

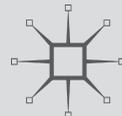
Security, Conflict and Cooperation
in the Contemporary World



Britain in Global Politics Volume 1 From Gladstone to Churchill

Edited by

**CHRISTOPHER BAXTER
MICHAEL L. DOCKRILL
KEITH HAMILTON**



Britain in Global Politics Volume 1

Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World

Edited by **Effie G. H. Pedaliu**, LSE-Ideas and **John W. Young**,
University of Nottingham

The Palgrave Macmillan series *Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World* aims to make a significant contribution to academic and policy debates on cooperation, conflict and security since 1900. It evolved from the series *Global Conflict and Security* edited by Professor Saki Ruth Dockrill. The current series welcomes proposals that offer innovative historical perspectives, based on archival evidence and promoting an empirical understanding of economic and political cooperation, conflict and security, peace-making, diplomacy, humanitarian intervention, nation-building, intelligence, terrorism, the influence of ideology and religion on international relations, as well as the work of international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

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Edited by

Christopher Baxter

Honorary Lecturer in Intelligence History, Queen's University Belfast

Michael L. Dockrill

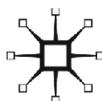
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Saki Dockrill

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A List of Saki Dockrill's Key Publications

Monographs

Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament, 1950–1955 (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Eisenhower's New Look National Security Policy, 1953–1961 (Macmillan/St Martin's, 1996).

Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World? (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

The End of the Cold War Era: The Transformation of the Global Security Order (Hodder Arnold/OUP, NY, 2005).

Edited volumes

From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima: The Second World War in Asia and the Pacific, 1941–45 (Macmillan/St Martin's Press, 1994).

Controversy and Compromise: Alliance Politics between Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States (Philio, 1998).

Cold War Respite: The Geneva Summit of July 1955 (ed./author with G. Bischof) (Louisiana University Press, 2000).

L'Europe de l'Est et de l'Ouest dans la Guerre froide 1948–1953 (ed. with Georges-Henri Soutou, Robert Frank, and Antonio Varsori) (Presses de l'Universite de Paris Sorbonne, 2002).

Advances in Cold War History (ed. with G. Hughes) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Over Thirty Years: The United States and the Legacy of the Vietnam War, (ed. with Jon Roper) (Palgrave/Macmillan, November 2007).

The North Korean Nuclear Crisis (ed. with Rosenau and Bluth) (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

Articles

'The Evolution of Britain's Policy towards a European Army 1950–54', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (1989), 12/1.

'Hirohito, the Emperor's Army and Pearl Harbor', *Review of International Studies* (1992), 18.

'Cooperation and Suspicion: The United States' Alliance Diplomacy for the Security of Western Europe, 1953–54', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* (1994), 5/1.

'Retreat from the Continent? Britain's Motives for Troop Reductions in West Germany, 1955–1958', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (1997), 20/3.

'Forging the Anglo-American Global Defence Partnership: Harold Wilson, Lyndon Johnson and the Washington Summit, December 1964', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2000), 23/4.

'Britain's Power and Influence: Dealing with Three Roles and the Wilson Government's Defence Debate at Chequers in November 1964', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* (2000), 11/1.

'Does a Superpower Need an Alliance?', *Internationale Politik* (2002), 3/3.

'After September 11: Globalisation of Security beyond the Transatlantic Alliance', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* (2003), 1/1.

'Dealing with Fear: Implementing the Bush Doctrine of Preemptive Attack', *Politics & Policy* (2006), 34: 344–373.

Chapters in edited collections

'The Partition of Europe 1947–48: An Overview', in Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (eds) *The Failure of Peace in Europe, 1943–48* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

'The Anglo-American Linkage between Vietnam and the Pound: 1964–68', in Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaisse (eds) *La Guerre du Viet-Nam et l'Europe (1963–1973)* (Bruylant, 2003).

'Hiroshima: A Strategy of Shock (co-authored with L. Freedman)', in Gordon Martel (ed.) *The Second World War: Reader* (Routledge, 2004).

'Eisenhower's Methodology for Intervention and its Legacy in Contemporary World Politics', in Dennis Showalter (ed.) *Forging the Shield: Eisenhower and National Security for the 21st Century* (Imprint Publications, 2005).

'Dealing with Fear: Implementing the Bush Doctrine of Pre-emptive Attack', in John E. Owens and John W. Dumbrell (eds) *America's 'War on Terrorism': New Dimensions in U.S. Government and National Security* (Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

'Defense and Détente: Britain, the Soviet Union, and the 1968 Czech Crisis', in Gunter Bischof, Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler (eds) *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968* (Lexington Books, 2010).

Cold War History Series, Palgrave Macmillan **General Editor: Saki Dockrill**

Günter Bischof, *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945–55: The Leverage of the Weak*.

Christoph Bluth, *The Two Germanies and Military Security in Europe*.

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Effie G.H. Pedaliu, *Britain, Italy and the Origins of the Cold War*.

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Kevin Ruane, *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–55*.

Helene Sjørusen, *The United States, Western Europe and the Polish Crisis: International Relations in the Second Cold War*.

Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (eds), *The Failure of Peace in Europe, 1943–48*.

**Global Conflict and Security since 1945 Series,
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**Editors: Professor Saki R. Dockrill and
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Vesselin Dimitrov, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Foreign Policy, Democracy and Communism in Bulgaria 1941–48*.

James Ellison, *The United States, Britain and the Transatlantic Crisis: Rising to the Gaullist Challenge, 1963–68*.

Peter Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism: British Policy towards South-East Asia, 1945–65*.

Jon Roper, *Over Thirty Years: The United States and the Legacy of the Vietnam War*.

T.O. Smith, *Britain and the Origins of the Vietnam War: UK Policy in Indo-China, 1943–50*.

Ken Young, *Weapons Systems and the Politics of Interdependence*.

Preface and Acknowledgements

This is the first of two volumes of essays dedicated to the memory of Saki Ruth Dockrill, Professor of Contemporary History and International Security at King's College, London. Soon after her untimely death in August 2009, friends, colleagues and former students expressed a wish to commemorate her life and work with a collection of essays. Professor John Young and Dr Effie Pedaliu, co-editors of the second volume, took the initiative in sounding out prospective contributors, and so enthusiastic was the response that it was decided that two volumes, rather than one, would be required. The resulting essays deal with a broad range of issues, each reflecting the specialist interests of individual authors, but linked by a common concern with Britain's role in international affairs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As editors of this volume we are grateful to all our contributors, and particularly to Professor Brian Holden Reid, whose introductory essay combines an appreciation of Professor Dockrill's scholarship with a summary overview of other chapters. Special thanks are likewise due to Jen McCall, Holly Tyler and other members of the publishing team at Palgrave Macmillan for their patience and support in carrying this project forward; and to Dr Gaynor Johnson of the University of Salford for undertaking at very short notice a peer review of the volume in manuscript and for offering some very helpful suggestions regarding its content and presentation.

We should also like to acknowledge the assistance of the following archives and libraries in providing contributors with access to their collections: The National Archives at Kew, London; the Parliamentary Archives, London; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library; the British Library; Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge; Cambridge University Library; the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Balliol College Archives, Oxford; Hatfield House Library and Archives; the Norfolk Record Office; the Buckinghamshire County Record Office; the Liverpool Record Office; the West Sussex Record Office; Nottingham University Library; the National Archive of Scotland, Edinburgh; the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast; the Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon; the Library Archives

Canada, Ottawa; the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes; the Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air, Vincennes; Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes; and the United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Finally, we should like to express our gratitude to the editors of the second of the two memorial volumes for their advice and close cooperation. In this respect we are especially indebted to Effie Pedaliu whose drive, energy and passion made the whole project possible. The volumes will, we hope, be a fitting tribute to Saki Dockrill, a highly respected scholar and much-loved wife, colleague and friend.

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Brian Holden Reid is Professor of American History and Military Institutions at King's College, London, and since 2010 an Academic Member of College Council. A former Head of the Department of War Studies (2001–07), in 2007 he was awarded the Fellowship of King's College London (FKC), the highest honour the college can award its alumni and staff, and he is both. He was a Trustee of the Society of Military History (2003–11). His books include *J.F.C. Fuller: Military Thinker* (1987, 1990); *The Origins of the American Civil War* (1996); *Studies in British Military*

Thought (1998); *Robert E. Lee: Icon for a Nation* (2005, 2007); and *America's Civil War: The Operational Battlefield, 1861–1863* (2008).

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has written extensively on colonial politics and his most recent book, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–1940* was published in 2012. He is currently working on a comparative study of French and British decolonisation to be published with Oxford University Press.

Introduction: Saki Ruth Dockrill, 'No Ordinary Professor'

Brian Holden Reid

The study of international history in the twentieth century has still to reckon fully with the premature death of Saki Ruth Dockrill on 8 August 2009. I gladly write this introductory chapter, but as I sit down to begin it I am fully conscious that what would have been her 60th birthday beckons in a few days' time and that she was struck down in her prime. Saki Dockrill ranked among the finest and most productive international historians of her generation. From a unique Anglo-Japanese perspective, her work blended strategy, defence policy, international relations and cultural themes. Her analysis focused primarily on the Pacific War, 1941–45, the Cold War, and relations between the West and the Pacific Rim. Throughout her career she exhibited a capacity for growth – real intellectual development – so that one could predict confidently that her most celebrated achievements still lay ahead of her. She remarked several years earlier that she did not want to be 'an ordinary professor'. She was not, and she will not be remembered as ordinary, but death cut her down before she could be regarded as an extraordinary professor.

She was born in Osaka, Japan, on 14 December 1952 and graduated in 1976 from Kyoto University with an LL.M., majoring in law and history. She spent five years as a managing tutor at a Japanese private school before embarking on an academic career on moving to Britain in 1981. Her time as a manager bequeathed significant administrative and organisational skills from which both her own work and her future academic department benefited. She took an MA in International Relations at the University of Sussex and studied under Christopher Thorne. Dockrill enjoyed a fine command of languages, being fluent in English, German and Japanese, and this combination of language skills was put to good use in her postgraduate researches. Her doctorate in War Studies at

King's College London followed in 1988, where she was supervised first by Wolf Mendl and later by Lawrence Freedman.

In 1988–89 she went to Yale University as a John M. Olin Fellow. Welcomed by her friend Paul Kennedy, introduced to Professor Sir Michael Howard, then Robert A. Lovett Professor of Military and Naval History, she did so much more than make new friends among the British expatriate community in New England. The Yale interlude served as a truly formative experience. Before 1988 Dockrill was primarily a European specialist with interests in the interaction of European powers with American foreign policy. Her time at Yale filled in all kinds of missing dimensions in her understanding of American social values, policy formation and view of the world. In short, the Yale fellowship gave her a refreshed understanding of American foreign policy and strategy. With characteristic drive and diligence, she began exploring American archival collections. Effie Pedaliu has remarked that the Eisenhower Presidential Library at Abilene, Kansas, 'became her home from home'. For a non-American scholar her grasp of its contents was literally unique and impressed even those American historians familiar with its contents.

She returned to War Studies at King's College London to a series of research appointments, including a MacArthur Fellowship, before being appointed to a lectureship and gaining election as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1992. Promotion to senior lecturer followed in 1997 and conferment of the title of Professor of Contemporary History and International Security six years later. Dockrill also taught in the institutes of the University of London, serving as a Teaching Fellow of the Institute of United States Studies, 1992–97, and sitting on its Advisory Board, 2002–4.

Dockrill's first book, *Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament, 1952–1955* (1991) grew out of her doctorate, but set a pattern in its exhaustive research, drawing upon sources in three foreign languages, if English is included in this category. This book appeared in Cambridge Studies in International Relations No. 13. It is an impeccable, concise monograph, beautifully arranged and organised, clearly written and sensitively argued, and quickly became the standard work on its subject, appearing in paperback posthumously in 2010. Dockrill's book dealt with the most controversial issue that the signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were forced to confront, namely, the imminence and extent of West German rearmament. Her analysis rests on systematic research in numerous Anglo-American archives and indeed British policy lay at the heart of the book. In this period no elaborate

defence plan existed for the defence of the three Western zones of occupation – military planners just assumed a withdrawal to fight on a line behind the River Rhine. The British, moreover, occupied the most badly devastated of the three zones and sought to reduce the burgeoning costs of their occupation, and thus were keen to move the issue along. Dockrill explains that British policy ‘for Germany and for Europe as a whole evolved in stages between 1945 and 1950’. It was also fashioned in a very pragmatic manner.¹

Dockrill explores these stages, from an initial modest British proposal for arming the West German police, via Churchill’s more visionary plea for a European Army, unveiled while he was Leader of the Opposition in August 1950, the critical British reaction to American proposals for ‘a package’ of measures to speed up the process, the French sponsored Pleven Plan to slow it down, and the saga of the European Defence Community (EDC). Finally, she discusses the British sponsored compromise, which saw acceptance of West Germany as a sovereign state and as an equal NATO partner, in return for specific restrictions on limiting West German freedom of military action. Dockrill neatly sums up the dilemmas of British policy which persist more than half a century later, and remain steadfastly unresolved: Britain ‘did not want to become too closely involved in schemes of European federation, nor did she wish to appear too hostile to any European initiative on the subject in case this resulted in the loss of her influence in Western Europe’.²

The book’s reflections on United States policy are most stimulating. Initially American policy-makers felt less pressure to force the pace of West German rearmament and felt more sympathy towards the residual suspicion and fears of those European powers, especially France, that were reluctant to endorse the slightest move to restore German sovereignty less than five years after the conclusion of the Second World War. All this changed with the anxiety expressed after the commencement of the Korean War in 1950, with fears that the Soviet Union would use the Korean *imbroglio* as a means of distracting the Western powers before launching an all-out assault on Western Europe. Dockrill, though she does not neglect the haste with which the United States often prepared major switches of policy, argues forcefully ‘that American post-war policy was much more subtle and cautious than earlier scholars had surmised, in that American policy-makers sought to cooperate with the Europeans and not to dictate to them’. She also explores the ‘latent disharmony’ between British and American policy inherent in the former’s expectations of the ‘special relationship’ as a means of advancing British interests. In response, American military and civilian leaders often resented

the eagerness with which Europeans took American money and then cavilled at the obligations the United States expected them to take up or the fractious spirit with which they entertained shifts in American policy.³

Her edited book, *From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima: The Second World War in Asia and the Pacific, 1941–1945*, that appeared three years later inaugurated her work on the Pacific War, to which she intended to return at the end of her career. It also provided evidence of her ability to exploit appearances on the conference circuit and turn them into effective publications. This work grew out of an international conference at the Imperial War Museum (IWM), London, on the 50th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Dockrill's conduct not only during the conference but also in preparing the book for publication, offered evidence of her remarkably tolerant, objective and balanced judgements, both in her private relations and in her research and writing. Towards the end of the IWM proceedings, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC stood up and publicly congratulated her on the candour that she had shown in her analysis both of Japan's responsibility for starting the Pacific War and for the brutal way Japan conducted it. It was, however, by no means clear that the senior Japanese scholars also present shared Cheshire's admiration. The final published work has served as an important source of reference for understanding the many facets of this gruesome conflict.

Dockrill's authoritative study, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953–1961* (1996), placed this controversial policy in a broad context and offered a sustained defence of her hero, Dwight D. Eisenhower. In the post-war years, Dockrill explains, the United States had assumed all the burdens of world leadership. But by the time of General Eisenhower's election to the presidency in 1952 the American sense of security had continued to decline remorselessly; such a feeling reflected the odd paradox that the more powerful the United States became the greater her sense of vulnerability.⁴ Dockrill argued that this 'increasing sense of vulnerability compounded the frustration of American decision makers in trying to formulate a coherent foreign policy'.⁵ Her book attempted to assess Eisenhower's Cold War strategy within the broader context of 'national security'. She admits this is a rather inexact term, but she interprets it to mean a policy which embraced not only military and foreign policy objectives, but also its domestic sources and anxieties plus the economic and financial dimensions on which it rested.

In exploring this theme, Dockrill argued that Eisenhower sought to '*strike a balance*' between the external and internal factors. The New-Look

National Security Policy thus overlapped over many spheres of government, and Dockrill was forced to make a choice in her investigations as to how she should restrict her researches if she was ever to finish the book (not to mention the increasingly tiresome bureaucratic pressures to complete ambitious projects that began to be felt by the early 1990s within arbitrarily chosen five yearly cycles for Research Assessment Exercises). So Dockrill selected the theme of strategy, defence budgets and the reaction of Congress to the policy's unfolding. In her finest book on American history, Dockrill's painstaking analysis of the vicissitudes of the New Look draws out the controversial areas. Not the least controversial was the aim of an overall reduction of defence spending, which fell disproportionately on the US Army. She also dealt with American anxieties over the increasingly important summit meetings with the Soviet leaders. 'I dread the prospect', the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, admitted frankly when contemplating the worries that could spread in a media conscious, television age. But Dockrill was not misled by these pervasive but exaggerated anxieties. She argued convincingly that Eisenhower succeeded in his aim 'of keeping the economy solvent' and submitted three balanced budgets in financial years, 1956, 1957 and 1960. Another issue that Dockrill disposes of confidently was the Eisenhower Administration's supposed over-reliance on the nuclear issue which became a moot issue in the 1960 Presidential Election. 'Nuclear weapons', she concludes, 'reinforced Eisenhower's anxiety to wage cold war by non-military means'.⁶ Dockrill revisited the general subject in 2000 in the excellent co-edited work produced as a result of another international conference on the Geneva Summit, though her own chapter focused on Anthony Eden's over-playing his hand in advancing the cause of German re-unification.⁷

Dockrill's other revisionist foray, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez* (2002), is probably her best book. She offered a stout and persuasive defence not just of the underlying concept but of the implementation of the Labour Government's policy to withdraw from the Far East. She took a novel approach to the study of defence policy. It was not in any sense a 'conventional' work on the matter, for she sought 'to examine the nature and scale of the various pressures which were presented to Britain (economic, diplomatic and American) in formulating its global policy' – and her assessment rested on three inter-related themes. The first was 'the progressive changes in Britain's global defence policy' and the relationship between British commitments and security interests. Such a relationship led her logically to a reconsideration 'of how the British governing elite perceived Britain's standing in the world'. Was

the decision, she asked, to abandon the British position East of Suez the product of a major effort to re-think Britain's position in the world? The second theme relates to the need to participate in the Common Market. The third theme related to the manner, rather characteristic of British policy-making, whereby long-term plans became merged with short-term goals. How and why did the Labour Government become preoccupied with withdrawal, at a time when the United States began to increase its commitment to Vietnam and Britain fought a war to guarantee the independence of Malaysia, the 'Confrontation' with Indonesia. As Dockrill observes, there were numerous pressures working against disengagement. The third theme – a *leitmotiv* of Dockrill's historical writing – refers to Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States. The Johnson Administration observed the Wilson Government's evolving policy with intense interest. Dockrill concludes that the reiteration of specialness 'did not mean that one power would always support the other'. Their means of fighting the Cold War and views on the character of the Soviet threat 'were often at variance'.⁸

Dockrill's central argument – the 'over-arching theme of the book' – represents a distillation of the fundamental questions she raises. It serves also to underline her unique contribution to war studies, namely, 'the utility of military power in the modern world in relation to the political influence drawn from that power'. Hence it alludes to the psychological factors and attitudes shaped by education and experience that lay behind the formally composed but lucid minutes and memoranda that she quotes with authority and discernment. Dockrill concludes that the final implementation of the Labour Government's policy was 'epoch-making' because once the decision had been taken 'it proved difficult to change'. In 1970 the efforts of the succeeding Heath Government to reverse the abandonment of East of Suez failed because of the priority it afforded to Europe and a wish to reduce defence expenditure still further.⁹ Dockrill produced a truly pioneering and innovative study, and though future historians might challenge its approach or vary its emphasis, it will continue to stand as an extremely well-written and forcefully argued point of departure for all who follow in her footsteps.¹⁰

Her last major book, *The End of the Cold War Era* (2005), argues that although Mikhail Gorbachev played a central part in terminating the Cold War, the terms of its settlement were framed by the United States. This book is also significant in opening up a new point of departure for Dockrill – a path that, alas, she could not traverse. In her opening essay in a text aimed largely at a student readership, but lively, stimulating, even helpful to more expert readers, *Advances in Cold War History* edited

with her former pupil, Geraint Hughes (2006), Dockrill observed that 'the main tenet of the Cold War can be seen as the East-West competition in ideas, arms and spheres of influence'. The Cold War, she maintained, differed from previous conflicts because it was not fought militarily save through surrogates, and fundamentally it remained a struggle for comparative advantage in which political risks and costs were as high as in any previous conflict – perhaps higher – but not secured by battle. 'There was no obvious means for bringing the underlying conflict to an end', Lawrence Freedman and Geraint Hughes emphasise in their essay on strategy, 'short of a potentially catastrophic war on the one hand or an ideological capitulation on the other'. Such an all-embracing conflict and the possibility of regime change had a decisive influence on the outlook, interests and conclusions of an entire generation of scholars. The Cold War threw up such urgent issues that it was both futile and unproductive to attempt to ignore it. But Dockrill was young enough to begin to think outside this framework and begin to develop thoughts about the international structure bereft of a ceaseless competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. Also, given her East Asian origins, she was uniquely equipped to embrace this new world. She approached her new task like a historian, but *The End of the Cold War* represents her first confident steps.¹¹

As well as producing four other edited or co-edited books, from 1991 she served as the founding editor of the journal, *Cold War History*, and then sat on its editorial board, while from 1997–2004 she presided as General Editor of Palgrave Macmillan's Cold War History Series, publishing no less than 21 volumes.

Dockrill did not excel solely as an author and researcher. She was a superb teacher, being dedicated, painstaking, well organised, sympathetic and approachable. She earned the affection of generations of King's students, for she was never afraid to socialise with students at every level and would readily accept invitations to attend dinners and receptions of the student-run War Studies Society or celebrations of a more informal nature. She was generally very convivial. Some of the most remarkable occasions I can recall over the years involved Saki. These included our visits with Michael Dockrill to see A.J.P. Taylor and after his death in 1990 to see his widow, Eva Hazsрати Taylor; her 80th birthday party was a special highlight, with the Hungarian Ambassador and Robert Key as guests of honour, and also meeting Eva's sons and grandchildren. Saki's 50th birthday party in 2002 was a memorable event, not least for displaying the range of her innumerable friends. Her temperament was highly strung, but she always remained level-headed

and politically alert. Her attendance at departmental meetings remained regular to the last, and she habitually offered views that were authentic and well considered and never self-serving. She remained to her dying day one of the sheet anchors on which a talented Department rested.

Saki Dockrill was a slim, elegant and attractive woman, always impeccably dressed in vivid, fetching colours. She was charming, affable, cooperative and conscientious to a fault. But she was far from sombre, being furnished with an infectious sense of humour. She would emit a high-pitched giggle when teased and would respond with a ready riposte in her chirpy Japanese accent. She truly loved her adopted country. I recall once saying to her: 'I never think of you as anything but British'. In April 1986 she married Michael Dockrill; theirs was a happy union which exerted a powerful influence on her development as an international historian. In November 1993 she assumed naturalised British citizenship, and in May 2003 was confirmed as a member of the Church of England by the Bishop of Southwark, taking as a second Christian name, Ruth. She had a wide range of hobbies, including painting, playing the piano and gardening.

Nothing earned her more admiration than the last months of her four year battle with leukaemia. Her determination and fortitude became a by-word as she continued to commute regularly to King's, despite growing fragility, to see students and continue her researches. In 2008 she had been awarded a Leverhulme Fellowship to complete the book she was uniquely qualified to write, 'Impossible Victory: Japan in the Pacific War and its Contemporary Legacy'. But she was cut down in her prime before she had barely started on what undoubtedly would have been a remarkable work. Yet she bequeathed a series of substantial books and many essays that stand as testimony to her enduring contribution to the field of international history.

These works were pre-eminently concerned: with the themes of the utility of military power and its place in the international states system; with the evolution and implementation of defence policy and strategy which might assume a deterrent form; with the reciprocal influence of domestic forces on those policies and strategy, especially in Britain and the United States; with the nature of the Anglo-American 'special relationship'; and as conflicts reached their culminating points, with the possibility of 'regime change'; with the nature of peacemaking; and finally, she was intrigued by the cultural influences on the treatment of war and its impact and how these alter perceptions of the past over time – itself an historical process of great significance. The chapters in this book commemorate Dockrill's achievement by addressing

these themes either as their own central theme considering a subject of the authors' choice or in passing. The authors are a combination of colleagues, former students and her friends and admirers with whom she often worked closely in the many professional bodies with which she involved herself. Here, the authors enlarge upon and extend her achievement and enhance our understanding of the aims of her work, written with such dedication and diligence and in her final years with such dogged courage.

T.G. Otte opens the work with a survey of the meaning of the term 'Cold War'. He argues against the restriction of its use to the very specific historical conditions that pertained to the second half of the twentieth century. Otte interprets the meaning of this term as sustained antagonism before the level of the outbreak of armed engagement, a form of competition reliant on the containment of an aggressive state by a status quo power. Otte makes a plausible case for widening use of this term back to the eighteenth century in British history, though it hardly depicts a consistent state of foreign affairs until the nineteenth century when Tsarist Russia became a bugbear of British liberalism. The diplomatic consequences of the Crimean War, not least the demilitarisation of the Black Sea, underlined a determination to contain Russian expansionism; by the 1870s this policy was undergirded by a belief that Russian financial vulnerability would eventually fracture the Tsar's huge empire – an anticipation of the fate that finally overtook its Soviet successor after 1989. Otte argues that British policy blended deterrence as well as diplomacy, though the Franco–Russian alliance weakened the effect of naval deterrence. Britain responded with her alliance with Japan, though Japan exploited this to gain regional predominance. The Bolshevik Revolution permitted British policy-makers, like Lord Curzon, who were instinctively anti-Russian, to give full vent to their prejudices. Otte argues for the existence of a 'well established tradition in British foreign policy' to deploy the methods of Cold War via the employment of proxy powers or alliances with other European powers. He has produced a suggestive essay and addresses issues that lie at the core of Saki Dockrill's *oeuvre*: the nature of cold war and the methods employed to deter uncooperative or belligerent powers.

John Fisher's treatment of the career of Lord Curzon raises the problems inherent in deploying power to gain – and then secure – a post-war settlement that will last. Curzon's prime concern was to secure 'absolute' imperial security for Britain. Curzon, as Fisher shows, envisaged this security as the major benefit of Britain's victory in 1918 which would permit a measure of 'pre-emptive acquisition'. Curzon had little patience

with the nostrums of the American president, Woodrow Wilson, and he feared that the defeated powers might circumvent Britain and take their cause directly to him. His dislike did not prevent him from employing Wilsonian precepts when it suited him, as when in 1919 he argued that Constantinople should be taken away from the Turks. Curzon's main weakness as Foreign Secretary was that he was a poor advocate – he could not resist histrionics and exaggeration that annoyed his cabinet colleagues. Like the American Senator Charles Sumner (1811–74) he was quite remarkably self-absorbed. Fisher's assessment of this exceptionally gifted but unfulfilled man is far from uncritical. Curzon spent too much time shadow-boxing with his allies and too little adapting to the changed conditions after 1918. He certainly contributed to the casual, commonplace Francophobia of the inter-war years.

The impact of control of the air on ideas and methods of colonial government, not least its reduction of inaccessibility, is the subject of Martin Thomas's sober and learned chapter. His exploration underlines how nations believe technology elevates their primacy. It also permits, as Saki Dockrill well understood, the development of obfuscating jargon and euphemism that conceals destructive power. Both French and British policy-makers, frequently but not exclusively airmen, referred ambiguously to the 'moral value' of air policing; they believed that air attacks on defenceless villages would be 'demonstrative rather than annihilating'. Thomas shows just how meaningless such distinctions were in practice. Air action turned out to have results that were not decisive. Both the French in Morocco and the British in Mesopotamia persuaded themselves that air control was largely about intelligence-gathering as the basis for political objectives that could achieve pacification; and that air attack would achieve results to quick order, and break the link between the rural economy and rural resistance to colonial rule. In the event, impatience led to brutal, indiscriminate methods. Thomas's cogent treatment of these ethical issues highlights an important issue that resonates to this day. The dangers that result from the employment of new technologies of political control which lack an established series of agreed legal restraints. There are echoes here of the doubts expressed recently as to the legality of the Obama Administration's indiscriminate use of drones in pursuit of a policy of 'targeted killing'.

Keith Hamilton addresses a question that greatly intrigued Saki Dockrill: the meaning of historical events and the purposes to which the manipulation of historical recollections can be put – especially in an age of anxiety. He considers the vetting by the Foreign Office of diplomatic and ministerial memoirs, during the years 1919–1939. Great power

diplomacy in these years could not be separated from the legacy of the Versailles system. The Foreign Office remained determined to maintain a firm hold over the writings of those previously involved in its business, its primary weapon rested on the threat to withhold the payment of ambassadors' pensions; similar threats were wielded before senior intelligence officers during the *Spycatcher* affair in the 1980s.¹² Sir Arthur Hardinge who dared to publish extracts of his memoirs in the newspapers while not deigning to submit his manuscript was soon brought to heel. The Foreign Office even attempted to extend its writ over the publications of military attachés. In contrast to its attitude after 1945, the War Office took a more casual approach and refused to allow Army officers' work to be censored. It is a consistent theme of Dr Hamilton's chapter that the efforts to censor published work 'could not be equated with defence of the national interest'. The protection of reputations was its highest priority; the more senior the author the more latitude he was given. But even the former Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was persuaded to drop a chapter in his *War Memoirs* on the Tsar and his Family which placed both King George V and his own government in a most unflattering and timorous light. Even the most single-minded and maverick of authors could grasp the benefits of an attempt to manage the past.

Saki Dockrill's pupil, Christopher Baxter, explores in some detail the curious Noulens affair, the arrest in June 1931 of a Soviet agent, Hilaire Noulens, in China. He uses the odd circumstances surrounding an odd individual to prise open broader issues that test the traditional parameters of the Cold War and the nature of the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Dr Baxter thus explores anxiety as a source of policy and action. Indeed many of the characteristics of the post-1945 struggle could be found in this earlier period: the paranoia and fear of an all-seeing, all-knowing and super-perceptive enemy. Richard Hofstadter describes this 'paranoid style' as a belief in 'the existence of a vast insidious preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetuate acts of the most fiendish character'.¹³ In the spirit of an historical detective, Dr Baxter shows how the arrest of Noulens offered the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) an insight into the workings of the Comintern and its Far Eastern Bureau. It was amazed at the extent of its financial power, disbursing funds that at current values amounted to £4.6 million (that is, £105,000 every year). Whether such a sum amounted to value for money is rather less clear. The 'turning' of another Soviet agent, Gu Shunzhang, amounted to a major success in revealing the methods by which Soviet agents reported to Moscow. The main consequence of the Noulens affair appears to have been a diverting of attention away from

the looming Japanese military threat, and the replacing of it with fears about communist subversion in China. But at least the affair bequeathed a longer term benefit by helping to prepare SIS agents for the days when indeed such subversion returned to the forefront of policy anxieties.

Brian McKercher offers the first of several studies of appeasement from different angles. His chapter addresses a question that engaged Saki Dockrill throughout her career, namely, the place of force in the international system. He explores the roots of a policy whose torments cast a shadow over American policy for almost half a century. John Foster Dulles admitted in 1955, that his worst fear was the compulsion 'to adopt a policy on "appeasement" lines'.¹⁴ The historical reality of the appeasement policy, as McKercher explains, especially in terms of cool detachment, was very different from how policy-makers in the post-war world believed it operated. McKercher argues forcefully that until 1929 British statesmen did not conceive strategic compromise as a substitute for the maintenance of the balance of power. Nor did they hesitate to employ armed force when required. Before 1937 they were prepared to use appeasement as a *tactical* method to secure their objectives. Chamberlain ushered in a change of emphasis, for he agreed with criticisms of the dangers represented by a balance of power; however, the rational identification of points of contention and location of the means to ameliorate them, McKercher contends, was a form of *realpolitik* – and every bit as realistic as the balance of power. And it could be said in Chamberlain's favour that at least he *had* a strategy and dispensed with the tactical opportunism so preferred by British policy-makers.

Philip Bell also addresses themes of great interest to Dockrill in his well-informed survey of Churchill's belief in the power of the French Army, namely the utility of military power and deterrence. Bell begins by surveying Churchill's own view of his alternative to appeasement in the 1930s. Churchill claimed that he believed the German threat could be resisted by working in the closest concert with France. Bell argues that this policy presented a number of intractable difficulties. The first was the great sway enjoyed over 'respectable opinion' by the acceptance of the German case against the Versailles Treaty. Churchill could neither engender an alternative moral case nor overcome the anti-French prejudice of the period which conceived France as an impulsive 'aggressor'. Under these conditions Bell regards Churchill's attempt to renew the *entente cordiale* as implausible. Secondly, Churchill behaved inconsistently and did not speak out with a clear anti-appeasement tone. It was only after the Munich Agreement that he found his real voice. Yet Bell concludes soberly that his stance could only serve as the basis for a

post-appeasement policy rather than a convincing alternative to it. This chapter, written with Bell's customary elegance and clarity might have come as a shock to Foster Dulles but would have been a delight to its honorand.

Glyn Stone offers a fascinating case study because his discussion of Anglo-Spanish relations traverses both of Dockrill's preferred periods and draws out their continuities while highlighting 'regime change'. The British standpoint on the Spanish Civil War rested on a refusal to recognise the belligerent rights of either side because the war represented a clash between divergent forms of totalitarianism. Although many British Conservatives remained deeply suspicious of the Republicans, 'non-intervention' was pursued in tandem with France in a bid to contain the civil war; a tense and mutually suspicious relationship developed after 1939–40. General Franco's programme of repression prompted some British criticism of the fascist regime by 1944, and a willingness to pursue efforts to restore democracy. Churchill opposed any efforts at regime change during the Second World War. By 1945–1947 this policy chimed with the United States view, despite renewed oppression in 1945–1946. Although the Labour Government, elected in July 1945, maintained some links with the anti-Franco opposition, the declaration of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, announcing the containment of communism, proved to be the salvation of the Franco regime as it resulted in the reinstatement of a policy of non-intervention and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries.

A further reconsideration of appeasement is provided by Joe Maiolo. He explores Neville Chamberlain's conduct of the Phoney War. He remarks at the outset that a significant defeat – and the collapse in the West in the spring of 1940, often described by British historians as the 'Fall of France', implying tacitly that Britain had little responsibility for the outcome, was nothing less than a catastrophe – 'still retains some of its former stigma as an expression of divine judgment'. Maiolo defends Chamberlain's conduct despite the outcome. Maiolo's contribution is consonant with the themes of this volume because Chamberlain wanted to see the removal of Hitler and defined the success of his policy by the extent to which he succeeded in achieving regime change; his failure throws light on the utility of force in the first phase of the Second World War in Europe. Maiolo argues that Chamberlain's strategy rested on a subtle calculation: that economic pressure would either lead to the collapse of the Nazi regime or provoke Hitler to gamble on a 'final throw' that in all probability would fail – like the Ludendorff Offensive in the spring of 1918.

In addition, Chamberlain sought to win the war at the least cost, especially in lives. Hitler could not win a long war and would certainly lose a desperate effort at victory in a short war; failure at either would break his hold over the German people. The Germans managed to overturn Chamberlain's neat calculations not through any military superiority – either in terms of equipment, command, conceptual or doctrinal superiority – but due to good luck. Maiolo thus applies the methods of A.J.P. Taylor to this problem, that is, accidents and unintended consequences determined a history which 'grew out of specific events'; it also affords his discussion some of Taylor's sparkle.¹⁵ Nothing succeeds like success. If Chamberlain's strategy had succeeded, as Maiolo observes, it 'would have struck historians as remarkable foresight', but it did not, and was damned as feeble failure.

Andrew Stewart, who had also been taught by Saki Dockrill, explores the comparatively neglected subject of the committee (a very British expedient) created in December 1942 on 'American Opinion on the British Empire'. The committee's terms of reference were defined as the analysis and assessment of this opinion as part of the process whereby an overall strategy could be identified that would show the British Empire as a worthy partner that could assist the United States in running the post-war world. Deep-seated hostility to the Empire was an festering sore in Anglo-American relations. Dr Stewart attempts to rescue this worthy body, chaired by Richard Law, later Lord Coleraine, the son of the former Prime Minister, Bonar Law. Law's fellow committee members were seized by the notion that the Empire's reputation for success and efficiency had been badly damaged by the run of defeats culminating in the fall of Singapore in 1942. Law's allies, including the Canadian journalist, Graham Spry were appalled by American ignorance of Britain and its empire. Spry also put his finger on the profound American ambivalence towards Britain, what he referred to as 'respect and rivalry towards Britain' that he judged as an 'impediment to American clarity of thought' in its transatlantic relations. This ambivalence can be explained by the presence of Great Britain throughout much of American history as both America's natural enemy and natural friend. I learned a great deal from reading this chapter, especially concerning the important Canadian dimension to Anglo-American relations.

Saul Kelly takes up where Dr Stewart has left off in explaining the tangles that developed over opposing British and American views on the future disposal of the Italian colonial empire in Africa. The British favoured a partition of these territories taking the views of the Arab, Jewish and Italian interests into account. This required a rejigging of

their frontiers, explored by the Foreign Office Research Department (FORD). By contrast the United States hoped to organise a series of international trusteeships which would facilitate the creation of a series of new, independent states in Africa and the Middle East that would look eagerly and gratefully towards the United States as their main trading partner and mentor in international affairs. The entire affair was a disillusioning one for the British because rather than gaining American acceptance of their detailed plans, not only did the latter ungratefully ignore them but showed every inclination to go their own way to the detriment of British security interests. Indeed, reflecting the baiting of Winston Churchill by Franklin Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference that so amused Stalin, the United States offered the Soviet Union participation in these trusteeships as a *quid pro quo* for occupation of previously League of Nations mandated Japanese islands in the Pacific. Indeed the Soviet Union demanded a trusteeship of the former Italian colonies at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. This is an absorbing study in the limits to the 'special relationship'.

It has been a real pleasure to accept the invitation to write the Introduction to this commemoration of the life and work of a much loved colleague and friend. It is to be hoped that the publication of this, the first of two volumes, will sustain increased interest in the works of a remarkable scholar and stimulate further research in the areas which engaged her.

Notes

1. Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament, 1950–1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 5, 7. Ernest Bevin expressed a very powerful tradition in British twentieth century foreign policy-making when he declared his preference for a step by step process rather than 'advocating ambitious schemes of European unity'. (*Ibid.*, p. 13).
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 29–31, 42, 44.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 2, 21, 157.
4. On this odd state of affairs see John A. Thompson, 'The Exaggeration of American Vulnerability: The Anatomy of a Tradition', *Diplomatic History*, 16 (Issue 1, January 1992), pp. 23–43.
5. Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953–1961* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp. 15, 139.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 274–75.
7. *The Cold War Respite: The Geneva Summit of 1955* edited by Gunter Bischof and Saki Dockrill (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000; Eisenhower Centre Studies in War and Peace); Dockrill's essay is on pp. 161–89.
8. Saki R. Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 4.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 225.
11. Saki R. Dockrill, 'Introduction: The Cold War as History', *Advances in Cold War History*, ed. Saki R. Dockrill and Geraint Hughes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 1; Lawrence Freedman and Geraint Hughes, 'Strategy', *Ibid.*, p. 134.
12. This is a reference to the celebrated legal battle over the accusations of irregularities, illegalities and incompetence in Peter Wright's book, *Spycatcher*, first published in Australia in 1985, which the British Government attempted to 'gag' in Britain. In March 1987 its case was dismissed in the Australian courts, permitting publication in Britain that year.
13. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 14.
14. Quoted in Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look Policy*, p. 139.
15. Quoted in Chris Wrigley, *A.J.P. Taylor: Radical Historian of Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 283.

1

‘A Very Internecine Policy’: Anglo–Russian Cold Wars before the Cold War

T.G. Otte

Whether or not each epoch is equal to God, as Leopold von Ranke once suggested, certainly each new generation of historians creates a new version of the past, one that suits its needs or tastes or that, at any rate, suggests itself as a plausible reconstruction of past occurrences. This is also relevant for the study of the post-1945 East-West conflict. The Cold War is generally seen as the key organising principle of the second half of the short twentieth century. So ingrained, indeed, is this view in the intellectual habits of today’s political leaders and commentators – and not a few scholars, too – that they tend to cast back wistful glances at the ‘familiar certainties of the Cold War and its alliances.’¹

In so doing, they reflect their particular present and its preoccupations. The past is not immutable, however; and, as John Lewis Gaddis has argued, the history of the twentieth-century Cold War ‘is bound to look different when viewed through the binoculars of a distant future’.² This chapter makes no pretence at knowing what this future might look like, or what its binoculars (a very twentieth-century instrument) might reveal to the interested spectator. Instead, it seeks to tackle one notable feature of the extant literature on the history of international relations, that is its restrictive use of the term ‘cold war’ as having specific application only to the latter part of the twentieth century.

The reasons for this *lacuna* are manifold, the reluctance to extend research to the period before 1945 being one of them. This omission is all the more curious since the ideological and strategic challenge posed by Russia in her post-1917 Soviet guise is well documented.³ Another reason is the ‘double-teleology’, centred on 1914 and 1939, that is still inherent in much of the literature on nineteenth- and twentieth-century

Great Power relations. Generations of historians have plotted Europe's descent into war in 1914 as a succession of gradually escalating crises. And in a similar manner, with one notable exception, they seem content to focus on the familiar stops along the route to the continent's final destination of renewed conflict in 1939/40 – Paris, Geneva, Locarno, Stresa and, finally, Munich, Prague and Warsaw.⁴

The focus on the Central and later the Axis Powers masks the more complex realities of international politics; it also distorts a proper understanding of British foreign policy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Having to maintain an empire with global reach and global interests, Britain's foreign policy élite took a larger view of the world, one whose horizon stretched beyond the environs of Paris, Berlin or Vienna. The empire may well have been acquired 'in a fit of absentmindedness', but its very existence, and the need to safeguard it, inculcated broader understandings and sophisticated appreciations of the tools available for this task. In this context, the concept of 'cold war', that is sustained, systematic antagonism below the level of actual hostilities, is particularly pertinent. Britain's antagonistic relations varied in focus and intensity. Its attendant phenomena, such as arms races or *détente*, were as familiar to the Earl of Clarendon or Sir Edward Grey as they would be to later twentieth-century foreign secretaries. And just as the Marquesses of Salisbury and Curzon recognised the utility of buffer states for the purposes of containment strategies, so Viscount Palmerston or Sir Austen Chamberlain were aware of the ideological dimension of these earlier cold wars.

What follows here, then, is not so much a *histoire événementiel* of Britain's external relations; rather it is a meta-diplomatic history that focuses on the strategic calculations that lay beyond the quotidian concerns of the British foreign policy élite. The principal emphasis of what follows is on Anglo-Russian relations. This is partly for reasons of space, but even more so because Russia was the most important variable in the calculations of British policy-makers. Nevertheless, it is this author's contention that aspects of the 'cold war' concept can equally be applied to relations with France and Germany during different phases of the long nineteenth century.⁵

* * *

Nineteenth-century British foreign policy revolved around two strategic objectives: the maintenance of an equilibrium in Europe, and the containment of Russia in the East. For the former, relations with France

and later Germany were key, though no balance was viable without Russia; the latter object entailed the need to cultivate ties with most of the other Powers, especially Austria and then Germany, but also France. Russia was thus a necessary element of European politics and a potential threat to British interests in Europe and beyond; and that invested Russia with a special importance.

Concerns about Russia ran like a golden thread through the texture of British policy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is one of the ironies of history, therefore, that George II's alliance with Russia in 1743, to protect his Hanoverian interests, marked the latter's arrival as a Great Power on the European scene.⁶ For much of the eighteenth century, with the exception of the Seven Years' War, British statesmen thought it necessary 'to include Muscovy in their general system of alliances with the maritime powers'.⁷ Russia was regarded as a useful check on French ambitions in Central Europe and, more especially, the Eastern Mediterranean. The Earl of Chatham, indeed, confessed to being 'quite a Russ', who hoped that as a result of Russia's advance in the Near East 'the Ottoman will pull down the house of Bourbon in his fall'.⁸ Russia's advance in the Black Sea region, however, opened up a new dimension of international power politics. It was the younger Pitt who came to regard it as a potential threat, the first British politician to stipulate a strategic nexus between Constantinople and Britain's Indian possessions and other Eastern interests. Pitt was unsuccessful in blocking Russian expansionism, perhaps most egregiously in the Ochakov affair in 1791. But he and his successors remained on the alert. Since 1807, for instance, a naval squadron operated in the Baltic Sea to keep watch on Russian movements in Northern Europe.⁹

British policy towards Russia after 1815 was by no means passive, however. It aimed at the double containment of Russian power in the East, and focused on two key points of geopolitical significance, the Turkish Straits and the terrestrial counterpoints of this maritime defile, Herat on the Afghan-Persian frontier and the Khyber Pass in India's troublesome north. This containment strategy did not preclude cooperation, as was demonstrated by George Canning's attempted realignment with Russia during the Greek crisis of 1825–6. For Canning, cooperating with St. Petersburg was a means of restraining its ambitions and of undermining the Neo-Holy Alliance.¹⁰

Cooperation with Russia was nevertheless intermittent. Between them, the 1828 Russo-Persian and 1833 Russo-Turkish treaties of Turkmanchai and Unkiar Skelessi helped to crystallise British thinking about Russia in the East. The threat anticipated by William Pitt in the

late 1780s now shaped Anglo-Russian relations, and would continue to do so until at least 1907. Geopolitical calculations were now paramount. When, for instance, Russia absorbed parts of Khorassan in the spring of 1834, Lord John Ponsonby, the ambassador at Constantinople, warned that she now occupied a commanding position along the northern rims of the Turkish and Persian empires, which would 'open a free passage for Russian troops in the direction of Bagdad'.¹¹ The ensuing Anglo-Russian contest for the allegiance of Persia in the aftermath of Turkmanchai also affected other aspects of British diplomacy in the East. Given Persia's growing importance, for instance, Palmerston, usually a stout advocate of an 'ethical' foreign policy, was forced to tone down his anti-slavery policy so as not to offend Persian sensibilities on that score.¹²

The events in the Levant in 1832–3 reinforced British suspicions of Russian expansionism. The first Mehmet Ali crisis drove the Ottoman Sultan, Mahmood II, into the Tsar's warm embrace at Unkiar Skelessi. The consequence, Palmerston calculated, was 'that Russia would become the Umpire between the Sultan and his subjects, would exercise a species of Protectorate over Turkey, and the Sultan would be bound to adopt the quarrels of Russia'.¹³ Palmerston, more especially, had come to view Russia as an inherently expansionist Power, driven by a sense of messianic mission; and in this he came to echo Pitt: 'No reasonable doubt can be entertained that the Russian Government is intently engaged in the prosecution of those schemes of aggrandizement towards the South, which ever since the reign of Catherine have formed a prominent feature of Russian policy.' He gave little credence to Russian assurances to the contrary: 'notwithstanding these declarations, it has been observed that the encroachments of Russia have continued to advance on all sides with a steady march, and with a well-directed aim, ... [the] extension either of her influence, or of her territory'. With Austria passive and British and French military and naval power overstretched, Russia had made 'an enormous stride [at Unkiar Skelessi] towards the accomplishment of her designs upon Turkey'. The close proximity of her fleet and troops to the Bosphorus, moreover, placed Russia in a strong position to take advantage of renewed internal turmoil in the Sultan's dominions. It was in Britain's strategic interest to prevent Turkey from 'becom[ing] the Satellite of any other Power', and to preserve 'the integrity and independence of the Turkish Empire as an important element in the general Balance of Power'.¹⁴

From now on, until the eve of the First World War, albeit with varying degrees of intensity, Britain was committed to the idea of reforming

the Ottoman Empire in order to preserve it as a bulwark against Russian expansionism. Palmerston and other Whigs, more especially, were wedded to this notion. Axiomatic to Palmerston's policy was the assumption that Russia was inherently expansionist. Her *Drang nach Süden* could not be tamed; but it could be contained. '[L]arger and more serious encroachments have been made by Russia upon the territorial limits, and upon the political independence of Turkey during the reign of the present Emperor, than during any equal period of former time', Palmerston concluded. St. Petersburg's

vast military arrangements, ... its naval preparations, & the extensive fortifications which it is constructing at extreme points of its territory, obviously serve as the basis of offensive operations. [...] [W]e are unable to find anything in the acts of the Russian government proofs of anything but a system of encroachment on every side, pushed forward as rapidly as is consistent with the internal resources of the Empire, and with the external obstacles opposed by the resistance of other Powers.

Therein, of course, lay the problem, for Austria and Prussia were reluctant to risk the bones of their grenadiers for Turkey, and instead renewed their vows to Russia at Münchengrätz.¹⁵

Relations with France in the Levant, moreover, were always brittle; too determined, it seemed, was France to extend her influence in the region, and too ineffectual were British efforts 'to fix the policy of France in the right track with respect to the affairs of the Levant'.¹⁶ This was underscored by the second Mehmet Ali crisis of 1839–40. British diplomats generally concluded that the Egyptian viceroy's renewed campaign against Ottoman overlordship was '*de fabrique français*'.¹⁷ The crisis also demonstrated, however, that the differences between the other Powers tended to be greater than their disputes with Britain. In turn, this was an important, qualifying aspect of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Russian 'cold war', for it allowed for limited Anglo-Russian cooperation. During the second Levant crisis Palmerston's concerns about French regional ambitions coalesced with the Tsar's mistaken conviction that an Anglo-Austrian-French combination was in the offing. For Palmerston the 'grand objective' was to replace Russian influence at Constantinople with a joint quasi-protectorate by the Great Powers; for the Tsar this was preferable to an offensive anti-Russian combination.¹⁸

Such cooperation, however, was limited geographically and in time. London showed no interest in a general understanding on Central

Asia, as had been proposed by the Russian chancellor, Count Karl Robert von Nesselrode. Palmerston dismissed the latter's '*théorie des tampons*', though he tacitly acknowledged the strategic significance of the Central Asian khanates as 'a non-conducting body between Russia and British-India, and separated from both by a considerable interval of space'.¹⁹ At best, formalising any such arrangement would buy time. But since there were no international combinations that could be forged against Russia in that region, any such understanding was likely to be of limited duration. If anything, Palmerston favoured a more aggressive containment of Russia in the East: 'By taking Afghanistan under our protection, and in garrisoning, if necessary, Herat, we shall regain our ascendancy in Persia ... British security in Persia gives security on the eastwards to Turkey and tends to make the Sultan more independent and to place the Dardanelles more securely out of the grasp of [Tsar] Nicholas.'²⁰

No doubt, Palmerston's complacent anticipation of such beneficial developments was a prelude to the catastrophe of the first Afghan War. In the context of Anglo-Russian relations, however, it underlined Britain's commitment to an active strategy of containing the spread of Russian influence in the East. Although the Tory interlude of the early 1840s marked a period of relative *détente*, checking Russia's power in Turkey and farther east remained a strategic priority. The Anglo-Russian confrontation over the Hungarian political refugees at Constantinople in 1849 was a pointer towards things to come. A joint Anglo-French naval demonstration at the entrance to the Dardanelles, combined with Admiral Sir William Parker's entering the Straits, marked the more aggressive pursuit of a containment strategy.²¹

The anti-Russian poise of British policy in this period reflected geopolitical realities. But equally so it reflected the growing Russophobia in British politics. The two were inseparably linked. Whilst their divergent interests suggested a degree of Anglo-Russian confrontation, the existing polarity of liberalism and Russian autocracy was skilfully instrumentalised by Palmerston and his acolytes. The energetic assertion of British power and authority abroad resonated with patriotic opinion at home. No doubt, it was in the domestic sphere that its real significance lay, but it nevertheless added an ideological component to the 'cold war' competition between Britain and Russia. Queen Victoria, no natural ally of Palmerston's, as so often was a reliable indicator of public opinion at home. At the time of the Persian campaign against Afghan-controlled Herat in 1838, she observed that 'of course the Russians

would deny participating in the aggression; but their words made very little difference, except when founded on facts'.²²

Ideological hostility towards Russia took on a more exaggerated form in the course of the Crimean War. 'The notion of a war is popular and there is a universal desire to have a brush with Russia', noted Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary.²³ In due course, *Punch*, that influential organ of middle class opinion, portrayed Tsar Nicholas as a low-life thug, 'brought to the bar of public opinion, charged with very aggravated assault'. The complainant was a Madame Civilisation, aided by her 'friend BRITANNIA, and her respectable next-door neighbour FRANCE, ... [who were] determined... to protect poor suffering CIVILISATION by force'. Before long, the Tsar emerged from the pages of *Punch* as the leader of an 'evil empire', adorned with all manner of diabolical accoutrements, including a cloven hoof, a tipped tail and the devil's hymn book.²⁴

If the war itself was the result of blunder and muddle, the fact that it was fought in several regional theatres underlined the global nature of the Anglo-Russian antagonism.²⁵ Its outcome, moreover, provided a new diplomatic framework for the continued containment of Russia by demilitarising the Black Sea, as a means of protecting Turkey against a future Russian onslaught, and of the Åland Islands so as to restrict Russian naval power in the Baltic.²⁶ At least for the moment, the war had removed the Russian threat to the Turkish Straits and Ottoman provinces in Europe. And for the moment, British diplomacy could take 'a high tone with Russia' and insist on 'our extreme rights under the [1856 Paris] Treaty'.²⁷

* * *

The experience of the war had nevertheless done much to dampen popular belligerence. Complications in Europe and in the periphery, moreover, curtailed Britain's ability to pursue a forceful containment policy. For one thing, France was 'coquetting with Russia' with a view to obtaining support for any of Napoleon III's many European schemes.²⁸ For another, Britain's position in Central Asia was fragile, as was powerfully underlined by the double-crisis of the Anglo-Persian War in 1856–7 and the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Sir John Wodehouse (later the 1st Earl of Kimberley), then special ambassador at St. Petersburg, reflected on the changing strategic landscape of the region in terms that were reminiscent of Palmerston's comments on the khanates of the Central Asian

steppes nearly twenty years previously. For the moment, Wodehouse reasoned, Russia was in no position to undertake any sustained military campaign,

but *so much the better* is the opportunity for securing our position in Affghanistan [sic]. What we have to fear is not a Russian invasion but the gradual absorption of the intervening territories between our Empire & the Russian Empire, or what is nearly equivalent, that the intervening territories should fall under a permanent Russian influence. As long as we keep up a *series of buffers* between India & Russia the peace will be kept between us – once we become neighbours peace will not long continue – in Asia especially there cannot be two permanent Powers side by side.

Wodehouse advocated a firm anti-Russian policy in Central Asia: 'Is it not better to pursue a bold, *preventive* policy than to let matters *drift* into a really dangerous situation?' If Britain wanted to maintain her position in the region against Russia, 'we must act as a great Asiatic Power, boldly, vigorously, decisively. I believe the maintenance of that Empire to be the mainstay of our greatness as a nation.' In Asia 'we are lads paramount – & there we must act as becomes an Imperial nation'.²⁹

In principle, British policy in Asia remained committed to containing the spread of Russian power. In practice, however, 'masterly inactivity', as practised by Sir John Lawrence, the first Viceroy of India, became the preferred policy.³⁰ Domestic developments reinforced passivity abroad. Shifting party combinations at Westminster acted as brake on foreign policy. The Tory Earl of Malmesbury's definition of British foreign policy in 1858 thus reflected the changed condition of domestic politics. Peace was indivisible, he stipulated. It 'cannot be disturbed in any quarter without the risk of the disturbance becoming more general'. Britain would therefore 'always be ready, by her good offices, to contribute to moderating angry discussion, to avert hostile collisions, or to remove entanglements which may threaten to alienate nations from one another'.³¹

Implicit in these sentiments was an abjuring of a more active containment policy. Financial constraints in the aftermath of the Crimean War added to this. The immediate demands on public finances aside, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Gladstone, insisted that there was a larger question to be addressed: the 'simpler question respecting the dispersion of our forces all over the world which seems

to me simply a receipt [*sic*] for a maximum of cost with a minimum of power'. Substantial army and navy establishments, necessitated by an active foreign policy, thus required 'a permanent & considerable Income Tax', a political hot potato if ever there was one.³² Indeed, the extension of the franchise in 1867 meant that the rising middle classes' greater concern for fiscal retrenchment sapped the ability of governments to lead with confidence: 'it has become practically impossible for any English Cab[ine]t whose existence may at any moment be cut short by a Parliamentary vote, to pledge the country... to any definite line of action'.³³

This had implications for the Anglo-Russian 'cold war'. British diplomacy was by no means blind to renewed Russian expansion. The public affirmation by the Russian chancellor, Prince Gorchakov, of Russia's civilising mission to bring under her control the '*peuplades à demi sauvage, errantes, sans organisation sociale fixe*' in late 1864 inaugurated a phase of rapid Russian expansion in Central Asia.³⁴ In the Eastern Mediterranean, too, Russian policy became more active again with the aim of gradually undermining the 1856 treaty framework 'without a formal act legalising such infraction by a collective action of the Powers'.³⁵ France's continued dalliance with Russia in the later 1860s and her refusal to 'return... to her old union with England' in the East, moreover, made the task of countering Russian activities in South Eastern Europe all the more difficult.³⁶

Metropolitan policy-makers appreciated the nexus between developments in the different regions that were of strategic interest to Britain. As Benjamin Disraeli, Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1866, noted: 'Power and influence we should exercise in Asia; consequently in Eastern Europe; consequently also in Western Europe'.³⁷ As with Wodehouse's suggestion of a bold, preventive strike in Central Asia, so Disraeli's doctrine was easy to promulgate, but more difficult to act upon.

The further spread and consolidation of Russian power had broader strategic ramifications for Britain. The growing military presence of the Northern Power in Central Asia had the potential for destabilising British control over India. Given the resource constraints under which British policy had to operate, any corresponding strengthening of British forces on the subcontinent would very likely have to be purchased at the price of weakening Britain's military posture in the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁸ A rapprochement with St. Petersburg thus seemed sensible, more especially if it led to an understanding that defined 'some territory as neutral' between the Russian and British possessions in Central Asia.³⁹ The Russian chancellor responded in kind, and following a meeting between

Clarendon and Gorchakov at Heidelberg in September 1869 amicable exchanges ensued about '*une zone neutral*' along the Oxus river.⁴⁰

Hopes for a *détente* in Anglo-Russian relations were as intense as they were short-lived. The talks about a regional *modus vivendi* soon got bogged down in technical details, made all the more intractable by a dearth of reliable cartographical data. Growing Russian pressure on Persia at the turn of 1869/70 cast further doubt on the scheme. Clarendon himself had always regarded a regional understanding as an instrument for managing the 'cold war' between the two Asiatic empires, not as a means of ending it. The 'experiment of a good understanding' was well justified, he reasoned with an eye on public opinion, for 'it may avert a quarrel for a time and when the quarrel comes it will be more defined & intelligible between the two Gov[ernmen]ts than if each had been drawn in & made catspaws of the Oriental barbarians'.⁴¹

That it would take more than expressions of friendly sentiments to ease the Anglo-Russian 'cold war' was underlined by St. Petersburg's unilateral renunciation, in November 1870, of the clauses of the 1856 Paris peace treaty that provided for the demilitarisation of the Black Sea. 'The shell has burst sooner and more suddenly than expected', observed Clarendon's successor, the Earl of Granville. The move rekindled public Russophobia, and so placed the government in an awkward position: 'Their wish undoubtedly is that we should be immensely bumptious, that we should never recede from our threats, and combine this with never going to war.'⁴² But the crisis triggered by Gorchakov's November note also illustrated the global nature of the Anglo-Russian struggle for dominance in Asia. If Russia were to gain access to the Mediterranean, this would have 'a very material bearing on the futurity of Italy and ... all the maritime Powers'.⁴³ On the other hand, there was a sense that Russia, too, remained vulnerable to British military pressure in Asia. To counter Russia's move in the Black Sea, Sir Andrew Buchanan, the ambassador at St. Petersburg, anticipating a form of 'forward policy', urged the Viceroy of India to despatch some 50,000 Indian troops '& your 100 guns' to the Oxus.⁴⁴ Ultimately, such measures were not needed. The Gladstone government conceded Russia's right to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea, but won the consent of the Powers for the restoration of Turkey's sovereignty in that region. The London convention of January 1871 thus underlined Britain's continued commitment to the containment of Russia, albeit in a form now altered to reflect the changed international circumstances. The late 1860s and early 1870s marked a turning point in the Russo-British 'cold war'. In the first instance, the Crimean system, as conceived in 1856, had come to an end. Russia's position

in South Eastern Europe was much strengthened, if still contained; her advance in Central Asia, however, soon accelerated. German unification was the second line of development here, significant principally because the emergence of a compact Central European Power affected Britain's ability to deal with Russia. This was demonstrated by a series of events in that decade. Already at the end of 1870, Granville's success in winning Bismarck's support for what was to become the London Straits convention had done much to moderate Russian diplomacy. In the aftermath of the London conference, with Russo-German relations not yet adjusted, Prince Gorchakov sought to recommence talks on a Central Asian *modus vivendi*. The British still deemed such a regional understanding desirable 'both for the maintenance of peace & tranquility in Central Asia, & for removing all causes of misunderstanding' between London and St. Petersburg.⁴⁵ However, in parallel with this Anglo-Russian diplomatic track renewed efforts were made to strengthen ties with Persia and the smaller states along the security glacis around India. These moves were dictated by the logic of geopolitics: 'Herat is the key of Affg[hani]stān and especially of Candahar, and Merv is not so far', reasoned the Viceroy of India, the Earl of Mayo. By forging client relationships with the Shah at Tehran or the Amir at Kabul, '[w]e could thus create in them outworks of our Empire' to contain the spread of Russian power.⁴⁶

Granville concluded the exchanges with St. Petersburg in early 1873. The outcome was a vague understanding, somewhat misleadingly called the 'Khiva Convention'. In reality, it was nothing but an exchange of 'scraps of paper'. Official assurances notwithstanding, indeed, within a few weeks Russian forces had occupied the Khiva khanate, situated well to the South of the agreed line dividing the Russian and British spheres in Central Asia.⁴⁷

Whether or not the Russian government had full control over its agents in the steppes of Central Asia, St. Petersburg felt emboldened to pursue a more aggressive line in the region on account of developments in Europe. And here the second line of development came into play. Following the Russo-German-Austrian realignment, consecrated in the *Dreikaiserbund* in October 1873, Russia's interest in an Asian *modus vivendi* with Britain all but evaporated. Indeed, the firmer the alliance between the three Eastern military monarchies, the greater was Russia's ability to pressurise Britain in Central Asia. Granville took comfort from the idea that, with the recent annexation of various khanates of the steppe, 'the Russians are opening a sore in their own body, that they have excited the bitterest hatred in the inhabitants of the Central Asia, that they are embarrassing their finances, and it is to come to a struggle,

the nearer that struggle takes place to Affghanistan [*sic*], the stronger we are, and the weaker they must be'.⁴⁸

But this was the diplomatic equivalent of whistling in the dark. Yet the episode was significant on a number of counts. In the Central Asian theatre of the Anglo-Russian 'cold war' Britain was now on the defensive. Granville's successor, the Earl of Derby, indeed, was reduced to pleading that 'we only desired the maintenance of the *status quo*, and certainly [we] should not be the first to take steps that might be considered aggressive'.⁴⁹ The new metropolitan consensus now was 'that the best way to meet the Russian policy in Central Asia is to consolidate our own influence in Affghanistan [*sic*]'.⁵⁰ At the same time, Granville's post-Khiva ratiocination reflected an important new line in British thinking with regards to Russia, based on the assumption that Russia's inherent financial weakness would ultimately cripple this vast empire. And, finally, the events of 1873 underscored the utility of the two Germanic Powers in the containment of Russia. It nevertheless still required the 'Great Eastern Crisis' of 1875–8 to help to crystallise British thinking on the latter point. For as long as the combination of the three monarchies held together, Russia was in a position to refashion the East in her own image. The advance of Russian forces in the Caucasus and towards Constantinople during the 1877–8 Russo-Turkish War threatened points of key strategic importance to Britain. Having broken through the Balkans, another campaign 'is greatly to be deprecated, for it w[oul]d not be undertaken by Russia, exc[ep]t with the determination of seizing Constantinople'. Control of much of the Caucasus, meanwhile, would allow Russia 'to descend into the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris next spring'.⁵¹ At the same time, the 'war ha[d] utterly... crush[ed] the Turkish power in Europe' and the Sultan's Balkan provinces were likely soon to slip from his grasp; and the preliminary peace treaty of San Stefano of February 1878 threatened to become little more than 'an armed truce' to be broken whenever it suited Russia.⁵² It was 'a dismal sight', reflected Britain's agent at Belgrade, W.A. (later Sir William) White, 'to see the entire edifice broken down which it cost so much English blood & treasure to erect in 1854/5'.⁵³ This threatened to leave Britain's containment policy 'utterly frustrated; there will be nothing for it except to... recognise as "accomplished facts" the practical conquest by Russia of European Turkey', warned Lord Tenterden, the Permanent Under-Secretary:

With the Turkish fleet in her possession Russian will laugh at any remonstrances ag[ain]st the continued occupation of Const[antino]ple,

& even if the capital is relinquished, Salonica will be a still more available port of menace to Egypt. That the Russian will use that advantage most unscrupulously nobody can doubt. If one ever had any trust in Russia's moderation it must now be dispelled.

The last chance seems to be to take a decisive attitude now.⁵⁴

British policy in 1878 was a skilful blend of deterrence and diplomacy. The projection of British naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean appeared to take the country to the brink of war with Russia; simultaneous diplomatic moves, including separate agreements with Turkey and Russia, reduced the risk of actual conflict. After 1878, Britain's 'cold war' policy towards Russia moved along a twin track. It entailed re-erecting 'the Turkish breakwater[,]...now shattered...[,] from the same material', as Lord Salisbury emphasised: 'I hope...to draw a wall across the Peninsula of the Balkans & across Armenia which shall give Turkey respite for twenty or thirty years.'⁵⁵ Disraeli identified the two themes that now shaped British policy: 'the maintenance of our Empire, and hostility towards Russia', and this required closer diplomatic ties with Russia's erstwhile allies, Austria-Hungary and Germany:

A fear of Russia, as the power that will ultimately strike at the roots of our Empire is singularly prevalent and is felt even by those who do not publicly or loudly express it. I believe that an alliance between those three Powers, Germany and Austria and Great Britain, at this moment would be hailed with something like enthusiasm by the people.... [...] [I]t might be worth considering whether some treaties between the 3 allies, not formally and avowedly for the great object [of containing Russia], but with reference to some practical joint action connected with it, might not be expedient.⁵⁶

Hostility towards Russia was not confined to Disraeli's Conservatives. Whatever Gladstone's personal views, 'the two great parties of the State...[are united] in an attitude of hostility to Russia', noted the Earl of Rosebery.⁵⁷ That enmity was nevertheless conceived of in 'cold war' terms. The aims of British policy remained – 'peace with Russia, tranquility for Europe, security for India'.⁵⁸

The three objectives were interlinked. In Central Asia, however, British influence was weakened. The 1879 Afghan War was one factor in this. But Britain's position was rendered even more difficult as Gladstone's Midlothian experiment achieved nothing else but to restore the *Dreikaiserbund*, leaving Russia free to renew her expansionist drive

in Asia. With Russia soon 'practically coterminous with Afghanistan', warned the then Viceroy, the Marquess of Ripon, Russia would soon meddle at Kabul, 'if nothing is done to obviate it.' As there was no 'reasonable probability of the contact of the Russian and Afghan frontiers being postponed for any considerable period', Ripon resurrected the notion of some form of regional *modus vivendi*. Such an understanding, he conceded, would not 'give us complete security; but it would be worth a great deal more than any alliance with an Afghan ruler, and might form the ground of a real friendly understanding between England and Russia'.⁵⁹ Senior Indian officials, such as Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, also advocated a 'definite understanding' with Russia: 'If the British people choose to go into a gigantic war, and to spend some hundreds of millions of money, they could sweep Russia out of Central Asia and hold it for a time. A madder proceeding, however, could not be imagined'. Significantly, like Granville in the 1870s and many Western leaders in the later twentieth century, Grant-Duff emphasised the brittle financial and political underpinnings of Russian power: 'it is not in the nature of things that the present system in Russia should go on much longer without a crash of some sort, which may nullify for years the efforts she is now making [in Central Asia]'. Delaying any Asian quarrel with Russia could only serve to strengthen Britain's position in the region.⁶⁰

The mid-1880s thus introduced two important, new elements into Britain's 'cold war' strategy. One was the notion of the containment of Russian expansionism through a formal understanding with St. Petersburg, the other a sharper understanding of the inherent stress-lines in the foundations of Russian power. The former would prove elusive, but both would be recurring themes in British analyses of Russia for the next quarter of a century and more.

* * *

The conviction that Russian expansion in Asia was insidious and surreptitious, and that Russia would shy away from any open confrontation was reinforced by the Penjdeh crisis in 1885, which threatened to destroy the Afghan buffer state. But the crisis also underlined the importance of the two German Powers. Their role, however, was ambiguous. The renewal of the *Dreikaiserbund* had fuelled Russian expansion in Asia. And yet, the Tsar's ministers were apprehensive of pushing matters to extremes in Asia for fear of Berlin and Vienna forcing Russia to 'pay

in Europe two times as much as she could gain in Asia'.⁶¹ Even so, it seemed that any regional arrangement could only be had on Russia's terms: 'She has especially told us that if we wish for a [frontier] line we must take her line. If the line happens to suit us, well and good: if not –.' The Russo-Afghan stand-off at Penjdeh was suggestive of the precarious balance between Russia and Britain in the region and beyond, as the Earl of Rosebery warned. Submitting to Russia

will incalculably increase our difficulties in the future. Our present difficulties arise from the impression that we may be safely kicked. This transaction will stereotype that impression.

The yielding every point to Russia will be a notorious fact throughout India and Afghanistan and the East. [...] The effect in the West will be as great as in the East. All Europe is laughing at us. Our nose has been pulled all over the world. As soon as one is pulled off we willingly present a fresh excrescence.⁶²

Conversely, closer ties between Britain and the Austro-German Powers made it possible to increase pressure on St. Petersburg; hence Salisbury's offer of 'a closer and more intimate alliance' to Bismarck in the autumn of 1885.⁶³ Russia's decision to disengage made it unnecessary to formalise ties with Germany, even if Bismarck had shown an interest. The need for a 'hearty understanding with the German Powers', however, remained as strong as before in light of the continued 'cold war' with Russia.⁶⁴ This was the chief purpose of the 1887 Mediterranean accords *à trois* with Germany's allies Austria-Hungary and Italy, which committed the three Powers to upholding the regional *status quo*, including the Balkans, and so provided for the renewed containment of Russian influence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Finding the most appropriate tool for solving Britain's Russian problem was made all the more complicated by the Byzantine nature of politics at the St. Petersburg court. That the Tsar's ministers were frequently unable to control their agents abroad had long been the refrain of British complaints: 'Russia is a great deal more peaceable than her subordinates'.⁶⁵ Beyond that, however, as Salisbury noted, it was difficult to discern what 'the real objects of Russian policy' were. Indeed, he was 'inclined to believe there are none, that the Emperor is really his own minister, & so bad a minister, that no consequent or coherent policy is pursued' as ministers and generals competed for influence at court. Finance, however, remained Russia's Achilles heel:

If Russia satisfies us that there is not room in Asia for herself & us also, our policy to her must be of a very internecine, & probably also of an effective character.... [F]inancial embarrassment must make Russia powerless before too long. It is of course easy to exaggerate the effect of financial embarrassment in preventing war; but that is her weak point, & if we become her chronic enemy it is to that weak point that our efforts must be addressed. We must lead her into all the expense that we can in the conviction that with her the limit of taxation has almost been reached, & that only a few steps further must push her into the revolution over which she seems to be constantly hanging. [...] For to us, Russia is really invulnerable to military attack.⁶⁶

Britain's 'cold war' policy towards Russia required constant recalibration. In a more philosophical mood, Salisbury pondered 'the question "what is Russia"' and what Britain's correct policy ought to be. He dismissed suggestions of an arrangement with St. Petersburg: 'You can have an entente with a man or a Government: but, no one, except Canute's courtiers[,] ever tried to have it with a tide.' This ever advancing swell was the result not of the schemes laid by individuals but of profounder forces. As Palmerston before him, he identified a sense of messianic mission as the root cause of Russian expansionism. Its driving forces were 'the religious & the military, the forces which moved the hosts of Mahomet, & those which moved the hosts of Attila'. They also indicated Russia's objectives:

Russia *must* go to C[onstantino]ple first – the religious tide dictates that condition: & then she will advance eastwards till we meet her in Afghanistan. What should our policy be? It seems to me that we have but one – the Fabian policy. Let her take as long on the road to C[onstantino]ple as we can possibly contrive to. We have everything to gain, & nothing to lose by the delay. If we can make it long enough, there are many things [that] may happen. [...]

But her goodwill is not worth buying by concessions: she is too impersonal, too much of an "ocean". The roll of her insincerities is endless.⁶⁷

The practical consequences of these insights were twofold. The realignment with the German-led continental bloc was meant to make Russia's road to the Bosphorus as long and difficult as possible. This was complemented by a major naval re-armament effort under the auspices of the 1889 Naval Defence Act. In laying down an ambitious ship-building

programme, Salisbury had a range of different objectives in view. It was meant to redress the naval balance with France and to reduce Britain's dependence on Bismarck.⁶⁸ But it was also an effort to put pressure on Russia's weak finances. Ultimately, Salisbury's initial scepticism as to the efficacy of such a policy proved right, for the financial burden on Britain was far greater than had been anticipated, a circumstance made all the more pressing in consequence of another unexpected occurrence, the Boer War. Even so, Britain continued to keep a weather eye on Russia's naval development and ambitions in the Baltic and the Black Seas, whilst '*la guerre sourde*', the arms races with Russia and France, continued.⁶⁹ Senior intelligence officers even toyed with the idea of 'wild cat schemes which would obtain ready credence among the Anglophobes in Russia' and so lure St. Petersburg into an escalating armaments spiral that would ultimately break its back. The Foreign Office might well dismiss such notions as 'genteel comedy'.⁷⁰ The fact that they were discussed at all underlined the extent to which Russia's presumed financial weakness was a factor in Britain's 'cold war' strategy towards Russia.

The eventual alliance between France and Russia complicated that strategy. For one thing, the Franco-Russian naval combination weakened Britain's naval deterrence.⁷¹ There were other problems, too. *Pace* Salisbury's confident predictions, the thrust of Russian policy now gravitated towards Central and, even more so, Eastern Asia. In an altogether more volatile international environment, Britain faced a double-Eastern Question, much to Rosebery's chagrin:

But above and beyond this [the traditional Eastern Question] there is an infinitely larger Eastern question upon us...in the situation developed by the peace between China and Japan. That is a situation...pregnant with possibilities of a disastrous kind; and it might, indeed, result in an Armageddon between the European Powers struggling for the ruins of the Chinese Empire. We must not scatter ourselves...; we must be ready at any moment to place our full force in one or both regions affected by the Eastern questions.⁷²

The immediate question of how best to contain the spread of Russian influence in the Far East aside, British policy-makers began to query the older verities that had underpinned policy towards Russia. With Britain more firmly in control of Egypt, maintaining the *status quo* of the Turkish Straits was no longer a strategic necessity; and the Anglo-Russian Pamirs agreement of 1894 had helped to stabilise the affairs of Central Asia. Not 'even her [Russia's] more fiery spirits', Salisbury speculated, 'will... wish

to “set the heather alight”.⁷³ Under the circumstances, Salisbury was prepared to seek a direct arrangement with Russia: ‘It may be possible for England and Russia to return to their old relations. But it is an object to be wished for and approached as opportunity offers.’⁷⁴ The affairs of China briefly offered an opening in early 1898: ‘the issue is an important one because if we succeed in working with Russia it will produce some change in the grouping of the Powers in Europe.’⁷⁵ Salisbury’s attempt at an Asian *modus vivendi* ended in failure, however. Nor was his successor, the Marquess of Lansdowne, any more successful in his efforts to arrive at ‘a friendly compact with [Russia] for the partition of the East’. The practical problems were insuperable, observed the Viceroy at Delhi, the Marquess of Curzon: ‘(a) Russia has all the cards in her hands (geographical, strategical, & political) & we have none; (b) the Russian statesmen are such incurable liars’.⁷⁶ For as long as Russia was in a strong position, an agreement with her was not a practicable option.

In his pursuit of Russia’s containment in East Asia, Lansdowne therefore turned to Japan as a potential ‘cold war’ ally in the region. The Anglo-Japanese alliance of January 1902 was the result of the confluence of the respective strategic interests of the two island Powers. On Britain’s part, this regional defence pact was the product of diplomatic, financial and naval considerations. The combination with Japan was to act as a strategic umbrella for the protection of British interest in East Asia.⁷⁷ In practice, however, it encouraged Tokyo to seek a military confrontation with Russia to settle the competing claims for regional dominance.

Russia’s defeat in 1905 changed the nature of the Anglo-Russian ‘cold war’. More immediately, the second Japanese alliance of August 1905 reinforced Tokyo’s commitment to the containment of Russia in Asia, and this now included a commitment to the defence of India. With the revised alliance, Lansdowne argued, Britain had ‘raise[d] the wall of [her] back garden to prevent an over-adventurous neighbour or that neighbour’s unruly or overzealous agents from attempting to climb it’.⁷⁸

The consequences of Russia’s weakness were more far-reaching, however, as senior military officials pointed out: ‘For ten years at least the Russians will not be in a position to undertake another campaign closely resembling Manchuria in size. The reconstruction of Russia will require a long period. ... [T]he Crimean War had the effect of deterring Russia from any great enterprise of opportunity for more than 20 years.’⁷⁹ Given the pressing need for time to recover, the Russians were ready to settle, and this paved the way for the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907. Sir Edward Grey and John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, were ‘convinced that it is worthwhile to make a stout effort. It is hard to

believe that there is no alternative to the stupid and ignoble rivalries that now constitute what is called our Central Asian system.⁸⁰ The convention removed long-standing imperial frictions in Asia between the two Powers. In arranging it Grey had achieved what had eluded Clarendon, Granville or Salisbury previously. If Russian weakness had facilitated its conclusion, then Britain's limited ability to defend India against Russia had helped it along further: 'That is our fundamental argument for the Convention, for we have not got the men to spare, and that's the plain truth of it.'⁸¹

The convention by no means removed suspicions of Russian policy, for these were deeply engrained. Any arrangement with Russia could only be of limited duration, warned Britain's minister at Tehran, C.A. (later Sir Cecil) Spring-Rice:

Russia binds herself not to advance beyond a certain point and we are bound not to oppose her advance to that point. But when she has reached that point – which she will because we withdraw our opposition – she will be in a position to advance much farther and not only that but she will be in such a position with regard to the Government of Persia that it will be hopeless for us to attempt to prevent her advance. We hope and believe that she will not advance. Is the agreement to be eternal? That is almost impossible to believe.

Geopolitics aside, there were profounder political and cultural differences between the two countries: 'There is too great a divergence of character and aim. We are not of the same make. We differ as our governments differ. [...] I don't talk of the Westernized Russians, but of the Asiatic service. And as you know Russia has an Asiatic service for business and a European for the front window.'⁸² All of this entailed practical difficulties: 'common action between an English Liberal and a Russian bureaucracy', Spring-Rice observed, 'is a pretty difficult thing to manage. A wild ass and a commissary mule make a rum team to drive.'⁸³

Such suspicions notwithstanding, the arrangement with Russia nevertheless ushered in a period of *détente*. Closer cooperation with St. Petersburg, moreover, was made more necessary because Russia's current weakness had dislocated the European balance of power. To an extent, therefore, the rising Anglo-German antagonism of those years came to overshadow many other considerations. Yet the more Russia recovered from her defeat in 1905, the more difficult Anglo-Russian relations became. Greater Russian assertiveness in Persia and elsewhere in Central Asia as well as in the Balkans raised doubts about the future viability of the 1907 convention. There were the '*déclarations habituelles ... sur la nécessité*

de continuer à travailler avec la Russie', but renegotiating the compact, it was agreed in Britain, would raise a host of 'awkward questions'.⁸⁴

* * *

The outbreak of the First World War relieved London from having to address the renascent Russian problem in Central Asia. The exigencies of wartime diplomacy, however, meant that, in the Treaty of London of April 1915, Britain had to offer up Constantinople as the ultimate prize after the war in order to ensure that Russia concentrated her military effort on Germany rather than Austria-Hungary and the Balkans.⁸⁵ Here, as elsewhere during the war, of course, diplomacy had to 'supply the want of military success', and could never recompense for deficiencies on that score.⁸⁶

The events of 1917 and the emergence of the Soviet state transformed the nature of the Russian problem. The 1907 convention had always been an opportunistic arrangement of convenience, dictated, like the war-time alliance, by geopolitical considerations. There had been no ideological glue to hold the Anglo-Russian 'rum team' together. Even Grey, the target of repeated Radical vituperations after 1907 on account of his alleged closeness to Russia, 'rejoice[d] at seeing Russia purge her Gov[ernmen]t & strike out for freedom'.⁸⁷

In the short-term, Russia's disturbed state forced her out of the war. In Buchanan's analysis 'Russia is morally and materially exhausted [so] that to hold Bolsheviks or any government to the obligations of the Czar is preposterous. He thinks peace is essential to them and that the only thing we can secure is that German penetration shall not take place after the war, if indeed we can secure that.'⁸⁸ In the longer-term, the emerging Soviet régime posed problems of an altogether different kind for the British. At the end of the last global war, in 1814–15, France had been regarded as a source of ideological contagion; but the Powers had made an effort to integrate her into the post-war system. In 1919, Russia was absent from the peace conference; but in her place there appeared the spectre of revolution and subversion.⁸⁹

With the end of the war, British policy towards Russia entered, in Keith Neilson's felicitous phrase, a 'period of persuasion'.⁹⁰ Even so, this policy was haphazard at best. Britain's intervention in the Russian civil war was the product more of muddle than design, driven by the combination of the developments inside the remnants of the Russian Empire and the need to maintain the existing war-time alliance with America, France and Japan. But it also reflected deep divisions within

the British government as to how best to deal with the new Russia. Winston Churchill, unwavering in his anti-Bolshevik belligerence, preferred fighting to 'shak[ing] the paw of the hairy baboon [foreign affairs commissar Krassin]'.⁹¹

The Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, took a different line. Already before the Red Army was eventually repulsed on the banks of the Vistula in August 1920, he argued that Russia's military threat to Britain's imperial interests was much diminished. Yet her raw materials were essential for the post-war reconstruction of Europe. A commercial agreement would help to moderate the Bolsheviks' behaviour; and, ultimately, it was 'the most effective way of striking a blow at Bolshevism'.⁹² Indeed, just as Lloyd George publicly speechified against the 'whining and maniacal shrieking of the Bolsheviks',⁹³ so he was prepared to resort to the tried 'cold war' methods of the nineteenth century. Thus, for instance, he toyed with the idea of despatching a naval squadron into the Baltic to compel the Moscow authorities to come to a reasonable settlement.⁹⁴ Lloyd George's scheme was opposed by the Foreign Secretary, the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston. Establishing trade relations with Soviet Russia would merely give 'a new lease of life' to Lenin's régime 'to no purpose... than to the subversion and destruction of the British connection with the Indian Empire'.⁹⁵

Curzon's suspicions of Russia were deep-rooted. As befitted a former Viceroy of India, he had been anti-Russian long before there was such a thing as Bolshevism. To an extent, the overtly ideological nature of the new Russian régime added a new dimension to traditional perceptions of Russia as inherently expansionist, and so reinforced older suspicions. Fear of subversion remained very real. In the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia, 'we are seriously threatened with the dangers arising from the influence of Bolshevik – or Russian – hostility'.⁹⁶ As stipulated by Curzon, and subsequently by the Cabinet, any trade agreement with the Soviets had to be accompanied by a political settlement that would bring with it 'a cessation of Bolshevik hostility in parts of the world important to us', but also at home.⁹⁷ By the end of 1921, even the most virulent anti-Bolshevik ministers were ready to make terms with 'the tyrannical Government of these Jew Commissars' in order to stabilise relations with the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ Within less than eighteen months, however, ministers in London concluded that the Soviets had 'consistently and flagrantly violated' the terms of the 1921 agreements, and Curzon and Moscow were embroiled in an exchange of notes over the latter's anti-British propaganda campaigns in India and elsewhere.⁹⁹ Ultimately, the

Soviet authorities had to yield to British pressure, but the episode left a lasting legacy and helps to explain why the hoax of the so-called 'Zinoviev letter' was given such credence in 1925.¹⁰⁰

In Persia, meanwhile, British policy was drawn once more into a 'Great Game' with the northern Power, much to the chagrin of Britain's chargé d'affaires at Tehran:

We can't make Persia strong enough to resist Russia if the latter means business. [...] But we *can* make Persia a mud wall which has got to be pushed over if one wants to pass. The Russians want to work for a situation where there is no wall at all, nothing but an elongated fringe of rubble over which they can step without anyone noticing. But if we can get a wall up, however rotten & flimsy, the Russians will at least have to knock it down. And all of this will raise at Geneva & in the USA (if we can get them interested) just enough noise & dust to make the Russians hesitate. That, I think, is all we can hope for.¹⁰¹

For much of the period, Britain's 'cold war' strategy was, indeed, subject to contending influences. The balance between them was often an uneasy one. Committed, in principle, to containing Soviet influence in Europe, in practice, British policy tended to veer towards aloofness and an 'indirect' approach towards containment. Thus, Curzon encouraged Poland's adhesion to the French *petite entente* as 'an element of stability in Central Europe' but there could be no question of a more active role on Britain's part.¹⁰² The best way of countering 'Bolshevism in the East', argued his successor, Austen Chamberlain, was 'the perfectly above board method of strengthening the solid and stable elements in a particular country'.¹⁰³

To some extent that was also one of the objectives of Chamberlain's Locarno strategy. Its main focus, of course, was on facilitating Franco-German reconciliation and the stabilisation of the affairs of Western Europe. In so doing, however, it was also meant 'to prevent a Russo-German understanding against the rest of Europe'.¹⁰⁴ As in the 1870s and 1880s, considerations of the German factor now influenced British policy towards Russia. The spectre of a return to a neo-conservative alliance, reverting to the traditionally close relations between Prussia-Germany and Russia, always lurked in the background. No doubt, following Locarno 'the menace of a German-Russian alliance [had] cease[d] to exist'.¹⁰⁵ But the dispersed nature of Britain's global interests left London's policy at the mercy of events, as was demonstrated by the

China crisis of 1926–7. The mounting instability in that civil war-torn country and the recent General Strike at home, and the Soviet Union's suspected role in both, led to a stand-off with Moscow. Chamberlain was opposed to breaking off relations 'not for the sake of Russia but for its reactions on Europe & especially on Germany and the Baltic States.'¹⁰⁶ Relations were nevertheless severed in the end, primarily on account of, at least partially trumped up, charges of espionage against the Soviet Trade Delegation in London. In Whitehall and Westminster it was widely accepted that Moscow and its agents were 'fomenting disturbances and disorder everywhere.' The Soviets' 'ruthless propaganda all over the world... assume[d] an anti-British character', argued the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, Sir William Tyrrell, 'not only because we are a world-wide Empire, but because our overthrow is the chief aim and object of Moscow.' Indeed, he concluded 'we are virtually at war with Russia'.¹⁰⁷

As the Locarno strategy gradually unravelled, British policy lost intellectual coherence. The rise of a more aggressively revisionist Germany complicated matters. If it suggested a commonality of interests between London and Moscow, such hopes were short-lived.¹⁰⁸ What inner coherence British policy might have gained after 1937, moreover, was undermined by the march of events. It was all very well for Sir William Seeds, Britain's ambassador at Moscow from 1939, to emphasise that 'owing to their far-flung territories... the Soviet and British Commonwealths were unique among World States and must in the nature of things have very similar interests where international politics were concerned'.¹⁰⁹ Yet, it proved difficult to give practical meaning to such aspirations. British policy under the guidance of the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, aimed at deterring war through increased military spending and alliance talks with the Soviet Union. These talks were meant to prevent the Soviets from drifting into the German orbit. At the same time, it was important to London not to cede to Moscow the ability to commit Britain to any Russo-German war.¹¹⁰

Such policy was scarcely designed to win over Joseph Stalin – and not just him. There was little in it sufficient to deter the rulers in Berlin. The German invasion of Poland forced upon Chamberlain the decision, which he and his predecessors had sought to avoid, to commit to the security of Europe and to clarify relations with the Soviet Union. Stalin's collusion in the destruction of Eastern Europe, meanwhile, shifted the focus on geopolitical factors rather than on ideological motivations. As Antony Eden noted, the Soviet leader was 'a man with a complete "Real Politik" [sic] outlook and a political descendent of

Peter the Great than of Lenin'.¹¹¹ Britain's Russian problem had once again been transformed.

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In John Lewis Gaddis' assessment of American foreign policy after 1945, '[p]reoccupation with the past seriously clouded the American vision of the post-war world'.¹¹² Something similar also applies to historians of twentieth-century international history. Preoccupied with their present, they clapped their telescope to an eye dazzled by what was unfolding in front of them. In consequence, they have tended to magnify the peculiarities of the post-1945 period; they blurred their vision for the longer-term origins of the Cold War; and they developed a collective blind spot for international relations in the *long durée*.

Restoring that wider field of vision was the aim of this discussion. In so doing it is hoped that the scholarly debate about the nature of Great Power politics will be left less temporally provincial. Focusing on relations with Russia, this chapter has emphasised a well-established tradition in British foreign policy to resort to 'cold war' tactics and tools. In part, this was a function of size and of geography. Neither Russia nor Britain, the one a land power, the other a maritime power, had the means to subjugate the other. Actual conflict was thus not an option. Only where the two empires were contiguous, in the Afghan-Indian frontier region, was there a risk of competition turning into open hostilities. Yet even here the prospect of prolonged and, most likely, indecisive conflict militated against that risk. The global reach of the British Empire and the vast expanse of Russia's Eurasian continental empire thus forced the two Powers to coexist in a 'cold war'. It was the only way in which they could manage their competition. To that extent, Wodehouse's surmise in 1857 that 'once we become neighbours peace will not long continue' was misguided.¹¹³ But neither was Seeds' confidence justified eight decades later that their 'far-flung territories' were suggestive of common interests.¹¹⁴

If anything, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British policy was committed to containing the spread of Russian power and influence through regional proxies or alignments with other European Powers. This was underpinned by occasional flashes of belligerence. If required, British policy could assume 'a very internecine &...effective character'.¹¹⁵ The notion that structural stress lines in the foundations of Russian power would force the rulers in St. Petersburg or Moscow to moderate their behaviour informed

British calculations and strategic planning from Granville's musings in the 1870s to Ardagh's turn-of-the-century 'genteel comedy' to Lloyd George's pushing for a commercial agreement in the early 1920s and Lord D'Abernon's emphasis on 'the extreme importance of the financial factor'.¹¹⁶ And here Britain's nineteenth-century 'cold war' experience offers an arresting parallel with later twentieth-century Western policies towards the Soviet Union, more especially during the so-called 'Second Cold War' of the 1980s.

If geopolitics contributed to the Anglo-Russian 'cold wars', then so did Britain's liberal constitutional arrangements. For one thing, the ideological representation of geopolitical conflicts helped to provide clarity of intent in public. Here the distinctive non-Western, non-liberal nature of Russia offered a convenient peg on which to hang public pronouncements. Not the least, it allowed British governments to satisfy public expectations 'that we should be immensely bumptious... [while] never going to war'.¹¹⁷ No foreign policy, after all, could 'succeed unless it can be completed within one beat of the pendulum [of public opinion]'.¹¹⁸ That held true in Lord Salisbury's day as it did in Lloyd George's.

Ideological assumptions, however, also influenced the perceptions of British policy-makers. Assumptions about the inherently expansionist nature of Russia ran through internal policy discussions from Palmerston to the two Chamberlains. And here, too, the 'English Liberal', whether in Whig or Tory colours, and the 'Russian bureaucracy', in either its Tsarist or Soviet guise, made for uneasy relations.

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Notes

1. R. Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (London, rev. edn 2004), pp. 4–5.
2. J.L. Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London, 2007), p. 260; and *Ibid.*, *We Know Now: Rethinking the Cold War* (Oxford, 1998 (pb.)), pp. 295–5.
3. D.C. Watt, 'Britain, the United States and the Opening of the Cold War', R. Ovendale (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of the Labour Governments, 1945–1951* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 43–60. See also the thoughtful analysis by A. Best, "'We are virtually at war with Russia": Britain and the Cold War in East Asia, 1923–1940', *Cold War History* xii, 2 (2012), pp. 205–26.
4. The notable exception is K. Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 2006).

5. For some tentative suggestions see T.G. Otte, "What we require is confidence": The Search for an Anglo-German Naval Agreement, 1909–1912', K. Hamilton and E. Johnson (eds), *Armaments and Disarmament in Diplomacy* (London, 2008), pp. 33–52.
6. R. Lodge, 'Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain, 1742–44', *English Historical Review* lxxv, 4 (1930), pp. 579–611. W. Mediger, *Moskaus Weg nach Europa: Der Aufstieg Russlands zum europäischen Machtstaat im Zeitalter Friedrich des Grossen* (Brunswick, 1952), pp. 226–47.
7. Carteret to Guy Dickens, 12 Oct. 1742, J.F. Chance (ed.), *British Diplomatic Instructions, 1689–1789*, v, *Sweden, 1727–1789* (London, 1928), p. 94. For some of the background see also J. Black, 'Anglo-Baltic Relations, 1714–1748', W. Minchinton (ed.), *Britain and the Northern Seas* (Pontefract, 1988), pp. 67–74; and also A. Cross, 'British Awareness of Russian Culture, 1698–1801', *Ibid.*, *Anglo-Russia: Aspects of Cultural Relations between Great Britain and Russia in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford and Providence, RI, 1993), pp. 1–28.
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9. J.H. Rose, *Life of William Pitt* (London, repr. 1923) pt. 1, pp. 603–6. A. Cunningham, 'The Oczakow Debate', *Middle Eastern Studies* i, 2 (1964–5), pp. 209–37. R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Baltic, 1522–1850* (London, repr. 1969), pp. 315–37.
10. H.W.V. Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822–1827: England, the Neo-Holy Alliance and the New World* (London, 1923), pp. 351–8. C.W. Crawley, *The Question of Greek Independence: A Study of British Policy in the Near East, 1821–1833* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 43–62. For a corrective see L. Cowles, 'The Failure to Restrain Russia: Canning, Nesselrode, and the Greek Crisis, 1825–1827', *International History Review* xii, 4 (1990), pp. 688–720.
11. The National Archives (TNA), FO 78/472, Ponsonby to Palmerston, despt. No. 29, 11 Mar. 1834. For some thoughts on the geopolitics, see J.P. LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700–1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 314–8.
12. FO 84/373, Palmerston to McNeil, despt. No. 1 (Slave Trade), 9 July 1841. See also E. Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828–1834* (Oxford, 1979) for a discussion of the strategic background.
13. FO 195/109, Palmerston to Ponsonby, despt. No. 15, 7 Aug. 1833. For British thinking on Unkiar Skelessi, see P.E. Mosely, *Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839* (Cambridge, 1939), pp. 9–12.
14. FO 195/109, Palmerston to Ponsonby, despt. No. 23, 6 Dec. 1833. See also K. Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784–1841* (London, 1982), pp. 382–4.
15. FO 120/144, Palmerston to Lamb, despt. No. 146, 16 Oct. 1834.
16. Palmerston to Granville, 8 June 1838, Sir H. Bulwer and J. Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston* (2 vols., London, 1870–6) ii, p. 268.
17. As quoted in Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, PA VIII/305, Weisungen, Rechberg to Esterházy (*reservée*, No. 2), 3 Feb. 1841. Lt.-Col. Patrick Campbell, the British agent at Cairo, had consistently warned that French policy was

- 'directed towards obtaining a preponderance in Egypt', FO 78/319, Campbell to Palmerston, 12 June 1836.
18. Palmerston's policy undermines Paul Schroeder's thesis of a form of Anglo-Russian condominium after 1815, see *Ibid.*, 'Did the Vienna System Rest Upon a Balance?', *American Historical Review*, xcii, 4 (1992), 683–706. For a critique see T.G. Otte, 'A Janus-like Power: Britain and the European Concert, 1815–1854', W. Pyta and P. Menger (eds), *Das europäische Mächtekoncert: Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitik vom Wiener Kongress bis zum Krimkrieg 1853* (Vienna and Cologne, 2009), pp. 125–54. For the Levant crisis see J. Marlowe, *Perfidious Albion: The Origins of Anglo-French Rivalry in the Levant* (London, 1971), p. 231. For the simultaneous Rhine crisis see P. Sagnac, 'La crise de l'occident et la question du Rhin, 1832–1840', *Revue des Études Napoléoniennes* xvi, 2 (1919), pp. 284–300.
 19. As quoted in J.C. Hurwitz (ed.), *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record* (2 vols., New York, 2nd edn 1975) i, p. 281. See also H.N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836–1844* (Berkeley, CA, 1976).
 20. As quoted in J.A.R. Marriott, *Anglo-Russian Relations, 1689–1943* (London, 1944), p. 108. See also J.A. Norris, *The First Afghan War, 1838–1842* (Cambridge, 1967).
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 23. Clarendon to Westmoreland, 14 Sept. 1853, W. Baumgart (ed.), *Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkrieges*, 3rd ser., vol. i (Munich, 2005), no. 308.
 24. Quotes from T.G. Otte, 'Victory to the smallest', *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 5639, 29 Apr. 2011, 11, and 'Te Deum', *Punch*, 28 Jan. 1854, p. 35. For the use of cartoons as a historical source see E.H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication* (London, 1999), pp. 184–211.
 25. See British Library (BL), Add. MSS. 49533, Halifax MSS., the instructions for Admiral Dundas in the Baltic, Eden to Dundas, 7 Apr. 1855; P. Knaplund, 'Finnmark in British Diplomacy, 1836–1855', *American Historical Review* xxx, 3 (1925), pp. 478–502; A. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy against Russia, 1853–56* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2nd edn 2011); J.D. Grainger, *The First Pacific War: Britain and Russia, 1854–6* (Woodbridge, 2008).

26. Bodleian Library (Bodl.), Clarendon MSS., Ms.Clar.dep.c.62, memo. Hammond, 5 Feb. 1856. See also W.E. Mosse, *The Rise and Fall of the Crimean System, 1855–1871* (London, 1963), pp. 25–33.
27. FO 519/185, Cowley MSS., Hammond to Cowley (private), 14 Aug. 1856.
28. Norfolk Record Office, Kimberley MSS., KIM 14/5/20, Wodehouse to Currie, 21 Feb. 1857.
29. *Ibid.*, Wodehouse to Currie (private), 3 Jan. 1857, (original emphasis). See also G.H. Alder, 'The Key to India?: Britain and the Herat Problem, 1830–1863', *Middle Eastern Studies* x, 2 (1974), pp. 186–209.
30. See *Ibid.*, *British India's Northern Frontier, 1865–1895: A Study of Imperial Policy* (London, 1963).
31. FO 83/185, Malmesbury circular, 8 Mar. 1858. For a discussion of British offensive means see the important piece by K. Neilson, 'The British Way in Warfare and Russia', *Ibid.* and G. Kennedy (eds), *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856–1956. Essays in Honour of David French* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2010), pp. 7–28.
32. Buckinghamshire County Record Office (Aylesbury), Somerset MSS, D/RA/A/2A/14/1, Gladstone to Somerset (private), 8 Sept. 1859.
33. FO 918/53, Ampthill MSS., Lytton to Russell (private), 31 Jan. 1872. See also H.C.G. Matthew, 'Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Politics of Mid-Victorian Budgets', *Historical Journal*, xxii, 3 (1979), pp. 615–43.
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35. Liverpool Record Office (LRO), 15th Earl of Derby MSS, 920 DER (15) 12/1/16, Loftus to Stanley (private), 24 Nov. 1866.
36. *Ibid.*, 920 DER (15)12/1/10, Lyons to Stanley (private), 29 Nov. 1867.
37. LRO, 14th Earl of Derby MSS., 920 DER (14) 14/6/2, Disraeli to Derby (private), 30 Sept. 1866.
38. Cambridge University Library (CUL), Mayo MSS., Add. 7490/60/1, memo. Forsyth, 'Remarks and Suggestions relative to proposed Negotiations with Russia regarding Central Asia', 7 Oct. 1868.
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2

Curzon's War and Curzon's Peace

John Fisher

For Lord Curzon, the First World War and its immediate aftermath was a time of expectation and hope, only partially fulfilled. The keynote of this period for the former Viceroy of India was opportunism and the possibility of attaining strategic security for the British Empire. In September 1914, to prolonged cheering at St Andrew's Hall in Glasgow, he anticipated an imperial war. Indian troops, in aiding the Empire, would be fighting 'for something more than power; it [the Empire] stood for justice, uprightness, good government, mercy and truth.' And it would be a victor's peace: a war against the rule of Satan on Earth. Indian troops would be in at the death, their lances fluttering down the streets of Berlin.¹ During the war he repeatedly disclaimed imperial motives.² But the record of his official dealings and of his private correspondence, suggests that this was only partly true. In a victory speech to the House of Lords on 19 November 1918, Curzon congratulated the British people on the role played by the Empire in winning the war and in terms of the position it occupied at its close.³ That power and influence had then to be applied to securing an enduring settlement: one with the necessary imperial safeguards.

However, obstacles abounded in terms of achieving these imperial aims, both during and after the war. These included the misguided ideas of politicians, who lacked Curzon's encyclopaedic knowledge of the East, the ideas of Woodrow Wilson, the emergence of Arab nationalism, obstructive and avaricious Allies, the chaos in Russia, and the broad phenomenon of, mainly Bolshevik-inspired, unrest which culminated in Curzon's 1923 Note of Protest to Moscow. Curzon chaired several War Cabinet committees which oversaw British policy in the Middle East and Central Asia, and in 1917 he chaired the Imperial War Cabinet's Territorial Committee, which devised peace desiderata with specific reference to imperial affairs.⁴ As Acting Foreign Secretary from

February 1919, and Foreign Secretary proper, from October 1919, he had opportunity to apply wartime planning, as well as his own distinctive ideas about the post-war world, to its settlement. It was also a fitting tribute to his labours, as well as to his peculiar abilities, which included a keen sense of protocol, that in February 1919, he was asked to chair a committee to examine the question of peace celebrations.⁵

David Gilmour and others have recorded Curzon's frustration arising from his exclusion from the War Council, the War Committee and, intermittently, from the Cabinet.⁶ In the words of fellow aristocrat, Lord Crewe, he resembled a Rolls Royce, kept only to deliver an occasional parcel to the station.⁷ During 1915, when Curzon sat on the Dardanelles Committee, Herbert Asquith and Edward Grey contemplated using his talents more effectively but this came to nothing. So, too, suggestions that he might replace Herbert Kitchener as War Secretary or become ambassador in Paris.⁸ Indeed, until 1917 his energies were dissipated. Amongst other things, he led the Conservative opposition in the House of Lords, and, when he joined the government in May 1915, deputised there for Lord Crewe or Lord Lansdowne. He contributed vigorously to the debate about conscription, he chaired the Shipping Control Committee, and he presided over the Air Board until January 1917. More broadly, he was an assiduous archivist, reading, annotating, and filing papers on a much wider range of issues, including events in Ireland, the holding of British titles and honours by German princes during the war, the sale of honours, the Channel Tunnel scheme, and reform of the House of Lords. On some of these matters, including the undesirability of horse racing during the war, he vented his feelings through the press, and just as often, in his speeches.⁹ He visited the Western Front on three occasions, once flying with the Royal Flying Corps, and was deeply solicitous regarding the welfare of British and Imperial troops.¹⁰ He also maintained a keen interest in senior military appointments, especially those in the Eastern theatres, and evinced strategic/military ideas which, in the summer and autumn of 1917, were sufficiently aligned with Lloyd George's thinking, to ensure his inclusion in the War Policy Committee.¹¹ And he maintained pre-war interests, many of them related to India, including constitutional reform, and nurtured pre-war grudges, notably, in connection with Indian military administration. However, the prevailing sense was of disappointment and frustration: disappointment that colleagues and officials who knew little or nothing of the East were charged with the oversight of British policy there; frustration that, when so much was at stake and territorial revision and imperial expansion a realistic goal, he was sidelined.

This sense of exclusion diminished slightly when in the spring of 1917, Curzon was asked to chair the Imperial War Cabinet's committee on the terms of peace. Its agenda was threefold. Firstly, it considered arrangements about enemy territory conquered during the war.¹² Secondly, it considered possible arrangements, either with Britain's wartime Allies or with neutral powers, which might be discussed in the general territorial settlement after the war. Thirdly, the committee considered general desiderata in the territorial settlement of Europe. Its purpose, according to its secretary, Leo Amery, was to ensure that imperial issues were not overlooked in the terms of peace.¹³ Fellow committee members Walter Long, Robert Cecil, Austen Chamberlain, Robert Massey, John Hazen and Jan Smuts were unlikely to permit this. Its ethos was more a reflection of Amery's imperial appetites than Curzon's. It sought absolute imperial security.¹⁴ The merging of statesmanship and of national self-interest reached its apogee in its deliberations and final report. The report noted, 'The future peace of the world should undoubtedly be the primary object in any resettlement, but British statesmen should not omit to view the situation, as, *mutatis mutandis*, the representatives of other Powers will be certain to do, from the standpoint of national interests'.

Any actual or potential base that might be used by Germany would be eliminated in order to secure the Empire internally and externally. The submarine, the telegraph, and the aeroplane accentuated the threat. German possessions along the All-Red Route, a concept which owed more to Amery's conceptual heritage than Curzon's, must be eliminated. The 'legitimate claims' of Britain's Allies would be met but, reflecting Curzon's world-view, Britain must also secure 'adequate and appropriate compensation'. The Middle East, with Britain controlling Palestine and Mesopotamia, would be the hub of British power radiating along the East coast of Africa and through South Asia to the Antipodes. The opportunity should be taken of removing niggling territorial irritants, including French possessions in India and in North America and possibly also in the East Pacific. French pretensions in Greece must be circumscribed. So, too, Britain might lease Easter Island from Chile: it might host a wireless station. The emphasis was on pre-emptive acquisition. Should Russia's aspirations regarding the Straits not fructify then this must not prevent British control of the so-called neutral zone in Persia, the necessary forfeit for Russia's gain. Should Denmark cede territory in Greenland, then Britain's prior claim to it must be noted. Within Europe, as one might expect, emphasis was placed upon restricting Germany and its allies. The precise means of achieving this, beyond

obvious measures such as the restitution of Belgium, remained unclear when the committee reported.

Curzon contemplated a victor's peace. Anything less was inconceivable. His war aims were his peace aims and he sought guarantees for future imperial strategic security. He firmly believed that the Allies would win and seldom wasted time speculating about compromise arising from defeat. The keynote was opportunism allied to imperial security.¹⁵ These were the overriding factors in his thinking during the war and in its aftermath. Precisely for this reason he was profoundly suspicious of Woodrow Wilson. When writing to Asquith in May 1916, at a time when he was excluded from the War Committee, he noted Wilson's 'singularly ignoble & unmoral' conduct during the war.¹⁶ He deprecated the assumption that Wilson would play the role of mediator or 'Champion of Peace'; that he should contribute to the formulation of peace terms; and that America should preside over an organisation aimed at the avoidance of war, when Wilson's only consideration was his own re-election. Worse, Wilson sought to bully Britain into accepting his ideas. The War Committee seemed accepting of these terms without any indemnity or guarantees for the future. Germany would obtain peace just as her efforts peaked, and at the hand of Wilson, whose only desire was self-preservation. 'Terrible as is the strain of war, & uncertain the immediate future, I would sooner go on indefinitely than contemplate a peace so inglorious as any that we are at all likely in existing conditions to obtain.' Indeed, the continuance of the struggle to avoid 'an inconclusive war and a patched-up peace' was a recurring theme in Curzon's speeches.¹⁷

His suspicion persisted in the autumn of 1918. Curzon feared that Wilson would so mishandle discussions with Germany that the conditions laid down by him, and accepted by the German Government, as those preliminary to the consideration of an armistice, would become confused with the conditions of the armistice itself, and with those conditions that would be reserved for discussion at the peace conference. Curzon argued that the terms of the armistice might contain 'the conditions of Allied victory: and the victory is not less a victory, and ought not to be robbed of the rewards or consequences of victory, because it has been the result of voluntary capitulation rather than of final disaster in the field.' Not only must the armistice preclude Germany's resumption of hostilities, but it must also contain evidence to the world of Germany's defeat.¹⁸

So, too, Curzon was sceptical about the idea of a League of Nations. The notion that it should be established during the war seemed foolish

and once it was established, he doubted its survival.¹⁹ Curzon advised Maurice Hankey against accepting the secretaryship of the League. He felt that it would not be the 'great and potent and world pacifying instrument that its creators desired'. The real post-war work would be in connection with the empire: 'These are great imminent and inevitable problems.... Their solution will be a signpost in the history of the Empire and in the progress of the world.'²⁰ Clearly, also, Curzon, as with other imperial thinkers, was profoundly uneasy as Wilson's notions, especially those concerning self-determination, were applied to the Middle East. Britain had largely conquered the Middle East but its people might seek to bypass British statesmen, and pre-empt the decisions of any peace conference by supplicating direct to Wilson.²¹

The victor's peace applied most compellingly to the Middle East, which Britain had conquered, occupied and delivered from Ottoman oppression. Here, there were the added threats of preposterous Italian claims, which could be brushed aside, as well as those of France, which could not. But in seeking to maximise British gains, there were other means to hand, not least flawed wartime allied diplomacy. According to Curzon, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916, which apportioned the region between Britain and France, and which Curzon strongly resented, had left the status of Palestine 'undetermined'.²² Palestine must be included in a British protectorate. Curzon cited Zionist support for this, though subsequently, and presciently, voiced serious concerns about the Balfour Declaration, and after the war remained very suspicious of the extent of Zionist aims. He fervently hoped that Britain would eschew the mandate.²³ In the spring of 1917, Curzon noted Italo-French rivalries in the Eastern Mediterranean as a reason to avoid the cession of Cyprus. Their post-war ambitions remained a good reason for its retention as a watch-tower in 1919.²⁴ And he called for vigilance concerning Persia, in case Russia's Provisional Government should abrogate the Anglo-Russian Convention of August 1907.²⁵

That this might occur was a real concern, and Curzon had recorded his anxieties about Russia dropping out of the war in May 1917. In both military and naval terms he feared the impact of this upon the Allied war effort.²⁶ By September 1917, he argued that whilst Russia's withdrawal would not bring Germany material gain for some six to eight months, Russia would nonetheless become Germany's vassal.²⁷ Curzon disclaimed expertise on Russia but his reading of events there was generally accurate and prescient. The recurring theme in this context was his accusation of inconsistency and indecision in British policy. In March 1918, when attention was focused upon Germany's spring offensive in

the West, he felt that events in Russia were being overlooked. He pointed to the striking disparity between Trotsky's call for a new revolutionary army, with Allied assistance, but no Allied intervention, and the view that Britain must intervene in the north and Japan in the east. 'Ought we not to decide between the two policies? To believe in one, while we pursue the other, or to believe in neither, but to pursue both, seems equally to lead to destruction.'²⁸

Central to achieving his advanced imperial aims was the fact that the war must not end prematurely.²⁹ Concerning the war with Turkey, Curzon argued in this sense in a memorandum in November 1917.³⁰ Turkey had not been sufficiently humbled. Its pan-Turanian ambitions persisted. Germany had more to offer than the Allies. Even if overtures were possible, negotiations would founder because of British pledges and commitments to the Arabs, the Jews and the Armenians. Having fought to end Turkish rule in the Middle East, the consequences of permitting its continuance would be grave. Turkish leaders would regard Allied peace overtures as an admission of defeat. Britain's position in Palestine and Mesopotamia must be improved before any talks should occur. Once this had been attained and its position on the Western Front had also improved, the Turks might approach Britain. When, in the autumn of 1918, the terms of an armistice with Turkey were under discussion, Curzon spoke forcefully against their reduction. British forces would not be possessed of key strategic points and the Turks would still be in situ in the Caucasus and elsewhere. An armistice would preclude further efforts to remove them or to secure additional strongholds.³¹ To Lloyd George, he noted that the whole Eastern world was watching to see how Britain would treat Turkey: Indian soldiers looked to a victor's peace as the corollary of their sacrifice.

We contemplate the cessation of war, even the conclusion of peace with her [Turkey], before we have got Mosul or Aleppo, before we have turned her out of Lahej, before we have recovered the whole of Syria or reached Alexandretta, while she is still in the Caucasus and at Baku and Batum, before any attempt has been made to settle the Armenian question.

If such an armistice were agreed upon the Turk would simply laugh behind Britain's back 'at his skill in escaping the penalty of his misdeeds and getting the better of the stupid Englishman.'³²

Curzon prized psychology when dealing with the Turk, and equally when persuading reluctant colleagues to adopt forward defensive

measures. Besides forestalling a separate peace, Curzon had also to justify further imperial accretions. In June 1917, he had asked Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, if he had read the report of his territorial committee. As he noted, 'our hardest fight' would be to maintain wartime conquests, 'since all the allies will continue to secure their own interests by forcing us to disgorge our spoils'. This would be facilitated by the 'sentimental but idealistic policy' which decreed that 'whoever profits by the war... it should not be ourselves'. This had blinded people to the real dangers in the future.³³

Lord Crewe once commented of Curzon that he invariably sought to fortify his case by making it artificially, and that his tendency to accentuate the dangers in any given situation alienated him from colleagues.³⁴ When seeking to persuade colleagues, Curzon deployed a range of arguments as well as a range of perceived threats. Passivity could only undermine perceptions of British strength. British defeats in Palestine in 1917 had to be redressed. When they were, in December 1917, the occupation of Jerusalem beckoned as a victory of immense symbolic portent. Curzon wanted to project its significance across the Muslim world and throughout India.³⁵ The collapse of Russia changed the dynamic of the eastern war. It became necessary to thwart Germany's *Drang nach Osten* campaign more vigorously than before, although Curzon had previously sought to highlight its potential danger.³⁶ Curzon portrayed this threat in suitably lurid terms, and with the help of Leo Amery and others, advised further, possibly temporary, territorial gain in order to forestall it. British control of Palestine and of the Basra and Bagdad provinces of Mesopotamia was a given.³⁷ Further accretions, in the Caucasus, and possibly also in Transcaspia, as well as a strengthening of Britain's position in Persia, would help to stem the enemy's march towards India. Conveniently, it might also provide the basis for a post-war presence. Curzon ranged widely in seeking to alert colleagues to the danger of Germany's eastern thrust. In March 1918, he highlighted the risk of a German peace with Romania. Should it occur, Germany would be 'supreme' on the Black Sea, and its easterly march through Persia and Turkestan would be hastened.³⁸ By late June 1918, the war was one for the mastery of Asia: Britain's empire was in imminent peril.³⁹

By this point also, Curzon's conception of the peace had crystallised, as had the pre-emptive logic which might help to secure it. Both Turkish and German territories had been seized and were held largely by force of British arms alone.⁴⁰ If Bagdad were to return to Turkish, and by inference, German influence then Persia and Afghanistan would follow. Reasons of sentiment and morality buttressed this logic, as they also did in Palestine

and in Armenia, as well as in Germany's African colonies, where the mistreatment of German colonial subjects would occur if German rule resumed. Similarly, the return of German colonisers would be ingrained on the African psyche as a German victory. Whereas the continuation and expansion of British power after the war would be a force for good, German colonies had become 'parade grounds for drilling native troops, nests of plotting officials and concealed machine guns, jumping off grounds for attacks upon neighbours or rivals.' In fact, German colonialism rested on two grounds only: economic advantage and world power. If left intact in Africa, it would lead to 'an India in Africa', and to the emergence of a vast black army which would be unleashed upon the world. Thus, the 'curse of militarism, naked and unashamed', would be released upon Africa. So, too, as the war progressed, Curzon's apprehensions about German ports had sharpened. Africa, if defended by guns, minefields and submarines, and if German possessions were connected by air fleets, would become a formidable base for pirate operations, such that if Britain acceded to it, it would be committing suicide. Future generations would execrate the perpetrators of such a peace. The notion of settling India's surplus population would also be ruled out.⁴¹ Arguing for a new Monroe Doctrine, Curzon noted that Britain's imperial routes would be imperilled by the 'tiger-power...spring[ing] forth from his lair on the African coast.' The Allies, America included, must agree not to retrocede Germany's African colonies. Only by divesting Africa of German influence, might it develop along civilised lines. Only by liquidating Germany's African colonies might the broader object to which they related, world power, be thwarted. International control of these former colonies was fantastic, a view that Curzon reiterated in the summer of 1918, when also opposing the idea that Germany's African colonies should be given to France or to another ally.⁴² In no sense could the catchwords of 'no annexation' disguise the fact that in most cases, British rule was the only realistic alternative. The strategic rationale was clear, as was its moral basis. Thus, the empire would emerge strengthened from the war.

As is well known, Curzon had argued thus at meetings of the War Cabinet's Eastern Committee, which he had chaired from its inception in the spring of 1918. On a number of occasions senior colleagues had opposed him, not least because of his controlling tendencies.⁴³ But by late 1918, he had apparently succeeded in formulating recommendations for the peace conference. Had these recommendations stood, Britain, by default or otherwise, would have obtained mandates, or would have predominant influence, in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, the Arabian

Peninsula, Persia and Transcaucasia. However, for a whole variety of reasons his recommendations were subsequently diluted.⁴⁴ Not least, of course, Curzon had misjudged the international environment. Balfour, Robert Cecil and Edwin Montagu, having reluctantly agreed with his ambitious desiderata at the Eastern Committee, then counselled against them. So did Lloyd George. In the case of Transcaucasia, Curzon considered this alliance decisive in securing Britain's withdrawal.⁴⁵

Of the many constraining factors that Curzon faced after the war, Russia was possibly the most enervating. In its latter stages his few utterances regarding the Bolshevik regime suggested profound suspicion on his part and in February 1918 he had argued against any further recognition of it. Then the Bolsheviks were negotiating a separate peace with Germany.⁴⁶ From the outset of his acting foreign secretaryship in February 1919, oversight of policy in Russia and the nature of policy itself had been unclear.⁴⁷ Allied intervention had begun as a wartime attempt to prevent armaments falling to Germany, but it had expanded inexorably. However, it occurred just as resources became more constrained. As Curzon had noted in December 1918, many people objected to British forces remaining in Russia apparently for the sole purpose of fighting Bolshevism, when the real purpose of their presence was to support those elements of the population, from Transcaspia through the Caucasus to Northern Russia, who had remained loyal to the Allied cause.⁴⁸ Perhaps it was partly for this reason, and because he feared the consequences of failure that he opposed the so-called Kotlas plan in June 1919 whereby General Ironside would endeavour to link Kotlas with Admiral Alexander Kolchak's forces.⁴⁹ To Curzon, writing in August 1919, the effort expended both directly and indirectly was incommensurate with Britain's disproportionate share of the cost.⁵⁰ America was doing relatively little in Siberia and Japan was concerned purely with its own territorial ambitions. Kolchak had alienated the Siberian peasantry as well as the Czech Legion, and his forces had virtually collapsed. The proposed evacuation from Archangel and Murmansk would enable the Bolsheviks to deploy their forces elsewhere just as their armies appeared to be strengthening. Britain had given *de facto* recognition to the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia, but since then no further efforts had been made to include them in operations and this had produced 'grave dissatisfaction' there and in Lithuania. Equally, they had not sufficiently recognised Finnish efforts against the Bolsheviks, although Finland's new government resolutely opposed operations against the Bolsheviks.⁵¹ So, too, Curzon bemoaned

the failure to recognise General Simon Petlura's administration in the Ukraine.⁵² General Anton Denikin's efforts in south Russia alone offered hope. But, like his fellow White generals, he too exhibited reactionary and acquisitive tendencies which seemed no less reprehensible than those of his Bolshevik counterparts, and which would ultimately aid their cause.⁵³ Denikin's efforts were doomed. Amongst the nascent Caucasus republics, policy 'had hovered between recognition and polite indifference'. Curzon argued for recognition of these as well as the Baltic republics, and General Kolchak.⁵⁴ Interestingly, in August 1919, he portrayed continued intervention as necessary to thwart German colonisation of Russia by political and commercial means. Connected with this notion, his idea of providing a more precise delineation of Allied spheres of interest and activity in Russia, and of creating effective Allied machinery for overseeing policy towards Russia, was dropped. According to Curzon, this left two if not three policies on Russia. In Paris there were none.⁵⁵ Curzon abjured a prolonged intervention but had his proposal been accepted, then it would have facilitated a temporary British presence in the Caucasus, from which place it had recently been decided to withdraw British troops.⁵⁶

None of these issues were being dealt with effectively by the Peace Conference or even by the British Delegation. Russia presented a 'kaleidoscopic situation demanding ... constant vigilance and often immediate action.' Repeated delays had sown uncertainty amongst anti-Bolshevik elements, and this had militated against success.⁵⁷ According to Curzon, these delays were partly due to the division of work between him in London and Balfour and Lloyd George in Paris. Curzon complained repeatedly about the fact that he did not have a clearly defined role, and about Balfour's ineffectualness.⁵⁸ Why were some issues referred to the conference when they were of concern to Britain alone? And he periodically became suspicious that issues were discussed without his knowledge, including the disposal of Cyprus.⁵⁹ He was distressed by Lloyd George's capacity for independent action. In August 1919, he reported to Balfour that the prime minister had suggested that if France were to receive Syria, Cilicia and Armenia, Britain might have mandates for Constantinople and Armenia. If, however, France coveted Constantinople and Armenia, then Britain might swap them for Syria and Cilicia: it being understood that Britain should have Palestine also. Curzon confessed to having been 'frightened' by this idea. He regarded a mandate for Constantinople as a poisoned chalice, though not one, as previously noted, that he would willingly entrust to France either.⁶⁰ In

March 1919, he had learned that Lloyd George had discounted a British mandate for Syria. This was in spite of a sense amongst some senior colleagues that Britain should have it – a feeling which was echoed by Britain's men on the spot.⁶¹ For some time afterwards he was also deeply, if predictably, unhappy about the Eastern Committee's demise and with it any real sense of him being able to coordinate Middle Eastern policy.⁶² Curzon insisted that its successor body, the Interdepartmental Conference on the Middle East, was simply the Eastern Committee 'under another and quite unnecessary disguise'.⁶³ But it wasn't and he felt increasingly marginalised as his work was ignored.

As the German threat dwindled but before Curzon perceived Bolshevik Russia as a serious strategic threat, he also felt it necessary to caution against French ambitions. In October 1918, as Allenby's cavalry pressed its advance north of Aleppo, he warned of the serious trouble that would arise with France over Syria. Britain had conquered it but France wanted the spoils.⁶⁴ Curzon resisted France's efforts to introduce its troops there, not simply because of the issue of Syria itself but also because it denied Curzon leverage when seeking recognition from France and Italy of British predominance in the Arabian Peninsula.⁶⁵ So, too, he noted of the French early in December 1918, that their character was different and that their political interests often collided with Britain's. It was 'the great power from whom we have most to fear in future.'⁶⁶ In March 1919, he argued strongly against the idea of a French mandate for Constantinople. France would become a 'formidable mid-Eastern Power', and would intrigue in Anatolia.⁶⁷ In the autumn of 1919, Curzon bristled at the prospect of a proposed French expedition to save the Armenians. In his view, the projected landing at Alexandretta would resemble efforts to take Deauville by landing at Marseilles. Worse, Balfour appeared to condone it.⁶⁸ These suspicions persisted both in the context of French ambitions towards the Ruhr, and in the context of the Greco-Turkish conflict. Curzon was affronted by the Angora Pact between France and Turkey.⁶⁹

After the decision was taken to withdraw British forces from the Caucasus, Curzon and Lord Hardinge mounted a well-known effort at least to maintain British forces in Batum.⁷⁰ If Curzon had truly ever doubted the Bolsheviks' offensive intent in military terms then he soon abandoned it.⁷¹ And his arguments for the retention of British forces were essentially proved to be correct. Soon after their withdrawal, Bolshevik forces advanced into northern Persia and absorbed the Transcaucasia republics.

And there were other disappointments. Curzon had repeatedly referred to the need to limit Turkish power concerning the Armenians. This was an issue of statesmanship. However, although guarantees of a kind for the Armenians, as well as for the Kurds and the Assyrians, for whose autonomy he had also expressed support, were obtained in 1923, their future was not secured and was, in fact, sacrificed to placate Turkish nationalism.

Curzon's peace was bound to be something of an anticlimax. Few of his colleagues doubted his command of Asian and imperial affairs. Indeed, according to Leo Amery, in 1917 Smuts would have had Curzon as Foreign Secretary.⁷² But as Smuts added, this was in spite of his defects. Principally, these shortcomings related to his lack of self-awareness, his dogmatism, his lack of perspective, and his long-winded and overbearing pomposity.⁷³ If Lord Esher is to be believed, by the autumn of 1918, Curzon, embodied traditional imperialism and was the most unpopular man in England. The discrepancy between his ideals and what Woodrow Wilson advocated was stark.⁷⁴ It was with some satisfaction that Robert Cecil, after his prolonged tussles with Curzon at the Eastern Committee, recorded Lloyd George's view of Curzon as being 'curiously unpopular', and his own view that Curzon had the respect but not the affection of his subordinates at the Foreign Office.⁷⁵ During the war and in its aftermath, this led colleagues to attempt to sideline him, something which became even more apparent after the war, when Lloyd George asserted his influence in European diplomacy, and in his active backing of a greater Greece.⁷⁶ Such developments aggravated Curzon's paranoia. He struggled on but there is a sense in which his later achievements as foreign secretary were tactical rather than strategic. The British Empire had won the war but its aftermath involved significant compromise, not least the mandatory principle. Regarding Egypt, Curzon disputed Lord Milner's advice concerning the nationalists, and sensibly eschewed hawkishness during the 1922 Chanak Crisis. On some issues, however, such as Russia, Lloyd George outmanoeuvred him. The Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement of March 1921 coincided with a Russo-Turkish friendship treaty. The former neglected Curzon's stipulation that the discussions should aim at 'comprehensive political agreement', and it, as well as the policy that it embodied, threatened to undermine him amongst fellow Conservatives.⁷⁷ As Harold Nicolson wrote, Curzon gnashed his teeth like Baba Yaga.⁷⁸ He repeatedly threatened to resign, but knew that if he were to do so, his career would be over. So did Lloyd George and he took advantage of this.⁷⁹ The freedom of the Straits secured in the Lausanne discussions in 1923, and the dislocation in Soviet-Turkish

relations was a personal triumph for Curzon but it paled in insignificance in terms of what might have been secured and what had been deliberately forfeited.

Occasionally, as when arguing for the ejection of the Turk from Constantinople in 1919, Curzon could deploy Wilsonian precepts to strengthen his hand.⁸⁰ But generally speaking he deplored them. Concerning Mesopotamia, for which Curzon, as chairman of various committees, had coordinated the establishment of an administrative structure, it became necessary to dilute the extent of British control. Though hesitant in the decision to advance on Bagdad in the autumn of 1915, thereafter Curzon displayed an appetite for territorial gain which was incompatible with notions of self-determination. Colleagues who were more politically astute gradually persuaded him of the wisdom of establishing a façade of Arab control there, rather than dwelling simply on the dangers of ceding control back to the Turk, and, by inference, Germany, which might then pursue its easterly march towards India.⁸¹ But Curzon found this reorientation difficult, and whilst he claimed to understand the need to placate Woodrow Wilson, the extent to which he did this is questionable.⁸² In October 1919, he still complained that Britain, having secured Mesopotamia, was expected to hand it over to an Arab state, as well as Syria to France.⁸³ As his foreign secretaryship proper loomed, and amid side-swipes at French ambitions concerning Tangier, he felt that the settlement of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia could and should be finalised separately and prior to the larger Turkish issues.⁸⁴ Unbeknown to him, Churchill as Colonial Secretary would soon oversee the new mandates. Worse he proceeded to meddle in what he, Curzon, and others, deemed to be foreign affairs.⁸⁵ He effectively lost the battle to retain control of the new Middle Eastern empire, just as he misunderstood the force of Persian nationalism with his stillborn Anglo-Persian treaty. He famously and spectacularly fell out with Herman Norman, when the latter was minister at Tehran. Norman derided Curzon, whom he claimed, not without reason, had been humiliated by events there.⁸⁶ His imperialism was founded upon the perception of other countries, frequently nominal allies, as perennially self-interested, and too often his energies were directed to shadow boxing with them, as well as a host of other threats, rather than adjusting to changed conditions. In short, his moment had come too late. The tide had turned in international affairs. Arguments bearing upon strategic security were old friends but in the post-war world especially, lacked credibility as retrenchment set in.

Notes

1. *The Times*, 11 Sept. 1914. For the satanic allusion, see 'Turning Point in the War: Entry of the United States: The New Ally Welcomed: House of Lords', *The Times*, 19 Apr. 1917.
2. 'The Response of India: Lord Curzon on Imperial Unity', *The Times*, 7 Oct. 1914.
3. 'Address to the King: House of Lords', *The Times*, 19 Nov. 1918.
4. Its papers are at The National Archives (TNA), CAB 21/77, and its activities discussed in V. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914–1918* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 67–75.
5. CAB 23/9, WC 534, Cabinet minutes, 19 Feb. 1919.
6. D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994), pp. 432–47. See also TNA, FO 633/24/115, Curzon to Cromer, 9 Jun. 1915.
7. *Ibid.*, Gilmour, *Curzon*, p. 449.
8. On the latter, see Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge (CACC), Esher MSS., 2/17, diary entries, 8 and 10 Jan. 1917; *Ibid.*, 4/8, Esher to Sir William Robertson, CIGS, 9 Jan. 1917.
9. Letter to *The Times*, 13 Mar. 1915, and connected correspondence at British Library (BL), Curzon MSS., Mss Eur. F112/97. He later submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet on the subject: 'Horse Racing', 13 Jun. 1918, Mss Eur. F112/125. On his speeches, see, e.g., those on behalf of the National Committee for Relief in Belgium, Mss Eur. F112/185.
10. Curzon's reports of these trips are at Mss Eur. F112/541–3.
11. Its papers and report are at CAB 27/6.
12. The following two paragraphs are derived from its report: CAB 21/77, Imperial War Cabinet: Report of Committee on Terms of Peace (Territorial Desiderata), p. 16, 28 Apr. 1917.
13. CACC, Leo Amery MSS., AMEL 1/3/26/1, Amery to Smuts, 10 Dec. 1917.
14. On this theme, and on the Territorial Committee also, see J.S. Galbraith, 'British War Aims in World War I: A Commentary on "Statesmanship"', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13 (1984–5), pp. 25–45.
15. Typical of this was his suggestion to Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, in November 1916 that Britain might raise the question of Spitsbergen, to which it had as good a claim as anybody. Cambridge University Library (CUL), Hardinge MSS., 27, Curzon to Hardinge, 16 Nov. 1916.
16. Curzon MSS., Mss Eur. F112/116/42, Curzon to Asquith, 24 May 1916. The remainder of this paragraph is derived from this letter. Asquith agreed. *Ibid.*, f.44, Asquith to Curzon, 26 May 1916. See also BL, Bertie MSS., Add Mss. 63943, Bertie note, 15 Aug. 1916.
17. *The Times*, 1 Jan. 1917, and 26 Jan. 1918.
18. CAB 24/66, GT 5980, 'War Cabinet. Conditions of Armistice. Note by Lord Curzon', 15 Oct. 1918, secret. See also CAB 23/14, WC 491b, War Cabinet minutes. Curzon had criticised Wilson's attitude regarding the deployment of Japanese forces at Vladivostok. CAB 23/7, WC 462, War Cabinet minutes, 21 Aug. 1918.
19. CAB 23/5, WC 368, War Cabinet minutes, 20 Mar. 1918. See H. Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase, 1919–1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy* (London, 1934), pp. 369–70.

20. CACC, Hankey MSS., 4/11, Curzon to Hankey, n.d., 4/11. A. Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919* (London, 1991), p. 59.
21. FO 800/202/131–3, note by Curzon, 12 Dec. 1918, in Sir Arthur Hirtzel to Sir Eric Drummond, 13 Dec. 1918.
22. CAB 21/77, Third meeting of the Territorial Committee, 19 Apr. 1917. Curzon argued that the Cabinet had been by-passed when the agreement was discussed.
23. On Curzon and the Balfour Declaration, see his paper CAB 24/30, GT 2406, 'The Future of Palestine', 26 Oct. 1917; and D. Gilmour, 'The Unregarded Prophet: Lord Curzon and the Palestine Question', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 25, 3 (1996), pp. 60–68. Regarding Zionist aims see: FO 800/215/91, Curzon to Balfour, 16 Jan. 1919; Curzon MSS., Mss Eur. F112/208a/37 (also at FO 800/215/136), Curzon to Balfour, 26 Jan. 1919; Mss Eur. F112/196/49, Curzon to Lord Derby, 30 Apr. 1919; and BL, Balfour MSS., Add Mss. 49734, Curzon to Balfour, 9 Aug. 1919. On the mandate see: Mss Eur. F112/196/49, Curzon to Balfour, 25 Mar. 1919; and Add Mss. 49734, Curzon to Balfour, 20 Aug. 1919.
24. FO 800/217/73, Curzon to Balfour, 24 Jun. 1919.
25. See n. 22, Territorial Committee.
26. CAB 24/13, GT 705, 'Policy in View of Russian Developments', Curzon, secret. See also FO 800/197/126, Curzon to Cecil, 1 Jun. 1917. Curzon later commented on his prescience; undated note, but Dec. 1918, Mss Eur. F112/179.
27. CAB 23/16, WC 239a, War Cabinet minutes, 27 Sept. 1917.
28. CAB 24/46, GT 4046, War Cabinet: The Russian Situation: Memorandum by Lord Curzon, 26 Mar. 1918, secret.
29. See Curzon at War Cabinet, on the possibility that the projected Socialist Conference at Stockholm might lead to an unacceptable peace, CAB 23/13, WC 135a, War Cabinet draft minutes, 9 May 1917.
30. CAB 24/32, GT 2648, 'Peace Negotiations With Turkey', 16 Nov. 1917. The remainder of this paragraph is derived from this document.
31. CAB 23/14, WC 489a to 491a, minutes of the War Cabinet, 21–25 Oct. 1918.
32. Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George MSS., F/11/9/19, Curzon to Lloyd George, 23 Oct. 1918.
33. FO 800/199/80, Curzon to Balfour, 29 Jun. 1917.
34. CUL, Crewe MSS., C23, Crewe to Hardinge, 18 Jul. 1912. Asquith criticised a wartime speech by Curzon for precisely this reason. Crewe MSS., C40, Asquith to Crewe, 4 Jul. 1915. Curzon, referring to his preference for a realistic portrayal of the military situation, felt that 'it was impossible to get the best out of the people of this country by feeding them with sweetmeats or by putting blinkers across their eyes.' 'House of Lords: Lord Curzon's Speech', *The Times*, 20 Dec. 1916. CAB 23/42, Curzon was capable of optimism in military terms: Imperial War Cabinet minutes, 15 Aug. 1918, pp. 3–4.
35. CAB 23/4, WC 279, War Cabinet minutes, Nov. 1917. Curzon later described it as 'an expiation of the affront which Christianity has had to endure for centuries and as the sacred symbol of the victory which we hope will crown our cause.' 'Parliament: Debate on the King's Speech', *The Times*, 13 Feb. 1918.
36. 'The Conduct of the War: Lord Curzon on Persia', *The Times*, 21 Feb. 1917.

37. Curzon MSS., L/P+S/11/115/5336/12, Curzon had argued for a public declaration to this effect with regard to the Basra province, somewhat earlier than most: Curzon to Chamberlain, 4 Dec. 1916.
38. CAB/23/5, WC 362, War Cabinet minutes, 8 Mar. 1918.
39. CAB 23/43, Imperial War Cabinet minutes, 25 Jun. 1918.
40. This paragraph is based upon 'German and Turkish Territories Captured in the War', Curzon, CAB 24/4, G182, secret, 5 Dec. 1917.
41. In fact, Curzon expressed strong reservations on this idea later in the war: CAB 24/67, GT 6062, 'The Indians and German East Africa, Memorandum by Lord Curzon', 19 Oct. 1918, confidential.
42. CAB 24/5, G218, 'Some Further Remarks on the German Colonies', 25 Jul. 1918.
43. Robert Cecil, from July 1918, assistant secretary of state for foreign affairs, with special responsibility for the Middle East, bitterly opposed this, as did Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India.
44. K. Neilson, 'For diplomatic, economic, strategic and telegraphic reasons: British imperial defence, the Middle East and India, 1914–1918', in G. Kennedy and K. Neilson, *Far Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (London, Portland, Or., 1997), pp. 114–9.
45. FO 371/3662/1015/71722, minute by Curzon, 14 May 1919.
46. CAB 23/5, WC 340, War Cabinet minutes, 7 Feb. 1918.
47. CAB 23/44b, WC 545a, War Cabinet minutes, 17 Mar. 1919.
48. W CAB 23/8, WC 511, War Cabinet minutes, 10 Dec. 1918.
49. M. Gilbert, *World in Torment: Winston S Churchill* (London, 1990 edn), pp. 297–301.
50. CAB 23/11, 'Policy Towards Russia', draft despatch by Curzon, 9 Aug., GT 7947, secret, and untitled revise, GT 7947A, secret, 16 Aug. 1919. The remainder of this paragraph is based upon these memoranda, and on War Cabinet minutes, 29 Jul. 1919, WC 601.
51. *Ibid.*, War Cabinet minutes, 29 Jul. 1919.
52. He had spoken of this much earlier: CAB 23/4, WC 304, WC 306, War Cabinet minutes.
53. FO 371/3663/1015/136702, Curzon to Churchill, 2 Oct. 1919, copy, cited in K. Jeffrey, *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* (London, 1985), p. 894.
54. K. Neilson, "'That elusive entity British policy in Russia": the Impact of Russia on British Policy at the Paris Peace Conference', in M. Dockrill and J. Fisher (eds), *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 91, and generally, on the complexities of the issue.
55. Chartwell MSS., 16/38, Churchill to Curzon and Curzon to Churchill, both 13 Aug. 1919, cited in Jeffrey, *Military Correspondence*, p. 805.
56. In fact, at the War Cabinet on 12 Aug. Curzon noted that Ambassador John Davis had notified him that, President Wilson's views notwithstanding, Congress would not sanction an American mandate for Armenia or Constantinople. As such, British forces must leave the Caucasus. CAB 23/11, WC 612.
57. See, e.g. CAB 23/9, WC 531 Curzon at War Cabinet, 12 Feb. 1919.
58. FO 800/217/73, Curzon to Balfour, 24 Jun. 1919; A. Sharp, 'Holding up the Flag of Britain... with Sustained Vigour and Brilliance or "Sowing the seeds of

- European Disaster"? Lloyd George and Balfour at the Paris Peace Conference', in Dockrill and Fisher, *Peace Conference*, pp. 35–9.
59. *Ibid.*, FO 800/217/85, Curzon to Balfour, 24 Jun., and Balfour to Curzon, 25 Jun. 1919, copy.
 60. Balfour Papers, Add Mss. 49734, Curzon to Balfour, 20 Aug. 1919.
 61. J. Fisher, 'Syria and Mesopotamia in British Middle Eastern Policy, 1919', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34, 2 (1998), pp. 137–42, pp. 150–51.
 62. See, for example, Mss Eur. F112/270, his note on the Caucasus, 2 Feb. 1919.
 63. FO 371/3661/1015/31192, minute by Curzon, 26 Feb. 1919.
 64. CAB 23/8, WC 492, War Cabinet minutes.
 65. J. Fisher, "'The Safety of Our Indian Empire": Lord Curzon and British Predominance in the Arabian.
 66. Quoted in Sharp, *Versailles Settlement*, p. 191.
 67. Curzon MSS., Mss Eur. F112/213a/35, Curzon to Sir Louis Mallet, 13 Mar. 1919, confidential. His vigilance persisted: FO 371/4156/166336, Curzon minute, 3 Jan. 1920.
 68. Lloyd George MSS., F/12/1/39, Curzon to Lloyd George, 2 Sept. 1919.
 69. On the Ruhr, see Sharp, *Versailles Settlement*, p. 108.
 70. J.D. Rose, 'Batium as Domino, 1919–1920: The Defence of India in Transcaucasia', *International History Review*, 11, 1 (1980).
 71. Curzon to Sir Henry Wilson, 20 May 1920, Jeffrey, *Military Correspondence*, p. 174.
 72. Amery to his wife, 25 Sept. 1917, in J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds), *The Leo Amery Diaries*, vol. 1 (London, 1980), p. 172.
 73. On the latter, see Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, Hogarth MSS., David Hogarth to Gilbert Clayton, 19 May 1919. Hankey acknowledged Curzon's ability, but noted: 'Curzon is an intolerable person to do business with – pompous, dictatorial, and outrageously conceited... Really he is an intolerable person, pig headed, pompous, and vindictive too! ... He can't have been kicked enough as a kid!!' Hankey Diaries, entry of 12 May 1916.
 74. Esher MSS., 4/11, Esher to Lord Derby, 25 Oct. 1918.
 75. BL, Cecil of Chelwood Diaries, Add Mss 51131, entries of 13 Jan., and 18 to 24 Feb. 1919.
 76. Gilmour, *Curzon*, p. 534, pp. 551–4. Also, regarding efforts to outmanoeuvre him on the issue of the Caucasus, Rose, 'Batium', pp. 273–4.
 77. Gilbert, *World in Torment*, p. 399, pp. 784–5.
 78. Nicolson, *Curzon*, p. 210.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 214. According to Nicolson, Lloyd George alleged that Curzon's letters were borne by a messenger with a club foot, followed by a further letter carried by a more nimble messenger.
 80. CAB 29/2, 'The Future of Constantinople', Curzon, 2 Jan. 19[19], P-85, confidential.
 81. This was the thrust of Curzon's memorandum, CAB 21/61, 'British Policy in Mesopotamia', 21 Sept. 1917.
 82. See his protestations in this regard at the Imperial War Cabinet, 30 Dec. 1918, CAB 23/42.
 83. FO 371/4183/2117/136602, Curzon minute, 3 Oct. 1919.
 84. Regarding the settlement, FO 371/4184/2117/141423, Curzon to Derby, 16 October 1919, copy, and regarding Tangier, Curzon minute, 17 Oct. 1919.

85. Gilbert, *World in Torment*, pp. 592–4, pp. 607–8, p. 808.
86. Norman to Archibald Clerk Kerr, 13 March 1921, General Correspondence and Papers, 1921, Clark Kerr Papers, Bodl. Norman alleged that Curzon claimed to know everything about Persia on account of having spent two weeks at the legation fifty-four years earlier, 'when he picked the brains of a drunken old fossil.'

3

Markers of Modernity or Agents of Terror? Air Policing and Colonial Revolt after World War I

Martin Thomas

In the expanded European colonial empires that took shape after World War I, new apparatus of imperial coercion made the open skies – the very air – a new type of political, military, and cultural space. Over the skies of the North African Maghreb and the western arc of the Middle East, the regions surveyed here, the airplane became a tool of French and British colonial government in several, mutually constitutive ways. Politically, coercive bombardment transcended the temporal divide between initial, sometimes nominal imposition of imperial authority through the threat, or use, of indiscriminate violence and the subsequent maintenance of colonial control through more selective violence targeted against dissident populations.¹ Militarily, the airplane offered new possibilities of force projection, destructive power, and consequent strategic advantage. Culturally, mastery of the air – and of the air-waves – conferred still greater advantages, making once impenetrable and seemingly incomprehensible desert spaces less forbidding whilst, at the same time, emphasising the technological superiority of western industrial modernism and thus underscoring the primacy of imperial nations. By shrinking space and rendering the once unknown and limitless both visible and bounded, it changed the cultural environment in which imperial power was projected. By threatening coercion cheaply, it transformed previously outlandish imperial ambition into affordable schemes to regulate vast swathes of desert steppe. Perhaps most critically, aerial reconnaissance, aerial photography, and air travel transformed imperial understanding of the terrain below, its strategic significance, its economic potential, and its social composition. In short, control of

the air irreversibly changed ideas and methods of government, what cultural historians sometimes refer to as imperial 'governmentality'.

It might seem self-evident, then, that after 1918 the aircraft occupied increasingly prominent, although quite different, spaces in the imagination of rulers and ruled alike. For one it offered reaffirmation of European imperial vitality; for the other, it was bitter proof of Europeans' inhuman practices and alien beliefs. For imperial policy-makers in Britain and France, the new technology's advantages, whether strategic, political or cultural, were often registered in a simpler presumption: air power assisted colonial population control at minimal financial cost. The process went furthest in Britain's Middle Eastern empire. Impelled by an Air Staff desperate to prove the usefulness of an independent air force, thereby safeguarding their service from swingeing Treasury cuts, 'air substitution' promised the rundown of expensive army garrisons. Soldiers' lives and imperial budgets would each be saved thanks to the deployment of strategically located RAF squadrons destined to become the iron fist of imperial prestige. Selective use of these aircraft would, in turn, rest upon the sound judgement of a cadre of political officers, or 'Special Service Officers (SSOs)', themselves serving airmen and military administrators in all but name. Still on active service, although rarely flyers themselves, they would know how best to deploy air power whenever their intelligence assessments so dictated.

Clearly, then, in colonial settings the airplane was assigned different tasks and acquired particular meanings that made little sense in the context of warfare between European industrial nations. In this latter setting, early theorists of air war such as the Italian artillery officer Giulio Douhet, expected that military aircraft would restore mobility to the battlefield by exploiting the air – the 'third dimension' apart from land and sea – to destroy fixed defences and traverse static enemy lines.² By contrast, as adjuncts of colonialism in situations where internal opposition was sporadic and diffuse but widespread, aircraft had a different role entirely. Aviation shrank colonial space, opening up previously impenetrable or inhospitable territory to cultural observation and political surveillance.

For the European imperial *arrivistes* in the Arab world of the 1920s, military aircraft afforded new means for the acquisition of western knowledge about colonised populations. Yet, as Priya Satia has argued so convincingly in the case of British-administered Iraq, far from dispelling long-held Orientalist stereotypes about places and peoples, the capacity to traverse vast distances and observe indigenous cultures from a new perspective only reified them. Evidence of this came in a most

deadly form. Imperial presumptions about the likely reaction of colonised peoples – rural communities and dissentient tribal confederations in particular – to the prospect or the actuality of attack from the air propelled the adoption of aerial bombardment as the foremost weapon of colonial repression after World War I.³ Martial Arab and Berber races, Bedouin herders, and otherwise resilient Kurds, it was assumed, would all submit to an omniscient, omnipresent adversary whose assaults could not be parried and whose lethality commanded respect. The fact that such violence was delivered from altitude – from the very heavens – only added to the quasi-mystical character of such retribution.⁴

With the next global conflict still twenty years away, domination of colonial skies was rarely contested. Rather, it was something appropriated to serve the goals of imperial expansion and consolidation. The use of the aircraft as an instrument of colonial control was neither limited to the British and French empires, nor was it confined to the decade after the Great War – quite the reverse. To take the French example, limited German air raids and Zeppelin attacks against Paris and the provincial cities of North-eastern France during World War I acculturated public and press to the menace of air power, albeit not on a scale comparable to the Second World War. That being said, German raids on Paris and its suburbs between 1914 and 1918 killed an estimated 275 Parisians alone.⁵ It seems, however, that French indignation over this heightened exposure of civilians to new military technologies did not translate into much fellow feeling for the peoples of the Empire subjected to coercive aerial bombardment in the 1920s. Here, as elsewhere, the standards of ‘civilized’ behaviour between warring parties did not apply.

From the three territories of French North Africa eastwards via British-administered Egypt and Sudan to the desert interiors of the Iraq and Syria Mandates, colonised populations, whether urban or rural, indigenous or settler, male or female, would come to regard the airplane as a key marker of foreign dominion and would continue to do so as decolonisation edged closer.⁶ Aircraft were, in this respect, a singular technological form: at once a symbol of oft-professed European modernity and a means of imperial projection that it seemed impossible and useless to resist. These features applied equally to the military machines that rained destruction on recalcitrant subjects and to the first commercial flights that delivered administrators, business employees, and, ultimately, tourist voyeurs to the furthest-flung reaches of the colonial interior. Not surprisingly, much of the initial refinement of European military aircraft as dedicated instruments of state coercion took place in colonial environs.⁷ Moreover, airplanes judged obsolescent in European warfare, the RAF’s *Vildebeeste*

and Hawker Hart for instance, remained mainstays of colonial policing throughout the 1930s.⁸ Colonial empires of the early twentieth century thus had the unfortunate distinction of becoming distinct political and military spaces in which aerial strategies were tested at low risk to the crews and machines involved, and with few qualms over the human costs for the colonial populations targeted.⁹ Far from being the unfortunate side effects of aerial bombardment, the terrorisation of civilians and the collapsing of distinctions between combatant and non-combatant were integral to colonial air policing. To apply contemporary thinking about the unacceptability or immorality of 'collateral damage' made no sense in this context because such destruction was instrumental to the effectiveness of air control as perceived by its advocates.¹⁰

If the presence of aircraft in the colonies was not peculiar to the 1920s, nor could the rebellions and political violence that punctuated the new western colonialism in the Middle East of the 1920s be construed as unique. Whether one describes post-war uprisings in French Morocco and Syria, or in British Egypt and Sudan, these were all revolts against a foreign occupier that had both recent antecedents and rapid successors. Moroccan resistance to French installation of a 'protectorate' in 1912 was protracted and severe. It was another twenty years before the French Third Republic, ever eager to stress its singular aptitude for government in North Africa, formally declared the last bastions of clan resistance in Morocco's mountainous interior 'pacified' in 1933–4, only to find that the country's northern cities erupted into political violence from 1936 onward.¹¹ French imperial control in Syria was more tenuous still. It lacked any firm roots in a settler overclass or in a favoured and collaborative indigenous community akin to the Maronite Christians in neighbouring Lebanon. The French instead confronted a complex, heterogeneous society in which mass oppositional politics and nationalist sentiment had become firmly entrenched in Emir Feisal's preceding Arabist regime.¹² Adding to Syria's difficulties were the impediments to transnational commerce and freedom of movement created by the new boundaries and tariff barriers imposed by the Mandate settlements on the one hand and by a fragile *modus vivendi* with Kemalist Turkey on the other. Here, too, violent political opposition to the French presence would re-emerge, albeit episodically, until the final – and characteristically violent – end of the Mandate in late 1945.¹³ The situation was not dissimilar in Britain's Iraq Mandate, tellingly described by one high commissioner as a political fiction held together by endless renegotiation of working alliances amongst Bagdadi elites at its administrative nerve-centre and by the coercive power of British airplanes in its outlying provinces.¹⁴ So what, if anything, makes

this trio of territories – the French Moroccan Protectorate and the Syria and Iraq Mandate – distinctive ‘spaces of war’ in the 1920s? The answer is simple. What sets them apart is their status as political sites and cultural spaces in which air power was most systematically applied as a primary agent of state violence and political implantation in the aftermath of the First World War.

French air policing (I): Syria

French forces in Syria and Lebanon assigned army aircraft a number of key tasks before and after the watershed of the Syrian Revolt in 1925–26. Their responsibilities could, however, be broadly sub-divided into two: intelligence-gathering and coercive policing. Ironically, the aircraft involved had first been deployed to Syria for another job entirely. A mixture of light bombers and multi-purpose reconnaissance craft, the first squadrons to operate in what would become the French Mandate, provided close air support for conventional operations against Turkish forces. An initial consignment of French military aircraft was shipped into Port Said in 1918 to participate in the Palestine campaign. Between 1919–21 five squadrons based at Mersina, Adana, Muslimieh, and Alexandretta supported army operations against Kemalist forces in Cilicia, the disputed region that separated southern Anatolia from northern Syria.¹⁵

After the French surrendered Cilicia to sovereign Turkish control in 1922, their aircraft were redeployed southward across Syria. This marked a new phase in air operations devoted to imperial policing and intelligence collection. On 1 October 1923 the eighty military aircraft in the Levant mandates were reorganised as the 39th aviation regiment. Divided into eight squadrons, this imperial air force was headquartered in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, although its individual units were primarily based in Syria. The largest concentrations of aircraft were at Rayak (covering the Bekaa valley and the Syria-Lebanon railway), Muslimieh (covering Syria’s northern commercial centre of Aleppo as well as the Turkish frontier), and Damascus (covering approaches to the capital and the Palestine frontier).¹⁶

The underlying assumptions behind these deployments were threefold. One was that the 39th Aviation Regiment had a vital part to play in the precise demarcation of mandate boundaries, whose haziness remained an obvious focal point for dispute. A second was that major sources of potential trouble lay across these disputed frontiers – from Turkish irredentists, from clan communities artificially divided by the recent Franco-British carve-up of Levantine spoils, and from nomadic Bedouin whose

seasonal migrations defied European conventions – political, fiscal, and cultural – of neatly codified imperial space. The third assumption central to the use of French aircraft was thus quite simple: the airplane was an essential instrument of population control, part coercive, part informational. Put crudely, before planes could force people to do as imperial authorities wished, the state had to establish where these populations actually were. In Syria, as in Morocco, air policing and aerial intelligence operations therefore shaded into one another.

The aircraft used, such as the Renault-powered Bréguet 19A2, were low performance, multi-purpose machines originally developed as observation planes in the First World War. Slow but sturdy, these airplanes were lightly armed, there being little fear of encounter with other hostile aircraft. Most of this first generation of French military airplanes were mounted with two Lewis machine-guns and carried a maximum payload of sixteen 10 kilogram bombs. Their capacity to kill was considerable nonetheless. Although such planes were designed for high altitude bombardment only, their pilots favoured low altitude flying to bomb tribal encampments and strafe rebel concentrations. These low altitude runs both increased the accuracy of bombardment and maximised opportunities to chase down those fleeing on the ground. Sporting, and more specifically, hunting metaphors were commonplace in French operational reports of such attacks, an early instance of the dehumanisation of their victims. Yet, whilst such missions were certainly deadly, their political purpose was neither to eliminate declared enemies of the colonial state nor the unfortunate civilians accused of sheltering them. Much like British imperial commands, the Levant army and the Moroccan occupation corps valued the intimidating potential of air power – its ‘moral value’ – over its actual capacity to deplete enemy forces.¹⁷ In the unsettling jargon of the day, this use of force was intended to be demonstrative rather than annihilating.

Clear on paper, such fine distinctions meant little in practice. Whilst aerial bombardment was meant to affirm that geographical remoteness was no barrier to imperial control, that tyrannies of distance had been overcome thanks to the aircraft’s contraction of space, such subtleties counted for nothing next to the human and material losses inflicted. Even relatively small-scale bombardment could be devastating. Population density within the rural dwellings targeted was often high because of multi-generational extended families inside them. And it was common practice to drop incendiary bombs on timber and daub housing that turned entire villages into infernos. Furthermore, although the use of poison gas, much of it from surplus First World War stockpiles of

mustard gas, was generally avoided in attacks on civilian populations, it was deployed against dense concentrations of Rifian forces in northern Morocco with appalling consequences. That said, French operations were of lesser intensity than those conducted by the Spanish military, which resorted to chemical warfare against its Berber insurgents on a murderous, industrial scale.¹⁸

Aerial bombardments in the Levant territories, generally launched without prior warning, became a routine feature of state punishment for all forms of dissidence, from armed insurgency to non-payment of taxes during the Syrian Revolt of 1925–27. Often, the simple impulsion to flee violence was occasion enough for the use of airpower. Rural refugees and Bedouin herders trying to escape Syria's disorders by traversing mandate frontiers were sometimes dissuaded from doing so by the appearance of low-flying aircraft. Such aerial herding of colonial subjects was most intense in Syria's Jabal Druze and the country's southern border region where aircraft were assigned to deter the increasing numbers of refugees trying to cross into British-ruled Transjordan and Palestine.¹⁹ This aerial coercion was backed up by tighter restrictions on freedom of movement, internal economic migration, and, most notably, the threat to requisition all vacated property.²⁰ Such high-intensity coercion achieved minimal results. Bedouin agriculturalists and Druze refugees continued criss-crossing mandate frontiers, whether attempting to escape the violence, to avoid French retribution, or simply to find livestock grazing.²¹

The airplane may have dominated colonial airspace but its operational range was constricted by the terms of land frontiers set by the colonial powers themselves. Thus military aircraft were more rigidly confined to the territorial spaces of French colonial rule than the subject population they coerced.²² Air attacks on Hama in October 1925 and on rebel columns known to be advancing on Damascus could claim a key role in weakening Syrian resistance.²³ Moreover, the Levant Army command resorted increasingly to shows of air strength to compensate for the near collapse of the Syrian gendarmerie, many of whose Arab recruits either deserted or refused to participate in attacks on communities allegedly supportive of the rebellion.²⁴ General Dupont, appointed interim Levant high commissioner in September 1925, reportedly confided to his British liaison officer two months later that he had been converted to the 'British formula', which posited that colonial policing demanded a coercive aerial presence as its cutting edge.²⁵

Yet decisive air intervention was the exception, not the rule. Stories of heroic forced landings in hostile terrain and daring escapes by

downed air crews belied the fact that aircraft contributed more to military success without firing a shot or disgorging bomb payloads. Army support remained the foremost priority. Supply drops to roving columns and isolated garrisons under siege were vital to the projection of military force into the desert interior, enabling the Levant army to maintain a permanent presence in non-pacified areas such as the Jabal Druze and the Upper Jazirah. Planes were also used to evacuate the wounded. Indeed, the Levant army command attached particular importance to this function as troop losses mounted. The nature of insurgent warfare across the Levant was crucial here. Less well equipped than their French adversaries, from the inception of the Mandate, Syrian insurgents generally avoided open encounters where possible, preferring to concentrate their forces for surprise attacks with overwhelmingly superior numbers against roving French military columns, exposed outposts, and police patrols in isolated rural locations.²⁶ Evacuation of wounded personnel thus assumed a more critical role for the French. With General Staff approval, from 1922 sixteen Bréguet machines were duly converted for use as '*avions sanitaires*' with stowage for stretchers and medical supplies.²⁷ If aircraft were useful beasts of burden, it was their visual capacity, their ability to shrink far colonial horizons by rapid observational over-flights that most impressed civil and military authorities on the ground.²⁸ The principal use of military aircraft in Syria was to provide long-distance reconnaissance for both army operations and civil administration.²⁹

This intelligence role became more important in the early 1920s as the requirements of mandate administration increased. Aircraft provided a wealth of data for civilian officials and military commands. Reconnaissance missions speeded up the mapping of regions not yet reconnoitred by troops. The use of aerial photography enabled army cartographers to make preliminary projections about unfamiliar terrain. Military aircraft also revealed archaeological finds, a major preoccupation of the mandate authorities and a key component of French cultural policy in the Levant. The use of military aviation by archaeologists attached to the High Commission's antiquities service gave French pilots unmatched knowledge of the Syrian desert.³⁰ Flight debriefings yielded additional evidence regarding the environment over-flown. By 1924 squadrons in Syria assisted the tribal affairs specialists of the Levant army's Bedouin control service with reports of untapped grazing, water sources, and concentrations of livestock.³¹

An understanding of the physical environment was critical to the imposition and maintenance of colonial rule. Shared understanding of this basic point was to bring the officers of the French army air

force in Syria and Morocco into ever closer collaboration with the military intelligence staffs and Muslim affairs specialists of the *Service de Renseignements* (SR) in each territory. Devoted to gathering diverse information, interpreting it, and making the results available quickly to those in charge of rural imperial administration, air force and intelligence personnel wanted to know as much as possible, as rapidly as possible about the features – topographic, climatic, economic, social, and political – of the terrains they claimed to administer. Their understanding of Syria and its people was strongly influenced by their cognition of distance and time, and the consequent need to deploy available military, administrative, and economic resources effectively.³² The objective that impelled this work was a deceptively simple one: to work out where maximum political effort should be concentrated. So, too, the intelligence effort that underpinned such intelligence acquisition resolved itself into a single primary goal: the maximisation of the territories' worth to France, whether in strategic, political, or economic terms. The study of internal infrastructure offers an example of the part played by air power in this intelligence effort.

Numerous factors influenced the quality of internal infrastructure. In general terms, past administrative history, the wealth of the local population, the physical obstacles to travel, preferred trade routes, and regional economic demand governed the development of internal transportation systems and communications networks. Colonial authorities required intelligence about all of these issues in order to allocate limited resources effectively. The very speed with which such reports reached central government was revealing. Couriers were still employed in the most isolated areas, such as Southern Sudan, Morocco's Atlas Mountains, and Algeria's southern territories, where telegraph systems were confined to a handful of permanent settlements. Elsewhere, the airplane came into its own in the provision of additional forms of information to decision makers and, by doing so, accelerating the decision-making process itself.

The availability of airplanes made it progressively easier to relay environmental intelligence in France's Levant mandates, with the exception of the Upper Jazirah region in North-Eastern Syria, the remotest part of the mandate from central administration and the region least well served by reconnaissance flights. Aerial photography combined with pilots' and navigators' summaries of their observations were an essential complement to the work of the army's rural intelligence-gatherers on the ground. The Levant SR made it an early priority to compile detailed information about the climate, topography, population distribution and agriculture of Syria and Lebanon. SR maps were used to make initial

assessments of road-building projects; SR logbooks detailed Bedouin migrations and livestock pasturage; SR agronomic reports on water availability and soil quality informed agricultural diversification and forestry projects; and, by 1930, SR files on over 4,000 Syrian villages offered the fullest index of the country's ethnic composition.³³ All were enhanced by the image intelligence (from aerial reconnaissance) and the detailed observation reports from the 39th aviation regiment.

Information supplied by pilots and navigators also became integral to rural tax collection. Aerial reconnaissance of ploughed fields and large livestock herds made the work of tax collectors easier as the number of livestock held and the quantity of land farmed formed the basis for most agricultural taxation. Similarly, photographing tent encampments offered the most reliable indication to civil and military authorities alike of the location and numbers of clan affiliates grouped into a tribal confederation at any one time. Such intelligence sometimes blurred the dividing line between tax collection and punitive policing as, for example, in May 1922 when photographic reconnaissance of villages and camps of the Choueitat tribe paved the way for subsequent aerial bombardment of these sites by fourteen aircraft in punishment for the community's refusal to pay taxes. On 29 May, 188 ninety kilogram bombs were dropped on the tribe's main settlements without prior warning in a deliberate attempt to maximise the number of casualties inflicted. One hundred and eighty reportedly hit their target producing what was described in typically jaunty and euphemistic terms as 'a strong and salutary impression.'³⁴

The early parameters of air operations in the Levant placed a high value on intelligence-gathering, but, as we shall see below, French loss of control in the Jabal Druze in July 1925 demanded a reorientation in priorities. The 39th aviation regiment was intimately involved in the original outbreak of revolt amongst the Druze clans. Druze sharpshooters downed a routine reconnaissance flight south of Imtam on 13 July. The loss of this aircraft had two immediate consequences. First, it drove Commandant Tommy Martin, the SR chief in the Jabal Druze, to admit that he lacked reliable intelligence of the escalating violence amongst Druze clansmen loyal to Sultan al-Atrash in the days following the incident. Second, the decision to dispatch a slow-moving column of 166 troops, fifty-seven horses and twenty-seven mules from the Druze capital Soueida to 'fly the flag' in the southern Jabal and pick up the two aircrew shot down the week before was made with little knowledge of the disposition of rebel forces. With hindsight, the outcome was predictable. On 20 July, Captain Normand's column established camp at Kafer, south of Soueida,

to await reinforcement by rail before engaging Druze forces thought to be in and around the town of Salkhad. A single aerial reconnaissance flight over-flew the Kafer camp on the morning of 21 July, but failed to spot an approaching combined Druze and Bedouin force estimated at around 200 cavalry and 500 tribesmen under arms. Caught unawares, by nightfall the Normand column was decimated. At least eighty-nine troops were killed, including all twenty-two French personnel.³⁵

This intelligence failure was soon compounded. By the end of July much of the Jabal Druze was in rebel hands.³⁶ Access routes and communications links were cut and the Soueida garrison faced the prospect of a siege that would last sixty-one days. The Levant army command responded with a two-pronged strategy of aerial bombardment and overland reinforcement, supplemented by twelve tons of supply drops to the 700 troops of the besieged garrison.³⁷ Aircraft based at Damascus and Rayak began this air offensive, supplemented by a squadron of light bombers relocated to an advance base at Deraa in the southern desert. An observation group of six aircraft at Ezraa was designated to provide aerial reconnaissance for the projected army reinforcement.³⁸ Again, army commanders, anxious to restore control swiftly, acted without adequate intelligence from observation flights or locally based informants. Neither aerial reconnaissance nor military intelligence revealed the speed with which Sultan al-Atrash's rebel force had grown after its attack on the Normand column. By the time another larger French column under General Roger Michaud departed from Izra on the twenty mile journey to Soueida at the end of July, Druze forces were almost 10,000 strong. Once again, intelligence shortfalls proved fatal. The Michaud column was ambushed seven miles outside Soueida. Its core element of poorly trained Malagasy colonial infantry disintegrated. The smaller number of Frenchmen killed (fourteen) was eclipsed by the huge numbers of wounded and missing troops (over 800), and the loss of some 2,000 rifles.³⁹

The prospect of a nationwide rebellion on the back of two devastating military reverses in the space of a fortnight provoked disorders in Damascus and panic in outlying regions surrounding the Jabal. High Commissioner General Maurice Sarrail, an outspoken republican, loved and loathed in equal measure by supporters and opponents of the Cartel des Gauches in France, paid the price. His dismissal became inevitable once the Cartel's critics in Parliament and press pounced on evidence of the complete breakdown in the military intelligence system in Syria. General Dupont's ensuing military inquiry into the loss of the Michaud column criticised the poor quality of the colonial troops involved and the command's excessive haste in mounting the expedition. But

Duport's key findings related to intelligence. He singled out Sarrail's senior officers for their poor operational coordination. It was a criticism fuelled by the lack of either reliable image intelligence (imint) or verifiable human intelligence (humint) at the Levant army headquarters.⁴⁰ Aircraft, it seemed, had not supplied enough of the former or helped confirm much of the latter.

The results of aerial reconnaissance may not have been acted on with any consistency in the first months of the Syrian revolt, but the intensity of the aerial bombardment helped turn the military tide in the Jabal Druze back in French favour from September 1925. Newly installed as Levant army commander, General Maurice Gamelin enjoyed the benefit of fresh reinforcements, including a formidable array of artillery used to devastating effect against rebel villages and Damascus itself over the winter of 1925–26. But Gamelin and his deputy, General Charles Andréa, had learnt the intelligence lessons of the disasters in July and August. Communications between headquarters, units in the field and the Ezraa and Rayak airbases were improved. More regular reconnaissance of railway lines and arterial roads enabled columns to deploy rapidly with greater confidence. And informants' reports and prisoner interrogations were used more systematically to determine operational priorities and the targeting of villages allegedly sympathetic to the rebel cause. In short, Gamelin's command integrated air policing and intelligence into their combined operational planning. This yielded immediate results. During September alone aircraft from Ezraa and Rayak flew 661 sorties in support of a Foreign Legion relief column edging closer to Soueida. On the morning of the 17th 4,660kg of bombs were dropped; on the 22nd a further 5,515kg; and on the 23rd, aircraft attacked again as the Legionnaires routed a Druze force at Tel Hadid. The Soueida garrison was relieved a day later.⁴¹ The ability to call up aircraft to assist army engagements and pilots' capacity to pursue retreating forces indicated a decisive shift in operational priorities from intelligence-gathering to punitive air policing. This would continue until the rebellion was finally crushed in early 1927.⁴²

Gamelin's staff proposed various methods of colonial policing differentiated according to local topography, climate, and population. In mountainous, inaccessible areas of the country from the Syrian–Turkish frontier in the north to the Jabal Druze in the south, Gamelin favoured a system of fixed fortifications and regular patrolling amongst the sedentary rural population. But in the desert interior the Levant army high command rejected permanent garrison forces as impractical and prohibitively costly. Only the aircraft could maintain state power in this type

of colonial space effectively. Gamelin maintained that air operations remained the most effective sanction in desert policing until his final departure from Syria in August 1928. Aircraft could survey huge tracts of territory in search of dissident tribesmen without need for major logistical support and with relatively little concern for the obstacles of climate and terrain. Above all, punitive bombardments posed little risk of French loss of life. Threatening the resumption of air attacks was also considered a powerful deterrent to any recrudescence of rural unrest.⁴³ Indeed, by the time the Syrian Revolt began, such logic was already entrenched amongst the French military intelligence community in Syria.

During 1921, the SR estimated that 1,500 warriors of the Mawali tribe in northern Syria were active in the revolt led by Ibrahim Hananu against French control of the Aleppo vilayet.⁴⁴ In May of that year attacks by Mawali and Sbaa tribesmen on the railway linking Homs and Hama prompted pursuit operations by a French column led by General Goubeau. Although French forces utilised the railway to catch up with their adversaries, only after aerial attacks on their encampment at Kaatra did the Mawali seek an amnesty.⁴⁵ Five years later, on 9 June 1926, in the latter stages of the Syrian revolt, Ruwala Bedouin were bombarded, having ignored military warnings not to return to summer pastures in the fertile Ghouta oasis east of Damascus. Gamelin's headquarters had just declared the Ghouta a 'war zone', and irregular units were then conducting brutal forays to clear out the remaining rebel forces from the area. The arrival of several thousand armed Ruwala tribesmen was, at least according to Gamelin's analysis, pre-empted by a single aerial bombardment.⁴⁶

For all their apparent enthusiasm for the aircraft as a cost-effective salvation of colonial control, its heyday as a primary coercive instrument of state power in the Syrian mandate was relatively short-lived. French experience in this respect echoed that of the British. For one thing, the stereotypical image of tribal populations overawed by air power seems questionable.⁴⁷ In spite of greater reliance on air policing as the principal weapon of state retribution in the mid-1920s, internal security remained tenuous in British-controlled mandates. In early 1926, Captain John (Pasha) Glubb, the archetypal British tribal control administrator, then responsible for policing Iraq's south-western desert against raiding by Ikhwan fighters from Saudi Arabia, urged a move away from reliance on air power. He advocated a return to a more balanced combination of ground patrols, intelligence-gathering amongst desert tribes, fixed frontier posts, and limited use of air attacks. Aware that rumours of British intentions to punish raiding parties spread quickly amongst itinerant tribes in the Shamiyah desert, Glubb was keen to put the desert

rumour mill to good use as a deterrent. Targeted aerial bombardments and the more widespread use of armoured car patrols for ordinary frontier policing tasks made more sense in this light than dependence on air policing alone.⁴⁸

With the sharp escalation in Ikhwan raiding in 1928 it soon became equally apparent in Transjordan that aerial reconnaissance could not supplant old-style intelligence-gathering by guards deployed along a line of frontier posts and mounted camel corps visiting tribal encampments and monitoring the ebbs and flows of seasonal migration.⁴⁹ In January 1930 the air staff advocated construction of a series of frontier posts east of the Hijaz railway, linked by telegraph to the RAF command in Amman. Aircraft could then respond immediately to intelligence of incursions by raiding parties.⁵⁰ By 1930 in Britain's Middle East Mandates, as in their French neighbour's, the highpoint of 'air substitution' had passed. If anything, changes came earlier in Syria. Budgetary cuts bit deeper into imperial defence expenditure from 1926 onwards. Between 1927 and 1933 lack of funding limited the scope of French tribal control and frontier surveillance. The fortification system that Gamelin had proposed for Syria's most lawless regions remained incomplete five years after his departure. Alternative policing methods were not pursued. Instead, SR officers and *Sûreté Générale* (SG) policemen bemoaned the cancellation of plans to build a string of strategic frontier posts along Syria's eastern rim, intended to monitor movements of population.⁵¹

French air policing (II): Morocco

French air policing in the Morocco protectorate was even more sharply focused on intelligence-related tasks than in Syria. This was a reflection of the political culture of early protectorate administration over which towered the dominant presence of Morocco's first and most influential Resident-General, Louis-Hubert Lyautey. Forever identified with a distinctively French ethos of indirect rule, Lyautey aimed to minimise violent opposition to creeping French political and administrative control by exploiting intelligence about communal politics, regional particularities, and clan affiliation. Lyautey, and the coterie of long-serving colonial military intelligence officers with whom he surrounded himself, perceived Morocco as a uniquely diverse political space, a patchwork of Arab and Berber cultures in which loyalty to the Sultanate, to the clan, or to other local genealogies of belonging both prohibited outright French political control and yet facilitated ethnically-grounded policies of divide and rule. These administrators were quick to see that the aircraft would

help them make sense of it all, or, at least, help confirm or deny their pre-conceptions about the fragmentary nature of Moroccan society.

Much as in Syria, French army air squadrons in Morocco were reorganised in April 1923 into a distinct force – the 37th aviation regiment.⁵² It was, in turn, sub-divided into five groups of two squadrons distributed across Morocco's four regional commands: Fez, Meknès, Marrakech, and Taza.⁵³ Each squadron was composed of six military aircraft (the trusty Bréguet A2 in the early 1920s), plus two airplanes converted for medical evacuation. A separate photographic section was attached to each group, ensuring that aerial reconnaissance tasks were performed by specialists rather than by all-purpose crews. Image intelligence was then relayed to a central photographic reconnaissance centre (*Section centrale photographique*) for analysis and distribution to regional army commands and SR units. A similar centralised office processed meteorological data gathered by air squadrons, whilst another coordinated ground to air radio transmissions. The Moroccan *corps d'occupation* encouraged relatively junior officers and even district administrators (*commandants du cercle*) to call for air support in fulfilment of their day-to-day activities. This ranged from cartographic work and tax assessment to aerial bombardment and the ferrying of officials to the remotest corners of their administrative sub-district. Lyautey retained the sole right to authorise the permanent transfer of air forces between bases.⁵⁴

Before the Rif war spilled over into the French protectorate in April 1925 the most distinctive feature of air policing in Lyautey's Morocco was its subordination to the requirements of the *Service de Renseignements*. Lyautey integrated the use of punitive air operations into the work of tribal pacification spearheaded by the military intelligence officers that staffed Morocco's native affairs bureaux. This was a two-way process. Airmen reported the results of aerial reconnaissance direct to SR officers who, in turn, determined where reconnaissance should take place. Lyautey allowed native affairs bureaux to authorise attacks on tribal settlements either to punish dissidence or to prevent it. The physical difference between 'reprisal bombing' (*bombardements de représailles*) for acts of rebellion and 'harassment bombing' (*bombardements de harcèlement*) to compel tribal submission was perhaps marginal. Both forms of attack targeted concentrations of armed men, the destruction of property, the killing of livestock, or blockage of customary migratory routes. But, to the SR officers involved, the subtle differences of scale were crucial because the use of air power was attuned to political more than military objectives. The absolute self-assurance so characteristic of the SR's political culture conditioned an assumption that Moroccan minds

read aerial bombardment in predictable ways. Too much force was self-defeating, too little ineffective. According to SR analysts, striking the correct balance in order to advance the cause of pacification depended on careful evaluation of aerial reconnaissance from affected areas to judge the impact of bombing and strafing on popular attitudes.⁵⁵

Lyautey may have encouraged officials to make maximum use of air power, but he imposed a rigid chain of command for the authorisation of aerial attacks. All bombing operations required formal approval by the local SR chief. The entire approval process from initial request to take-off was supposed to take less than half a day, enabling military intelligence to bring force to bear as soon as intelligence of actual or potential unrest was received. It was for the SR to determine the scale and intensity of a punitive raid. Hence, for example, settlements in the Upper Moulaya region were bombed repeatedly over two days in late April and early May 1922 both to clear the way for an advancing army column and to reduce armed opposition to their advance. According to the SR staff involved, bombing saved lives on both sides: local tribes were induced to submit to French authority without a pitched battle with troops that would have left more dead than the bombing. This logic of carefully targeted aerial bombardment as part of a minimum force strategy appealed to Lyautey. As he put it, 'A single bomb that misses its target, even if it causes no damage, is more damaging to our [pacification] policy and the good name of our air force than ten successful bombardments of the most rebellious tribe.'⁵⁶ The key to colonial air policing therefore lay in its capacity to deliver quick results with pinpoint accuracy (itself a gross over-estimation of the technology available). Rapid deployment and rapid delivery of punishment promised rapid pacification of territory. Meticulous SR intelligence-gathering underpinned the whole strategy from initial assessment of reconnaissance to targeting and evaluation of results.⁵⁷

The confident expectation that air power would remain subordinate to the political needs of Morocco's native affairs bureaux was shattered by the organisational sophistication of tribal resistance encountered in the Rif war during early 1925. The imint gathered from aerial reconnaissance over Riffian positions along the northern margins of the French Moroccan zone revealed the construction of defensive works, key river crossings bridged and supply roads constructed. By mid-February, military staff in Rabat knew that an offensive was likely against the French defensive perimeter north of Taza. According to Lyautey's chief of staff, Colonel Heusch, the French response was entirely consistent with an intelligence-led strategy of divide and rule. Berber tribes along the

northern banks of the Ouergha River valley were to be coaxed or cajoled into submission, thus creating a buffer to the southerly penetration of Riffian dissidence.⁵⁸ But, as we have seen, contrary to SR expectations, Berber populations were not easily cowed by aerial bombardment. Moreover, as Riffian forces advanced deeper into the French protectorate threatening to descend on the key strategic towns of Taza and Fez, so military demands grew for more intensive bombing.

By June 1925 the Lyautey model of air policing as an element in the politics of pacification was surrendered to a more conventional military approach in which bombs and machine-guns were used to kill as many enemy forces and livestock as possible. The 37th air regiment was reinforced, first to 112 aircraft, and then to 160. The reinforcements, which for the first time included heavy bombers, were assigned to close air support of troops on the ground, partly to assist the land offensive and partly for want of clear targets further behind the frontline.⁵⁹ To this end, an army corps made up of two infantry divisions, one (largely Moroccan) drawn from the Rhine occupation army, the other a composite force of Armée d'Afrique units in Tunisia, was assembled in late July under General Boichut, army commander in Algeria. These were supplemented by two levies of Moroccan irregulars, some 6,500 men, recruited in the name of the Sharif as auxiliaries to the main army force.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, SR staff gathered fresh intelligence on the tribal allegiance of the principal Berber clans in the Rif heartland. Their reports provided the basis for a renewed wave of aerial sorties intended to deplete rebel numbers and destroy their means of agricultural subsistence, thus denying Abd el-Krim the means to replenish his frontline harkas.⁶¹ Air bombardments were therefore authorised deep in the Rif interior during the campaign's final stages in the early months of 1926.⁶²

There was, however, a law of diminishing returns to repeated bombing of defenceless targets, even if these missions were launched in response to precise intelligence. Rebel bands began to anticipate the arrival of punitive bombardments, civilian populations worked out where best to hide, and, over time, greater familiarity with air policing nurtured popular contempt for it. This was certainly the view of Gilbert Mackereth, who observed the rapid escalation of the Rif war from his vantage point as vice-consul in Fez. During late 1925 he noted a subtle shift in French targeting of dissentient Berber tribes. As these tribal forces became more adept at avoiding air attack, their livestock bore the brunt of subsequent bombings. Far from merely selecting the softest of all targets, the killing of animals represented a fundamental shift in tactics from control of space to control of resources. The underlying strategy – to sever the links

between pastoral communities and rebel bands – remained the same, however. The SR calculated that depletion of Riffian herds would undermine the economic basis of rural rebellion.⁶³

Lyautey's premature departure as Moroccan Resident and commander-in-chief, although attributable in part to political clashes with Paul Painlevé's administration, also reflected his disenchantment with a strategy of overwhelming French firepower that threatened to unravel years of pacification. But the air policing ideas implanted over several years did not die overnight. Disappointed with their new role, on 17 July 1925, Colonel Armengaud, commander of the 37th aviation regiment, recommended that his aircraft be used as a means of force projection rather than close air support. The essence of Armengaud's scheme was simple: to mount exemplary strikes against the settlements of the two main dissident clans, the Beni Zeroual and Beni Uriaghel, rather than to intensify the rhythm of bombardments across the entire northern front. As he concluded, 'the problem comes from the Rif, and it is there that the remedy lies. Hit the source of Riffian arms and their prestige, and peace will be assured.'⁶⁴ Here was a classic reassertion of SR thinking, of air power as a component of an intelligence-led strategy.

In practice, its message of limited bombardment got lost amid the shake-up of command that followed Lyautey's departure in September. Under his successor as commander, fellow Marshal, Philippe Pétain, Rif settlements were targeted, but only as part of a wider strategy of maximum firepower in which the scope of air attacks widened. French army air force squadrons in French North Africa gradually assumed a dual role of 'territorial defence' based on internal policing and frontier protection.⁶⁵ Field commanders rather than military intelligence advisers determined the use of aircraft in Morocco until Rif resistance collapsed in 1926, a change that marked a significant departure in the relationship between air power and colonial policing. Whereas under Lyautey air policing formed part of a counter-insurgency strategy driven by the military intelligence community, Pétain imposed a sharp distinction between the role of aircraft in war and their use in more normal times. Once rebellion occurred, the air force had to meet the military demands of frontline commanders.⁶⁶ The SR might still advise but it could no longer determine the nature of air operations. Pétain's reassertion of the subordinate role of aircraft to land operations, and his firm belief that air power was a complement to land offensives and not a replacement for them, echoed a broader debate in France. Argument would persist throughout the inter-war years between the advocates of an independent air force capable of mounting a strategic air offensive

and their critics who insisted that aircraft should remain confined to an army support role.⁶⁷

In French Morocco, as elsewhere, the army won out. In the last years of Moroccan tribal pacification, between 1926–34, aircraft reverted to their role as adjuncts to the native affairs bureaux, providing intelligence through reconnaissance and early warning of dissidence to command outposts. But when major ground operations took place, this link with military intelligence officers became harder to maintain because front-line commanders then took priority in assigning air-policing tasks.⁶⁸

Iraq and British ‘air substitution’

When it comes to comparing French with British air policing in Mandate Iraq similarities clearly outweigh differences. Once again, we need to provide some institutional context to the development of what would become a highly coercive, often terrorising, form of social control. On 14 February 1921, Lloyd George’s coalition Cabinet approved the creation of a Colonial Office department to oversee Britain’s expanded interests in the Middle East, the newly-minted Mandates in particular. As Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill seized the opportunity to augment his Ministry’s jurisdiction at the expense of Whitehall’s more established Middle Eastern troika – the Foreign Office, the War Office and, above all, the India Office. Churchill found a key ally in this jockeying for bureaucratic influence: Chief of the Air Staff Sir Hugh Trenchard, pioneer of what would come to be known as imperial ‘air substitution’. The Air Marshal worked hand-in-glove with Churchill at the Cairo conference in late March 1921 during which the division of the Middle East’s administrative spoils was thrashed out.⁶⁹

The conference, remembered in the Iraqi context primarily for its affirmation of the decision to install the Hashemite Emir Feisal as ruler of the new mandate, actually spent rather longer debating two other issues.⁷⁰ One was the pressing need to economise on defence costs by reducing the size of Mesopotamia’s imperial garrison. The other was the equally urgent requirement to contain Kurdish separatist rebellion in northern Iraq whilst stamping out the remaining embers of revolt across much of the country’s Shia heartland in the south. Trenchard’s air substitution scheme was welcomed as the comprehensive remedy. A permanent presence of five RAF squadrons would, he promised, permit the reduction of the army garrison to a single brigade rather than the twelve infantry battalions and full cavalry regiment otherwise envisaged. A levy force recruited from the Assyrian Christian refugees in northern Iraq would

work alongside the RAF fire-fighting dissent as the new Mandate took shape.⁷¹ Airplanes, bombs and loyalist irregulars, it seemed, offered a miracle cure for problems of limited reserves and unlimited rebellion with the added advantage of forging another link in the chain of imperial air communications between London, India and the Far East.⁷²

The success of Trenchard's solution, whilst grounded in its money-saving, high technology appeal, was further assisted by the multiple uncertainties surrounding Mandate government. Still unresolved were the long-term status of the Middle East Mandates, their likely socio-political development and the levels of popular opposition that would arise once it became clearer that the Mandates were very much a part of Britain's imperium.⁷³ Neither the respective proportions of local to imperial security forces, nor their respective roles had been determined. The formulation of viable 'Defence Schemes' for Iraq and Palestine were ultimately conferred on the new Colonial Office department in July 1922. From the outset, discussion focused on the matter of suppressing internal order through 'convenient and practical' means.⁷⁴

If the coercive arm of Britain's aerial presence figured largest amongst Whitehall strategic planners, its political utility and cultural possibilities featured more prominently in the thinking of the Iraq Mandate's local British architects. Gertrude Bell, renowned as the muse to Sir Percy Cox's Mesopotamian administration and an early sponsor of Prince Feisal as Iraq's putative monarch, recycled a good deal of the cultural stereotypes about Arab social groups, the irredeemable shortcomings of Ottoman rule, and the intrinsic lawlessness of the three vilayets that would be conjoined to form the Iraq Mandate in 1920–21. Information gathered both from aerial reconnaissance and by the first political officers appointed to various Iraqi provincial centres tended, if anything, to confirm rather than confound her presumptions and those of the administration she served. The Ottoman government, it was asserted, had never mobilised the cooperation of tribal sheikhs. Yet this was the only way, Bell insisted, to maintain to writ of central authority amidst the perennial storms of inter-tribal feuding and sectarian rivalry. The Ottoman agrarian system, meanwhile, fomented disorder because it ignored the landholding customs and grazing rights that traditionally governed land usage in Iraq. Overflying Iraq indicated the close correlation between natural resources and rural demography. Aerial reconnaissance photographs lent weight to Bell's argument that understanding the connections between agrarian practices and the local reach of sheikhs' customary authority was all. To Bell's evident satisfaction, Britain's first Iraq Revenue Commissioner, Henry Dobbs, studied tribal custom and agricultural distribution down

the Tigris Valley, his recommendations forming the basis for eventual tax collection in collaboration with local sheikhs.⁷⁵

Administering Iraq proved tougher in practice. Behind Bell's picture of rational, ethnographically-oriented administration conducted in sympathy with customary forms of agriculture and commerce lay another story entirely. The first British political officers sent to implement this supposedly enlightened policy of sheikh-based local government were either outmanoeuvred by their chosen clients as in Hillah and Samawah or overwhelmed by the scale of local opposition as in the Shi'ite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Far from containing the disorder in Southern Iraq, these reprisal actions contributed to the eruption of more widespread rebellion throughout much of the Shia-dominated regions of southern-central Iraq during 1920.⁷⁶ Martial law remained in force throughout much of the region and the garrison at Kufah, near Najaf, faced a three-month siege before it was eventually relieved on 17 October. The concomitant submission of Najaf itself was the prelude to collective punishments dispensed by imperial troops, including community fines and the dynamiting of dissentient villages, which continued until well into the following year.⁷⁷

Ironically, the manifest failure of the first experiments in British administration in southern and northern Iraq played into the hands of the enthusiasts for air policing less as an instrument of collaborative government than as a weapon of war. Aerial bombardment of allegedly recalcitrant and previously inaccessible villages in the Shia marshlands persisted throughout the early 1920s, supplanting the use of ground forces or police. So much so that a well rehearsed script of official denial was soon written; there were three parts to it. First, steps were taken to ensure that initial calls for punitive air action came from the local Arab government official. The fact that their British Special Service Officer, or SSO, for their district took the critical decision was concealed under the mantle of 'advice' given. Second, it was further maintained that warning flights and leaflet drops threatening future bombardment were generally sufficient to curb disorder. Third, and finally, when civilian deaths occurred, these were excused on the grounds that casualties would have been incommensurately heavier if ground troops were employed. Hence, the well-worked paradox that aerial bombing represented minimum force imperial policing at its best. The very fact that air attacks were limited in duration and extent prevented the deeper popular antagonism to government from Bagdad, liable to arise from protracted military occupation of a much wider area.⁷⁸

None of these arguments withstood close scrutiny. The decisive role of SSOs, usually RAF officers themselves, in determining air attacks was

obvious. The suggestion that purely deterrent flights and leafletting worked well was belied by the mounting evidence of actual bombardments. And questions were even asked in the House of Commons about the apparent correlation between target selection and the progress of tax collection, a connection that the Bagdad High Commission emphatically denied.⁷⁹ In characteristically euphemistic language, the Colonial Office did concede that 'local officials', increasingly impressed by the ease with which Iraq's aircraft could be deployed, 'are apt to ask for their help in circumstances in which police could more properly be used'. Indeed, such was the preference for aircraft that the nascent Iraqi army remained under-utilised and, consequently, under-developed.⁸⁰ Most strikingly, Shi'ite resentment of mandate administration simmered on after prominent 'ulama from Najaf and Karbala were banished in 1923. Indeed, the threat of a renewed Shia uprising was deemed sufficiently pressing for Air Headquarters in Bagdad to compile a list of urban and 'tribal' bombing targets in Shi'ite districts, its contents revisited when rumours of unrest peaked over the spring and summer of 1927.⁸¹ Meanwhile, far to the north, sustained and intensive attacks within Iraq's northern Sulaimaniyah district on Kurdish villages allegedly sympathetic to rebel leader Sheikh Mahmoud steadily intensified prior to their temporary suspension in September 1924.⁸² Settlements outlying Halabja, a name that stirs recognition of indiscriminate latter day government reprisal, were all targeted because some of their menfolk had joined Mahmoud's forces. But these villages were also typical in their apparent resilience to the supposedly decisive impact of air attack. Such were levels of dissent here that on 16 September 1924 the RAF dropped proclamations warning residents that 'their homes will be subjected to severe aerial punishment without further notice'. Put differently, all pretence of selective targeting within individual settlements would be dropped.⁸³ Bombings of the villages of Yelampeh, Gul and Khormal, quickly followed by the burning of undamaged homes by levy forces over the subsequent fortnight left at least fifteen dead.⁸⁴

To these air actions within Iraq's two most actively dissentient regions, the bombardment of nomadic Bedouin, often for unauthorised movements across the Mandate's invisible and artificial boundaries, must be added. Reported under the headings of 'tribal control' or 'tribal policing', these attacks were typically justified either as punishment for inter-clan feuding and livestock theft, or as preventive measures against them. Once more, the Orientalist presumptions behind the use of aircraft in this way were easily discerned. Technologically unfamiliar, culturally alien, and capable of rapid, unheralded intervention, aircraft were

thought capable of overawing herding communities in a way that slow-moving troops or police could not. The bomb as instrument of state vengeance was thus viewed as potentially decisive not only in controlling rural population movement, but in breaking what was depicted as an otherwise endless cycle of raids and counter-raids between nomadic groups. An added advantage was the availability of aerial bombardment as an instant riposte.⁸⁵ In this sense, punitive bombing did not replace the more time-consuming business of gathering ethnographic intelligence about nomadic clan affiliations, livestock rearing, and the underlying grievances – usually related to barred access to grazing and water resources – that triggered violence within and between Bedouin communities. Instead, it was supposed to complement it. Far from the painstaking work being done in Iraq's southern desert by tribal control officers such as John 'Pasha' Glubb being antithetical to air attacks, 'air control' and 'tribal policing' supposedly advanced hand in hand. The more comprehensive the knowledge bank built up by the former, the more effective the punishment meted out by the latter was expected to be. The supreme irony here was that so much of the alleged misbehaviour that incurred reprisal bombing was the direct outcome of the imposition of mandates, which, as late as 1926, still lacked defined frontiers, much less any consensually agreed rights of access to the natural resources on which Bedouin survival depended.⁸⁶

Increasing use of air forces to enforce frontier boundaries and regulate population movement was also attuned to the geo-political rivalry with France for imperial supremacy in the fertile and resource-rich arc of Middle Eastern territory stretching from Iraqi Kurdistan in the north-east to the junction between Syria's Jabal Druze and British-administered Transjordan in the south-west.⁸⁷ Whether in regard to Sheikh Mahmoud's supporters finding refuge in French Syria in the early 1920s or to dissentient Druze clansmen congregating in and around Azrak in Transjordan, air intelligence and aerial pursuit across desert frontiers became critical to the reprisal actions and reciprocal accusations traded between the two Mandate authorities.⁸⁸ Within Iraq, meanwhile, the underlying fact that aerial coercion had become an essential justification for a continued British presence in Bagdad government was only rarely acknowledged. Sir Henry Dobbs, elevated from Revenue Commissioner to High Commissioner, bucked the trend in his valedictory telegram sent to the Colonial Office on the eve of his departure from Bagdad on 4 December 1928. 'Iraq', he admitted, remained a political and cultural fiction. Its foreign King, imported by the British, had not struck 'local roots; its national lacked accomplishment; and its

political elite commanded no respect beyond the confines of Bagdad. The strength of the Administration,' Dobbs continued,

... rests almost solely on the knowledge of British support and control and on the fear inspired by British aeroplanes and armoured cars in the plains and by the Assyrian Levies helped by British aeroplanes in the Kurdish hills... If the Royal Air Force were to be withdrawn, but the British alliance [with Iraq] and British powers of inspection and remonstrance remained, the Iraq administration (though badly crippled) might survive, because the people would expect the re-entry of British forces on emergency. If both disappeared, the Government of Iraq would, I believe, in a few months, either vanish altogether or remain clinging desperately to a strip of territory along the Tigris between Samarra and Kut, the whole of the rest of the country falling away.⁸⁹

Two years later, facing the prospect of withdrawal once a delayed Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Independence was eventually implemented, the Air Staff returned to the same theme. Internal order, they insisted, could not be entrusted to a Bagdad government. Aside from its sectarian bias, Feisal's administration would be overwhelmed by Iraq's complexity. 'The area is too vast, the racial feuds are too bitter, the temper of the tribesmen is too truculent...'. Trenchard's original air substitution plans, now reinforced by almost a decade of Air Force-directed regional administration, still held good, meaning, in practice. Because the British had only just begun training up an Iraqi air force (and the Iraqi governmental turn to Italy as an alternative aerial sponsor still lay in the future) a continuing RAF presence was essential. Without 'adequate Air Force... all responsible opinion in Iraq agrees that the Government will be unable to maintain the present standard of internal security, which must revert to the low level it stood under the Turks.'⁹⁰ With this neat, self-justificatory tautology, British air policy in Iraq was thus brought full circle, the prevailing political and cultural assumptions behind the initial implementation of air substitution now remobilised to caution against its abandonment. In this reading of events, only Britain's air force passed the test of modernity; the Iraq government it served having failed it.

Conclusion

Frederick Cooper has noted that colonial state violence was both affirmation of the strength and the frailty of empires. Terrorisation through

aerial bombardment remained a method of choice for colonial governments from the early 1900s to the final days of European rule. Yet, Cooper reminds us of the other side of this coercive coin. 'This terrify-and-move-on aspect of colonial control reflected the weakness of *routinised* administration and policing in colonial territories and the need to keep the costs of administration and discipline low, whatever the claims of civilizing missions or rule of law.'⁹¹ Use of military aviation to suppress disorder in 1920s Morocco, Syria and Iraq the 1920s typifies this duality. On the one hand, uncontested air attacks underlined European control of colonial space. On the other, such operations were valued precisely because they helped conceal or correct the weakness, in some cases, the absence, of effective administrative control on the ground.

Aircraft typically mounted punitive operations when civil order threatened to break down, or when it had already done so. And this 'before' or 'after' aspect of air policing generally depended on the quality of incoming intelligence about likely sources of dissent. Even when 'shows of strength' took place without actual use of force, their underlying rationale was to deter incipient Mandate unrest. All too frequently, aircraft were called in, sometimes on the whim of district political officers, after disorders had already begun. In this sense, the more widespread appearance of military aircraft in Middle Eastern airspace merely signalled that fear of rebellion or overthrow remained a constant preoccupation of the colonial state.

As a seemingly decisive weapon operating in a distinct spatial dimension, colonial military aircraft also remind us of the dangers consequent upon security force adoption of new technologies of political control without the existence of legal restraints or established societal norms to limit their usage.⁹² In the absence of such regulatory mechanisms there was little to counter-balance the gradual evolution of increasingly deadly weapons and murderous strategies. For all the administrative euphemisms and rhetorical excuses used to conceal it, one of the most striking aspects of colonial air policing is the indiscriminate nature of the violence meted out. Rarely did the killing of innocents elicit legal consequences or, apparently, significant doubts amongst its perpetrators. Indeed, Priya Satia has made clear that dedicated proponents of aerial bombardment against defenceless colonial populations performed quite staggering feats of mental gymnastics in order to justify such actions – at least in their own minds – as being in tune with the ways of warfare in the Arab world and consistent with the precepts of Arab-Muslim cultures.⁹³ Ironically, the intensive aerial response to

rebellion in Syria, Morocco and Iraq eventually declined because of slowly dawning official recognition that its advocates had over-estimated its effectiveness. Military solutions to the unending dilemmas of control over colonial space were intrinsically temporary, whatever the technological form involved.

Notes

1. On the temporal shifts between indiscriminate and selective state violence in the setting of domestic insurgency, colonial or otherwise, see Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, 2006), chapters 6–7, especially pp. 170–2, pp. 207–9.
2. Phillip S. Meilinger, 'The Historiography of Airpower: Theory and Doctrine', *Journal of Military History*, 64:2 (2000), pp. 471–2. Claudio S. Segre, 'Giulio Douhet: Strategist, Theorist, Prophet?' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 15/3 (1992), pp. 351–66. Mussolini appointed Douhet as Under-Secretary for Aeronautics in 1922.
3. Priya Satia, 'The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia', *American Historical Review*, 111/1 (2006), pp. 26–32.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
5. Susan R. Grayzel, "'The Souls of Soldiers": Civilians under Fire in First World War France', *Journal of Modern History* 78 (September 2006), pp. 595–7.
6. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005), p. 157.
7. Michael Paris, 'Air Power and Imperial Defence', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24/2 (1989), pp. 209–25; Michael Paris, 'The First Air Wars: North Africa and the Balkans, 1911–13', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26/1 (1991), pp. 97–109. David Killingray, "'A Swift Agent of Government": Air Power in British Colonial Africa, 1916–1939', *Journal of African History*, 25/4 (1984), pp. 429–44. Charles Townshend, 'Civilisation and "Frightfulness": Air Control in the Middle East Between the Wars', in C. Wrigley (ed.), *Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics* (London, 1986), pp. 142–62.
8. David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control. The Royal Air Force, 1919–1939* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 140–9.
9. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*, pp. 184–207; Jafna L. Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground: The Importance to the Royal Air Force of its Role in Iraq, 1919–32', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13/2 (1985), pp. 157–84.
10. Satia, 'In Defense of Inhumanity', p. 34.
11. Archives Nationales (AN), Paris, Louis-Hubert Lyautey Papers, 475AP/189, 'Les dernières étapes de la pacification de l'Atlas central', 13 October 1933; 'La pacification de l'Anti-Atlas', 4^e trimestre 1933. Moshe Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco. Colonialism and its Consequences* (London, 2000), pp. 146–61; William A. Hoisington jnr., *The Casablanca Connection, French Colonial Policy, 1936–1943* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1984), pp. 40–73.
12. James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties. Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, 1998), part I; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial*

- Citizens. Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York, 2000), chapter 4. For the Maronite comparison, see Jennifer M. Dueck, 'Educational Conquest: Schools as a Sphere of Politics in French Mandate Syria, 1936–1946', *French History*, 20/4 (2006), pp. 442–8.
13. Service Historique de l'Armée de terre (SHA), Vincennes, Série 4H Levant, carton 4H360/D1, EMA-2, Commandant Supérieur des Troupes du Levant, situation reports, May–June 1945. The National Archives (TNA), London, FO 371/45580, E5800/8/89, War Office report, 'Historical Record: Levant, 29 May–11 June 1945'. Aviel Roshwald, *Estranged Bedfellows: Britain and France in the Middle East during the Second World War* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 190–212. Martin Thomas, 'Divisive Decolonization: The Anglo-French Withdrawal from Syria and Lebanon, 1944–46', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28/3 (2000), pp. 71–90.
 14. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, part II, series B: *Turkey, Iran and the Middle East* (Washington, 1986), vol. 6: Eastern Affairs, Jan. 1928–June 1930, enclosure to doc. 206, Sir Henry Dobbs to Leo Amery, 4 Dec. 1928.
 15. Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air (SHAA), Vincennes, 1C31/D2, Levant army, 'Historique du 39^e régiment d'aviation, 1919–1930'.
 16. SHAA, 1C31/D2, Commandant Laquinaire report, 'Notes sur l'aéronautique du Levant (1922)'.
 17. SHAA, 1C8/D3, no. 1469/3, Commandant des troupes de l'Euphrate à Lamothe (Aleppo), Report 7/3, 29 May 1922; 2C35D2, Forces aériennes françaises au Maroc, Lyautey memo., 'Instruction sur l'organisation et l'emploi de l'aviation au Maroc', 1 April 1923.
 18. Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace. Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 123–56. For contemporary debates about the ethics of chemical warfare, albeit largely confined to consideration of conflicts between 'civilized' nations, see Tim Cook, "'Against God-inspired conscience": the perception of gas warfare as a weapon of mass destruction, 1915–1939', *War and Society*, 18/1 (2000), pp. 47–69.
 19. It should be noted that larger numbers of Syrian refugees, many of them from Damascus and numbering around 25,000, crossed into Lebanon in late 1925. Syrian refugees, concentrated in and around Beirut and Tripoli, received assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross. See Dzovinar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie humanitaire. Les acteurs européens et la scène proche-orientale pendant des entre-deux-guerres* (Paris, 2004), chapter 8.
 20. TNA, AIR 23/90, Major Salisbury-Jones Syrian Desert intelligence report to GHQ Jerusalem, 8 September 1926; FO 371/11508, E5509/12/89, Damascus Consul, to Foreign Office, 15 September 1926.
 21. TNA, CO 733/132/1, Amman Residency report, 5 August 1927.
 22. Occasional French over-flights of Druze refugee encampments at Azrak in Transjordan provoked angry British protests, see: CO 733/131/1, no. 451/27, Palestine High Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, Leo Amery, 14 January 1927.
 23. Omissi, *Air Power*, 193–5.
 24. AIR 23/88, BL/S/10, Major Salisbury-Jones, Beirut intelligence report to GHQ Palestine, 28 October 1925. Salisbury-Jones, the British Liaison Officer to the Levant high commission, reported overhearing Captain Carbillot on

- the telephone at French military intelligence HQ complaining at incoming reports of Syrian gendarmerie desertions.
25. AIR 23/88, Salisbury-Jones to GHQ Palestine, 23 November 1925.
 26. Jean-David Mizrahi, *Genèse de l'État mandataire. Service de Renseignements et bandes armées en Syrie et au Liban dans les années 1920* (Paris, 2003), especially chapters 4, 5, and 10.
 27. SHAA, IC8/D3, 'Note sur les évacuations sanitaires par avions', n.d. 1922.
 28. It bears repeating that the sheer geographical vastness of the colonial empire still presented the most fundamental political challenge to imperial administration. See Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 28.
 29. SHAA, 1C8/D1, 39^e régiment d'aviation, 'Résumé des principales questions traitées par le Commandant d'aéronautique au cours de soumission à la 12^e Direction', 11 September 1924.
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 31. SHA, 7N4192, Comité Consultatif de Défense des Colonies, manuel colonial 1923–1925, chapter IV: 'Organisation des unités auxiliaires spéciales au pays', 31 Jan. 1925. Philip S. Khoury, 'The tribal shaykh, French tribal policy, and the nationalist movement in Syria between two world wars', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18/2 (1982), pp. 182–6.
 32. Jean-David Mizrahi, 'Le renseignement français dans le Levant des années 1930: environnement intellectuel et dispositif cognitive', in Frédéric Guelton and Abdil Bicer, *Naissance et évolution du renseignement dans l'espace Européen*, (Vincennes, Service Historique de la Défense, 2006), pp. 277–94.
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 35. SHAA, 1C8/D4, no. 78/AM, Commandant Tommy Martin report, 'L'affaire de Kafer', 21 July 1925.
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 39. Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate. The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (London, 1987), pp. 151–2.
 40. Duport's findings were presented to the Chamber of Deputies army commission at the War Ministry on 24 February 1926: AN, Paul Painlevé papers, 313AP/248: Syrie 1925–26, 'Rapport du Général Duport sur les événements militaires de 26 juillet au août 1925'.
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 42. See the 39th aviation regiment operational files in SHAA, IC8/D4: 'Répression de la révolte Druze, 1925–1927'.
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44. SHAT, 20N1089/D1, SR bulletin de renseignements no. 175, 12 May 1921. For details of the Hananu revolt, see Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 102–10.
45. SHAT, 20N1089/D1, SR bulletin de renseignements no. 176, 13 May 1921, and SR rapport hebdomadaire no. 21, 19–25 May 1921.
46. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE), Quai d'Orsay, Paris, série E, Syrie-Liban 1918–1929, vol. 274, no. 2190–9/II, EMA Section d'Etudes Afrique, bulletin de renseignements des questions musulmanes, 1 July 1926. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 175–6, 199.
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69. AIR 9/19, 'Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12 to 30, 1921'.
70. TNA, WO 32/5233, Comments regarding Cabinet 14(21): Mesopotamia and Middle East situation, 22 March 1921.
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4

Addressing the Past: The Foreign Office and the Vetting of Diplomatic and Ministerial Memoirs during the Years between the World Wars

Keith Hamilton

The past, L.P. Hartley once mused, 'is a foreign country'.¹ It is certainly a land few foreign ministries have felt free to disregard, especially when, as in the years between the world wars, its charting has been subject to international dispute. Hence the importance generally attached by diplomats to the keeping of full and accurate records. Hence, too, the desire of ministers and officials to exercise some degree of control over what might be revealed to the public in the recollections of those intimately involved in the making and conduct of foreign policy. In Britain the vetting of diplomatic memoirs intended for publication fell during the inter-war years within the administrative purview of the Librarian's Department of the Foreign Office. This was a logical arrangement. The Library, one of the oldest divisions of the Foreign Office, had custody of the diplomatic archives prior to their transfer to the Public Record Office, and drawing upon these and an ever-expanding collection of printed works, it had acted throughout the nineteenth century as a records and research department.² During the Great War its work was supplemented by the Office's acquisition of a Historical Section, charged with preparing specialist studies on a variety of issues pertinent to the anticipated peace conference, and of a Political Intelligence Department (PID), to whose work historians and other academics contributed. Neither survived into the 1920s – they were both axed as a result of post-war spending cuts.³ But the Foreign Office could not so easily dispose of the recent past,

particularly as reparations, one of the key features of the peace settlement, were explicitly linked to the Versailles treaty's attribution to Germany and its allies of responsibility for the war. Great power diplomacy was thereafter inextricably bound up with the contemporary debate on the origins of the war and the legal and moral foundations of the peace.

To assist it in gathering up detailed information on the historical background to the various issues arising out of the peace treaties the Foreign Office retained the services of James Headlam-Morley. Formerly the assistant director of the PID and before that an employee of the Propaganda Bureau at Wellington House, in May 1920 Headlam-Morley was appointed historical adviser to the Office.⁴ At a time when the attention of historians and journalists was focused on the masses of archival material released by the authorities in Berlin and governments elsewhere, he saw it as his duty to keep himself fully acquainted with everything that was published bearing on the origins of the war. 'It is', he argued in justification of his own position, 'clearly necessary that there should be someone in the Foreign Office who is watching the whole controversy and is able from time to time to draw the attention of the Office to publications which might appear to impugn the good faith of the British Government and to suggest what action should be taken.'⁵ This in practice involved his encouraging greater openness in the way the Office responded to public criticism of British diplomacy. He had already won its consent to his own and two PID colleagues' participation in a multi-volume study of the peace conference being prepared under the auspices of the newly-formed Institute of International Affairs; and he was to play a key role in persuading the government to agree in 1924 to the appointment of two independent historians, G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, as editors of what eventually became the *British Documents on the Origins of the War*. Meanwhile, former members of the Historical Section were permitted to publish expurgated versions of the *Peace Handbooks* on which they had worked.⁶

The management of the past also involved Headlam-Morley in seeking to influence the revelations of former ministers and retired and serving diplomats. A propagandist as well as an accomplished historian, he was keenly aware of the importance of not exposing the Foreign Office to undue criticism, and he freely admitted with regard to contributions by officials to the peace conference history, that he had himself 'cut out a certain number of passages which [he] thought should not be published'.⁷ But it was his colleague, the classicist and Office librarian, Stephen Gaselee, who was in the first instance responsible for ensuring that the literary pretensions of officials were kept within the bounds of

diplomatic propriety. At a time when politicians, leading figures in the armed services, and other participants in the war and the international crises which preceded it, seemed all too ready to rush into print, he had to cope with far more than ambassadorial recollections. Like other government departments, the Foreign Office could look to the Official Secrets Acts of 1889, 1911 and 1920, as a mechanism by which to deter and punish the publication of information contrary to the public interest. Restraint was also exercised through the Diplomatic Service regulations, No. 20 of which required both serving and retired officials to secure the foreign secretary's permission before publishing either 'observations on, or accounts of, experiences in countries in which they [were] or [had] been officially employed', or 'any information obtained by them in their official capacity'. Infringements could, it was indicated, affect a diplomat's pension.⁸

The regulation (originally No. 22) had been introduced following an earlier breach of diplomatic etiquette. In November 1902 Sir Horace Rumbold, who until 1899 had been British ambassador in Vienna, had published an article in *The National Review*, in which he had expressed his personal fears about German hostility towards Britain and revealed the substance of a conversation with the Emperor Francis Joseph regarding press caricatures of Queen Victoria. The article, about which questions were asked in the Austrian Reichsrath, irritated King Edward VII and caused some embarrassment to the government, particularly as its publication coincided with a visit to London by the German emperor. The law officers of the crown advised against prosecution under the Official Secrets Act. Nonetheless, Lord Lansdowne, the then foreign secretary, issued a strong reprimand.⁹ 'It is', he informed Rumbold, 'clearly improper that a retired Diplomatic Servant of the Crown should assume the right of making such publications without even obtaining the permission of his own Government.'¹⁰ The episode could hardly be said to have threatened the security of the state. But a matter of principle was involved and Rumbold was regarded as having broken a hitherto unwritten convention regarding the confidentiality of such diplomatic exchanges.

The Foreign Office exhibited similar concerns when, in 1921 *At the Supreme War Council*, Captain Peter E. Wright's account of the politics of wartime strategy was published. Wright was not a diplomat and, unlike his late twentieth-century namesake, the author of the controversial memoir *Spycatcher*, he had no connection to the British intelligence and security services.¹¹ He had served during the latter stages of the war as assistant secretary of the Supreme War Council at Versailles and drawing largely upon his recollection of events and War Office correspondence, he used

his book both to extoll the wartime leadership of David Lloyd George and to denigrate the conduct of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Field Marshal Sir William Robertson and Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, and their handling of the military situation in France during 1917–18. None of this had much bearing on current British foreign policy. But in one instance he reported, without having first secured Foreign Office permission, intelligence supplied to the British embassy in Petrograd by a Polish informant regarding disclosures made in a secret session of the Austro-Hungarian Delegations on the military exhaustion of the Central Powers.¹² The casualty figures thus revealed had been sent to the Foreign Office in a ‘Most Confidential’ telegram of 20 February 1918, which Wright cited, but misdated, in a footnote reference. There was little in any of this which could be said to pose any harm to British interests: the Foreign Office’s telegraphic cypher was not compromised and, as Gaselee expected, the Pole in question was ‘beyond the reach of Austrian or German vengeance’.¹³ However, the War Office was building a case for the prosecution of Wright and sought confirmation from the Foreign Office that he had not been given permission to refer to the said telegram.

Sir Eyre Crowe, the permanent undersecretary, agreed that it was ‘high time that an example was made of one of these delinquents’. ‘Unfortunately’, he added in a minute of 12 April 1921, ‘the habit of committing these indiscretions is not confined to minor and temporary officials, and a bad example has been set by admirals and field marshals.’ His political master, Lord Curzon, had no such scruples. ‘If we cannot cut off the head of a poppy’, he scribbled, ‘that is no reason why we should not decapitate a daisy.’¹⁴ Much, however, to Gaselee’s personal regret,¹⁵ Lloyd George, who remained prime minister until the autumn of the following year, shared Crowe’s doubts about the merits of taking action against Wright when so much had already been disclosed by senior officers. He had, in any case, reason to be grateful to Wright, from whose assistance he would later benefit in the writing of his war memoirs, and whom he would praise as a ‘brilliant witness of the proceedings at Versailles’.¹⁶ When the question of prosecuting Wright was raised in the Commons on 18 April, Lloyd George reminded the house that the former assistant secretary was not alone in recently publishing information purportedly derived from access either to official documents or to persons in high official positions or to both. ‘If’, he declared, ‘action is to be taken it must be taken quite impartially against those who improperly published and those who improperly imparted this secret information.’ Reprehensible though the practice was, there had, he insisted, ‘been very much worse offenders’ than Wright’s book.¹⁷

By the winter of 1921–22 Lloyd George was himself contemplating the prospect of writing his memoirs.¹⁸ The coalition government he headed was sympathetic to the plight of former ministers who found themselves exposed to allegations based on misleading and partial quotations from confidential sources, and in January 1922 it ruled that they should be permitted to use official documents to vindicate their actions, provided that this did not compromise the current public interest.¹⁹ Headlam-Morley was eager to help. In an unofficial capacity he assisted Herbert Henry Asquith, Lloyd George's immediate predecessor as prime minister, with his writing of *The Genesis of the War*; and he commented critically upon chapters which Winston Churchill, the former first lord of the Admiralty, had drafted for inclusion in his history, *The World Crisis*.²⁰ With the assent of Curzon and Crowe, he also supplied Asquith with information from the archives which Asquith then communicated to Churchill for his use.²¹ But on Boxing Day 1922, Churchill, at Asquith's behest, wrote to Headlam-Morley asking if he could refresh his memory. 'I cannot', Churchill confessed, 'remember what passed at the naval conversations we had with France in August and September 1912.'²² Then, early in the New Year, Headlam-Morley received another letter, this time from Asquith who was suffering from a similar lapse of memory, requesting that Churchill be given access to Foreign Office documents.²³ The issue was a significant one since Headlam-Morley understood that Asquith wished to demonstrate that Britain had been under no moral obligation to assist France in 1914 as a result of the fleet dispositions assumed by the British and French navies prior to the opening of the conversations. Headlam-Morley doubted if Asquith would succeed. It was a matter, too, on which he felt his own researches could be of use, and he would like to have been able to provide Asquith either with copies of the records he desired, or a statement summarising the contents of relevant correspondence.²⁴ Otherwise, with regard to Churchill's own book, he thought he might, as before, send Churchill his comments on the draft chapter he was preparing.²⁵

Headlam-Morley made the case for his continuing to offer such advice in a minute of 11 January 1923. He explained:

It is, I think, of serious public importance that if former ministers do write books they should be free from obvious errors of fact and that they should be warned as to the interpretation which may be put by hostile critics on the attitude they assume. If I do not help them

the probability is that they will make serious mistakes and they may easily go to someone else for assistance who is not a safe guide.²⁶

Crowe, who had already had an opportunity to discuss applications from former ministers for advice and information with the new prime minister, Andrew Bonar Law, sympathised with Headlam-Morley's position. There was, he thought, 'some advantage of letting the truth be known under conditions which we can to some extent control'. He was nonetheless irritated at Churchill having addressed himself directly to an official of his department rather than to the foreign secretary. 'Prima facie', he observed in a note to Bonar Law, 'it seems somewhat dangerous to set the precedent of letting ex-ministers call for official statements on any subject that may have arisen during the time they were in office in order to earn money by publishing such information.'²⁷ The prime minister agreed.²⁸ In the meantime, Headlam-Morley had received a copy of Churchill's chapter covering the naval conversations and found it so in accordance with Foreign Office records that he would probably not require more information.²⁹ He had nonetheless to write to Churchill requesting him to address himself to Bonar Law who might have to decide in Cabinet upon the matter.³⁰ Moreover, when the publication in the press of extracts from Churchill's forthcoming book led to questions in the Commons regarding his use of confidential Admiralty papers, the Cabinet agreed on 21 February 1923 to constitute under Curzon's chairmanship a committee to examine the use of such official material in publications.³¹

This Cabinet decision was taken only a matter of days before the Foreign Office's receipt of the proofs of the first of two more volumes of memoirs, those of Sir George Buchanan, Britain's wartime ambassador to Russia. Buchanan had begun working on these in 1922 and, despite Gaselee's personal distaste for the practice of 'retired officials from any service publishing their memoirs as soon as they go, and using... a certain amount of official material for the purpose', he was allowed to consult despatches and telegrams he had sent to the Foreign Office.³² The volume was not especially controversial. The Foreign Office's Northern Department pronounced the proofs 'innocuous', Gaselee thought them 'not very exciting', and Headlam-Morley considered the book 'disappointing'.³³ It is, the latter noted on 3 March, 'quite impossible to distinguish which of the statements made are derived from personal knowledge at the time and which have been taken from reading the numerous publications which have since been issued', and 'one often wishes that he [Buchanan] had told us more clearly what he

knew at the time and given more of his personal experiences'.³⁴ He also disputed both Buchanan's interpretation of British and Russian policies towards the German-sponsored Bagdad railway project, and his assertion that 'at about 3 o'clock on the afternoon of July 29th [1914] the [Russian] order for partial mobilisation against Austria was issued' – a matter of timing vital to any understanding of the immediate origins of the Great War.³⁵

More worrying, however, from Headlam-Morley's point of view, was Buchanan's inclusion in his book of the substance of a telegram despatched from St Petersburg (subsequently Petrograd) on 2 August 1914 in which he had pressed strongly for British intervention in the war on Russia's side. There was no doubting the significance of the document. Unfortunately, only a part of it had been received by the Foreign Office in 1914, and it had not been printed in the Blue Book on the European crisis which the Office's Parliamentary Department had hastily and inaccurately assembled for publication just two days after Britain's declaration of war. The Blue Book had already given rise to claims that documents had been deliberately doctored, and Headlam-Morley feared that Buchanan's citing of his telegram would reinforce the views of critics that there had been 'much omission from the published correspondence'.³⁶ Buchanan was ready to compromise. He followed Headlam-Morley's suggestions, duly inserting an explanation that his telegram had reached the Foreign Office in a 'mutilated form' and had therefore not been included in the Blue Book.³⁷

That, however, was not the end of the affair. Crowe, who had agreed that in view of recent precedents the Office could hardly withhold from permitting Buchanan to proceed with publication, was surprised by an announcement in *The Times* that extracts from the book would soon be appearing in its pages.³⁸ The said extracts were drawn entirely from the second volume of Buchanan's memoirs, which was not submitted to the Office for vetting until 20 March. As Buchanan subsequently explained to Curzon, he was anxious to use the opportunity to defend himself against charges of 'having started the Russian Revolution' and of having failed in 1917 to deliver to the former Emperor Nicholas II an invitation from King George V to reside in England. Whilst neither Gaselee nor Headlam-Morley could find anything in the second volume requiring censorship, Crowe and Curzon were irritated by Buchanan's presumption in proceeding to publish the articles without the Office's prior consent. Curzon warned Buchanan that he was 'guilty of a serious lache'.³⁹ As for Crowe, he felt that, despite the appearance of the articles in *The Times*, the Office should not seek to halt the publication of

the volumes. Indeed, he drew some satisfaction from the thought that their publication might encourage the adoption of a less liberal regime. 'It may perhaps', Crowe noted, 'even be found that when the Cabinet Committee discusses the matter, the fact that permission to publish his (censored) memoirs could not, in the circumstances, equitably be withheld from Sir G. Buchanan may strengthen the conclusion that, as regards the future, the application of restrictive rules is desirable.'⁴⁰

Curzon's committee was in fact never to meet. Other more urgent diplomatic preoccupations may have obstructed its progress.⁴¹ But Curzon continued to insist on the strict observation of conventions governing diplomatic confidentiality. This was made only too apparent when in June 1923 the veteran diplomat Sir James Rennell Rodd submitted for Foreign Office approval the typescript of what eventually transmuted into the second and third volumes of his *Social and Diplomatic Memories*. The first volume of his recollections, covering his early career, had been read personally by Curzon before its publication in 1922 and had not given rise to any difficulties.⁴² But the new typescript, which at Curzon's request Rodd sent directly to Crowe, dealt with his years as second in command in the British agency in Cairo during the 1890s, his legation in Stockholm (1905–08) and embassy in Rome (1908–1918), and his membership of the commission of enquiry which Lord Milner, the colonial secretary, headed to Egypt in 1919–20. Rodd thus wrote in some detail about events preceding the Fashoda crisis of 1898, and more particularly about his own mission to Ethiopia in 1897 when he had succeeded in encouraging the Emperor Menelik II to frustrate the ambitions of a French officer, Captain Clochette, to establish for France a position on the upper Nile. He was also, in recording his role in the Milner mission, critical both of the British response to the aspirations of Egyptian nationalists for independence and of the insularity of the British community in Cairo. Save, however, for what Rodd revealed about his negotiations with Menelik, there was little in his account of a significant factual nature which could not have been gleaned from official publications, including Milner's report. Gaselee, to whom Crowe delegated the vetting of the typescript, could find nothing in it to which he felt the Foreign Office 'need object'. He thought that after the passage of so much time it hardly mattered that Rodd's conspiring with Menelik to thwart Clochette should become known, and that on post-war Egypt, Rodd had expressed himself 'temperately' and made a 'tenable point'.⁴³

Crowe was altogether more circumspect. Possibly with recent Anglo-French differences over the French military occupation of the Ruhr

in mind, he urged excision of the reference to the Clochette mission. 'It reveals a piece of history', he noted, 'which it would be far better not to give to the world as yet.'⁴⁴ He also felt the 'greatest hesitation' over any ventilation by Rodd of Britain's recent policy in Egypt, fearing that it would lead to a revival of public controversy.⁴⁵ Curzon, by contrast, had no hesitation in condemning Rodd's revelations. 'In my view', he protested, 'it would be quite wrong that an ex-official, a recent Ambassador himself still on occasion in the employ of the F.O., should give his own account, which must necessarily be one sided, of a Commission which sat only 2-3 years ago, the letter of the Report of which excited vehement controversy at the time and the after effects of which have far from subsided.' Apart, however, from the personal opinions which Rodd expressed about British conduct in Egypt, Curzon was concerned about the precedent their publication might set. He did not believe Rodd's projected chapters on post-war developments in Egypt to be compatible with the position of a recently retired ambassador and, he noted, 'if we were to sanction it in this case, I fail to see what check we could exercise in the future'. The essential point was that, although Rodd's criticisms were undoubtedly restrained, they were based on information which 'only came to him in his special capacity'.⁴⁶

Curzon detailed a number of instances where Rodd's narrative revealed an imperfect knowledge of the way in which the government's post-war attitude towards Egypt had developed. But he also made it plain that he believed Rodd should be asked to 'withdraw' the two chapters in which he dealt with the 'later phase of his Egyptian experiences'.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, Gaselee, who met with Rodd to discuss Foreign Office requirements with regard to his typescript, may not have conveyed the full force of Curzon's objections. Rodd was thus ready, albeit reluctantly, to remove all but a perfunctory reference to the Clochette mission. He recognised that the time might not be right to disclose to the French that 'we may sometimes have accomplished what *they* were always trying to do to our disadvantage'.⁴⁸ He was, nonetheless, reluctant to expurgate all mention of the Milner mission. In a new version of his typescript, which he produced within less than a week, he merged two chapters into one, omitting those passages which 'contained or implied criticism of the policy of H.M.G.'. Gaselee had some sympathy for Rodd's achievement. Whilst the mission's work still featured in the typescript, the redraft was in Gaselee's words wholly descriptive and did 'not appear objectionable'. Likewise, Rodd's general treatment of conditions in Egypt seemed not in Gaselee's opinion to use "'inside" knowledge'.⁴⁹

Crowe was less impressed. Rodd, he thought, had evidently not understood Curzon's position.⁵⁰ As for Curzon himself, he blamed Gaselee for having failed to read his previous note attentively. The contents of the original chapters he still regarded as 'inopportune', and he did not believe that Rodd's much amended text contained sufficient of value to condone what he continued to regard as a 'deviation from the rule' that former diplomats should observe. 'My standards', he protested, 'may be fastidious and old-fashioned. But I should regret their abandonment: and if the head of the F.O. does not maintain them no one else will.'⁵¹ It was left to Gaselee to impart Curzon's verdict to Rodd.⁵² The latter was doubtless disappointed by the news. He had wanted to include the chapter(s) on post-war Egypt so as to give 'a sort of unity' to the book from 'the artistic point of view'. But he had already assured Curzon that he 'would always regard duty to state as the first consideration'.⁵³ The result was the publication of this second instalment of his memoirs in two volumes: one in 1923 and another, which contained no more than a passing reference to Rodd's appointment to the Milner mission, in 1925. By then Crowe, Curzon and Milner were dead. Judging however from the gracious tribute Rodd paid to Curzon in the epilogue of the final volume he seems to have borne no grudge against the former foreign secretary.⁵⁴

Others were rather less observant of their 'duty to the state'. Sir Arthur Hardinge was particularly negligent in this respect. A cousin of the former permanent undersecretary, Sir Charles Hardinge (later Lord Hardinge of Penshurst), he had served as British agent and consul-general in Zanzibar, and successively between 1900 and 1919 as minister in Tehran, Brussels and Lisbon, and ambassador in Madrid. Sadly, by 1926, when he completed the first of two not wholly accurate volumes of recollections, his eyesight was failing and in the words of Hubert Montgomery, an assistant undersecretary in the Foreign Office, he was 'in very poor health and indeed not very responsible'.⁵⁵ Gaselee, who had assisted Hardinge by supplying him with annual reports he wished to consult, reminded him in February that he would have to send his finished work to the Foreign Office in typescript or proof so that anything considered 'politically objectionable' could be removed.⁵⁶ Yet Hardinge disregarded this warning and in August, without first informing the Office, allowed the *Weekly Dispatch* to publish extracts from his forthcoming volume. Whilst these contained nothing which was likely to threaten the national interest, they did include criticism of Belgian conduct in the Congo and anecdotage which was judged so offensive in Belgium that the country's socialist foreign minister, Emile Vandervelde, was moved to

complain.⁵⁷ One story retailed by Hardinge implied that a Belgian officer in the Congo had encouraged native troops in cannibalism. Elsewhere, he referred to the late King Leopold II's ill-treatment of his queen, quarrels with his daughters, and 'relations with a series of *low-class mistresses*, culminating with his infatuation with Baroness Vaughan'. All this in the opinion of the current British ambassador in Brussels was, coming from the pen of a former ambassador, 'rather to be deplored – especially as it is true!⁵⁸

Hardinge's articles also provoked protests from within the Foreign Office. Gerald Hyde Villiers, the head of the Western Department, was incensed by the way in which one extract, published in the *Weekly Dispatch* of 15 August, had seemed to suggest that his father, Hardinge's immediate predecessor in Lisbon, had failed in his duty and could have prevented the overthrow of Portuguese monarchy in 1910. 'I have little doubt', Villiers noted, 'that his object in defaming my father is to maintain his lifelong practice of currying favour with Royalty.'⁵⁹ No wonder then that following Hardinge's delivery to the Foreign Office on 17 September of a printed, but as yet unpublished, copy of his volume, *A Diplomatist in Europe*, he was severely taken to task.⁶⁰ On 24 September, when he and his wife again called at the Office to express their concern lest the Office delay its publication, Montgomery made it plain that his misconduct might jeopardise his pension. In the end abject letters of apology from Sir Arthur and Lady Hardinge and a promise not to proceed to publication until the Office had censored his work saved Hardinge from more than a reprimand.⁶¹ Senior officials were nonetheless determined that no additional publicity should be given to the offending passages through their reappearance in the book.

Further excisions which the Office subsequently demanded of Hardinge bordered on the ludicrous. Ivone Kirkpatrick, who as a clerk in the Western Department was delegated the job of reviewing the volume, urged that Hardinge omit his description of the Flemish language as a 'low German dialect' on the grounds that, although this was technically correct, it would offend the Belgians. He also felt that the Portuguese, being an 'exceedingly vain people', would be upset by Hardinge's comment on Portugal's republican leadership that the 'Ethiopian had not changed his skin when he assumed the Phrygian cap of liberty'. A more appropriate metaphor might, Kirkpatrick suggested, be the 'leopard had not changed his spots'. Evidently, in Kirkpatrick's opinion, the vanity of the Portuguese was less likely to be injured by their being compared to wild beasts than to native Africans.⁶² Hardinge had the courage and good sense to ignore the first of these requirements.⁶³ But

much to the distress of his publisher, Jonathan Cape, whose representative, Miss Sinclair Smith, visited the Foreign Office in vain hope of reaching a compromise, other costly deletions had to be made.⁶⁴

Jonathan Cape, which threatened to 'throw up' the whole project and demand repayment of Hardinge's cash advance, took more care with the second volume, *A Diplomatist in the East*.⁶⁵ The typescript, the reading of which Gaselee found a 'somewhat wearisome task', was sent to the Office on 29 October 1926 and, whilst there was not the same problem with pre-release articles, officials again insisted on the removal of passages which they feared might be taken amiss by friendly powers.⁶⁶ Hardinge was thus required to take out references to the pro-Boer sympathies of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands during the early 1900s and to her delight in placing Willem Leyds, South Africa's special envoy in Europe, in close juxtaposition to the British minister at public ceremonies in The Hague. He was likewise required to omit mention of the persistence of the east African slave trade in native dhows claiming French protection.⁶⁷ But, perhaps surprisingly in view of Hardinge's known opposition to the activities of Britain's anti-slavery societies, he was permitted to reproduce in an appendix to the volume his official correspondence from 1894–95 with the Liberal foreign secretary, Lord Kimberley, over the latter's proposal to press for the abolition of legal slavery in Zanzibar. As British agent in Zanzibar, Hardinge had made a genuine endeavour to understand and explain the theory and practice of slavery in the Islamic world.⁶⁸

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Arthur Hardinge was evidently disturbed lest his conduct put his pension at risk. But the Foreign Office could exercise no such sanction over those who had been only temporarily in its employ. Much to the irritation of Gaselee, the Office was powerless to act when in July 1926 he learned from *The Times Literary Supplement* that the Cambridge University Press was about to publish a work by C.A. Macartney, the former 'Controller of the British Passport Office' [*sic*] in Vienna, entitled *The Social Revolution in Austria*. As a passport control officer the future historian of central and eastern Europe had been working for British intelligence. Gaselee insisted 'that it would be very wrong for a work on a definitely political subject like this to be issued under the name of somebody actually at work under the F.O.'⁶⁹ Whilst it was very largely an academic study of the rise of Austrian socialism, the essential point in Gaselee's opinion was that its author would be making use 'of knowledge acquired by him

in the course of his official duties'. Given, however, that Macartney had long since left the service, the Foreign Office could do no more than protest to his publisher and request submission of the book in proof or typescript.⁷⁰

The Foreign Office could be no more effective when it came to responding to the publications by former embassy staff selected by other government departments. One such case was a book by Brigadier-General W.H.H. Waters, a retired army officer who had served as military attaché in St Petersburg (1893–98) and Berlin (1900–03), and who had been attached to the Russian army in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05). His memoir, *Secret and Confidential: The Experiences of a Military Attaché*, which was published by John Murray in the autumn 1926 without prior submission to either the Foreign Office or the War Office, contained, as Gaselee admitted, no disclosures which were 'serious, in so far as they were likely to embroil... [Britain's]... present relations with any foreign power'.⁷¹ There was certainly nothing in the book which would justify an appeal to the Official Secrets Act. Indeed, Headlam-Morley was rather disappointed at Waters's discretion in recounting his years in Berlin. It was well known that the German emperor had been in the habit of freely discussing political matters with military attachés, but Waters only related one such conversation.⁷² Waters was, however, quite vindictive in describing his personal relations with his diplomatic superiors, particularly Charles Hardinge, who had been ambassador in St Petersburg immediately before beginning his first term as permanent undersecretary in 1906, and who had returned to the Foreign Office for a second term in 1916. 'He says', Gaselee noted, 'in so many words that Sir C. Hardinge condemned him unjustly for an episode in Siberia, discussed the subject improperly with a Russian lady [Princess Belosselsky], chicaned him out of a K.C.M.G. which he deserved, and hints that he – then Lord Hardinge – suppressed a letter to the Tsar which might have had an effect on the fate of Russia.'⁷³ In short, Waters had not been treated as an officer and a gentleman, and had subsequently not behaved like one.

Gaselee and Villiers both felt sufficiently annoyed by Waters' criticism of Lord Hardinge as to recommend a formal complaint to the War Office in the hope that it in turn would express its displeasure over the book's publication without previous submission.⁷⁴ Headlam-Morley doubted the merits of this course. Whilst he recognised that there was good reason why military attachés should be expected to abide by the same rules as other embassy staff, he questioned whether this book gave the Foreign Office sufficient grounds on which to press the point, especially

if the War Office were to become 'tiresome' about it. After all, Waters had also complained about his treatment by the War Office, yet his military chiefs had seemed to find no reason to object to the book and might take the view that there was no reason why the Foreign Office should be more sensitive about this internal matter than any other government department. 'Nobody', he minuted, 'pays any attention to these garrulous soldiers with a grievance.'⁷⁵ Sir William Tyrrell, Crowe's successor as permanent undersecretary, disagreed. Furious about a work 'distinguished by its lack of tact and taste', he was determined to draw the War Office's attention to 'this improper book'.⁷⁶ But a letter to the Army Council requesting that the War Office (1) convey its displeasure to Waters over the publication, and (2) agree to extend to military attachés the diplomatic service rule governing publication, achieved little.⁷⁷ The War Office felt itself in no position to take any effective action against Waters since as a retired officer he had broken no regulation, and it was reluctant to enter into correspondence with him. Moreover, the War Office could see no advantage in introducing any new rule for attachés, such as the Foreign Office proposed, since it would confer no additional disciplinary powers and such powers as existed could hardly be used with justice to punish officers for breaches of confidence unless they amounted to the disclosure of information 'prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State'.⁷⁸

This rebuttal by the War Office highlighted the extent to which Foreign Office efforts to censor publications could not invariably be equated with defence of the national interest. Curzon had sought to maintain the principle that public servants should not reveal all within a few years of retirement, and he, Crowe, Gaselee and others in the Office had wanted to enforce and, on the basis of Waters's indiscretions, extend, the regulation governing the vetting of typescripts. They were also anxious that nothing should be published which might upset friendly governments and thereby harm bilateral relations. Headlam-Morley had for his part wished to ensure that nothing appear in British diplomatic or ministerial memoirs which might be open to misinterpretation regarding the origins of the war. After having perused the Foreign Office records of the pre-war era, he was by 1924 convinced that they contained nothing the publication of which would cause 'serious embarrassment'.⁷⁹ The following year saw the publication, with some official assistance, of the memoirs of the former foreign secretary, Lord Grey of Fallodon, and Grey's decision to leave his private papers in the Foreign Office library open to inspection by his successors seemed in Gaselee's opinion to validate the view that the Office had

'nothing to hide'.⁸⁰ Moreover, whilst Gooch and Temperley were not free to include in their volumes all that they selected, their publication from 1926 onwards of the correspondence and minutes of British diplomats left the Foreign Office with less scope to object to what pre-war officials might wish to recall in public.⁸¹ As, however, was apparent in the reactions of Gaselee and Tyrrell to Waters's book, senior officials remained concerned over the way in which memoirs and recollections might affect the reputation of the Foreign Office and the dignity and standing of other institutions of state.

* * *

This was further illustrated in the Office's response to the war memoirs of David Lloyd George. In the six volumes which appeared between 1933 and 1936, the Welsh Wizard worked literary wonders, elevating his own role as wartime leader and disparaging the contributions of others to Britain's triumph in 1918. Much of what was contained in the volumes, the draft chapters of which were submitted to Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet secretary, was of no more than marginal interest to the Foreign Office. But one chapter of the original typescript presented a major problem for British diplomats, and it was one which Lloyd George was eventually persuaded to suppress. Entitled 'Czar's Future Residence', it dealt with his government's handling of the proposal, first made on 19 March 1917 by Pavel Milyukov, the foreign minister in the newly-established provisional administration in Russia, that the deposed Emperor Nicholas II and his family should be offered asylum in Britain. The events to which it related have since been recounted elsewhere in considerable detail, most notably by Kenneth Rose in his biography of King George V. The essential facts were that, after some initial hesitation on the part of ministers, possibly resulting from concerns over how the presence in Britain of the tsar would impact on Britain's relations with a revolutionary Russia they wished to retain as an ally, it was suggested that the Russian imperial family might more appropriately be accommodated in either neutral Denmark or Switzerland. Nevertheless, after further consultation amongst Lloyd George, the Conservative leader, Bonar Law, and King George V's private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, on 22 March Buchanan was instructed to invite the imperial family to reside in Britain.⁸²

Thereafter, whilst the provisional government prevaricated over whether to release Nicholas II from virtual house arrest at Tsarskoe Selo, the king began to have second thoughts about the wisdom of

receiving his cousin in England. Worried lest the monarchy thereby expose itself to criticism from a public unsympathetic to the Russian autocrat, Stamfordham wrote to Lord Balfour, the foreign secretary, on 6 April begging that the invitation be withdrawn. With this, Lloyd George was ready to comply, as also was the War Cabinet, and on 13 April a telegram was sent to Buchanan informing him there were indications that a 'considerable anti-monarchical movement' was developing in Britain, including personal attacks on the king; that it was thought that if the emperor came to Britain it might 'dangerously increase this movement'; and that his presence might 'weaken us in our dealings with the new Russian Government'. For these reasons it was thought preferable that the emperor should go to France if and when he was allowed to leave Russia. Whilst, however, Buchanan's views were sought on these developments, he was also instructed to say nothing to the Russian government on the subject unless they themselves raised the question. At this stage, they did not, and it was only when on 21 May Milyukov's successor told Buchanan that the imperial family would not be allowed to leave Russia, that the ambassador, informed him confidentially 'that so far from wishing this we should probably refuse permission to all members of the Imperial Family to reside in England during the war'.⁸³

In later years, long after the murder of the imperial family at Yekaterinburg, the apparent irresolution of Lloyd George's government in its handling of this asylum question came in for criticism in the press. The exiled Russian premier, Alexander Kerensky, himself a former member of the Petrograd Soviet, joined the fray. In an article which appeared in the *Evening Standard* of 4 July 1932 under the headline 'Why the Tsar never came to England', he asserted that on 10 April 1917 the Foreign Office had sent a 'conditional refusal' to the Russian proposal that the tsar should find asylum in Britain, and that in June or July Buchanan had presented the provisional government with a final refusal on the grounds that Lloyd George could not advise the king 'to offer hospitality to those whose pro-German tendencies were known to him'. Taken out of context, such claims doubtless encouraged those who were all too ready to believe that Lloyd George had blood on his hands. He was, according to Hankey, openly condemned in poster headlines in New York as 'Murderer of the Czar'. There were, however, those within the Foreign Office who fully understood the nonsense of such claims. On Kerensky's article and the government's *volte face* on the asylum issue, Laurence Collier, the head of the Office's Northern Department, noted: 'I understand that Mr Lloyd-George [*sic*] was not responsible for

the decision, but that it is not expedient to say who was; and that in these circumstances, I presume we can say no more than that, in reply to any enquiries which may be made of us.⁸⁴ Two years later, Gaselee, who had made himself familiar with all of the existing Office correspondence on the subject, was more explicit. 'I think', he minuted on 17 April 1934, 'that the truth of the matter is that Lord Stamfordham suddenly "got cold feet", and induced a couple of rather timid telegrams to be sent from here.'⁸⁵

It was no wonder then that Lloyd George wished to use his memoirs to defend himself and his government against the charges of his critics. The chapter which he drafted for inclusion in volume iii of his memoirs was nonetheless a bland affair. Archivally well-armed, he simply strung together, with very little personal comment, letters, telegrams and cabinet records relating to the question of asylum. These made no mention of the Court's intervention in the affair. Indeed, the thrust of the draft chapter appeared to suggest that much of the blame for the failure to rescue the tsar should be placed on Milyukov's excessive caution and the hesitant response of the Russian provisional government to the initial British offer of asylum. That said, Lloyd George did cite his own representation to the Cabinet in the second week of April 1917: (1) that 'there was a strong feeling hostile to the Czar in certain working class circles in this country, and that articles tending to associate the King with the Czar had appeared in the Press'; (2) that it was felt that if the tsar were to take up residence in Britain 'there was a danger that these tendencies might be stimulated and accentuated'; and (3) that in the event of any future Anglo-Russian differences of opinion, Britain's attitude might be attributed to the presence of the tsar. He also quoted both the Foreign Office telegram of 13 April 1917, which conveyed his views to Buchanan and the government's preference that the tsar should find asylum in France rather than England, and Buchanan's reply of 15 April in which the ambassador fully endorsed the substance of this advice.⁸⁶

If published in full these citations might have been taken to imply some degree of royal complicity in the government's retreat from its original offer of asylum. Yet this would hardly seem an adequate explanation of why, when in the spring of 1934 Lloyd George submitted his draft chapter to Hankey there was such vigorous opposition to its publication not only from the Court, but also from Sir Robert Vansittart, the permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office. Of one thing Hankey was certain: no objection could be made to the chapter simply on the grounds that it reproduced official correspondence. Others, such as

Churchill and Robertson, had already been allowed to present their cases to the public on the basis of official documents, and Lloyd George had promised to paraphrase Foreign Office communications. The fact that Lloyd George was under contract to furnish chapters of his memoirs to *The Daily Telegraph* also added 'some urgency' to any decision which might have to be made on censoring their content. There was, however, no doubt on Hankey's part that the references in the chapter to the king and anti-monarchical movements were likely to prove too sensitive to permit publication.⁸⁷ He felt sure from his own contact with the king that he would very much resent the publication of the passages referring to wartime criticism of the monarchy and, after first trying his own hand at censoring the offending telegrams and minutes, he wrote to Lloyd George urging their omission.⁸⁸

Vansittart, who expressed his views forcibly both in conversation with Hankey and in marginal comments on Lloyd George's draft chapter, was of much the same opinion. But central to Vansittart's objection to the use by Lloyd George of Foreign Office telegrams was not so much what they suggested about the king's stance on the asylum question, as what they revealed about official and public passions in wartime and the timidity of British statesmen and diplomats. He was, for instance, wholly averse to reminding the public that there had been any opposition in Britain to the monarchy in wartime. It was, after all, hardly a sentiment that could be reconciled with the preparations being made for the celebration of the king's silver jubilee in 1935. It was also, he thought, doubtful that the public would be convinced by the argument that this was truly an obstacle to receiving the Russian imperial family in Britain. The case was not one which could be easily reconciled with the memory of the war as a titanic struggle in which king and country had been united in the defence of liberty. Vansittart thus found particularly disturbing the inclusion in the draft chapter of Buchanan's telegram of 15 April 1917 in which the ambassador both supported the idea of persuading the French to invite the tsar to France, and proposed that he himself might tell Miliyukov 'that the Revolution, which had been welcomed with such enthusiasm in England, had so indisposed the public against the old Regime that the presence of the Emperor in England might provoke demonstrations that would cause serious embarrassment to HM Government'. This, Vansittart observed, would 'carry little conviction' to the public, who

...will not readily believe that there was any danger to the throne here, and will of course fasten on the obvious point that we confessedly tried to pass the responsibility and risk, if any, to France! I cannot

for the life of me see what use these telegrams can be to the case of the distinguished author. Many of his opponents will say that it confirms what they always said; & will find just enough material in this to bear them out, at least in their own eyes & that of some others.⁸⁹

Vansittart's distaste for Lloyd George's chapter was however rooted in more than what it might indicate about real or imagined threats to the British monarchy. He also disliked the idea of making public the views expressed by British diplomats on the Russian imperial family, and more especially their comments on the role and character of Tsar Nicholas's consort, the Empress Alexandra. She, like her husband, was a first cousin of George V, being along with the German emperor, a grandchild of Queen Victoria. But she was also the Marie Antoinette of the Russian revolution. As the daughter of the Grand Duke Louis of Hesse, she was naturally suspected of having German sympathies. She was popularly believed to have exercised an undue influence over her weak and irresolute husband, and revelations about her dependence upon the religious mystic, Rasputin, had brought her into further disrepute. However, whilst in 1917 for many in Britain Nicholas and Alexandra were the principal figures of a corrupt and tyrannical regime of which the world was well rid, by the 1930s their murder and other Bolshevik atrocities had transformed them into the victims of bloody red revolution. It was therefore perhaps unsurprising that Vansittart should have been shocked by Lloyd George's wish to reproduce another telegram from Petrograd, in which Buchanan reported Alexandra's apparent reluctance to contemplate exile in England, adding: 'She has been the Emperor's evil genius ever since they married, and nobody pities her'. 'I think', noted Vansittart, 'the extract says quite enough without [this] last pitiless sentence, which rather *overstates* the case & therefore weakens it.'⁹⁰

Even more objectionable from Vansittart's standpoint was the final document quoted by Lloyd George. This was a private letter to Balfour of 22 April 1917 from Lord Bertie of Thame, Britain's long-serving ambassador in Paris. In it Bertie expressed his relief that the idea of inviting the imperial family to England had been dropped. Had they been given asylum, he thought the Germans and the 'Russian extreme Socialists' would have contended that the British government 'were keeping the ex-Emperor in reserve to be used for a restoration' if in future it should suit the British to promote discord in Russia. And to this Bertie had added:

I do not think that the ex-Emperor and his family would be welcome in France. The Empress is not only a Boche by birth but in sentiment.

She did all that she could to bring about an understanding with Germany. She is regarded as a criminal or a criminal lunatic and the ex-Emperor as a criminal from his weakness and submission to her promptings.⁹¹

Anyone familiar with the two volumes of Bertie's wartime diary, which had been published in 1924, would have known that the language of this letter was typical of the ambassador's abrasive style.⁹² Anti-German long before the outbreak of war in 1914, and hardly less anti-Russian, he rarely made any attempt to disguise his prejudices. Moreover, Vansittart, who had once served under Bertie in Paris, was, as he later made clear in his own recollections, a great admirer of his erstwhile chief and his outspoken opinions. Bertie, he wrote in 1958, was 'not only a great ambassador ... but *the* very last of the great ambassadors'.⁹³

Nonetheless, in 1934 Vansittart had no wish to see Bertie's ruminations on the Romanovs made public. He underlined the word 'Boche' in Lloyd George's typescript and annotated in the margin: 'This kind of language will not strengthen the case. It may be thought a little over-pitched, in view of the subsequent tragedy.' Yet it was the preceding paragraph of Bertie's letter, with its reference to the Germans possibly using the tsar's presence in England to sow dissension amongst their opponents which probably gave Vansittart most cause for concern. This he again thought would risk putting the British government and British diplomacy in a poor light. The paragraph was, he argued,

...too hypothetical to carry conviction now. Who would be influenced now by what the Germans might have said in war? They wd. have said anything of course. The ordinary reader will think Lord Bertie pusillanimous, & that we were not very courageous to listen to this 'la-peur-des-qu'en-dira-t-on'.⁹⁴

Put simply, British diplomats would appear unduly timorous in opposing asylum for the tsar because of a wartime threat to the British monarchy, and because German propagandists might have exploited the tsar's presence in England to Germany's advantage. The public, he assumed, would not consider such explanations credible.

All this was conveyed to Lloyd George when Hankey returned to him his chapter along with his own and Vansittart's marginalia. But Lloyd George was in any case ready to concede that nothing should be published without the agreement of the Court, and in the end it was Sir Clive Wigram, Stamfordham's successor as private secretary to

the king, who carried the day. As a result of discussions with Wigram, conducted through an intermediary, probably Edward Lawson, the managing director of *The Daily Telegraph*, Lloyd George decided to drop the chapter. Instead, he revised the draft of a preceding chapter on the Russian revolution, and tacked onto it an emasculated and much abbreviated version of what he had written on the future residence of the tsar. This made no mention of any embarrassment that might have been caused to George V by the possible presence of the tsar in England. The nearest that Lloyd George came to mentioning public feelings on the matter was his assertion that by April 1917 'an agitation had also started in this country, which indicated that there was a strong feeling in extensive working-class circles, hostile to the Czar coming to Great Britain'. Moreover, Lloyd George insisted that the original invitation to the tsar had not been withdrawn. 'The ultimate issue in the matter', he maintained, 'was decided by the action of the Russian Government, which continued to place obstacles in the way of the Czar's departure.'⁹⁵

Lloyd George also indicated to his readers that he had been restricted in the use of official records. Not all of these, he explained, 'even at this interval of time, am I free to publish'. He did not, however, yield to all of Vansittart's pleas on behalf of the Foreign Office. True, he omitted from the paraphrased extract of Buchanan's telegram of 15 April the ambassador's clearly stated opinion that if there were any danger of an anti-monarchist movement, 'it would be far better that the ex-Emperor should not come to England'. Meriel Buchanan was thus left free to maintain unsullied by telegraphic detail her refutation of charges that her father, Sir George, had made no effort to save the imperial family and that he must share blame for the tragedy at Yekaterinburg.⁹⁶ But diplomatic blushes were not entirely spared. Lloyd George retained in his memoirs both Buchanan's description of the empress as the tsar's 'evil genius', and the equally derogatory remarks in Bertie's letter to Balfour of 22 April 1917.⁹⁷ The by then long deceased Bertie was thereby made to appear as pitiless and pusillanimous as Vansittart had feared. Perhaps, Lloyd George felt that he had no need to concern himself with the susceptibilities of the Foreign Office: he had, like several later prime ministers, rarely displayed much affection for professional diplomacy. He may even have recalled just how troublesome and petulant an envoy Bertie had been, and how, when in April 1918 he had finally managed to remove him from Paris, one of the most emphatic protests had come from George V.⁹⁸

The Foreign Office had other reservations about Lloyd George's typescript. Its inclusion in a chapter, headed 'Vatican and Kuhlmann

Peace Moves', of correspondence between the Spanish representative in Brussels and the government in Madrid regarding possible German peace feelers was regarded as possibly prejudicial to the public interest, not because of its content, but because of the uncertain provenance of the communications reproduced. 'You and I', Hankey reminded Lloyd George, 'know there are sources which it would be most dangerous to publish.'⁹⁹ Vansittart, in alliance with colleagues in the Dominions Office, also pressed strongly for the omission of the summary of proceedings and report of the wartime Curzon committee on territorial desiderata in terms of peace, which Lloyd George wished to add as an appendix to a chapter entitled 'The Imperial War Cabinet and Conference'.¹⁰⁰ The report clearly had a bearing on current foreign relations since amongst the territorial acquisitions considered by the committee were: German East and South-West Africa; St Pierre and Miquelon and France's possessions in India; the Alaskan coastal strip for Canada, in return for the cession to the United States of West Indian islands; an option on Greenland should Denmark decide to part with it; an airbase in the Azores; and imperial control of Palestine and Mesopotamia. The committee also urged that a barrier be erected to prevent the extension of German influence in the Near East, and recommended that 'France should not be allowed to dominate Greece'.¹⁰¹ It was a speculative wish list, but it was one whose publication would remind readers of how large Britain's imperial appetite had been.¹⁰² And whilst Lloyd George persisted in retaining the Spanish correspondence in his text, he was persuaded to excise the said appendix.¹⁰³

* * *

Ironically, the Foreign Office was far less perturbed by Lloyd George's second work of recollection, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, the two volumes of which focused almost entirely upon the diplomacy of peacemaking in the aftermath of the war. Hankey received the 300,000 word typescript shortly before Whitsuntide 1938, along with the news that Lloyd George had yet to negotiate a contract with a publisher and that all he was seeking was agreement in principle to his use of official government records. The timing was crucial. Hankey was due to retire in August and he was evidently keen to have the matter settled before he left office. Moreover, in the wake of the May crisis, when rising ethnic tensions between the Czech- and German-speaking communities of Czechoslovakia and the menace of military intervention by Hitler's Germany had seemed to threaten the peace of Europe, most senior

officials were too preoccupied with current events to pay much attention to tales of even the recent past. Lloyd George's typescript was in any case essentially a defence of British foreign policy. As Hankey subsequently pointed out to the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, Lloyd George's general aim was 'to justify the attitude of the British Government in general, and of himself as Prime Minister, towards the Peace Treaties'. Indeed, in his opinion one of the virtues of the book was the way in which Lloyd George countered claims that the peace treaties were drawn up hastily and without adequate preparation.¹⁰⁴

An important issue was nonetheless raised by Lloyd George basing his account on official documentation extending beyond the armistice of November 1918. Hankey inclined to the view that the peace negotiations could be regarded as belonging to the period of the war. 'From a practical view', he explained in a minute to Chamberlain, 'it appears to me that the arguments that were held to justify the quotation of official documents in War memoirs apply with even greater force to the Peace Conference.' Whilst in the case of the war, official histories were available to genuine students, the same could not be said of the peace conference. Rather, British policy had been misrepresented in works seeking to defend particular politicians or foreign governments. Some of these were based on the extensive use of official documents.¹⁰⁵ Authors, such as Ray Stannard Baker, President Woodrow Wilson's press secretary at Paris, and the American legal expert David Hunter Miller, had drawn freely upon conference records. So too had Luigi Aldrovandi Marescotti, who at the time of the peace negotiations at Paris had been *chef de cabinet* to Sidney Sonnino, Italy's foreign minister.¹⁰⁶ Both Gaselee and Hankey had been broadly sympathetic towards an American request for British concurrence in the publication of the proceedings of the peace conference, including the records of the Council of Four and the Supreme Council, in a forthcoming volume of *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*.¹⁰⁷

In the light of what had already been published on the peace conference Hankey was firmly of the opinion that Lloyd George 'should not be debarred from the use of such confidential documents as [could] be published without detriment to the public interest'.¹⁰⁸ On the whole Hankey found him 'much more restrained in this book than in his war books in his comments on individuals'. True, Hankey confessed, Lloyd George was 'caustic' about Woodrow Wilson, damned Wilson's assistant Colonel House with 'faint praise', made some 'nasty remarks' about Italian statesmen, was 'not very kind' to Curzon, and had 'not a good word to say' for the French president, Raymond Poincaré, on whom he repeatedly heaped abuse. Such passages were, however, far less virulent

than corresponding ones in the previous volumes.¹⁰⁹ More deserving of Foreign Office scrutiny were, Hankey thought, those passages in the typescript bearing on present events in Europe. Some of Lloyd George's comments on Italy seemed not best calculated to improve Anglo-Italian relations and his reference to the 'fundamental mutual dislike of the French and Italian peoples' was hardly conducive to fostering friendship between governments in Paris and Rome. A chapter covering the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and the emergence of new states in central Europe could also prove problematic in view of the 'delicate' situation in Czechoslovakia. In addition, there was the danger, as Hankey noted, that the same chapter would provide 'a good deal of grist to the German mill if and when the Germans [took] up the question of their relations with Poland'.¹¹⁰

There was also the question of whether the consent of dominion and allied governments should be sought for Lloyd George's use of official documents. The dominions might prove problematic. In 1921 Clement Jones, who had served as secretary to the British Empire delegation at Paris, had been refused consent to publish a book on the delegation's work largely because of the objections of the Australian premier, Billy Hughes, whose conduct the draft had failed to flatter.¹¹¹ Hankey nonetheless felt that the dominion governments should simply be informed of the forthcoming publication, and he was likewise disinclined to consult with the French, Italian and United States governments, or for that matter any other government represented in the Paris conference. 'None of them', he observed, 'have been particularly accommodating to us in such matters, and publicity has already been so extensive that it appears almost pedantic to ask their permission.' In summary, he recommended: 1. that they agree in principle to Lloyd George's use of hitherto unpublished material on the understanding that such extracts would first be examined by government departments and that Lloyd George would omit passages they thought against the public interest; 2. that the king approve this decision; 3. that subject to ministerial approval the dominions should be informed that the British government did not intend to prohibit publication; and 4. that he should be authorised to send the chapters to government departments for their approval.¹¹²

All four of Hankey's recommendations met with Chamberlain's approval.¹¹³ Gaselee, whose advice was readily accepted by Oliver Harvey, the private secretary to the foreign secretary, Lord Halifax, likewise approved. So too did Vansittart, who was now the government's chief diplomatic adviser, and Sir Alexander Cadogan, his successor as permanent undersecretary. Gaselee thought that the peace conference

fell 'morally into the War period', and that Lloyd George deserved the opportunity to defend himself against undeserved criticism. 'My experience', he noted, 'leaves me to believe that the authoritarian Govts (Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Portugal) have very little objection indeed to publications shewing up iniquities or deficiencies of their predecessors – indeed, they rather welcome them.' But this, he added in parenthesis, did not apply to their armies, 'their national spirit etc: but to their purely political ends and means'. In any case, as Gaselee acknowledged, so much on the peace conference that had once been secret had been published, mostly in the US, that there was 'hardly anything to withhold'.¹¹⁴ All then that was required of Lloyd George was that his chapters be submitted to the Foreign Office and other relevant government departments for vetting. The former prime minister was nonetheless still capable of springing nasty surprises. Thus, much to the astonishment of Hankey, he learned after lunching with Lloyd George on 1 July that *The Daily Telegraph* was due to begin publishing extracts from his book on 5 July. Even after it was decided that the first of these would not appear until the 7th, it left a busy Foreign Office with barely sufficient time in which to read and censor the typescript. Lloyd George's action had in Hankey's opinion been 'very precipitate and rather unfair'.¹¹⁵

Gaselee agreed that Lloyd George had 'behaved rather badly'. But the first two instalments of the book to appear in *The Daily Telegraph*, those dealing with Woodrow Wilson's visit to London in 1918 and the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, were far from controversial. They were supplied to the Foreign Office in proof prior to publication and were there judged 'entirely harmless'. Indeed, the Office's final verdict was that as a whole the book could not do much harm, and since a good deal of its subject matter had already been published elsewhere there was no need to request the elimination of extensive passages.¹¹⁶ The only omissions the Office required related to Italy and Turkey, powers which in the summer of 1938 British policy-makers had no further wish to alienate. Lloyd George was thus asked both to excise a description of Sonnino's diplomacy as 'blackmail' and to substitute for it a less derogatory term, and to remove from his typescript the mordant analysis of the Italian psyche by the British diplomat Mark Sykes. For similar reasons, the Foreign Office insisted that he take out a suggestion that the Turkish nationalist leader, Mustapha Kemal, might have been bribed to disband his army, since this was a 'reflection on the character of the Ataturk himself'.¹¹⁷ Foreign Office thinking on the offending Italian passages was very much in line with views previously expressed

by Hankey after his first hasty reading of the typescript. Because of their 'bearing on current problems', he had recommended that Cadogan and his colleagues give 'careful scrutiny' to text which appeared 'not best calculated to improve Anglo-Italian relations'. But Hankey had also thought that Lloyd George's chapter on the new states of central Europe would require 'careful vetting' especially as he had the impression that it 'contained a certain amount of material the publication of which would not do much good if the Czechoslovak controversy still persist[ed]'.¹¹⁸

Lloyd George was particularly critical of the territorial ambitions of Edvard Beneš, the former foreign minister and current president of Czechoslovakia. He also revealed that at the Paris peace conference Beneš had claimed that his government intended to make the new state 'a sort of Switzerland, taking into consideration, of course, the special conditions in Bohemia' – an objective which implied overcoming the country's ethnic divisions through cantonisation. 'Had the Czech leaders in time, and without waiting for the menacing pressure of Germany, redeemed their promise to grant local autonomy to the various races in their Republic on the lines of the Swiss Confederation', Lloyd George reflected, 'the present trouble would have been averted.'¹¹⁹ This, however, was a personal observation, and not one to which the Foreign Office offered any specific objection. As Hankey subsequently reported to Lloyd George, although the chapters on central Europe had been a cause for a little hesitation in Whitehall, it was felt generally 'that nothing could make the Czechoslovak situation much worse'.¹²⁰

There was also one section of Lloyd George's typescript – the prospective publication of which Gaselee positively welcomed – that describing the opposition voiced in the Imperial War Cabinet to any restoration to Germany of its colonial possessions. This stance Lloyd George endeavoured to justify by pointing to the wartime aspirations of German ministers and publicists to secure a repartition of Africa, in which Germany would be rewarded with a 'black empire... extending across the continent from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean'. And at a time when a new colonial settlement was still regarded as a possible element of a general accommodation with Nazi Germany, the section went on to argue that reconsideration of mandates was inconceivable 'except under conditions and guarantees which would make it impossible for Germany to convert her hold on an African colony into a formidable military, naval or aerial menace to her neighbours'.¹²¹ Not only was there nothing in this to which Gaselee thought the Foreign Office could object: he thought it 'a very good thing that the public should be reminded what the German colonial aims *were*, as expounded by responsible German

statesmen during the War'.¹²² Both the Dominions Office and the Colonial Office were also ready to acquiesce in what Lloyd George had to say on the subject of German colonies.¹²³ But the colonial secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, was less than happy about the inclusion in the typescript of a lengthy chapter on the origins of the Balfour Declaration and the British mandate in Palestine. In this Lloyd George gave clear expression to his Zionist sentiments and affirmed, as he had recently done to Lord Peel's commission on Palestine, that in framing its policy the British government had given no consideration to the notion of artificially restricting Jewish immigration so that the Jews would remain a minority in their promised homeland.¹²⁴ More than two years into the Arab revolt against British rule and Jewish settlement in Palestine, MacDonald feared that such language would do nothing to improve the atmosphere there and, as Hankey reported, he would have wished 'that this time had not been chosen for its publication'.¹²⁵

As in the case of the Foreign Office, the detailed amendments requested by the Colonial Office were relatively minor, and they were ones with which Lloyd George seemed ready to comply. Those passages which drew upon Lloyd George's evidence to the Peel Commission were thus paraphrased, rather than quoted, so as to respect the confidentiality of the Commission's proceedings. But Lloyd George was far less inclined to accommodate Treasury sensitivities when it came to the vetting of his chapter on reparations. He was willing to omit and modify figures relating to British demands for, and Germany's payment of, reparations which the department believed might otherwise be used by the Germans for propaganda purposes. He nevertheless chose to ignore Treasury wishes that, in dealing with the wartime debate on reparations, he attribute a memorandum of January 1916, not to John Maynard Keynes and Professor William Ashley, but to 'two economists'.¹²⁶ Whilst the paper in question had been intended to demonstrate that a moderate indemnity, paid preferably in kind or over a long period in cash, would not damage the commerce of recipients, Lloyd George claimed that all 'the extravagant estimates formulated after the War as to Germany's capacity to pay were based on this plan'.¹²⁷ He was in no mood to amend his chapter in order to spare the reputation of the author of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, even if, as Treasury officials claimed, the passages 'taken by themselves, would imply that Mr Keynes held views about the general problem of reparations very different from those which everybody knew that he actually held'.¹²⁸

The Treasury's stance on Lloyd George's references to Ashley and Keynes echoed earlier Foreign Office complaints over his quoting from

communications from Bertie and Buchanan. Where the vetting of typescripts was concerned, personalities seemed sometimes to matter more than policies. In part this was due to the passage of time. The academic debate on the origins of the Great War continued, but in an era in which treaty revision rather than treaty enforcement was the order of the day, the 'guilt' attributed to Germany and its allies in 1919 no longer had the same significance for international diplomacy. The Foreign Office could afford to dispense with a 'safe guide' to the past and when Headlam-Morley died in 1929 he was not replaced as historical adviser. No one in Whitehall sought to challenge Lloyd George's neutral verdict on how in July–August 1914 the 'nations slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war without any apprehension or dismay', with most of those in charge guilty of 'manslaughter rather than of murder'.¹²⁹ And with radical new regimes in power throughout much of central and southern Europe, by 1938 the susceptibilities of other nations seemed to count for less than they might once have done when it came to vetting typescripts. Only in the case of Palestine were the former prime minister's revelations considered likely to affect adversely British interests. The administration of the past remained too serious a business to be left solely to historians. But, as was evident in the handling of Lloyd George's chapter on asylum for the Russian imperial family, the war years constituted an increasingly foreign terrain whose contours senior officials would sometimes have preferred to forget.

Notes

I am grateful to the Parliamentary Archives for giving me permission to cite, and quote from, the papers of David Lloyd George which are in their custody.

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2. FCO Historians (LRD), 'FCO Library and Records, 1782–1995', *History Notes*, No. 8 (June 1995).
3. Erik Goldstein, "'A prominent place would have to be taken by history": the origins of a Foreign Office Historical Section', *Diplomacy and Power: Studies in Modern Diplomatic Practice* (Dordrecht, 2012), T.G. Otte (ed.), pp. 83–102.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), FO Library Memoranda, vol. 43 (1933–36), 'Note on the Duties of the Historical Adviser', paper by Headlam-Morley, 25 Oct. 1922.
6. Keith Hamilton, 'The Pursuit of "Enlightened Patriotism": The British Foreign Office and Historical Researchers During the Great War and its Aftermath', *Forging the Collective Memory: Governments and International Historians through Two World Wars* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996), Keith Wilson (ed.), pp. 192–229.

7. The National Archives (TNA), FO 370/179, L1149/20/405, memo. by Headlam-Morley, 11 Feb. 1922.
8. *Ibid.*, 'FO Confidential Papers and Information: Control over Unauthorised Publications', memo. by R.C. Dickie (assistant librarian, FO), 9 Feb. 1922.
9. FO 370/219, L6228/258/405, FO to Law Officers of the Crown, letter, 8 Nov. 1902; Law Officers to FO, letter, 13 Nov. 1902; FO minutes, 27 Sept. 1926.
10. *Ibid.*, Lansdowne to Rumbold, letter, 15 Nov. 1902.
11. Peter Wright, *Spycatcher: The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Office* (New York, 1987).
12. Peter E. Wright, *At the Supreme War Council* (London, 1921), pp. 27–28.
13. Wright misdated Petrograd tel. No. 529 as 27 February 1918. FO 370/149, L688/668/406, minute by Stephen Gaselee, 8 April 1921.
14. *Ibid.*, minutes by Crowe and Curzon, 12 April 1921.
15. FO 370/149, L792/792/406, minute by Gaselee, 29 April 1921.
16. Peter Wright first wrote to Lloyd George in November 1935, proffering his advice on sources available for the coverage of the months December 1917 – March 1918. He subsequently met and corresponded with Lloyd George. Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George MSS., LG/G/215, Wright to Lloyd George, letter, 20 Nov. 1935; Lloyd George to Wright, letter, 25 Nov. 1935; Wright to Frances Stevenson, letter, 12 June 1936. D. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (London: 2 vols., new edition, Odhams, 1938), ii, p. 1670.
17. HC Deb, 18 April 1921, vol. 140, cc. 1528–31.
18. George W. Egerton, 'The Lloyd George "War Memoirs": A Study in the Politics of Memory', *Journal of Modern History*, 60/i (1988), 55–94.
19. J.F. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 117.
20. The first of the original three volumes of this work, the volume covering the years 1911–14, was published by Thornton Butterworth in 1923.
21. FO 370/179, L20/20/405, minutes by Headlam-Morley, 30 Dec. 1922 and 3, 6 and 11 Jan. 1923; notes by Headlam-Morley on draft chapters by Churchill.
22. *Ibid.*, Churchill to Headlam-Morley, letter, 26 Dec. 1922.
23. *Ibid.*, minute by Headlam-Morley, 6 Jan. 1923.
24. *Ibid.*, minute by Headlam-Morley, 30 Dec. 1923.
25. *Ibid.*, minute by Headlam-Morley, 6 Jan. 1923.
26. *Ibid.*, minute by Headlam-Morley, 11 Jan. 1923.
27. *Ibid.*, minute by Crowe, n.d. Jan. 1923; Crowe to Bonar Law, note, n.d. Jan. 1923.
28. *Ibid.*, minute by Crowe, 10 Jan. 1923.
29. *Ibid.*, minute by Headlam-Morley, 11 Jan. 1923.
30. *Ibid.*, Headlam-Morley to Churchill, letter, 11 Jan. 1923.
31. TNA, CAB 27/217, Committee on the Use of Official Material in Publications; Churchill to Andrew Bonar Law, letter, 3 March 1923. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*, p. 69.
32. FO 370/187, L883/883/405, minute by Edward Parkes, 2 March 1923; Gaselee to Crowe, minute, 15 March 1923.
33. *Ibid.*, notes by Headlam-Morley, 3 March 1923.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.* The text of the telegram as received by the Foreign Office was subsequently published in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, vol. xi, *The Outbreak of War* (London, 1926), G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds), No. 490. On the problems arising from the erroneous compilation of the British Blue Book see: Keith Hamilton, 'Falsifying the Record: Entente Diplomacy and the Preparation of the Blue and Yellow Books on the War Crisis of 1914', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 18 (2007), pp. 89–108.
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38. FO 370/187, L883/883/405, minute by Crowe, 15 March 1923.
39. *Ibid.*, Gaselee to Northern Dept., minute, 21 March 1923; Buchanan to Curzon, letter, 14 March 1923; Curzon to Buchanan, 15 March 1923.
40. *Ibid.*, minute by Crowe, 15 March 1923.
41. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*, p. 70.
42. James Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1884–1893* (London, 1922). FO 370/190, L2303/2303/405, Rodd to Crowe, letter, 1 June 1923.
43. FO 370/190, L2303/2303/405, Gaselee to Crowe, minute, 4 June 1923. On the Clochette and Rodd missions see: G.N. Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile, 1882–1899* (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 293–96; and H.G. Marcus, 'The Rodd Mission of 1897', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, iii (1965), pp. 23–36.
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45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, minute by Curzon, 5 June 1923.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, Rodd to Curzon, letter, 8 June 1923.
49. *Ibid.*, minute by Gaselee, 12 June 1923.
50. *Ibid.*, minute by Crowe, 12 June 1923.
51. *Ibid.*, undated minute by Curzon.
52. *Ibid.*, minute by Gaselee, 12 June 1923.
53. *Ibid.*, Rodd to Curzon, letter, 8 June 1923.
54. Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1902–1919* (London, 1925), pp. 393–94.
55. FO 370/218, L6004/258/405, minute by Montgomery, 27 Sept. 1926.
56. FO 370/218, L1127/258/405, Gaselee to Hardinge, letter, 19 Feb. 1926.
57. FO 370/218, L6004/258/405, George Grahame (HMA, Brussels) to Tyrrell, letter, 18 Sept. 1926.
58. *Ibid.*
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61. *Ibid.*, Arthur and Alexandra Hardinge to Montgomery, letters, 24 Sept. 1926.
62. *Ibid.*, minute by Kirkpatrick, n.d. Sept. 1926; Tyrrell to Hardinge, letter, 30 Sept. 1926.
63. Arthur Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in Europe* (London, 1927), p. 191.
64. FO 370/219, L6400/258/405, minute by Gaselee, 5 Oct. 1926.
65. *Ibid.*
66. FO 370/219, L6893/258/405, Alexandra Hardinge to Montgomery, letter, 29 Oct. 1926; minute by Gaselee, 11 Nov. 1926.
67. *Ibid.*, Gaselee to Tilden Smith (Jonathan Cape), letter, 23 Dec. 1926.

68. Arthur Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in the East* (London, 1928), pp. 351–91.
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70. FO 370/218, L4660/258/405, Gaselee to the secretary, Cambridge University Press, 22 July 1926.
71. FO 370/219, L6280/258/405, minute by Gaselee, 11 Oct. 1926.
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73. *Ibid.*, minute by Gaselee, 11 Oct. 1926. Waters, *Secret and Confidential*, pp. 279–86, pp. 292–93 and pp. 366–67.
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76. *Ibid.*, minute by Tyrrell, 18 Oct. 1923.
77. *Ibid.*, Tyrrell to undersecretary, War Office (WO), letter, 27 Oct. 1923.
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79. FO 370/202, L792/792/402, minute by Headlam-Morley, 15 Feb. 1924.
80. FO 370/197, L5021/5021/405, minute by Gaselee, 14 Dec. 1923. Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-five Years, 1892–1916* 2 vols., (London, 1925).
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83. *Ibid.*
84. TNA, FO 371/16336, N4020/1336/38, minute by Collier, 5 July 1932.
85. *Ibid.*, Alexander Hardinge (assistant private secretary to George V) to Gaselee, letter, 10 July 1932; Gaselee to Alexander Hardinge, letter, 15 July 1932. FO 370/447, L2588/78/405, Gaselee to Sir Robert Vansittart (permanent undersecretary, FO), minute, 17 April 1934.
86. Lloyd George MSS., LG/G/212/3, ‘Czar’s Future Residence’, annotated draft Chapter XIV of the *War Memoirs* of David Lloyd George. Hankey forwarded this chapter to the Foreign Office for vetting along with three other chapters headed ‘America Enters the War’, ‘The Imperial War Cabinet and Conference’, and ‘Vatican and Kuhlmann Peace Moves’. TNA, CAB 104/141, Hankey to Vansittart, letter, 16 April 1934.
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91. *Ibid.*, ‘Czar’s Future Residence’.
92. Lady Algernon Gordon Lennox (ed.), *The Diary of Lord Bertie of Thame, 1914–1918* (2 vols., London, 1924).
93. Lord Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London, 1958), p. 53.
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96. Meriel Buchanan, *Ambassador's Daughter* (London, 1958), pp. 149–62.
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99. Lloyd George MSS., LG/G/212/3, Hankey to Lloyd George, letter, 19 April 1934.
100. *Ibid.*, Hankey to Lloyd George, 27 April 1934, covering minute by Harry Batterbee (assistant permanent undersecretary, Dominions Office), 20 April 1934.
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5

The Secret Intelligence Service and China: The Case of Hilaire Noulens, 1923–1932

Christopher Baxter

The arrest in June 1931 of Hilaire Noulens, the Comintern representative in Shanghai, heralded a major breakthrough for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in targeting the Bolshevik threat in the Far East during the inter-war years. At the time, Noulens, finally identified by Frederick Litten in 1994 as Jakob Rudnik, was playing a central part in nurturing Communist parties across the Far East, carrying out activities for the Department for International Liaison or *Otdel Mezhdunarodnoi svyazi* (OMS), the logistics, communications and intelligence arm of the Comintern.¹ Records released to The National Archives (TNA) in 2005 revealed for the first time that Major Valentine Vivian, Head of Section V, SIS's counter-espionage section, was responsible for drawing up a report in 1932 on the value of the papers found upon Noulens. Vivian's report, available previously only in sanitised form, was released in full along with all its exhibits and enclosures detailing the extent of the Noulens haul. These papers, together with releases from Security Service (MIS) records, provide a unique glimpse into the role SIS played in piecing the case together.²

It is important, however, to set the Noulens case against the political backdrop of the previous decade in order to comprehend why the event was seen as such a major coup for the British and SIS. In the aftermath of the First World War, the future of China dominated Britain's policy in the Far East. Although its commercial interests in China were slowly diminishing *vis-à-vis* those of the other great powers – direct trade, for example, was in steep decline – Britain continued to hold the biggest economic stake in that country. In 1931, the British community in China numbered just over 13,000 and British investment amounted to

approximately £244m, whilst business investments stood at £198m and government obligations £46m. British interests also controlled around 37% of Chinese shipping and over 50% of coastal shipping. The protection of these interests had remained, understandably, an important priority, especially during a challenging and violent period of growing Chinese nationalism between 1923 and 1931.³ To make matters worse, Chinese nationalism was perceived by many within Whitehall to be bound up with an ever-growing Soviet threat not just to the Empire but to the very fabric of British society.⁴ Indeed, one scholar has recently argued that studying Anglo-Soviet strategic and ideological rivalry in East Asia is an essential prerequisite to developing and challenging our understanding of the traditional parameters of the 'Cold War'.⁵

British anxiety in China was reinforced by the fact that from the early to mid-1920s, the fledgling Chinese Communists, under orders from the Comintern, cooperated with a revitalised Chinese Nationalist Party, the *Kuomintang* (*Guomindang*) in an attempt to rid the country of its feudal past and destroy the unequal treaties imposed by the great powers. It formed part of an agreement whereby the *Kuomintang* from 1923 onwards began to accept Soviet aid in the shape of money and arms, whilst also welcoming advisers such as the Comintern agent, Mikhail Borodin.⁶ The *Kuomintang* soon became increasingly active in criticising the foreign, and in particular the British, presence in China. Boycotts of British goods were organised and large-scale demonstrations occurred. In 1925, serious incidents of disorder took place, most notably in Shanghai on 30 May when Chinese demonstrators were shot by British and British-Indian police. A wave of strikes and anti-British protests followed in southern China, affecting all major ports, including the crown colony of Hong Kong.

This outbreak of trouble had been predicted by SIS a month earlier. Its chief, the charismatic Admiral Sir Hugh 'Quex' Sinclair, wrote to the Foreign Office twice during the unrest to remind his masters that SIS had given advance warning from a number of sources (including a copy of a secret despatch prepared by the Comintern) that the present trouble was 'very largely due to the intrigues of the Soviet Government, and has been cleverly organised by them'.⁷ The 1920s were a period of anxiety within SIS as they monitored the spread of Communism and the organs of the Soviet party involved in it, the chief of these being the Comintern. SIS's main intelligence-gathering effort was accordingly aimed against the Bolshevik target.

SIS's agent coverage of these activities was subsequently enhanced from the early 1930s by the interception of the Comintern's clandestine

communications from Moscow to Europe – codenamed ‘Mask’ – courtesy of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS), then under SIS’s control.⁸ However, in the Far East, the resources at SIS’s disposal to tackle the Bolshevik threat were meagre: the SIS budget for the whole of the region dropped from £18,200 in 1923 to £6,460 in 1934–35. In mainland China, during the same period, the controversial Harry Steptoe was the sole SIS representative charged with carrying out intelligence work. Steptoe’s competence or, as others have charged, blatant incompetence, has been debated elsewhere.⁹ Whatever the verdict on his capabilities, one cannot ignore the enormity of his task, especially when considering that he suffered from ill-health and was often overwhelmed by the passport control work that constituted his ‘cover’ as a vice consul in Shanghai. Steptoe had, nevertheless, to try to meet a plethora of demands for intelligence across a vast geographical area.¹⁰

This is perhaps best illustrated by looking at the demands of a key SIS customer department: the War Office. The military intelligence section dealing with the Far East, MI2c, regularly provided SIS with questionnaires. In 1929, for example, MI2c considered that within China gathering intelligence on Soviet activities was the primary target, but they also wanted information about ‘(a.) the relations between the various Chinese leaders (b.) Japanese and Soviet plans and progress in the remoter parts of China, e.g. Mongolia, Sinkiang, Kansu and Tibet (c.) progress of Japanese railway schemes in Manchuria (d.) progress in gas productions and aviation in various parts of China’.

In addition to these demands were tasks set out by two officers from MI3, the section responsible for Europe and the Soviet Union. Major Edward Calthrop of MI3b wanted a watch on ‘the activities of various German officers now in China in order to ascertain why they are there’, whilst Major Frederick ‘Paddy’ Beaumont-Nesbitt of MI3c, wanted information on ‘the extent of Russian control over the Mongolian National Army’. These were just the demands for China. Steptoe was also expected to try and gather intelligence on Japan – recognised by Sinclair as ‘the primary Far East intelligence target’ – and, in that same 1929 questionnaire, there were requests for information on Formosa (Taiwan), the capabilities of the Japanese Army, and Communism in Japan.¹¹

There was clearly a limit to what was realistically achievable and Sinclair frequently had to manage the expectations of customer departments.¹² Nonetheless, in 1929, Lieutenant-Colonel C. D. Rawson of MI2c thanked Major Humphrey Plowden of SIS for continuing to provide ‘most valuable information regarding Soviet policy in China, which for the time being remains the most important aspect of the situation in

that country'. Recent research has indicated that it was not until March 1933 that MI2c began to ask SIS to prioritise intelligence on Japanese ambitions in China ahead of information about Soviet intrigues in that country.¹³ Indeed, by the late 1920s, a Soviet threat to British imperial and commercial interests in China appeared particularly acute.

On 3 January 1927, a Chinese mob controlled by the *Kuomintang* attacked the British concession at Hankow (Hankou), forcing the British to withdraw temporarily. The Chiefs of Staff became alarmed and considered that the *Kuomintang* – now led by Chiang Kai-shek – was working to 'a considerable extent under Bolshevik influence' and argued it was time to contemplate an 'active defence'. Fearing a spread of violence to Shanghai, the cabinet agreed to despatch an expeditionary force of three infantry brigades under Major-General John Duncan to defend the International Settlement.¹⁴ In reality, Chiang was essentially working to his own agenda – an observation the Foreign Office had made a year earlier – but this argument became harder to sell as apprehension in Whitehall about the Soviet menace in East Asia quickly gathered momentum. It was inflamed further after the anti-Communist Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin (Zhang Zuolin) ordered a raid on the Soviet embassy in Peking (Beijing) in April 1927, which provided more evidence of the extent of Soviet aid to the revolutionary cause in China.¹⁵

These revelations came at a time of heightened anxiety in Britain over Moscow's desire to foment revolution in the United Kingdom. That fear had gathered pace with the publication of the controversial 1924 Zinoviev letter, the 1926 General Strike (which SIS was convinced had been 'conceived many months ago at Moscow') and, finally, the Metropolitan Police's raid in May 1927 on the offices of the All-Russian Co-operative Society (Arcos), through which ostensibly all Soviet business operated in Britain but, in reality, was a front for Soviet subversion and propaganda.

Unlike the swoop on the Soviet embassy in Peking, the Arcos raid produced no significant evidence of Soviet espionage. However, the cabinet had now resolved to break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and, much to the horror of Sinclair, fell back on using signals intelligence as the only proof available that Moscow had breached the normal rules of diplomatic behaviour. After parliamentary revelations alluded to the decrypted Soviet messages, which one commentator has described as 'an orgy of governmental indiscretion about secret intelligence', Moscow, alerted to the weakness of its diplomatic communications, immediately introduced the much more secure 'one-time pad' system thereby extinguishing a vital British intelligence asset.¹⁶

During what turned out to be a heated debate in the House of Commons on 26 May over the break of diplomatic relations, in which the Labour opposition tabled a 'vote of censure', Austen Chamberlain, the British foreign secretary, made reference to the recent history of Soviet 'intrigues' in China to reinforce the cabinet's case.¹⁷ Yet, as Chamberlain made his announcement, some dramatic changes were afoot in China. From mid-April 1927, Chiang Kai-shek had begun to carry out a purge of thousands of suspected Communists and dissidents in Shanghai, which spread throughout China. The killings, known as the 'white terror', drove most Communists from the urban cities and ports of China into the rural countryside.¹⁸

These events led Chiang to announce a break with the Soviet Union at the end of 1927 and effectively vindicated earlier Foreign Office thinking about potential divisions between the Communists and the *Kuomintang*.¹⁹ Although this brought some relief to British interests on the Chinese mainland and Britain became more sympathetic towards the *Kuomintang*, it did not mean that Bolshevik activity had ceased.²⁰ MI2c continued to call for intelligence on the Communist threat inside China as a matter of priority, not least because there was evidence that that country was being used as a platform by the Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party to spread Communism throughout the Far East.²¹

The major breakthrough came with the arrest in June 1931 of Hilaire Noulens, the Comintern representative in Shanghai. The arrest provided SIS with an extraordinary insight into the activities of the Comintern and the work of its Far Eastern Bureau. It also demonstrated the close collaboration between SIS and a variety of departments and agencies, including MI5, Indian Political Intelligence, the Metropolitan's Police's Special Branch, the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office and the Shanghai Municipal Police. In addition, GC&CS deciphered non-telegraphic cipher messages found amongst the Noulens papers. SIS corresponded with the security authorities in Singapore, Batavia and British India too; and with the Swiss, French, Dutch and Germans closer to home, all of whom were interested in tackling the Communist threat. Finally, there was an American dimension, since US Communists such as Earl Browder, later deeply involved in Soviet espionage in the United States, featured in the Noulens papers.²²

As soon as Noulens was arrested, Vivian wrote immediately to Gerard Clauson of the Colonial Office, considering the event to be of 'paramount importance'. Vivian explained that a suspicious French subject, passing under the name of Serge Lefranc, had arrived in Singapore from

Hong Kong in April 1931 and aroused the attention of the authorities by getting in touch with the local Communist party and sending cipher telegrams to code addresses in Brussels, Paris and Shanghai. Lefranc turned out to be identical with one Joseph Ducroux (alias Dupont), previously known to SIS in connection with Communist activities in France, Egypt, British India and China. Within two months Ducroux was arrested in Singapore. Amongst the telegraphic addresses to which he had been sending cipher telegrams was 'Hilanoul, Shanghai'. This address was communicated to Steptoe, who identified the recipient as Hilaire Noulens of 235 Szechuan Road, Shanghai. Steptoe reported back to SIS that as a result of the information he had given to the Shanghai Municipal Police, they launched a 'lightning raid' on that address during the night of 15/16 June 1931, where Noulens, who had been carrying on the ostensible profession of a French and German teacher, was arrested.²³

A search of 235 Szechuan Road produced no papers of importance, but a Yale latch-key in Noulens' possession led to the identification of an apartment, No. 30C, in a large building known as 'Central Arcade', situated at 49 Nanking Road. Noulens had rented this office under the name Alison, and he was subsequently found to be the occupier of two houses in the Western District, in one of which Madame Noulens, passing herself off as Madame Marie Motte, a Frenchwoman, was arrested later that day. Noulens had been observed visiting this address regularly and it was in this apartment that three steel boxes were discovered, containing the bulk of the documents upon which the Noulens case was to be based.

Noulens himself was in the possession of French, Belgian and Canadian passports and tried to claim first Belgian and then Swiss citizenship, both of which were denied. SIS, with assistance from its overseas representatives, MI5 and Special Branch, were able to prove that the passports Noulens held were forgeries. Once Noulens had been disowned by the Swiss he was handed over to the Chinese authorities on 12 August 1931. Denied the chance to claim extraterritorial rights, SIS lost interest in trying to ascertain his real identity and turned its attention instead to the question of unravelling the extent of Communist activity across the Far East provided by the Noulens haul.²⁴

Before the papers reached London, SIS received briefings on the material from its man on the spot, Steptoe. Just days after Noulens' arrest, Vivian felt it necessary to reveal to the Colonial Office the prospect of 'a complete organisation' being built up for the 'creation of labour troubles' in the Federated Malay States and amongst the Chinese in Burma. This was reinforced by intelligence from Steptoe that Tan Malaka, a well-known Java

Communist and one-time leader of the Communist movement in the Dutch East Indies, was to proceed to Burma immediately.

Steptoe had also telegraphed SIS, Vivian informed the Colonial Office, to state that ledgers acquired from Noulens' address showed that 'the sum of 50,000 gold dollars has been allocated for Communist work in the Federated Malay States for the June quarter of this year, and that 45,000 gold dollars have been allocated for work in Burma until the end of the present year'. The documents, Vivian suggested, afforded 'irrefutable evidence' that the Communist organisation in the Federated Malay States had 'developed very much further than is realised by the local Colonial authorities'. As the archives were 'too bulky' to be copied or photographed, Vivian told the Colonial Office that Steptoe had arranged to take them personally to Singapore for examination and discussion with the local authorities.²⁵

A further update at the end of June 1931 on the content of the documents provided by Vivian for the Colonial Office, based on Steptoe's initial findings, was no less dramatic. Vivian spoke of details 'so vividly illustrative of the far reaching nature of the Communist organisation in question, of the unity of Communist effort all over the world and of the careful and conspirative methods adopted to conceal the ultimate, but none the less undoubted, responsibility of Moscow and the Soviet Government'. It was becoming clear, too, that Noulens' communications with Moscow ran through Berlin for reasons of deniability and security. Deciphered telegrams which dealt with organisation and finance, were all in German, as were the accounts. According to Steptoe, there was also 'abundant general proof' of a connection between the Far Eastern Bureau in Shanghai and Moscow. For example, there was evidence of the regular use of Soviet couriers between Shanghai and Berlin via Moscow. Vivian also revealed to the Colonial Office that SIS had acquired intelligence the day before Noulens was arrested that instructions for the Far Eastern Bureau were being 'camouflaged' by the Soviet embassy in Berlin and, through it, Moscow.²⁶

As SIS started to investigate the case in more detail, the plight of Noulens and his wife attracted worldwide attention. The German Communist, Willi Münzenberg, organised a campaign across Europe with a number of radical sympathisers through what became known as 'Noulens (Rüegg) Defence Committees'. This group wrote protest letters seeking clemency for Noulens and his wife.²⁷ Münzenberg's campaign attracted some famous supporters, amongst them Albert Einstein, H.G. Wells, Romain Rolland, Clara Zetkin, Henri Barbusse, Theodore Dreiser, Maxim Gorki, Agnes Smedley, Madame Sun Yat-sen and Sun Fo.

Meanwhile, Moscow, concerned about the impact of further Comintern secrets being revealed, made desperate attempts to free the Noulens. Otto Braun and Herman Siebler, two German Communists working for the Fourth Department (Soviet military intelligence) were sent from Harbin to deliver money to Richard Sorge, then active in Shanghai, in order to buy the Noulens' freedom. Both men, who had been carrying \$20,000 each, met Sorge and delivered the money but it is unclear what happened next, apart from the mission's evident failure.²⁸

As well as a vigorous public campaign for their release, the Chinese Communist Party took measures to keep up the Noulens' spirits and thus discourage them from cooperating with their captors by establishing clandestine contact with them in their prison cells. The senior Investigation Section Officer responsible for the Noulens case was bribed to smuggle messages to and from the Noulens and also, if required, to warn of any plans to murder the couple before their trial.²⁹ The Noulens were finally brought to trial on 10 August 1932 in Nanking (Nanjing), without Western defence lawyers. Nine days later, they were found guilty of endangering the safety of the State, and a sentence of death, later commuted to one of imprisonment for life, was passed upon them.

By then, Vivian had already drawn up his detailed report based upon the documents seized from Noulens. Vivian, born in 1886, was widely known in SIS by his initials 'V.V' and sometimes as 'Val'. He initially joined the Indian Police in 1906 and within eight years rose to be Assistant Director of the Criminal Intelligence Department in British India before joining Indian Political Intelligence and then SIS, eventually heading up Section V in 1925. Vivian regarded the Comintern as a criminal conspiracy rather than a clandestine political movement and therefore focused on evidence of illegal activity, although he was not blind to the Comintern's revolutionary aims, particularly where they affected British interests. However, he could not have pieced together the Noulens story without the help of the Shanghai Municipal Police, with whom Steptoe fortunately had a particularly close relationship. They were able to follow up leads, carry out surveillance and interview as many people as possible connected to the case, the results of which they passed to SIS.³⁰

Once all the evidence had arrived in London, at Vivian's disposal was a substantial cache of papers relating to the work of the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS, or the Shanghai Secretariat of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat (PPTUS). From this material, Vivian finally issued his CX report on 7 March 1932, accompanied by Comintern documents, circulated as some 120 'exhibits' dealing with particular

geographical areas or topics. The size of the report necessarily precluded a wide circulation, therefore, in May 1932, Sinclair informed the Foreign Office that a revised edition had been written so it could be passed to selected individuals of friendly foreign powers and to relevant British Colonial and Dominion authorities.³¹

So what did Vivian's report reveal? He was unable to trace Noulens' career prior to 4 December 1929, when he obtained his Belgian passport in Brussels in the name of Samuel Herssens. It was on the Herssens passport that Noulens travelled back to China, arriving at Shanghai on 19 March 1930. Vivian correctly deduced that 'a great mass of contributory indications point to the conclusion that he (Noulens) was the administrative and organisatory pivot around which the work of the FEB (Far Eastern Bureau) revolved'. To assist him, Madame Noulens arrived on 19 June 1930 and they appeared to be in charge of all accommodation, finance and communication. These activities carried the risk of attracting attention and in the end helped to assist the police in unravelling the network. Yet, the evidence suggested that Noulens was not the biggest Comintern agent in the area and the papers revealed that other figures were drawing higher salaries. Furthermore, nowhere in the administrative correspondence with Berlin was any one of Noulens' many aliases mentioned.³²

Some of the financial transactions that Noulens was processing left Vivian astounded. Between August 1930 and May 1931, the Far Eastern Bureau disbursed in Reichsmarks, gold dollars, Mexican dollars and Yen, a total roughly equivalent to £86,820 sterling, averaging a monthly outlay of £8,682, or roughly £105,000 per annum. These values today would amount to something in the region of £4.6m, averaging a monthly outlay of £460,000 or just under £5.6m per annum. TOSS, meanwhile, was spending about £1,000 per month (equivalent to £53,000 in today's prices) and its expenditure was on the increase. These figures did not include the heavy expenditure incurred in the expensive methods used for controlling, and corresponding with, those organisations via Berlin. Altogether, Vivian estimated that at the time of Noulens' arrest in June 1931, the Comintern and the Red International of Labour Unions, commonly known as the Profintern, were spending approximately £120,000–£150,000 per annum (equivalent to roughly £6.3m–£7.9m in today's prices) through, and on, the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS.³³ Vivian was shocked by the 'magnitude' of Moscow's subversive activities, in what he considered a comparatively limited area: 'One, moreover, in which great distances and costly journeys must be more than balanced by the primitiveness of native standards, the backwardness of

the majority of regional Communist Parties concerned, and the consequent saving in party subsidies as compared with European and more developed standards.³⁴

Astonished by these large sums, Vivian then attempted to unpick the elaborate methods used by members of the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS to operate clandestinely. First, he noted that they indulged in a number of assumed names, using 'borrowed', or expertly forged passports. Noulens and his wife had six passports between them. In addition to the pseudonyms adopted locally, each of the conspirators had a Christian or concocted name, usually more than one, by which he or she was designated in accounts and correspondence. There was also a complex system of maintaining a number of accommodation addresses and establishments, each of them leased in different names, where plural existences were carried on. Most of the correspondence between Shanghai and Berlin was either interspersed with cipher groups to conceal the more 'tell-tale' portions or was entirely enciphered. Different cipher systems were used for postal and telegraphic messages. SIS was lucky that the Noulens documents included notes made by the encipherer for his own guidance together with rough workings which, had they been destroyed, would have, in Vivian's opinion, probably made the systems 'unbreakable'.³⁵

To supplement these postal and telegraphic methods, there was a sophisticated courier service, both for communication between Shanghai and Moscow or Berlin on the one hand, and the regional Communist parties, groups and individuals in the Far Eastern Bureau's and TOSS's 'jurisdiction' on the other.³⁶ Enquiries made in Shanghai immediately after Noulens' arrest also elicited the fact that there was a courier service operating between Shanghai and Japan, and another highly organised one extending from Shanghai to all the principal ports in the Colonial possessions in the South Seas. However, Vivian pointed his reader to flaws in the system. Moscow itself, he observed, 'presumably falsely secure in the efficiency of its cipher systems', had, in some of the telegrams obtained, set its own conspirative principles aside and furnished 'complete proof' of its complicity in the shape of 'recklessly frank' messages underlying the cipher texts.³⁷

A cipher message dated 2 April 1931 to one of Noulens' telegraphic addresses, gave party 'directives' for Communist action in North China. Instead of the arranged codenames of portmanteau terms, the message was addressed to the 'FOB' (*Fern-Ost Büro* or Far Eastern Bureau) and signed 'Political Commission' (of the Comintern). Other telegrams of the same damning order were signed by the 'KIM' (Communist

International of Youth), the Eastern Section of the Young Communist International, and the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern.³⁸ All these well-known institutions were in Moscow and the messages appeared to furnish clear evidence that the agencies nominally controlling the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS in Berlin were mere transmission stations for the purpose of camouflaged communication between the Comintern and Profintern in Moscow and its sub-agencies abroad.³⁹

In Vivian's opinion one of the most outstanding documents was a letter from the Far Eastern Bureau to the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern, dated 10 June 1931, giving a detailed account of the situation of the Chinese Communist Party at that time. The Far Eastern Bureau maintained a close liaison with the Chinese Communist Party and was the conduit through which Chinese Communists visited Moscow for study and training. It also had considerable influence on the Politburo of the party's central committee. The first part of this particular document was devoted to an account of the arrest of 'the provocateur Gu'. 'Gu' was an agreed term denoting Gu Shunzhang,⁴⁰ a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, who was arrested in the Hupei (Hubei) province on 26 April 1931, after trying to smuggle 'military advisers' into Shanghai for the Far Eastern Bureau. It has also been argued that Gu was on a mission to assassinate Chiang Kai-shek.⁴¹

Taken to Nanking, Gu defected to the Chinese Nationalist government and revealed to Chiang Kai-shek the addresses of several influential Chinese Communists as well as the liaison ties between the Central Committee, the Comintern and other Communist organisations in China. This information enabled the Nationalists to arrest on 22 June 1931 the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, Hsiang Tsung-fah (Xiang Zhong fa), executed two days later, and Pao Chung-fu (Bao Junfu), an agent of the Nanking government, who was correctly suspected of being allied with the Communists. The 'turning' of Gu dealt a serious blow to the work of all the leading branches of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai and in other centres of the Yangtze Valley. It ushered in what some have termed another 'white terror' where thousands lost their lives.⁴² Many of Noulens' associates left China immediately, which explains why so many documents were found with him, and why he and his wife had to perform a multitude of tasks (which increased the risk of exposure) to keep the organisation functioning.⁴³

After the Far Eastern Bureau had described the 'turning' of Gu, it set out in detail the condition of the Chinese Communist Party. From

the same letter, Vivian was able to pull together a detailed chart of the Communist organisation in China. In essence, the Far Eastern Bureau remained confident that after initial errors, the Chinese Communist Party would be in a position to attract more followers. Dire economic conditions and 'hundreds of millions of hungry and unemployed people strengthen still more the Red danger', the Far Eastern Bureau concluded, but 'the further development of events in China depends upon the state of our party'. The Far Eastern Bureau was sure that the *Kuomintang* would not succeed in extricating China from its current dire economic crisis and that this position had to be exploited.

'In our conversations with our Chinese friends', the Far Eastern Bureau told the Eastern Secretariat, 'we constantly point this out to them and try to give them advice in accordance with the orders of the Comintern'. The Far Eastern Bureau was utterly convinced that Chiang Kai-shek's effort to unify China and to destroy Soviet districts and the Red Army would end in 'an absolute failure'.⁴⁴ Although a certain amount of time had now elapsed since the writing of this document, and minor changes in method and personnel must have taken place, Vivian was confident that the main lines of policy and organisation were 'too fundamental to have suffered any radical change as the result of the lapse of a few months and the temporary disorganisation caused by the seizure of FEB (Far Eastern Bureau) and TOSS archives'. Vivian therefore thought the document would retain 'some permanent interest'.⁴⁵

Other documents from the Noulens haul contributed much detailed information on the aims, methods and progress of the various branches of Communist endeavour, with which the 'Departments', shown on Vivian's organisational chart as dependent upon the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, were organised to deal. Papers bearing upon the establishment of a Soviet District on the borders of Hupei, Hunan, and Anhui, and others discussing intelligence organisations, military matters and work in the army, were perhaps the most important. Vivian noted that these, together with some of the cipher messages from Moscow, exemplified 'the conscious exercise of control by the Comintern over events in a foreign country, which, being regarded as already in a state of revolutionary transition, was, by means of this control of events, to be converted into a Soviet State'.⁴⁶ For example, in a document called 'Archiv' but not dated, a passage read: 'At present the district of the IVth Army is not thoroughly Sovietised. In all its parts Revolutionary Committees must be established... Soviet elections must be carried out and Soviet governments must be set up'.⁴⁷ In addition to the classes of papers mentioned, a great many of the archives relating

to China comprised accounts of interviews between leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and liaison agents of the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS. The papers illustrated the method by which these bodies collected information for the purpose of reporting to Moscow, drafting for the Communist press and controlling the various ramifications of the movement.⁴⁸

Apart from the Chinese Communist Party, the Noulens papers also provided insights into other Far Eastern Communist parties. From April 1930, the Malayan Communist Party and, Vivian conjectured, 'presumably the Indo-Chinese Communist Party', was directed through an organisation in Hong Kong known as the 'Southern Bureau'. In December 1930, this was raided and its records seized by the Hong Kong police. It appeared, however, to have lived on in a moribund state as a transmission and translation sub-agency of the Far Eastern Bureau, in the person of Nguyen Ai Quoc, later known as Ho Chi Minh, the Annamite Communist. There was, in Vivian's words, 'a bewildering mass of this man's oddly expressed letters' to the Far Eastern Bureau in the Noulens archives, which furnished the main clues to the Communist situation in those countries and the working of the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS in their connection.

With regard to Indo-China, the letters provided a cumulative impression. Vivian recognised that the local ardour for the Communist cause appeared considerable but it was tinged with a fierce nationalism, that had been largely uncontrolled either from Moscow or Shanghai, and from the Communist standpoint, was grievously off the party 'line'. The Indo-Chinese Communist movement was also being subjected to violent suppression from the French Colonial authorities, and was heavily handicapped from within by 'mistakes in practice', by 'deviations' due to want of experienced leaders and by a total absence of 'directives', either from the Comintern or the Far Eastern Bureau.⁴⁹ Nguyen Ai Quoc wrote plaintively on 21 February 1931 that the struggle of the masses in Indo-China had been 'completely ignored by our organisations, that they are forsaken, forgotten and alone, that they have no backing from international solidarity'. Nguyen Ai Quoc was arrested on 6 June 1931 in Hong Kong, a result of Gu's defection.⁵⁰

Turning his attention to the Federated States of Malaya, Vivian remarked that there was plenty of detailed information which showed that the area had been studied thoroughly from statistical, Trade Union and 'strike' standpoints. But from these memoranda and the information he had already passed to the Colonial Office earlier, there was comparatively little on the actual Communist situation either from these notes or from Quac's letters, except that the Malayan Communists

stood in the same need as the Indo-Chinese for direction, finance and leaders.⁵¹ Finally, the connection of the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS with Communist work in Japan was evidenced by a number of very lengthy reports and essays. These were not reproduced, as they afforded 'no particular insight into the underground working'.⁵² But, amongst the Noulens papers were rough notes which, though the majority dealt impersonally with labour problems, strikes and party questions, included conspirative memoranda in the case of Japanese Communism. These proved of practical value in furnishing detailed particulars of several active agents, including an artillery officer in the Japanese Communist movement, together with their addresses for secret correspondence and their passwords for contact with emissaries from Shanghai. It enabled the Japanese authorities to make important arrests and to take severe measures against Communists in Japan.⁵³

Despite the volume and detail of the evidence, with the passage of time, from the arrest of Noulens in June 1931 to March 1932 when Vivian's report was completed, the SIS officer seemed to take a more pessimistic view about the seizure of the papers and felt they would not affect the activities of the Far Eastern Bureau in the long run. He concluded that the Noulens case did 'little more than administer a temporary and partial check to Communist-inspired centres of revolt or disaffection'. Vivian argued that:

The main power-house in Moscow and its sub-agency in Berlin, without whose generous funds and able organising ability, the Communist organisations in the countries of the East would die a speedy natural death, remain supremely unaffected by the disclosures and will remain so as long as the Soviet Government's bland disclaimers of responsibility for the Comintern is accepted as closing the argument.

Even the staffs of the Far Eastern Bureau and TOSS had, Vivian noted, managed to ride out the crisis so that the majority of these trained organisers would be able in due course to reform and continue their work of disintegration, either again from Shanghai or elsewhere. It was unfortunate that at the time of Noulens' arrest, many of the agents working for the Comintern in China should have been out of Shanghai and that the whole group was more than usually upon its guard owing to the recent 'treachery' of the 'provocateur Gu'.

In the end, only Noulens, Ducroux and Nguen Ai Quac were caught.⁵⁴ Several Comintern agents, despatched from Berlin about the time of,

or after Noulens arrest, even arrived safely in Shanghai and received directions through Berlin.⁵⁵ However, Vivian was convinced that if there was one lesson to be learned from the Noulens case, it was the 'utter dependency' of oriental Communist organisations upon Moscow and upon Moscow's confidential agents. Without them, Communism in the Far East was 'unlikely to represent any particular danger'. With them 'it cannot but remain a constant lurking danger both to prosperity and to stability'.⁵⁶

Vivian may have been influenced by an SIS report received in November 1931, indicating that various organisations which had been hit by the arrests were beginning to revive.⁵⁷ Yet, it is possible to take a much more optimistic view of the impact of Noulens' arrest. Steptoe, for example, thought there was always a danger of overestimating the effectiveness of the Comintern. In terms of skilled agents, he told the Shanghai Municipal Police, 'their number is not legion' and if they can be uncovered, their value to the Comintern was lessened, 'in fact it may become nil'. Steptoe was confident that the 'cumulative effect of the blows dealt I know is great and causing much uneasiness in Comintern circles'.⁵⁸ Indeed, a considerable amount of detail had been added to official knowledge on the aims and methods of Communist intrigue in China, Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), Malaya, Japan, Formosa, Korea and the Philippine Islands. Safe houses were blown, and cipher and code material was discovered together with a large sum of money and numerous incriminating documents. Both the Japanese and Philippine Communist Parties suffered severe losses. Some months after Vivian issued his report, Edward Ingram, the Acting Counsellor at Peking, still considered the Noulens arrest 'a severe blow' to the Comintern in China, which, in part, was responsible for 'slowing down Communist progress in the industrial areas'. The arrest of Noulens probably accelerated the departure from Shanghai of Chou En-lai (Zhou Enlai), first foreign minister and later, prime minister after the Communist victory in 1949, and other members of the Politburo to join Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) in the rural hinterland.⁵⁹

Ultimately, Vivian seems to have regarded the seizure as an opportunity for illumination rather than counter-action. This view may have been shared by the Foreign Office whose marginal notation on Vivian's report demonstrated an interest in the conspiratorial machinery of the Far Eastern Bureau's activities rather than its political consequences. Noulens' arrest also began to be overshadowed by Japanese aggression in Manchuria, sparked by the Mukden Incident of September 1931, and Sino-Japanese clashes in Shanghai during January-March 1932. Antony

Best, whilst recognising that the Comintern was seen as 'a greater menace than any other potential danger' in the region at this time, has suggested that because the nature of that threat was mainly political, SIS would be left ill-prepared to deal with the more potent and military-orientated threat posed by Japanese expansionism. Nevertheless, Best, who is one of Steptoe's critics, accepts that despite his shortcomings, his 'experience in working against Soviet and Comintern activities was still considered to be of value, for the Bolshevik menace had not gone away'.

Steptoe was also heavily involved in the Shanghai Municipal Police's efforts to clamp down on the Chinese Communist Party in the International Settlement.⁶⁰ He would be helped in his endeavours by SIS's running of Johann ('Jonny') Heinrich de Graff, a German Communist and agent of both the Comintern and the Fourth Department of the Red Army Staff (later the GRU, Soviet Military Intelligence). Thus, from 1933 onwards, Vivian was able to exploit the Noulens database as well as agent coverage and 'Mask' material to investigate and counter the Comintern's attempts to spread Soviet influence. When 'Jonny' was sent by the Comintern to Shanghai in February–July 1934 he was handled by Steptoe, who transmitted reports back to London on the weakness of the Comintern in China, again rather undermining Vivian's eventual downbeat assessment of Noulens' arrest.⁶¹ Steptoe's handling of the Jonny case and of the Noulens material must have absorbed much of his time. It may also explain why, in 1934, when the British naval authorities in the region began to complain about Steptoe's competence on the grounds of his failure to produce intelligence on Japan, Sinclair leapt to his defence.⁶²

After 1934, when photos of the Noulens couple were released to show that they had not been maltreated in prison, popular interest in their plight waned. On 27 August 1937, during the first few months of the Sino-Japanese war, the Noulens were released from prison ostensibly to find bail but they fled seven days later to Shanghai and were taken in by Madame Sun Yat-sen. Their hostess left Shanghai that same month. The next part of their story is unclear although they eventually returned to the Soviet Union sometime in late 1939 after receiving help from the Soviet Consulate in Shanghai, leaving China on 25 July 1939.⁶³

In conclusion, SIS's success against the Comintern in the early 1930s proved a double-edged sword. With regard to Steptoe, for example, it certainly diverted his energies away from the Japanese target, a target for which he was not well versed considering his expertise in Communism and Chinese politics. With a lack of SIS personnel in the region and little prospect of any additional funding, that target became particularly

difficult to penetrate, especially given the nature of the Japanese security regime, which made any but the most professional espionage operation extremely hazardous. However, the Noulens case evidently remained important and retained its place in SIS's corporate memory. Jack Curry, an MIS officer 'lent' to SIS in May 1943 to form a new department, Section IX, to specialise in international Communism and its links with Moscow, used the Noulens case as part of an SIS training course.⁶⁴ Curry's work revived once more SIS's desire to uncover 'illegal' or underground aspects of the Communist movement in foreign countries. And, the Noulens case provided, in Curry's own words, 'an unique opportunity of seeing from the inside and on unimpeachable documentary evidence, the working of a highly developed Communist organisation of the "illegal" order'.⁶⁵ It showed that the experience gained by Vivian and Section V in the meticulous articulation of the material from the Noulens papers had long-term benefits, particularly as the Bolshevik threat loomed large once more and the British had to prepare for a new ideological struggle.

Notes

I would like to thank the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for allowing me to republish extracts of this article, written originally in 2005, to mark the release of classified papers from the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department of the Foreign Office to The National Archives (TNA). I would also like to thank Gill Bennett, Keith Jeffery and Mark Seaman for their helpful suggestions and comments on the text. In addition, I am extremely grateful to Alexander Millar for providing me with a copy of his excellent thesis, 'British Intelligence and the Comintern in Shanghai, 1927–37' (University of Cambridge, 2010) and for the many enjoyable conversations we have had about this subject in the past. Finally, the views expressed in this chapter are mine alone and do not reflect those of any government department.

1. In an impressive piece of academic detective work, Frederick S. Litten made strenuous efforts to ascertain Noulens' identity, his contacts and what happened to him after his imprisonment. Frederick Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', *The China Quarterly*, 138 (1994), pp. 492–512. Alexander Millar has expanded on Litten's work adding in new dimensions, such as the role played by the Kuo Chen-chang (Gu Shunzhang), the Chinese Communist defector, and Harry Steptoe, SIS's representative in Shanghai. See Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 76–149. Frederick Deakin and George Storry, *The Case of Richard Sorge* (London, 1966), pp. 84–94 devotes a chapter to the Noulens affair but contains some factual errors.
2. A sanitised version of Vivian's report can be located, for example, in TNA, CO 323/1931. The files released in 2005 relating to Noulens can be found in FO 1093/92–103, *ibid.* The Security Service file on Noulens, opened in 2007, is KV 2/2562, *ibid.*

3. In 1931, Britain's share of trade with China was less than 8% compared to more than 11% in 1913. In Hong Kong, that share had fallen from 30% to 17% in the same period. In 1930 the British Empire accounted for under one-third of China's trade but in the late 1870s that figure had stood at 85%. See Peter Lowe, *Britain in the Far East: A survey from 1819 to the present* (London, 1981), pp. 116, pp. 134–35.
4. See Christopher Andrew, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London, 1985), chapters 7, 9 & 10; Ibid., *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London, 2009), pp. 139–59; and Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949* (London, 2011), chapters 6–7.
5. Antony Best, "'We are virtually at war with Russia": Britain and the Cold War in East Asia, 1923–40', *Cold War History*, 12/2 (2012), pp. 205–25.
6. Michael Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (New York, 1996), pp. 101–114.
7. Jeffery, *MI6*, p. 259.
8. A large volume of 'Mask' decrypts can be found in TNA under the classmark HW 17. See also Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 175–77.
9. See Jeffery, *MI6*, pp. 255–266. For criticism of Steptoe, see Richard Aldrich, 'Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia during the Second World War', *Modern Asian Studies* 32/1 (1998), pp. 183–87; Ibid., *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29–30 and Antony Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914–1941* (Basingstoke, 2002). For a robust defence of Steptoe see Millar, 'British Intelligence'.
10. Jeffery, *MI6*, p.258.
11. TNA, WO 208/506A, Rawson, minute for MI1c, 23 January 1929; Calthrop, minute, 22 January 1929; Beaumont-Nesbitt, minute, 22 January 1929; Jeffery, *MI6*, p. 262.
12. Ibid, pp. 258–66.
13. I am grateful to Alexander Millar for drawing my attention to this point. See also Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 19–22. See also WO 208/506A MI2c questionnaire for China dated 15 March 1933.
14. See Lowe, *Britain in the Far East*, p. 130; *The Times*, 25 January 1927; and diary entry for 13 Feb. 1927 in *The Diaries of Captain Malcolm Duncan Kennedy, 1917–1946*, Kennedy papers, Sheffield University, <http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/kennedy_diaries.pdf>.
15. Hunt, *Genesis*, p. 103 and Best, 'Britain and the Cold War in East Asia', pp. 210–11.
16. See Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 154–156; Gill Bennett, *Desmond Morton: Churchill's Man of Mystery and the World of Intelligence* (London, 2006), pp. 107–116; Ibid., 'A most extraordinary and mysterious business': *The Zinoviev Letter of 1924*, FCO History Note no. 14 (London, 1999); and Jeffery, *MI6*, pp. 214–30.
17. See *The Times*, 27 May 1927 for extracts from the debate at the House of Commons. The Labour party lost the 'vote of censure' by a majority of 248 votes.
18. Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the China He Lost* (London, 2005), chapter 9.

19. 'Nanking orders break with Russia', *The New York Times*, 3 Dec. 1927.
20. Lowe, *Britain in the Far East*, p. 131.
21. Best, *British Intelligence*, pp. 78–82 and *Ibid.*, 'Britain and the Cold War', p. 214.
22. The KV file 2/2562 is particularly illuminating with regard to the close cooperation between different government departments and agencies. On Steptoe's relationship with the Shanghai Municipal Police see Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 106–09. The Americans expressed their 'sincere thanks' in making Vivian's dossier on Noulens available to them in 1932. This is recorded in later correspondence. See KV2/2562, Hollis to Vivian, 13 Sept. 1944. On Browder see Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London, 1999), pp. 142–44, p. 146, pp. 161–62 and pp. 170–71.
23. *Ibid.*, Vivian to Clauson, 19 June 1931. See also 'Communist Activities in China, Federated Malay States, etc. (The "Noulens Case".)' (Hereafter referred to as 'The Noulens Case'). FO 1093/97, Vivian report, 7 March 1932. WO 106/5815, 'Report on the Arrest in Shanghai of the Communist Agent Noulens', Intelligence Bureau (Shanghai) report for GOC, China, 27 Aug. 1931.
24. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932; KV 2/2562, Vivian to Indian Political Intelligence, 3, 9, 13 July and 17 Aug. 1931. See also Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 109–115.
25. *Ibid.*, KV 2/2562, Vivian to Clauson, 19 June 1931. This letter was copied to the Foreign Office, India Office, War Office, MI5 and Scotland Yard.
26. *Ibid.*, Vivian to Clauson, 30 June 1931 (copies passed to the same addressees as above).
27. Paul and Gertrude Rüegg started to become the universally accepted cover name for the Noulens' couple, even though this too was a false identity. Even the Security Service's file is so identified. See KV 2/2562 and Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', p. 495.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 497–8.
29. WO 106/5815, extract from 'China Annual Report, 1932', Peking despt. No. 55, 11 Jan. 1933.
30. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932. See also Jeffery, *MI6*, p. 167, pp. 226–27 and Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 114–20.
31. *Ibid.*, FO 1093/93, Sinclair to Norton, 11 May 1932.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 502–03. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932. See Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', pp. 492–512 for a good breakdown of who was who in the Communist apparatus for the Far East.
33. Calculations of current value of historical sums of money are based on the Retail Price Index, as indicated in www.measuringworth.com and refer to 2010 prices. I would like to thank Keith Jeffery for directing me to this website.
34. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
35. *Ibid.*
36. FO 1093/96, Berlin to Hilanoul, Shanghai, tel. 137, 18 May 1931.
37. FO 1093/97, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
38. See FO 1093/96, Berlin to Saneselus, Shanghai, tel. 92, 2 April 1931; Berlin to Eniral, Shanghai, tel. 93, 2 April 1931; and Berlin to Revibol, Shanghai, tel. 94, 2 April 1931.

39. FO 1093/97, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
40. Gu Shunzhang to which he is popularly known is preferred rather than the Wade-Giles translation of Kuo Chen-chang.
41. FO 1093/99, translation of a typewritten document in German headed 'An das Ost-Sekretariat der Komintern', dated 10 June 1931. Millar, 'British Intelligence', p. 96.
42. FO 1093/99, 'An das Ost-Sekretariat der Komintern'. Millar, 'British Intelligence', p. 98, pp. 104–105.
43. These were points Noulens was keen to explain to his superiors when he returned to Moscow and wrote up a report in 1939. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–105. Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', pp. 506–07.
44. FO 1093/99, 'An das Ost-Sekretariat der Komintern'.
45. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
46. *Ibid.* For papers on the organisation of the Red Army see FO 1093/99. The cipher wires can be found in FO 1093/96.
47. Typewritten draft document in German headed 'Archiv', undated, and other related papers can be found in FO 1093/99.
48. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
49. These papers can be found in FO 1093/100.
50. Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', footnote 10, p. 494.
51. Papers relating to Malaya can be found in FO 1093/100.
52. See papers on Japan in FO 1093/101.
53. *Ibid.*, typewritten document in English, addressed to the Eastern Secretariat of the Communist International, dated 10 June 1931.
54. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
55. One of these had been identified as an individual who arrived on 2 August 1931 under the name Oswald Doenitz, posing as a traveller for a Hamburg quack medicine firm. This 'cover' appeared to have been real inasmuch as the business actually existed. Doenitz also opened premises purporting to represent the 'Eastern Trading Developing Co.', which he soon closed without doing any business. His movements were furtive and he changed his address often. He eventually left Shanghai for the Soviet Union on 26 December 1931. There was nothing to show whether Doenitz was one of the members of the Far Eastern Bureau or TOSS groups mentioned or whether he was a new addition. 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932, FO 1093/92, TNA. When Richard Sorge was seen with Doenitz, he was suspected to be an agent of the PPTUS. Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', fn. 103, p. 507.
56. FO 1093/92, 'The Noulens Case', Vivian report, 7 March 1932.
57. See Best, *British Intelligence*, p. 81.
58. Millar, 'British Intelligence', p. 123.
59. FO 371/16212, F7392/310/10, Peking despt. No. 1060, 13 October 1932. Millar suggests that Noulens was actually responsible for saving Chou's life, as the latter had proposed a resolution in the Politburo condemning himself for the arrest of 'provocateur Gu', which Noulens promptly stopped. See Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 121–22.
60. Best, *British Intelligence*, pp. 81–2.
61. Jeffery, *MI6*, pp. 267–68.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 263–64 and Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 120 and 140.

63. Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', pp. 498–9, pp. 508–12, and Millar, 'British Intelligence', pp. 143–48.
64. KV 2/2562, MI5, minute, 5 Oct. 1951. John Curry, *The Security Service, 1908–1945: The Official History* (London, 1999), pp. 22–3.
65. KV 2/2562, 'Notes on the Noulens Case' by Jack Curry, n.d.

6

Strategy and Foreign Policy in Great Britain, 1930–1938: From the Pursuit of the Balance of Power to Appeasement

B.J.C. McKercher

The strategic basis of British foreign policy built around the ‘appeasement’ of adversarial Powers began with the rise of the Conservative, Neville Chamberlain, to the premiership in May 1937. Before this moment, although appeasement had a tradition in English and, later, British external relations stretching back to the seventeenth century if not before, the country’s diplomatists had employed it only tactically to support grand strategy. Since at least the reign of Elizabeth I until the late 1930s, this strategy comprised the pursuit of the balance of power – changing alliances or drawing close to other Powers to preclude the regional hegemony of one nation or alliance.¹ It occurred, first, in relation to Western Europe and the security of the home islands and, then, as the expanding British Empire saw policy-makers in London defend the manifold interests of the only world Power, in key areas of the globe. Thus, appeasement had been just one of a number of tactical alternatives in the planning and execution of British foreign policy designed to ensure the security of Britain’s national and Imperial interests. These alternatives also included working with other Powers politically or militarily in short-term arrangements or longer-term alliances, unilateral threats or the use of military action, a reliance on conference diplomacy, and more. However, after mid-1937, because of his perception that pursuing the balance of power in Europe and the Far East held danger – flowing from his belief that failure to maintain the balance had led to

the Great War of 1914–1918 – Chamberlain used his position as premier to change the strategic basis of British foreign policy. In one sense, it amounted to a coldly realistic decision, reflecting the political strictures placed on British governments in the 1930s by both the electorate that wanted to avoid war and the need to buy time to allow for rearmament. In another, so Chamberlain and his supporters argued, it would bring long-term stability to Europe by meeting legitimate German territorial grievances without Berlin resorting to armed conflict to resolve them.

Appeasement as a British foreign policy precept is a somewhat amorphous concept that changed over time and was modified by circumstance. With a historian's lens, Paul Kennedy defined it in 1976 as 'the policy of settling international (or, for that matter, domestic) quarrels by admitting and satisfying grievances through rational negotiation and compromise, thereby avoiding the resort to an armed conflict which would be expensive, bloody, and possibly very dangerous'.² But a range of British leaders in the past possessed subtly different views. William Ewart Gladstone, four times prime minister between 1868 and 1894, talked about seeking 'the concord and hearty co-operation' amongst Great Powers to establish international stability – in this case, although pathologically Russophobic, Gladstone referred to Anglo-Russian relations and the 'Eastern Question' after the 1878 Congress of Berlin.³ Later, before the Great War in relation to the German question, Sir Edward Grey, the Liberal foreign secretary, spoke about 'mutual advantage & increased security'.⁴ In March 1919, when arguing for what he reckoned had to be a more lenient peace imposed on defeated Germany, David Lloyd George, the prime minister, stated in the Fontainebleau memorandum:

Our terms may be severe, they may be stern and even ruthless but at the same time they can be so just that the country on which they are imposed will feel in its heart that it has no right to complain. But injustice, arrogance, displayed in the hour of triumph will never be forgotten or forgiven?⁵

After he came to power, in reference to the two fascist European Great Powers, Chamberlain argued for 'better relations with Germany and Italy'.

No one would now claim that appeasement was unique to British foreign policy pursued during the late 1930s. But as views as diverse as those of Gladstone, Grey, Lloyd George, Chamberlain, and their governments indicate, there existed differences of emphasis in its goals. And

these differences beg several questions: Was appeasement a political precept girded by hard and fast rules delimiting its creation and application to perceived threats to international stability and, hence, British national and Imperial security? Was it, instead, a flexible approach in strategic thinking having at its base the desire to ameliorate international tensions, but whose pursuit had to consider the unique conditions wrought by time and circumstance? Did it have limits, say where removing the bases of disputes was circumscribed by perceived threats to national and Imperial interests? Or was it simply a general notion that foreign policy should seek to avoid 'the resort to an armed conflict' – and policy should be the handmaiden of peace at all costs?

The pursuit of the balance of power in western Europe and in other places in the world where British interests touched those of other Powers – in the western and eastern Mediterranean, South Asia, East Asia, and the Americas – comprised British grand strategy. In this pursuit, there existed the economic, political, and military resources available – particularly naval power – the perception of benefit and loss, and, given the limitations of domestic support, the willingness of policy-makers to pursue particular diplomatic tactics and strategies including war.⁶

Accordingly, after the Congress of Berlin, Gladstone looked to pursue a moralistic foreign policy in contradistinction to that of the Conservative ministry that fell from power in April 1880 – ultimately, he was not successful. But consideration of appeasing Russia via a policy of cooperation had the benefit in his mind of stabilising the post-1878 status quo respecting the Ottoman Empire.⁷ Eschewing the need for allies given Britain's insular geography and the security afforded by the Royal Navy, British policy sought to combine with other Powers on an *ad hoc* basis to maintain the balance. Thus, improving relations with Russia, still looking covetously on Turkish Balkan territories, might have the advantage of meeting the intrigues of other Powers, especially Austria-Hungary, to maintain stability in the region and thereby defend better British strategic and other interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. The contemplation of appeasing Russia hence constituted a tactical manoeuvre, after the Congress of Berlin, to maintain stability in South Eastern Europe – the regional balance of power; of course, Gladstone understood that Anglo-Russian cooperation would not last forever, so that changing circumstances might mean a shift in tactics.⁸ The important point, nonetheless, remained that for the time being, London and St Petersburg might pursue their own interests against other Powers less worried about each other in their handling of the 'Eastern Question'. When Gladstone's government subsequently found itself compelled to

annex Egypt in 1882 over the protests of the embittered French – and, admittedly, Gladstone initially opposed this Imperial aggrandisement – the Russians acquiesced in the decision.⁹ But the tsar's government then turned increasingly towards Germany, which might better restrain Austro-Hungarian ambitions in the Balkans. New circumstances had arisen and new British policies respecting the Great Powers and the 'Eastern Question' had to be determined.

Grey, who dominated British foreign policy before the Great War, existed in a profoundly different international milieu than mid- and late-Victorian political leaders like Gladstone. By the time he became foreign secretary in late 1905, Britain had allied with Japan in 1902 to buttress the East Asian balance of power and concluded an *entente* with France in 1904 to bury Anglo-French colonial differences in East Asia, North Africa, and the Americas. In August 1907, he added to these agreements – which were not in any sense an appeasement of either Japan or France – with a Russian *entente* that determined spheres of interest on India's northern hinterland. In this context, Grey saw the European balance and its wider global dimensions devolving from the two blocs of Great Powers that had emerged after the mid-1890s: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, on one hand, and Britain tacking towards the Franco-Russian Dual alliance, on the other. In this period, Wilhelmine Germany stood as Britain's foremost rival. It was seeking to enlarge its formal and informal empire against those of Britain and the other European Imperial Powers, build a 'blue water' navy that despite German protests to the contrary was designed to fight the Royal Navy, and dominate Europe politically and economically, and, thus, upset the continental equilibrium so crucial for British national security.¹⁰

Despite suspicions held by Grey and his principal Foreign Office advisers about German ambitions,¹¹ the foreign secretary was prepared to find a compromise with Berlin that brought 'mutual advantage & increased security'. But compromise had to be acceptable to the six Great Powers. As he observed in August 1909: 'It strikes me at first sight that if any German political understanding is to be arranged[,] it should be not one between two Powers alone but between the two great groups of Powers, ourselves[,] France & Russia on one side, and the Triple Alliance on the other.'¹² Accordingly, when the German chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, proposed talks that month to produce an Anglo-German naval and political agreement, Grey agreed to participate. Remaining wary of German foreign policy goals, especially concerning their navy, he was willing 'As regards smaller matters between us [to] adopt a conciliatory attitude if they will reciprocate'.¹³ Ultimately, in

desultory discussions stretching into 1911, this initiative foundered because the Germans wanted a political settlement before a naval one – a tactic allowing more time to augment the strength of their fleet – and they initiated an unsuccessful crisis in Morocco to break the Anglo-French entente.¹⁴ This latter action threatened the balance between the two blocs. Nonetheless, in approaching Germany, Grey demonstrated that to preserve the balance of power, improving Anglo-German relations remained possible by finding common ground to resolve smaller issues through appeasing measures by each side; however, limits existed when confronting perceived threats to British national and Imperial security, especially over its armed strength and relations with friendly Powers.

Lloyd George's embrace of appeasement came at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 after the defeat of Germany and its allies in the Great War. Responding to the pressures of British voters, who paid for Britain's war effort with blood and treasure, he and his government fought a General Election in December 1918, part of the rhetoric of which involved making Germany pay for the war.¹⁵ Therefore, at Paris in January–March 1919, Lloyd George and the British Delegation pressed for German disarmament, the dismantling of the German overseas Empire, the imposition of reparations, and the hiving-off of German-controlled territory in Europe to France and Belgium in the west and to the new Successor States in the east. To be honest, Lloyd George rarely thought in strategic terms – building policy around clearly-defined long-term goals. He had made his career as a domestic politician by finding solutions to crises like industrial strikes or political reform with pragmatic deals designed to meet immediate needs. After rising to the premiership in December 1916, he transferred this approach to foreign policy-making and, distrusting the Foreign Office as a bastion of aristocratic privilege, determined to make foreign policy in Downing Street.

Two months of disputatious negotiations saw the Peace Conference approach a breaking point caused by division amongst the victorious Powers, chiefly Britain and France. The French intended to keep Germany weak both economically and militarily for as long as possible by the firm application of a harsh treaty. In mid-March, despite the heated promises made to British voters in December 1918 and the hard-nosed policies that he and his Delegation afterwards pursued, Lloyd George realised that European stability would not return if an implacably revanchist Germany emerged from the Peace Conference. Moreover, such instability might prove fertile ground for the spread of Russian Bolshevism in both Germany and Europe. He encased his concept of appeasing Germany

in the Fontainebleau Memorandum, circulated to the other victorious Powers; it translated into limiting Germany's territorial losses – especially to reborn Poland – and moderating its reparations payments. He then embarked on efforts to stymie French demands and make the Treaty of Versailles more palatable to the Germans. Although he then curbed some French excesses, little doubt exists that British policy at the Peace Conference was inconsistent after mid-March – especially over reparations; and controversy exists about Lloyd George at Paris and during his peacetime government, which lasted until October 1922, beginning the granting of concessions to Germany that later achieved full flower under Chamberlain.¹⁶ Regardless, his brand of appeasement after the war was purely tactical, aiming to contain French power on the continent, assure the revival of a stable German – and, therefore, European – economy essential to British trade and finance, and better meet the revolutionary threat posed by Bolshevism.

In these examples of British appeasement from the 1870s to the early 1920s, Gladstone, Grey, and Lloyd George never saw negotiation and compromise as a strategic replacement for maintaining the balance of power in Europe and elsewhere. Rather, appeasing other Great Powers involved tactical adjustments to maintain the balance – although, admittedly, at the series of post-war conferences that endeavoured to build on the peace treaties, Lloyd George tended to do deals over reparations, territorial adjustments, Middle Eastern issues, and more that sometimes ignored the balance.¹⁷

Even so, in each case, limits existed beyond which removing the bases of possible disputes proved impossible. With Britain and its lines of communication to the Empire and overseas markets secure behind the strength of the Royal Navy, and with its rivals divided as they competed for advantage, Gladstone could consider an opening to the Russians. When this became increasingly impossible after 1881–1882 because of Britain's occupation of Egypt, and St Petersburg deciding for closer relations with Berlin, British policy had to look elsewhere for maintaining the Eastern Mediterranean balance.¹⁸ For Grey, despite misgivings about Wilhelm II and his naval and foreign policy advisers, finding an Anglo-German political and naval *modus vivendi* preoccupied him after he became foreign secretary. Nevertheless, for Grey, the balance of power devolved from equilibrium 'between the two great groups of Powers'. Whilst an Anglo-German understanding that added to the political and military balance had his support, an agreement giving Germany a free-hand in Europe was unthinkable and German actions threatening Europe's equipoise required counter-pressure; limits existed to British

conciliation should Germany threaten national and Imperial interests. After the Great War, Lloyd George and his government concentrated on creating a new, stable international order, perhaps most important in this regard lay constraining German economic, military, political, and naval power. But such constraints would not last forever – although it was assumed Germany could come to accept its new status; consequently, finding means to appease the new Germany in the immediate aftermath of its defeat became necessary. Whilst mixed, Lloyd George's German policies represented one part of balancing a different constellation of power in the search for continental stability.

For those responsible for British foreign policy before the 1930s, appeasement encompassed a tactical – and therefore flexible – approach to the country's grand strategy. It offered narrow means to ameliorate international tensions with particular Powers, and unique conditions wrought by time and circumstance shaped the contours of policy and its goals. Appeasement had limits in that removing the bases of disputes should never undermine the defence or extension of national and Imperial interests. And there was no general notion that foreign policy should avoid 'the resort to an armed conflict' at all costs or that policy should be the handmaiden of peace.

In terms of the late 1930s, Chamberlain is often characterised in older treatments as a weak politician whose appeasement of fascist aggression led to the Second World War.¹⁹ The post-Dunkirk, anti-Conservative polemic, *Guilty Men*, published in 1940 in part fuelled this view.²⁰ After 1945, the memoirs of Chamberlain's political adversary, Winston Churchill, who succeeded him as prime minister in May 1940 and led Britain to victory over Nazi Germany and Italy, embroidered on it both to glorify Churchill's reputation and cement his hold on the Conservative Party.²¹ Even before the opening of British public and other archives in the late 1960s, however, historical revision of Chamberlain began.²² And with access to the official records and private manuscript collections, he was shown to be a better than competent politician, usually the best prepared minister at the Cabinet table, possessive of a clear political agenda, and holding a dominant voice amongst Cabinet ministers and within Whitehall.²³ Above all else, especially after rising to the premiership, lay a stubbornness tied to political shrewdness to force his ideas on the Cabinet and its civil service advisers. And although the older treatment of Chamberlain continues to hold sway amongst some assessments, more balanced and nuanced examinations of his political life have been written seeking to better understand the man and his policies.²⁴

However, as even revisionists would agree, whilst Chamberlain excelled at domestic politics, he had decided limitations in foreign policy. He made 'fatal misjudgements' about the German threat.²⁵ In terms of the sinews of power, he 'valued fiscal stability and economic vitality more than rearmament'.²⁶ Rebuffing other alternatives, he pushed for his brand of appeasement and, because of his intractability, blunted 'serious chances of preventing the Second World War'.²⁷ Crucially, relying on appeasement, he 'abandoned the traditional British policy of containing threats through the maintenance of the balance of power'.²⁸

In these criticisms – and in older ones – discussion centres largely on policy rather than strategy and strategic considerations. One of the reasons – stemming from *Guilty Men* and Churchill – is the view that in the major international crises confronted by Britain beginning with Manchuria in September 1931 and ending with Czechoslovakia in September 1938, successive British governments appeased the totalitarian regimes of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and the Japanese militarists.²⁹ Another is that Chamberlain as chancellor of the Exchequer in the National Government from November 1931 to May 1937 and prime minister thereafter had decided influence over defence spending and was able to guide the course of external policy.³⁰ Whilst Chamberlain's authority over foreign and defence policy – including Imperial defence, and thus strategy – after May 1937 is undoubted, two issues before he became prime minister require reconsideration. First, those responsible for foreign policy before May 1937 used appeasement selectively – as a diplomatic tactic. It never served as the strategic basis of policy. Flowing from this circumstance, the Foreign Office dominated the making and execution of foreign policy until 1937; and in this context, through the efforts of its influential permanent undersecretary, Sir Robert Vansittart, it ensured that the strategy of the balance of power underpinned British policy in Europe, East Asia, and elsewhere.³¹ This does not mean that the Treasury lacked influence between 1931 and 1937, but neither the chancellor nor his senior advisers dominated external policy-making.

In February 1932, under pressure from the military Chiefs of Staff Committee (COS), the National Government led by Prime Minister James Ramsay Macdonald jettisoned the 'Ten-Year Rule' that had guided defence policy for more than a decade.³² This Rule assumed that in producing the armed forces' annual budgets, 'there will be no major war for ten years'.³³ But it was not until October 1933, following Japan's conquest of Manchuria and Hitler's consolidation of policy in Germany, that the Cabinet, through its principal advisory committee on foreign and defence policy – the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) – moved

to replace the Rule. It created a Defence Requirements Sub-Committee (DRC) to examine threats to British and Imperial security and make recommendations for additional defence spending. Composed of the COS, Vansittart, Sir Norman Warren Fisher, the Treasury permanent secretary, and chaired by Sir Maurice Hankey, the CID and Cabinet secretary, the DRC advised deterring German ambitions in Western Europe, strengthening British Far Eastern bases to contain Japan's aggressiveness, and saw no need to abandon the 'Ten-Year Rule' *vis-à-vis* Italy, France, and the United States. In terms of strategy, the DRC re-affirmed maintaining the balance of power in both Western Europe and the Far East.³⁴ A deadline of five years – 1939 – was set to meet defence deficiencies. At the heart of this advice lay the creation of the Field Force, an expeditionary ground force for despatch to the Low Countries – it would consume 36% of total DRC recommended spending, £25,680,000 out of £71,323,580. The Field Force would signal to all the European Powers, especially Germany, Britain's commitment to ensuring the continental balance. As Vansittart, supported by Warren Fisher, observed: 'The order of priorities which put Japan first pre-supposed that Japan would attack us after we had got into difficulties elsewhere, "Elsewhere" therefore came first, not second; and elsewhere could only mean Europe, and Europe could only mean Germany.'³⁵

When DRC recommendations reached the Cabinet, and despite Warren Fisher's contributions in the sub-committee, Chamberlain succeeded in reducing DRC-proposed spending to £55.4 million; but facing opposition from senior ministers, including Macdonald, Stanley Baldwin, the lord president and leader of the Conservative Party, John Simon, the foreign secretary, and the service ministers, he could not kill the Field Force.³⁶ It would receive £12,004,000 of the modified estimates – more than 20 per cent of new spending. Whilst appreciating the German menace,³⁷ Chamberlain looked to deter a German attack on Britain by expanding the RAF, refrain from joint action with Belgium, Holland, Italy, and France, appease Japan, and avoid cooperation with the United States.³⁸ Tied to concern about heavy defence spending, he wanted non-intervention on the continent whilst the RAF protected Britain from air attack and the RN prevented a cross-Channel invasion. His strategic prescription did not inform foreign and defence policy.

Nor did it do so over the next three years. Indeed, in 1935, when the DRC deliberated further in the light of Germany's announced rearmament in March and poor Italo-Abyssinian relations that led to Italy's invasion of the East African kingdom in October, his efforts to eliminate the Field Force came to nought.³⁹ With extra defence spending now

totalling £394.5 million – £241 million by 1 January 1939, with another £153.5 million by 1 January 1941 – the Cabinet with Baldwin as premier continued to see the Field Force as essential to maintaining the European balance.⁴⁰ The Field Force tranche of this expanded funding amounted to £59,857,000, plus almost £15 million extra for heavy artillery and tactical air support.⁴¹ Although bottlenecks appeared, like securing enough merchant shipping to ferry the Force to Europe, the War Office planned for sixteen infantry divisions supplemented by one Cavalry Division, two Cavalry Brigades, one Tank Brigade, and three Air Defence Brigades.⁴²

Given the 'Ten-Year Rule' and reduced military power backing foreign policy, Vansittart had long been concerned about the effectiveness of British diplomacy; extra defence spending would protect better Britain's interests in Europe and elsewhere.⁴³ Accordingly, from late 1933 to mid-1937, notwithstanding now Chamberlain's periodic involvement in the policy-making process, strengthened National Government foreign policy proved effective at supporting the balances of power in Europe and the Far East. For instance, when in April 1934, Japan asserted both its 'special position' in China and 'special responsibilities in East Asia' in the so-called Amai declaration, Britain refused to be cowed. The Foreign Office advised Simon to ignore Tokyo's bluster; behind the scenes, the anticipated strengthening of Britain's military presence in East Asia, including Singapore, bolstered this policy position.⁴⁴ When Japan then proposed a bilateral non-aggression pact in August, Chamberlain saw it providing an Anglo-Japanese understanding in the region.⁴⁵ With the backing of Vansittart and the Foreign Office's Far Eastern Department, Simon argued that the Japanese proposal would threaten the East Asian balance by provoking ill-favour amongst the Americans, Chinese, Russians, and Dutch.⁴⁶ With what might then amount to British compliance, Japan could pursue forward policies in East Asia. The proposed pact also touched preparatory negotiations for the forthcoming second London naval conference, intended to extend the Washington naval treaty: Japan sought parity with Britain and the United States. The Cabinet thus delayed any discussions about the non-aggression pact. When Tokyo took a hard-line in the naval discussions, Britain sided with the United States: with global naval responsibilities, both Powers reckoned Japan had only a regional navy. For the British, there was no compromise with the Japanese on either non-aggression or naval policy. Despite Chamberlain's efforts, the Cabinet had no intention of appeasing Japan.

'Elsewhere', in Europe, the same non-appeasing attitudes marked British strategy. In July 1934, an attempted Nazi putsch in Vienna

aimed to unify Germany and Austria. Through a firm stand by Britain, France, and Italy in supporting the Austrian regime, the coup failed; Hitler claimed disingenuously that Berlin had nothing to do with it.⁴⁷ But recognising Italian interest in an independent Austria – and, perhaps, even in an Austria subservient to Italy – Vansittart reckoned this an opportunity to isolate Nazi Germany: ‘we should do all we can to widen the breach between Italy and Germany.’⁴⁸ Anglo-Italian relations warmed. This approach continued with Hitler’s announcement of German rearmament in March 1935 – relative to the other Powers, it constituted moderate rearmament: a 550,000-strong army, an air force, and naval construction. Whilst Hitler’s action had some justification – with the World Disarmament Conference moribund and Britain and the other Great Powers not having disarmed to Germany’s level promised under Section V of the Versailles treaty – realistic policy had to consider a rearmed Germany. Within a month, Macdonald and Simon met French and Italian representatives at Stresa, producing a ‘front’ to continue supporting the 1925 Locarno treaties – that guaranteed the Franco-Belgian-German borders – and declaring that independent Austria constituted their ‘common policy’.⁴⁹ For the Foreign Office German experts, the point was simple:

The Germans...for natural and simple reasons started the challenge to the existing order. To discourage the development of that challenge there is only one way; and that is the display of counter-force and counter-resolve.⁵⁰

Almost immediately, Hitler’s government proposed an Anglo-German naval agreement – worried about the recrudescence of the pre-1914 naval race that had a deleterious effect on Wilhelmine foreign policy, the Nazi dictator seems not to have wanted to provoke Britain unnecessarily. Moreover, he long believed that some kind of Anglo-German condominium of interests existed.⁵¹ Signed on 18 June 1935, the agreement limited the *Kriegsmarine* surface fleet to 35 per cent of that of the Royal Navy and gave parity between the two Powers in submarines. Importantly at this juncture, the lethality of submarines remained moot. The British Admiralty believed that its anti-submarine strategies, developed as the Great War progressed – especially the application of air power – had resolved the submarine puzzle.⁵² Older studies argued that this agreement revealed Britain’s infidelity towards its Stresa partners and began the discredited ‘appeasement’ of Germany.⁵³ Newer enquiries outline complex considerations impelling policy: controlling arms spending;

reducing Britain's European naval commitments to permit flexibility in the Far East; promoting renewed European arms control and security; and meeting domestic concerns about rearmament.⁵⁴ These intricate problems convinced ministers to support an Anglo-German agreement as the National Government re-organised before an anticipated General Election,⁵⁵ and on 7 June, Baldwin replaced MacDonald as prime minister. But what needs clarity is that this agreement conformed to the Foreign Office vision of maintaining the balances of power in Europe and the Far East. In this context, the Royal Navy retained a two-Power standard against Germany and Japan, which in crisis would probably be enhanced by the American and French navies. British naval strength had been augmented rather than diminished, a tactic that continued afterwards through the effective leadership of the first sea lord, Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield.⁵⁶

Stresa, however, weakened during the summer of 1935. The Anglo-German naval agreement annoyed the French; angry at not being consulted, they argued rightly that Britain sanctioned German violation of the disarmament provisions of Versailles – although Hitler's announcement in March really pronounced their death knell. But France had concluded a treaty of guarantee with Soviet Russia in May without consulting its Stresa partners, something that antagonised the strongly anti-communist Mussolini. For his part, Mussolini was embarking on policies to isolate Abyssinia and seemingly prepare the way for an Italian invasion of the kingdom, a course London and Paris tried to prevent. When Italian forces descended on Abyssinia in October, Stresa unravelled as Anglo-French efforts failed to blunt Italy's offensive.⁵⁷ The British and French wanted to save Italian *amour propre*, end the crisis, and continue working together to contain German power. In early December, after the League of Nations failed to find a settlement, they decided secretly on a plan to give Italy seven-eighths of Abyssinia. A leak in the French foreign ministry before the other Powers could be consulted led to a public relations crisis and drove the new British foreign secretary, Samuel Hoare, and his French opposite, Pierre Laval, from office. Stresa died and, over the next year, especially after May 1936 when Italy's conquest was complete, Mussolini moved closer to Hitler.

Although the constellation of power in Europe was changing, British strategy to contain Germany and its emerging Italian confederate saw new approaches in pursuing the balance of power. This devolved largely from Vansittart who, despite being integral to the ill-fated Hoare-Laval pact, continued to dominate policy-making in the Foreign Office. It came from his experience, understanding of overall strategy, and continued support

from Baldwin and Macdonald, the latter now lord president. Bolstering Vansittart's policy-making was the improved defence spending, particularly for the Field Force, which came from the DRC's 1935 deliberations. Determining risk in the context of German efforts to aggrandise at the expense of continental stability lay at the basis of British strategy from late 1935 until mid-1937. Thus, although German remilitarisation of the Rhineland in March 1936 was viewed by the French as another assault on the Versailles system, the British conceded to Hitler's action. Vansittart and his advisers appreciated the strategic advantages that the German Army might have in an attack on France.⁵⁸ Still, at that moment, Vansittart understood that Hitler was only integrating fully a portion of Germany into the Reich. And with a Franco-German war inconceivable at that juncture, remilitarisation did not really endanger the balance.⁵⁹ His only pique concerned Hitler's method – sudden and unannounced – not its result. The Cabinet largely agreed.⁶⁰

Over the next year, as German rearmament continued apace and Italo-German relations warmed to the extent that Mussolini in November 1936 could say publicly that 'this Berlin-Rome Line is not a Diaphragm but rather an Axis' around which European affairs revolved, Vansittart and his Foreign Office advisers looked for new means to maintain the continental and Mediterranean balances within changing international circumstances. Their strategy involved a modern version of the pre-1914 Triple Entente of Britain, France, and Russia.⁶¹ The older triplice could not be revived through formal agreements because of both the Cabinet's antipathy to the Bolshevik fact in Russia and its unwillingness to conclude a formal alliance with the French. But mechanisms like loans, improved political relations, and collaboration in dealing with the German threat – all suffused by continued rearmament and the re-arming of the Field Force – could provide stability via a visible deterrent to Nazi Germany's ambitions. A Russian connection might also be helpful in maintaining the Far Eastern balance of power.

Nonetheless, in the fourteen months between the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and Chamberlain's rise to the premiership, the chancellor of the Exchequer looked to re-direct British external policy away from the pursuit of the balance of power; and by early 1937, with his succession to Baldwin assured, his political strength to do so began to increase. Part of the reason lay in his determination to protect the national budget from excessive arms spending; another derived from his antipathy to Vansittart and his like-minded advisers within the Foreign Office, about whose strategic prescription – the balance of power – he was increasingly concerned. In this process, both Chamberlain and

Vansittart shared concern about the potential German threat to Britain; but they differed on why, and how to meet the threat. Chamberlain looked to diminish Anglo-German differences. Thus, when the Cabinet considered Territorial Army estimates in December 1936 to bring it to full strength, Chamberlain argued that these funds should be spent on the RAF and RN. Where Vansittart and the secretary for War, Alfred Duff Cooper, saw spending on the Territorial Army as means to convince France of Britain's commitment to the continent, Chamberlain took the view that 'the French might not be satisfied, but it was not for France to dictate to us the distribution of our Forces'.⁶² Such an approach would, he reckoned, also have a salutary effect in Berlin.

By early 1936, Vansittart's position as permanent undersecretary in the Foreign Office also began to suffer criticism. His role in the Hoare-Laval Plan led to Hoare and other senior Conservative politicians seeing him as responsible for the crisis; at the same time, Simon, now the home secretary, remained irritated that Vansittart had dominated foreign policy-making when he was foreign secretary. Most important, Chamberlain and Anthony Eden, who succeeded Hoare in December 1935, united in their criticism of Vansittart. Chamberlain took the tack that the Foreign Office 'never can keep the major objects of policy in mind'.⁶³ Sensitive to his self-esteem as foreign secretary and chafing at Vansittart's political strength, Eden did not take kindly to the advice rendered by this older man. He tried to have Vansittart transferred to Paris as ambassador in January 1937; but not even Baldwin's intervention could move Vansittart.⁶⁴ As Eden noted in his memoirs:

[Vansittart] clearly saw the growing military power and political ambition of Nazi Germany as the principal danger. To meet this he was determined to keep the rest of Europe in line against Germany, and would pay almost any price to do so ... he expressed himself with such repetitive fervour that all except those who agreed with him were liable to discount his views as too extreme.⁶⁵

And as Chamberlain remarked in August 1937: 'I believe the double policy of rearmament and better relations with Germany and Italy will carry us safely through the danger period, if only the Foreign Office will play up'. Clearly, the danger period constituted the time until Britain fully rearmed.

Chamberlain believed reliance on the balance of power to be dangerous.⁶⁶ Similarly, international conferences were sterile, something confirmed by his experience with a World Economic Conference and

other multi-lateral initiatives in the 1930s. As Manchuria and Abyssinia proved, the League could do little to reconcile aggressive Powers. As he had argued since at least 1934, British security would best be enhanced by meeting the legitimate grievances of the totalitarian Powers or, at least, those where concessions did not imperil British interests. The possibility also existed that by removing points of contention, such a policy might augment British diplomatic capital by dividing the 'Axis' Powers. In a word, it was appeasement. Chamberlain embarked on using it to underpin British strategy.

Almost immediately on becoming prime minister, he initiated a defence review under the minister of Defence Co-ordination, Thomas Inskip. In early December 1937, he removed Vansittart as permanent undersecretary, as well as Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, the Army chief who supported the continental commitment – with Baldwin retired and Macdonald having died in November, Vansittart's political strength evaporated. Chamberlain held that escalating defence expenditures were as fatal to British security as an attack by another Power because they sapped the country's economic vitality.⁶⁷ Senior ministers, including Eden, Inskip, and Simon, now the chancellor of the Exchequer, shared his view that appeasing the dictators would slacken defence spending increases. When Inskip reported to the Cabinet in February 1938, he proposed final defence spending by 1941 of £1,650 million.⁶⁸ In this new milieu, the COS now submitted that whilst Britain could fight Germany, Italy, or Japan singly, it could not fight two or all three simultaneously.⁶⁹

With funds only for the RAF and RN, Inskip's 'Report' recommended abandoning the Field Force. Genuflecting to Chamberlain views about a continental commitment, Inskip argued that European conditions had changed since January 1936: France did not anticipate British land-based assistance against any German threat; Hitler's guarantee of Belgian neutrality in October 1937 obviated the need for British forces to secure that vital area; and deploying the Army to garrison the Empire would enhance British security more than despatching the Field Force to the continent. None of these excuses for amending British strategy lacked substance.⁷⁰ By February 1938, British external policy and the strategy that underpinned it were travelling along a path determined by Neville Chamberlain. That path existed until March 1939 when the German occupation of the rump of Czechoslovakia violated the September 1938 Munich Agreement and showed the hollowness of pursuing 'better relations with Germany'.⁷¹ Chamberlain's government then revived the Field Force, aligned with France, offered guarantees to Poland, Greece, and

Romania, and cast about for allies – including Russia, admittedly half-heartedly – to deter further German ambitions. It looked to revive the balance of power as the basis of British strategy, especially in Europe.

In a sense, appeasement as a national strategy constituted an expression of *Realpolitik* – as realistic as pursuing the balance of power. The home islands could be defended by heavy investment in sea and air power; British involvement in a continental war was limited if not completely obviated; and, given the ‘danger period’ until rearmament was completed, a better armed Britain would result. Moreover, British voters did not want a repetition of 1914–1918 in financial and human terms: Chamberlain’s hero’s welcome after Munich is indicative. But grand strategy based on Chamberlain’s brand of appeasement after mid-1937 had decided limitations. These were understood since at least the first DRC by Vansittart and his supporters and advisers. It was the handmaiden of peace. It lacked flexibility, clear in the 1934 discussion of an Anglo-Japanese non-aggression proposal and more starkly in March 1939 when Hitler engineered a changed international situation that favoured Germany. Cancelling the Field Force meant that in addition, Britain’s strategic ability to confront changed continental circumstances was a mirage. Chamberlain’s strategy might remove some of the bases of dispute but, in new circumstances, it undermined the defence of national and Imperial interests. Flexible, centred on effective armed forces, and with its practitioners sensitive to changing international conditions, the balance of power never did. Appeasement had tactical advantages; at the strategic level, it proved bankrupt.

Notes

1. See J.R. Davies, ‘Britain and the European Balance of Power’, in C. Williams, (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 34–52; E. Luard, *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648–1815* (London, 1992); M. Sheehan, *The Balance of Power* (London, 1996), pp. 1–23, pp. 106–26 passim. Cf. J. Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?: Britain, the Balance of Power and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 2009); P.W. Schroeder, ‘The “Balance of Power” System in Europe, 1815–1871,’ *Naval War College Review*, (March–April 1975), pp. 18–31.
2. P.M. Kennedy, ‘The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865–1939’, *British Journal of International Studies*, 2(1976), p. 195.
3. F.W. Gansaulus, *William Ewart Gladstone* (London, 1898), p. 288. Cf. W.E. Mosse, ‘Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The British Public and the War-Scare of November 1870’, *Historical Journal*, 6(1963), pp. 38–58; D. Schreuder, ‘Gladstone and the Conscience of the State’, in P. Marsh, (ed.), *Conscience of the Victorian State* (Syracuse, NY, 1979), pp. 73–134. On Gladstone’s russophobia, see W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian horrors and the question of the East* (London, 1876).

4. The National Archives (TNA), FO 371/671/1799/1799, Grey minute, n.d. [but 15 or 16 January 1909]. Cf. M.L. Dockrill, 'British Policy during the Agadir Crisis of 1911', in F.H. Hinsley, (ed.), *The Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 271–87; W. Mulligan, 'From Case to Narrative: The Marquess of Lansdowne, Sir Edward Grey, and the Threat from Germany, 1900–1906', *International History Review*, 30(2008), pp. 273–302.
5. Lloyd George memorandum, 25 March 1919, in D. Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, Volume 1 (London, 1938), pp. 404–16. Cf. M.L. Dockrill and J. Fisher, *The Paris Peace Conference. Peace Without Victory* (London, 2001), pp. 35–51; A. Lentin, *Guilt at Versailles. Lloyd George and the Pre-History of Appeasement* (Leicester, 1985).
6. See, for example, K. Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815–1908* (London, 1967); A.D. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy against Russia, 1853–56*, 2nd edition (Farnham, 2011); J.F. Maurice, *Europe: An Examination of the War Resources of Great Britain and the Continental States* (Edinburgh, London, 1888).
7. On morality in foreign policy, see Gladstone's Third Midlothian Campaign Speech, 27 November 1879, in W.E. Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1879), pp. 5–56. On Gladstone's foreign policy, see P. Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (Hamden, CT, 1970); S.J. Lee, *Gladstone and Disraeli* (London, 2005), pp. 85–103.
8. See K. Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830–1902* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 137–40; C.J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, Vol. I: *British Foreign Policy 1878–1902* (London, 1967), pp. 28–31.
9. J.S. Galbraith and A.L. al-Sayyid-Marsot, 'The British Occupation of Egypt: Another View', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9(1978), pp. 471–88; A.G. Hopkins, 'The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882', *Journal of African History*, 27(1986), pp. 363–91.
10. M. Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of the First World War* (Oxford, New York, 2004); V. Ullrich, *Die nervöse Großmacht 1871–1918. Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs* (Frankfurt, 2007), pp. 193–222.
11. On Foreign Office mistrust, cf. FO 371/77/28291/12103, Spicer [Western Department] minute, n.d. [but August 1906]; FO 371/257/73/73, Crowe [senior clerk, Western Department] 'Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany', 1 Jan. 1907; FO 371/458/3659/3659, Hardinge [permanent undersecretary] minute, n.d. [but Feb. 1908].
12. FO 371/675/31696/31695, Grey minute, n.d. [but late August 1909 from internal evidence].
13. FO 371/674/24021/24021, Grey minute, n.d. [but June 1909].
14. M. Epkenhans, *Die wilhelminische flottenrüstung 1908–1914: Weltmachtstreben, technischer Fortschritt, soziale Integration* (Munich, 1991); *Ibid.*, 'The Naval Race before 1914', in H. Afflerbach and D. Stevenson, (eds), *An Improbable War?: The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (New York, 2007), pp. 118–26. Cf. P.M. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (London, 1980), pp. 446–51.
15. E. Goldstein, 'Great Britain: The Home Front', in M.F. Boemeke, G.D. Feldman, and E. Glaser, (eds), *The Treaty of Versailles. A Re-assessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, New York, 1998), pp. 147–66; P. Rowland, *Lloyd George* (1975), pp. 461–75.

16. M.L. Dockrill and J.D. Goold, *Peace Without Promise. Britain and the Peace Conferences 1919–23* (London, 1981), p. 75; Cf. M.G. Fry, 'British Revisionism', in Boemeke et al., *Versailles*, pp. 565–602; E. Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and Paris Peace Conference, 1916–1920* (Oxford, New York, 1991). Then see Lentin, *Pre-History*; S. Rudman, *Lloyd George and the Appeasement of Germany, 1919–1945* (Newcastle, 2011).
17. E. Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements 1919–1925* (London, 2002), pp. 22–79.
18. This fell to Gladstone's successor, the third Marquess of Salisbury. See C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886–1896* (1965); G. Goodlad, *British Foreign and Imperial Policy, 1865–1919* (London, 2000), pp. 57–58.
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20. Cato, *Guilty Men* (London, 1940).
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 36. CAB 16/110, DC(M)(32) meetings 41–50. Cf. DC(M)(32) 120, 'Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Report of the Defence Requirements Committee'.
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39. CAB 16/112, DRC meetings 13–14, 'Interim Report' [DRC 25], 24 July 1935; DRC meetings 15–26 (3 Oct.–14 Nov. 1935), DRC 'Programmes of the Defence Services. Third Report' [DRC 37], Volume I, 21 Nov. 1935.
40. DPR(DR) Meetings in CAB 16/123.
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67. For instance, CAB 24/270, Simon memorandum [CP 165(37)], 25 June 1937.
68. CAB 24/274, Inskip 'Report on Defence Expenditure in Future Years' [CP 24(38)], 8 Feb. 1938. CAB 23/92, CC 5(38)9, 16 Feb. 1938. Cf. Warren Fisher 1, Warren Fisher minute, 15 Feb. 1938.
69. CAB 24/273, COS 'Comparison of the Strength of Great Britain with that of Other Nations as at January, 1938' [CP 296(37)], 12 Nov. 1937. CAB 53/34, COS memorandum, 'Planning for War with Germany', [COS 644JP], 13 Nov. 1937. Cf. CAB 53/8, COS meetings 216, 221.
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7

‘Thank God for the French Army’: Churchill, France and an Alternative to Appeasement in the 1930s

Philip Bell

On 23 March 1933 Churchill warned the House of Commons that the Nazi regime which had recently come to power in Germany threatened the peace of Europe, and observed that ‘there are a good many people who have said to themselves, as I have been saying for several years: “Thank God for the French Army”.’ He returned to this theme in April, declaring emphatically that: ‘France is not only the sole great surviving democracy in Europe; she is also the strongest military power, I am glad to say, and she is the head of a system of States and nations.’ Some years later, when writing the first volume of his war memoirs, *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill looked back on these speeches and recalled ‘the look of pain and aversion which I saw on the faces of members in all parts of the House when I said “Thank God for the French Army”’.¹

After the Second World War, these remarks came to represent a standard interpretation of British foreign policy in the 1930s, roughly as follows. Successive British governments, headed in turn by Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, sought to achieve a settlement of European problems by means of ‘appeasement’, which meant meeting German claims (territorial, military and financial) by negotiation and orderly concession. Churchill, almost alone, opposed this policy, and advocated instead resistance to German ambitions, acting in cooperation with France. In the event, appeasement failed, essentially because Nazi Germany was unappeasable. Churchill was vindicated, and

achieved a new reputation as the man who was right in the 1930s, and almost inevitably the best leader for Britain in the Second World War. With the passage of time, the stark and simple outlines of this interpretation were amended by more nuanced approaches.² Appeasement has been explained, and to some degree vindicated, by careful examination of its motives, and also by a firmer grasp of the constraints under which British governments had to operate. At the same time, Churchill's stance on foreign policy has been shown to have been more complicated and ambivalent than it once appeared. The possibility of a Churchillian alternative to appeasement, based on an alliance with France, has come to appear uncertain, and is well worth re-examination.

To offer any convincing alternative to appeasement meant confronting the apparently unshakeable mind-set of British public opinion on the fundamental issue of foreign policy: how to treat Germany. As early as 30 May 1919 – that is, almost as soon as the Treaty of Versailles had been signed – Lord Robert Cecil, who had himself played a significant role in preparing the peace terms, told a meeting held in London to found the Institute of International Affairs that: 'There is no single person in this room who is not disappointed with the terms we have drafted.' Disappointment proved an inadequate word to describe the feeling which speedily came to dominate British opinion. Anthony Lentin has summed it up precisely: 'Whether or not it [the treaty] was too hard on the Germans, it was demonstrably too hard for much of British opinion. From the outset, liberal England had no heart for it.'³ This movement of public opinion was already under way when it was reinforced by the publication of John Maynard Keynes's book on *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, which convinced most of its readers (and doubtless many who did not read it at all) that the Treaty of Versailles was both immoral and unworkable – a formidable combination.

This reaction against the Versailles Treaty was often cloaked in a religious language which counted for much in the Britain of the 1930s. On Armistice Day 1931 the preacher at an Oxford University Service in the Sheldonian Theatre, Maud Royden (an influential Free Church minister and public figure) declared that the treaty was 'a self-evident example of evil in public policy.' Amongst the congregation was R.B. McCallum, a distinguished historian, who observed that no one found Royden's remarks at all strange, but simply a truth universally acknowledged.⁴ This view was repeated when in 1932 the Archbishop of York (an outstanding Anglican theologian) addressed the League of Nations Disarmament Conference at Geneva, and proclaimed that the so-called 'war guilt' clause of the Treaty of Versailles, by which Germany accepted responsibility for causing the war of 1914–18 (or so it appeared), was an offence to the

Christian conscience and must be renounced, 'struck out by those who framed it'.⁵ R.W. Seton-Watson, a historian and realistic commentator on international affairs, wrote in 1938 that there remained substantial criticisms of the Versailles Treaty, including the charge of exclusive war guilt, still outstanding. 'The time is surely ripe', he declared, 'for public admission of these errors, as tardy amendment to sensitive German opinion. It would not be a sign of weakness, but of strength and sanity of judgement.' He concluded, in almost religious terms, that the British people must 'make public and fearless confession of our faults...'.⁶

Similar sentiments held sway right across the political spectrum. Arthur Henderson, at one time Labour Foreign Secretary, and later Chairman of the Disarmament Conference, met Hitler and believed that he was sincerely pacific. In March 1935 Neville Chamberlain, who was in many ways a *bête noir* for the Labour Party, wrote to his sister Hilda that 'Hitler's Germany is the bully of Europe. Yet I don't despair.'⁷ Anthony Eden, who as a young Foreign Secretary was for a time a favourite of the House of Commons, held very similar views. In February 1936 he told Harold Nicolson that his aim was to avert another German war. 'To do this', Nicolson noted in his diary, 'he [Eden] is prepared to make great concessions to German appetites provided they will sign a disarmament treaty and join the League of Nations. His idea is to work for this during the next three years and then suddenly put it before the League.'⁸ Eden's optimism was unshaken by the German occupation of the Rhineland demilitarised zone in March 1936, and on 18 June he told the House of Commons in a major speech that 'I believe that nothing less... than a European and appeasement should be our aim.'⁹ Alastair Parker wrote of this speech that 'Eden helped to make appeasement respectable.'¹⁰ This was true enough, but only up to a point. The fact was that appeasement was already respectable. When German troops entered the Rhineland, a house party was under way at Blickling Hall, Lord Lothian's country house in Norfolk, with a distinguished guest list, including Norman Davis (a senior American diplomat), Vincent Massey, Lady Astor, Lord Layton, Thomas Inskip, Tom Jones (formerly Secretary to the Cabinet, and still closely associated with Lloyd George), and Arnold Toynbee. When the news from Germany came through, the members of this impromptu house party set out to draft a speech for Baldwin to make in response, which was at once telephoned by Tom Jones to the Prime Minister. The main theme in this gathering of the great and the good was that Hitler wanted above all to be accepted by England as respectable. To achieve this, the best course would be to hold a conference in London as soon as possible to examine Hitler's 'peace programme' which was to replace the

Rhineland demilitarised zone with a new system of guarantees. Baldwin should accept Hitler's proposals at their face value and try him out fairly, now that the last trace of humiliation had been removed.¹¹

There was therefore an immense moral weight of respectable opinion, founded on a bad conscience about the Versailles Treaty and a fixed disposition to accept the German claims about the injustice of the treaty. In face of this cast of mind, Churchill simply could not offer a moral alternative. Indeed, his principal alternative policy was to strengthen British ties with France, and to rely on French military strength to safeguard Britain's position in Europe. But even to raise such a possibility met the obstacle of a deep and widespread hostility to France. As long ago as 1921, the annual report by the British Embassy in Paris found 'an atmosphere of militarism pervading the government'.¹² This official opinion was shared by radical writers on the left of the political spectrum. E.D. Morel, the founder of the Union of Democratic Control, described France in 1920 as 'a state, traditionally militaristic, which enjoys today a domination over Europe unequalled for a century.' H.N. Brailsford, a fellow-radical, held the same views: 'France has recovered the military predominance which she enjoyed under the first Napoleon', and had revived 'the persistent military tradition of this most nationalist of peoples.'¹³ These views were shared by Ramsay MacDonald, a radical who in 1924 became the first Labour Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. His hostility to France was unaltered by his new situation. In 1924 he told the French Premier, Edouard Herriot to his face that France had behaved unjustly towards Germany and must be prepared to revise the Treaty of Versailles in Germany's favour, safe in the certainty that there would be no danger from Germany in the future.¹⁴

In the 1930s these views remained the main current of British opinion about France. In January 1935 MacDonald, then the Prime Minister of a National Government, wrote in his diary that France was 'steeped in the militarist mind', and was herself responsible for the Nazi rise to power in Germany. 'Had there been no Tardieu', he wrote, 'there would have been no Chancellor Hitler.'¹⁵ (Tardieu was a prominent right-wing politician, who had opposed German rearmament.) Such views were common across the political spectrum. Robert Bernays, a Liberal MP and junior minister wrote in a private letter in March 1935 that, whilst Germany was certainly the main cause of difficulties in Europe, 'French intransigence' was also to blame.¹⁶ In the same month, Henry Channon, a Conservative MP and an ardent advocate of appeasement, greeted the news of Germany's introduction of conscription for the armed forces with the weary comment that 'I think France, as usual, is to blame.'¹⁷ Channon was a maverick, and his views might be disregarded

on that ground. But Baldwin's opinions certainly could not. In March 1936, when Hitler sent his troops into the Rhineland demilitarised zone, Baldwin told the House of Commons that in the past, hopes for an agreement with Germany had been blighted by the French missing opportunities, and warned that this must not happen again. This sentiment was echoed on the Opposition front bench, where Hugh Dalton, the leading Labour spokesman on foreign policy, acknowledged that: 'It is true that Herr Hitler has broken treaty after treaty.' But he went on: 'It is also true that the French government have thrown away opportunity after opportunity of coming to terms with him.'¹⁸ In what now seems an extraordinary transfer of blame, France was made to bear as much responsibility as Hitler for the difficulties of Europe.

These views were powerful enough in themselves, but they were also symptomatic of something much deeper – the profound fear of repeating the experience of the Great War of 1914–18. 'Never again' was the British motto – no more battles like the Somme or Passchendaele; no more casualties like those suffered on the Western Front. There was moreover a widespread opinion that the French had drawn the British, by means of the staff talks before 1914, into a commitment far greater than they had expected or wanted. It followed therefore that any form of close cooperation with France, and especially talks about military relations, was to be shunned like the plague. It was symptomatic of this frame of mind that in November 1934 the Committee of Imperial Defence warned its members and officials that on no account, and whether in private or *a fortiori* in public, should they use the words Expeditionary Force.

The foundations of the policy of appeasement, and the cast of mind that lay behind that policy, were formidable: guilt for the Treaty of Versailles, which the liberal conscience had long rejected, and deep-seated hostility towards France. What did Churchill, as an opponent of appeasement, have to offer as an alternative? In effect, he presented two main propositions: first, rearmament; and second, close cooperation with France in order to restrain Germany, by diplomacy if possible and by force if necessary.

On this subject, Churchill had a good deal to say. In 1934 he made a speech in his constituency in favour of Britain concerting plans with France for their mutual protection. At the end of March 1936 he told the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee that the British ought to regard a defensive association with France as fundamental to their foreign policy, and tried to reassure his audience that France, far from being militarist, had 'tremendous inhibitions against war.' In December 1936 he told the 1922 Committee of backbenchers that: 'If we did not keep in with the French Republic we should be doomed.' In March 1938,

after the German annexation of Austria, he insisted in the Commons that the only hope of averting war was for Britain and France to gather together a 'grand alliance' to resist German aggression.¹⁹

Thus Churchill presented his message; but he failed to carry conviction. The trouble was that France showed little sign of being a reliable ally for Britain. In the mid-1930s French politics were in a state of perpetual crisis, with governments succeeding one another with dreary frequency. Early in 1934 the whole system seemed on the verge of collapse. In January 1934 the Stavisky scandal, which had long been grumbling in the background, suddenly revealed a sordid affair of fraud and bribery, involving government ministers, senators and deputies, and the police. On 6 February 1934 a Right-wing mob came near to storming the Chamber of Deputies and throwing its President into the Seine. The whole regime of the Third Republic was tottering, and there was little sign that its supporters would rally to its defence. British ministers and officials looked on with alarm. Eden (then Lord Privy Seal, with an important role in foreign policy) visited Paris in February 1934 and noted in his diary: 'Dominant impression is France's unhappy internal political state.... This govt. cannot last long; there is the rot of corruption in the whole Parliamentary system.'²⁰ At that stage, the danger came from Right-wing and near-fascist groups. Two years later, after the Popular Front victory in the elections of 1936, the British switched their anxieties to the danger of communism. Maurice Hankey, not long retired as Secretary to the Cabinet and still an influential figure, wrote that France was 'inoculated with the virus of communism.... In her present state she is not a very desirable ally.'²¹

Sometimes it appeared doubtful whether France would remain on good terms with Britain at all. In the autumn of 1935 French public opinion went through one of its periodic outbursts of Anglophobia. The trigger was a series of three articles by Henri Beraud in the right-wing weekly *Gringoire*, under the general heading 'Faut-il réduire l'Angleterre en esclavage?' Beraud produced a list of French patriots who had been enemies of England – Joan of Arc, Crillon, Jean Bart, Robespierre and Napoleon; and he claimed that the French people still held the same views. His conclusion was brutal in its simplicity: 'I say that I hate this people... I say and I repeat that England must be reduced to slavery, since in truth the nature of the [British] Empire lies in oppressing and humiliating other peoples.' And he repeated Napoleon's proclamation of the doom of England from his exile on St. Helena: 'You will perish like the proud Venetian Republic.' Beraud's articles were quickly issued as a pamphlet, which became an instant best-seller. *Gringoire's* owner recorded that the articles attracted no fewer than 19,500 letters of support, and only 500 in opposition.

British opinion was badly shaken. In London, even Sir Robert Vansittart – a lifelong Francophile – was dismayed and alienated. The British Ambassador in Paris was instructed to protest to the French Foreign Minister in person. Officials in the Embassy believed that at the very least Beraud had revealed deep-seated hostility against England. In these circumstances, to restore close cooperation between Britain and France, as Churchill proposed, seemed highly unlikely.²²

Churchill's idea of reviving the *Entente Cordiale* of the war years was at best implausible; and Churchill himself did not pursue it with any consistency. It is well worth looking at what Churchill actually did and said during a number of events which put his policy towards France to the test: the Anglo-German naval agreement of June 1935; the Abyssinian crisis of 1935–6; the German occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936; the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9; and the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1938.

The Anglo-German naval agreement presented, raised the question of relations with France in a straightforward form. The treaty allowed Germany to build up to 35 per cent of British strength in surface warships, and 45 per cent in submarines. The British government hoped that this agreement would limit German naval construction, and avoid another naval race like that before 1914, which was widely held to be one of the causes of the Great War. But the case against it was strong. The agreement was a clear breach of the Treaty of Versailles, which imposed strict limits on the German surface fleet, and forbade the Germans to build any submarines at all. It was also in flagrant disregard of the position of France as a principal signatory of the Treaty of Versailles, and of French interests as a major naval power. Indeed, France had not been consulted, or even informed, about the British negotiations with Germany. For Churchill, the issues were clear-cut, and he opposed the agreement in the House of Commons on three grounds: first, it condoned a substantial breach of the Treaty of Versailles; second, it would increase, not limit, British naval construction, because the new German building would have to be more than matched by British building; and third, the agreement was damaging to British relations with France. 'We cannot have done this', said Churchill, 'without affecting prejudicially... the confidence which exists between ourselves and France, which is so vitally necessary for us at all times...'²³ These arguments, however well-founded, were in vain; and the naval agreement went forward regardless of the damage to Anglo-French relations.

The Abyssinian crisis in 1935–6 was a much more complicated affair. In October 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia, a fellow member of the League of Nations. This was straightforward enough; and a strict anti-appeasement

policy, opposing all acts of aggression, would presumably have led Churchill to support Abyssinia and condemn Italy. But in fact Churchill had his eye on other issues. First, he wanted to keep Italy in the anti-German alignment which had been set up at the Stresa conference in April 1935 between Britain, France and Italy – the so-called Stresa Front. Second, he was anxious to keep intact the military agreements between France and Italy, concluded in June 1935. In private, therefore, Churchill advised the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, only to act against Italy as far as he could carry the French with him; and he particularly warned Hoare not to push France into any actions that would endanger her military links with Italy. But (sensibly enough) he had no wish to repeat this advice in public, in the face of strong British support for the League of Nations. In practice, Churchill remained silent. He was on holiday in Morocco in December 1935 when the news broke of the Hoare-Laval pact, which would in effect have accepted Italian control over most of Abyssinia. He took no part in the debate on sanctions against Italy which took place in the House of Commons on 24 February 1936. When he eventually spoke in the House, on 6 April 1936, it was to *oppose* the maintenance of sanctions, which was a far cry from an anti-appeasement policy. Churchill then wrote a long letter to *The Times* (published on 20 April 1936), pointing out that, without helping Abyssinia at all, Britain had got France into difficulty through the loss of her military agreements with Italy, which would have allowed the French to divert 15 divisions to defence against Germany. He pleaded that the British should at least show understanding of French difficulties – ‘which may in the long run be our own.’²⁴ But that was all. There was surely a strong case for ‘appeasing’ Italy in order to keep Mussolini out of the German camp, and protecting French military security. On the other hand, there was an opposite case for imposing rigorous sanctions against Italy, even at the risk of war, and so strengthening the League of Nations. Churchill made neither case. In the event, Abyssinia was conquered; the French lost their military agreements with Italy; and Italy was pushed towards an alliance with Germany. Altogether, the French and British were left with the worst of all worlds, and Churchill did almost nothing to avoid this disastrous result.

On 7 March 1936, whilst the Abyssinian crisis was continuing, Hitler seized the opportunity to move German troops into the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland, where Germany was forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles to station any forces or build any fortifications. In retrospect, the Rhineland crisis has often been regarded as a lost opportunity for the French to strike against the Germans at little risk to themselves. At the time, almost no one advocated such a course. The reaction of the

French Army was cautious and defensive, and French public opinion, right across the political spectrum, was overwhelmingly against the slightest risk of war. British opinion was similarly opposed to any military action, and British policy was at once directed towards preventing the French doing anything rash – of which there was in fact no danger at all. If Churchill had pursued an anti-appeasement policy, he would presumably have advocated a prompt French military advance into the Rhineland to drive the Germans out and enforce the Treaty of Versailles. In fact he did nothing of the sort. Instead he praised French calmness and restraint in limiting themselves to appealing to the League of Nations, which in practice was a means of doing nothing. So far from striking a belligerent attitude, Churchill followed the French lead in accepting the German action as a *fait accompli*.

The Rhineland crisis was followed almost at once by the outbreak of civil war in Spain, in which Right-wing Nationalist forces rose in rebellion against the Popular Front government elected in 1936. The ensuing Spanish Civil War lasted almost three years, ending in 1939 in victory for the Nationalists, led by General Franco. In the course of the conflict, the Nationalists received substantial help in men and material from Italy and Germany; whilst the government received assistance from the Soviet Union, and from the Communist International, which organised large numbers of volunteers in what was seen as a war against fascism. In this civil war, the official policy of the British and French governments was one of non-intervention, even when it was perfectly clear that large-scale intervention was taking place. In these circumstances, non-intervention in Spain came to be identified with the wider policy of appeasement, and was often rightly seen by its opponents as showing weakness in the face of German and Italian aggression. If Churchill were to follow a consistent anti-appeasement policy, he should presumably have supported the Spanish government and advocated action against German and Italian intervention. In fact Churchill followed no such line. In general he supported the policy of non-intervention, which amounted to appeasement in Spain. Instinctively his sympathy lay with Franco and the Nationalists, not with the Popular Front of Republicans, Socialists and Communists. On strategic grounds, he thought that support for Franco was the best way of protecting the British base at Gibraltar. By the end of 1937 he had changed his mind on this, and was afraid that an alliance between Franco, Germany and Italy would endanger British interests in the Mediterranean. All in all, Churchill's emotions pulled him towards the Nationalists, whilst strategic calculations drew him in the opposite direction. At any rate, he

certainly did not pursue a clear anti-appeasement policy, or indeed any clear policy at all.

It was not until the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938, and above all its dramatic denouement in the Munich conference of 29 September, that Churchill fully established his reputation as an outright opponent of the policy of appeasement. During the long months of crisis, from April to September 1938, Germany brought heavy pressure on the Czech government to make concessions to the German-speaking minority in the Sudetenland, concessions so far-reaching that they would lead to the disintegration of the state. Finally, a four-power conference (Germany, Italy, France and Britain) on 29 September reached an agreement by which Germany annexed the Sudeten territories, under the barely disguised threat of war. In a four-day debate in the House of Commons (3–6 October) the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, defended the Munich agreement, and held out the hope that it would open the way to a far-reaching European settlement by accepting Germany's final territorial claim. Churchill spoke on 5 October, and delivered a formidable indictment of the agreement. So, far from securing a diplomatic success, he declared that 'We have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat.' Czechoslovakia had not been saved but sacrificed, and would not survive long. 'Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness. I venture to think that in future the Czechoslovak State cannot be maintained as an independent entity. You will find that in a period of time which may be measured by years, but may be measured only by months, Czechoslovakia will be engulfed in the Nazi regime.'²⁵ Churchill had made great speeches before. This time his words were speedily vindicated by events. In a period of time amounting to only five and a half months, in March 1939, Czechoslovakia indeed ceased to exist, broken into pieces and destroyed by Nazi Germany. Churchill had proved not only a great orator but a true prophet. His reputation as an opponent of appeasement had been made, and was never unmade.

At this stage, Churchill was able to strike a true note in opposition to appeasement. But when these five episodes are looked at together, no consistent pattern emerges. Churchill opposed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of June 1935; but the issues involved were somewhat technical, and the debate was soon forgotten amongst other problems. During the Abyssinian crisis of 1935–6, Churchill was cautious and largely silent, taking no firm line even in private. In the Rhineland crisis of 1936, Churchill supported the French policy of appealing to the League of Nations, which was merely a way of appearing to be active whilst in practice doing nothing at all. He uttered no clarion call to drive

the German forces out of the demilitarised zone. During the Spanish Civil War Churchill's heart was with Franco, whilst his strategic sense grasped that a Nationalist victory might endanger Gibraltar and threaten British control of the Mediterranean. Again, he was reluctant or unable to advocate any clear policy. Not until 1938 did Churchill find an issue on which he could oppose appeasement with both heart and head, and be fully justified by events.

There was, however, another aspect of Churchill's dealings with France. Virtually alone amongst senior British politicians (Eden was another exception), Churchill went out of his way to cultivate good personal relations with French political and military leaders. He corresponded with Flandin when he was French Foreign Minister, asking him for information on French intelligence about the strength of the German air force and it is striking to see that Flandin replied to this request favourably and at once. Churchill also took trouble to get on good terms with the Socialist leader Leon Blum, across what might have been thought of as an unbridgeable divide between Conservative and Socialist. He praised Blum, and the Popular Front government which he headed, for rallying the French people to the cause of national defence and rearmament; and he even went out of his way to congratulate the French Communists for protecting the interests of France.²⁶ In April 1938 he wrote to Blum at the end of a short second term as Premier, claiming that: 'I have never seen the good feeling between Britain and France so strong as during your tenure of power.'²⁷ On a visit to Paris in January 1938, Churchill wrote to his wife that Blum was the most informative of his French contacts.

Soon afterwards, at the end of March 1938, Churchill made a three-day visit to Paris, staying at the British Embassy and engaging in a tight-packed programme of meals, drinks and conversations with French politicians of many different colours: Leon Blum, Camille Chautemps, Edouard Daladier, Pierre-Etienne Flandin, Paul Reynaud, Georges Mandel, Louis Marin, and Joseph Paul-Boncour. (Churchill wanted to meet a communist, but the Ambassador, Sir Eric Phipps, persuaded him otherwise.) Churchill also met the Secretary-General at the Foreign Ministry, Alexis Leger, and the Chief of the General Staff, General Gamelin; and two influential figures from the French press, Chastenot from *Le Temps* and Sauerwein from *Paris Soir*. It was an impressive array, and a tribute to Churchill's personal prestige – after all, he had not held ministerial office for many years, and was often a lonely figure at Westminster. To everyone his message was the same, delivered with great emphasis and sometimes in his own idiosyncratic French: that France and Britain

should form a close alliance to resist the growth of German power. The exact effects of his advocacy were hard to ascertain, but Phipps was worried lest the French should form an exaggerated view of Churchill's influence in Britain, and suggested that Chamberlain and Halifax should visit Paris to 'put things in better proportion.'²⁸

Churchill returned to Paris on 19–20 September 1938, at the height of the Czechoslovakian crisis, in an attempt to encourage the opponents of appeasement in Daladier's government. He conferred with Reynaud and Mandel, and urged them not to resign from the cabinet, but to continue to argue their case from within. It may be that his intervention had some effect; but Reynaud's biographer, Elisabeth du Reau, observed that Czechoslovakia was abandoned all the same.²⁹ Digesting the results of the Munich conference, Churchill wrote gloomily to Reynaud that he could not see what foreign policy was now open to France. Her word was worth nothing. 'No minor state will risk its future on the guarantee of France. ... You have been infected by our weakness, without being fortified by our strength.' Reynaud replied that France was in a worse state than in 1870, at the outbreak of the Franco–Prussian War. Her alliances with Poland and Rumania were in danger. He foresaw victory for Franco in Spain. He dismissed the Munich agreement as 'un marche des dupes.' Rather oddly, he concluded this distressing catalogue by claiming that there was still grounds for hope; but he did not specify where it could be found.³⁰

Churchill for his part found comfort in the strength of the French Army. In December 1937 he defended himself against charges of over-optimism brought by Lord Rothermere by claiming that 'at the present time the French army can defend France against Germany, and is in fact a stronger military organisation'; though he recognised that this situation would change as the German army grew in size.³¹ This favourable view of French military strength continued well into 1939. On 14 July Churchill stood on the saluting base on the Champs Elysees and was deeply impressed by the march-past of French troops, accompanied by a British contingent as a symbol of Allied solidarity. Soon afterwards, in mid-August 1939, he visited parts of the Maginot Line under the guidance of Generals Gamelin and Georges. General Georges set out for him a comparison of the strength of the French and German armies, which impressed Churchill so powerfully that he exclaimed 'But you are the masters.' In notes describing his visits, Churchill argued that the French front could not be broken except at an enormous cost in German casualties; and he argued that the same would be true, to a lesser extent, if the French tried to break through the German defences. He concluded his observations on a note of high praise for the French: 'It is impossible

not to be affected by the mood of calm confidence which prevails in the High Command...'³² As war approached, Churchill was still buoyed up by his confidence in the formidable defences of the Maginot Line and the calm professionalism of the French military commanders.

There was a curious twist in the tail of this story of Churchill's confidence in France. On 2 September 1939 Churchill was in despair over the weakness and hesitations of the French government. On 1 September Germany had attacked Poland, and yet neither Britain nor France had declared war on Germany in response. The Poles had been left to fight alone. Churchill (still a back-bencher in the House of Commons, though waiting to be called to join the government in the event of war) knew that the British government was delaying its own declaration of war, and waiting for the French to take action. Churchill lost patience with the French failure to act. He telephoned the French Embassy, found an official on duty, and told him firmly that if France did not declare war on Germany the next day, then: 'it is finished between France and me...I shall publicly denounce the dishonour and cowardice of the France of today.'³³ It was a remarkable display of Churchill's confidence in his own prestige and political weight, and also the strength of his own emotional links to France. In the event, France declared war on Germany the following day, 3 September, though some hours after the British declaration, Churchill did not need to denounce France for dishonour and cowardice, and this strange episode remained unknown or forgotten until Alastair Parker drew attention to it in 2000. But it is striking to see how angry Churchill became in the face of what he believed to be French appeasement.

There is no sign that any of Churchill's contacts with France had any significant effects on French policy. French governments followed their own policy of appeasement for most of the 1930s, and Churchill had no chance of persuading them to change their minds, even when he had had the opportunity to try.

Looking back over the period between 1934 and 1939, it is plain that Churchill did not, and indeed could not, present a consistent policy towards France which could have formed an alternative to the policy of appeasement. His attitudes in the various crises of the 1930s varied according to circumstances. The most that he could offer was a willingness to make contacts with French politicians and military men which could form the basis for a renewed Franco-British partnership if the two countries eventually decided to stand up to Nazi Germany, even at the cost of going to war. This was not an alternative to appeasement, but became a basis for reviving the anti-German *entente* when it became clear that appeasement

had failed. Churchill's words and actions in the 1930s laid the foundations for a different policy during the Second World War. Between 1940 and 1945 it became of crucial importance that the British government was headed by a statesman who was an avowed supporter of France on grounds of personal friendships and of national interest. Churchill did not present a consistent alternative policy to appeasement in an alliance with France, but instead provided a starting point for a new, post-appeasement policy.

Notes

1. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. I, *The Gathering Storm* (London, 1948), pp. 59–60.
2. See especially: David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain* (London, 2001); John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory. A Political Biography* (London, 1993); R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement* (London, 1993) and *Churchill and Appeasement* (London, 2000); Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (Aldershot, 2006).
3. Robert Cecil's speech, and Lentin's comment, in Anthony Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany: An essay in the pre-history of appeasement* (Leicester, 1984), p. 135.
4. R.B. McCallum, *Public Opinion and the Last Peace* (London, 1944), p. 101, note 1.
5. Temple, quoted in Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany*, p. 151.
6. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Britain and the Dictators* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 76–7, p. 80.
7. Robert Self, (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, vol. 4, *The Downing Street Years* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 123.
8. Nigel Nicolson, (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1930–1939* (London, 1966), p. 243, entry 13 Feb. 1936.
9. Quoted in Parker, *Churchill and Appeasement*, p. 93.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
11. Tom Jones, *Diary with Letters* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 180–1, letter from Jones to Lady Grigg, 8 March 1936.
12. The National Archives, FO371/8625, W/1389/1389/17, Hardinge to Curzon, 11 Feb. 1922, enclosing annual report for 1921.
13. Morel and Brailsford quoted in A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers* (London, 1957), p. 177.
14. Georges Suarez, *Une nuit chez Cromwell* (Paris, 1938) gives a vivid account of this meeting from a French point of view. Perhaps not many British readers will recognise MacDonald in the guise of Oliver Cromwell!
15. MacDonald diary, 9 Jan. 1935, quoted in Nicholas Rostow, *Anglo-French Relations, 1934–1936* (London, 1984), p. 85.
16. N. Smart, (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays, 1932–1939* (Lampeter, 1996), p. 184; letter from Bernays to his sister, 8 March 1935.
17. Robert Rhodes James, (ed.), *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (London, 1993), p. 28; entry for 16 March 1935 – the date of the German announcement of the introduction of conscription.

18. Baldwin and Dalton, quoted in Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, p. 63.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–105; Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 165; Martin Gilbert, (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. V, *Companion*, Part 3, *The Coming of War, 1936–39* (London, 1982), p. 470; N. Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers: Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s* (London, 1971), p. 162.
20. Quoted in Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (London, 1986), p. 134.
21. Quoted in Michael Dockrill, *British Establishment Perspectives on France, 1936–40* (London, 1995), p. 53.
22. This passage rests on a revealing article by Martyn Cornick, 'Faut-il reduire Angleterre en esclavage: A case study of French Anglophobia, October 1935', *Franco-British Studies*, No. 14, Autumn 1992, pp. 3–20.
23. *HCDeb.*, 5th Series, vol. 304, cols. 543–4.
24. Gilbert, *Churchill* vol. 5, *Companion*, 3, pp. 101–3.
25. *H.C. Deb.*, 5th. Series, vol. 339, cols. 360–73. See accounts of the debate in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 5, 1922–1939 (London, 1976), pp. 997–8, and David Faber, *Munich: The 1938 Appeasement Crisis* (London, paperback, 2009), pp. 422–5.
26. Parker, *Churchill and Appeasement*, p. 117.
27. Churchill to Blum, 14 April 1938; Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 5, *Companion*, 3, p. 991.
28. For Churchill's various meetings, and Phipps's comments on his visit, see *ibid.*, pp. 951–2, pp. 959–60, pp. 963–4.
29. Elisabeth du Reau, *Edouard Daladier, 1884–1970* (Paris, 1993), pp. 262–4.
30. Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 5, *Companion*, 3, pp. 1208–9 and 1209, note 2.
31. Rothermere to Churchill, 23 Dec. 1937, *Ibid.*, pp. 865–6; Churchill to Rothermere, 29 Dec. 1937, *Ibid.*, p. 869.
32. Notes by Churchill, 23 August 1939, *Ibid.*, pp. 1952–6.
33. Quoted in Parker, *Churchill and Appeasement*, pp. 256–7, from Girard de Charbonnieres, *La plus evitable de toutes les guerres* (Paris, 1985), pp. 206–7. De Charbonnieres was the official who took Churchill's call to the Embassy.

8

Britain and the Spanish Connection, 1931–1947: Non-intervention and Regime Change

Glyn Stone

In modern times, since the end of the Napoleonic wars, Britain's connection with Spain was often concerned with that country's internal affairs and its various revolutions and changes of regime. The response to these changes was invariably, though not always, to take a stance of non-intervention or non-interference. So that in the early 1820s, for example, both Foreign Secretaries Lord Robert Castlereagh and George Canning opposed external intervention in Spain. In his State Paper of 5 May 1820, circulated to the other European great powers (France, Austria, Prussia and Russia), Castlereagh, aware of their wish to make intervention against liberal revolution a dominant principle of the ongoing Congress system, asserted that to generalise 'the principle of one state interfering by force in the internal affairs of another' and 'to think of reducing it to a system, or to impose it as an obligation' was a scheme 'utterly impracticable and objectionable' and 'no country having a Representative system of Government could act upon it'.¹ When the French invaded Spain in 1823 to overthrow the Spanish liberal constitutional Government British liberals urged Canning to retaliate by guaranteeing to Spain the eventual restoration of the Spanish constitution. This he refused to do, though he confirmed that the principle on which 'the British Government so earnestly deprecated the war against Spain' was that of 'the right of any Nation to change, or to modify, its internal institutions'.²

Although, in contrast to his predecessors, Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston pursued intervention in Spain at the time of the Carlist Wars in the 1830s, notably with the Quadruple Alliance of 1834 (Britain, France, Spain and Portugal), he justified it as limited and as supporting those Spaniards, Constitutionalists as opposed to Absolutists, 'who wanted constitutional liberty, equal laws, a Parliament, justice, no Inquisition – against those who were for having no Parliament, no justice, but much Inquisition'. In intervening by means of 'trifling assistance which could not possibly have determined events, if the Spanish people had not been on that side', Britain enabled them 'to work out their liberties with smaller sacrifices than they must otherwise have submitted to, and with less suffering than they must otherwise have encountered'.³ When revolution, by means of the overthrow of the Bourbon Queen Isabella II, occurred in 1868 through a time honoured *pronunciamento* by the Spanish military, Spain underwent six years of turmoil which brought a foreign king as a constitutional ruler, the brother of Victor Emmanuel I of Italy, the Duke of Aosta, as Amadeo I (and last), the inevitable Carlist rebellions, the first and short-lived Spanish Republic and the restoration of the Bourbons. Throughout these six years successive Liberal Foreign Secretaries, Lord George Clarendon and Lord George Granville, supported by Prime Minister William Gladstone, adopted and pursued a non-interventionist policy whilst maintaining control of Gibraltar, seeking to advance free trade with Spain and preserving an independent Portugal. Virtually from the outset, the Embassy at Madrid was instructed to abstain from 'anything like an endeavour to influence the course which the Spanish nation may adopt for the reorganisation of its government'.⁴

Non-intervention was again applied by the British Government in 1923 when the deeply flawed and ineffective Parliamentary Monarchy of Alfonso XIII was subjected to a coup d'état led by General Miguel Primo de Rivera who became dictator of Spain whilst the king retained his throne.⁵ The coup was met by almost total silence and indifference in British Government circles, as a *fait accompli*, which indeed it was. It was intended to discuss the coup at Cabinet on 26 September 1923 but in the event no discussion took place then or after.⁶ The only point of real concern, no doubt with the recent bombardment of Corfu in mind, was the intention of the new regime to seek an entente with Fascist Italy which might have implications for the balance of power in the Mediterranean.⁷

With the exception of Palmerston's limited intervention in Spain in the 1830s for more than one hundred years, British governments had

stood aloof from interference in Spanish internal affairs, including changes of regimes and governing systems. The end of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship and of the Spanish Monarchy in 1931 heralded a new period of turmoil in the political history of Spain which was only finally settled in the late 1940s with the full consolidation of the dictatorial regime of General Francisco Franco. In this period the tradition of non-involvement or non-interference in the internal politics of Spain was maintained though there were moments during the Second World War and its aftermath when some British statesmen thought seriously about intervening and considered supporting regime change. The establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 and its democratic parliamentary constitution, the subsequent civil war, the Second World War and its aftermath confronted successive British Governments with challenges to their commitment to Spanish democracy. As time and events would demonstrate there was no automatic or unconditional response in its favour. On the contrary, between 1931 and 1947 there were times when the Foreign Office and the Cabinet were highly critical of Spanish democracy and Spanish democrats and less so with the dictatorial alternative.

I

The immediate British reaction to the end of the regime of Alfonso XIII and the inauguration of the democratic Second Spanish Republic in April 1931 was scarcely enthusiastic and encouraging despite the observation of the British Ambassador at Madrid, Sir George Grahame, that the provisional Republican Government 'is at present being carried on a flood tide of popular support' following republican victories in the municipal elections which were generally regarded as having the effect of a plebiscite.⁸ Senior officials in the Foreign Office, including the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Robert Vansittart, were concerned that the new regime would be unable to control militant Catalan and Basque nationalism;⁹ and their fears were not assuaged when, on 18 April, Catalonia agreed to be reintegrated into a single Spanish Republic. In view of these concerns the Foreign Office wanted the Great Powers to act together and 'merely recognise the [provisional] Republican Government de facto and transact business with it unofficially, deferring full de jure recognition until it had established itself in a constitutional manner.' They had in mind the precedent of the fall of King Manuel II of Portugal in 1910 when the British Government had declined to recognise the Portuguese Republicans until a constitution had been drawn

up and ratified eighteen months later.¹⁰ Unfortunately for the Foreign Office, the French Government refused to wait, not wishing 'to split hairs over a difference of recognition de facto and recognition de jure, nor to proceed by two stages', and granted de jure recognition on 17 April.¹¹ The Labour Government proved no less anxious to show goodwill to the provisional democratic Spanish Government. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Hugh Dalton, personally welcomed 'the change from dictatorial to democratic forms' which he hoped might be imitated elsewhere in Europe. He regarded 'the peaceful and bloodless character of the change' to be both 'very remarkable and praiseworthy'.¹² With the agreement of the Dominions, whose views had been canvassed, de jure recognition by Britain was accordingly granted on 22 April 1931, much earlier than originally intended by the Foreign Office.¹³

Having shown an initial reticence in recognising the Second Spanish Republic, the Foreign Office, acting on Dalton's stricture to secure the new Spain as 'an ally at Geneva and elsewhere of our international policies' by taking notice of the Republican regime and playing up 'to their sensibilities', moved quickly to consolidate their position at Madrid.¹⁴ This shift in attitude included the friendly cultivation of the new Spanish Ambassador, Don Ramón Perez de Ayala, by Vansittart whilst Henderson at Geneva complimented the new Spanish Foreign Minister, Alejandro Lerroux, on the calm transition from a monarchical to a republican regime.¹⁵ But this did not mean that the original reservations held by the Foreign Office were diminished after recognition. Confronted with attacks by revolutionary elements on religious institutions throughout Spain after April 1931, including monasteries and churches, notably in Madrid, Seville, Cádiz, Alicante and Murcia, Vansittart was critical of what he and his colleagues perceived to be the insufficient assertion of authority by the Republican Government. Aware of the comparisons being made in diplomatic circles between the Republican Government and the Kerensky regime in revolutionary Russia, he was certain that 'the present administration will have to show a good deal more courage and efficiency than hitherto if they are to get the better of communism in Spain'.¹⁶ In the event, the Spanish electorate got 'the better of communism' by refusing to elect a single Communist deputy at the nationwide elections for the Cortes, held on 28 June 1931.¹⁷

In the early years of the Republic, British policy was strongly influenced by the need to counter what was perceived in the Foreign Office as a growing entente between Paris and Madrid. In May 1933 Grahame warned Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, that the Spanish authorities suspected 'a residue of antagonism' on the part of Great

Britain towards the Republican regime which was, of course, liberal, radical and democratic.¹⁸ The Spanish Government from June 1931 onwards was certainly left leaning, based on a Republican-Socialist bloc in the Cortes, led by Prime Minister Manuel Azaña, leader of the Left Republicans, but for the Foreign Office the political complexion of the Republican Government mattered less than that the Spanish Republic should be consolidated and capable of maintaining authority.

Whilst they looked for evidence that the Republic would be capable of consolidation, the British were also concerned to protect their considerable economic and strategic interests in Spain. Yet, at no time during the period of the Second Republic before July 1936 did the British authorities fear a threat to their strategic position in relation to Spain either from a Franco-Spanish entente or even an Italo-Spanish alignment and Britain's control of Gibraltar and, therefore, entry into and from the western Mediterranean appeared as firm as before 1931. British economic interests in Spain, however, appeared more threatened by Left-wing regimes hostile to foreign capitalist enterprises, or by Right-wing regimes inspired by economic nationalism. As by far the largest foreign investor in Spain with £40 million, representing some 40 per cent of total foreign investment in 1936, Britain had considerable interests to protect, including those of the Rio Tinto Company, the largest single foreign investor in Spain.¹⁹ Before 1936, however, there was no fundamental challenge to British economic interests whether from Left-wing or Right-wing Republican regimes.²⁰ But this did not prevent the Foreign Office from expressing increasing concern at internal political developments within Spain and the threat which they could pose to British interests. The Embassy at Madrid and the officials in London, notably Vansittart, wished for strong and stable governments able to maintain law and order, and saw the alternatives as either a military coup which would restore the Monarchy or a Left-wing revolution. The former was attempted and thwarted in 1932, the latter, centred on Madrid, Barcelona and most notably the Asturias mining region was crushed in October 1934. In the case of the Asturias revolt, and despite its brutal suppression by the military, the Foreign Office, which was kept fully informed of Spanish events by Grahame,²¹ showed scant sympathy or understanding of the miners' revolt. Indeed, Assistant Under Secretary Sir Orme Sargent went so far as to condemn the Asturias revolt for its anti-democratic character: 'The fact remains that at the Last General Election [1933] the Spanish people, in enjoyment of universal suffrage, returned a chamber with a definite conservative tendency.'²² The Government also resolutely refused to intervene with regard to the trial and imprisonment of

some of the rebels, including socialist deputies in the Cortes, and despite the urgings of Labour MPs.²³

Little faith was shown in the prospects of Spain establishing a stable and democratic parliamentary republic despite the degree of agreement and cooperation which existed in the foreign relations of the two countries. Spain was a loyal member of the League of Nations and although she was reluctant to do so imposed, at Britain's behest, economic sanctions on Italy during the Abyssinian crisis. In addition, the Spanish Government responded to British overtures in September 1935 by sending air squadrons to Algeciras, Cartagena, the Balearic Islands and Ceuta in the western Mediterranean, by reinforcing the garrisons there and by sending units of the Spanish navy.²⁴

The lack of British faith in Spanish democracy was reinforced in February 1936 with the unexpected victory of the Spanish left-wing Popular Front in the general election in Spain; unexpected because the prediction of the Ambassador at Madrid, Sir Henry Chilton, was otherwise.²⁵ This attitude was maintained even when Foreign Minister Augusto Barcía Trelles confirmed that the foreign policy of the new Government was to keep in step with Britain and France and in particular to continue with sanctions against Italy.²⁶ Foreign Office officials, including Vansittart, remained sceptical about the ability and prospects of the Spanish Liberal Republicans, such as Azaña and Barcia, holding the political ring in the face of the militant activities of their socialist, communist and anarchist allies on the one hand and, on the other, the forces of the Spanish Right, including Monarchists (Carlists or Alfonists), CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autonomas – the Spanish Confederation of Right-wing Groups), the Falange (Spanish Fascist Party) and the Generals themselves who were busy preparing a military coup at Estoril in Portugal. Following the Popular Front victory, like the State Department in Washington, the Foreign Office, echoing the doubts of 1931, perceived the increasing social unrest in Spain in terms of revolutionary Russia in 1917. They regarded Azaña, who became President of the Spanish Republic in May 1936, as a Spanish Kerensky and his Government as the equivalent of the ill-fated Russian Provisional Government which eventually succumbed to the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. As in 1917, the options seemed to be either an extreme Left-wing revolution or a military coup.²⁷

Against the background of the rapidly polarising situation in Spain during the spring and early summer of 1936 the Foreign Office focused its attention on protecting British commercial interests threatened by new labour laws, by the threat of physical violence against British lives

and property and by the imposition of heavy surcharges on nearly all imports into Spain which were contrary to previous Spanish legislation.²⁸ British protests at this state of affairs, regarded by Vansittart as 'disgraceful' and 'a sad commentary on the weakness and timidity of the Spanish Government',²⁹ went unheeded by the Spanish authorities. As a result, the Permanent Under Secretary advised Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden to speak strongly to Barcía at Geneva. Eden did so and was briefly reassured. But, by the end of June, early July the situation relating to British companies in Spain worsened considerably with extensive strike action and disorders, the murder of the British manager of a Barcelona factory, Joseph Mitchell, by left-wing gunmen, and with the apparent impotence of the Spanish Government to intervene and redress these grievances.³⁰ By the time of the attempted military coup on 17/18 July 1936 official circles in London were increasingly alienated by the inability of the Republican authorities in Spain to resolve the social and political crisis and their faith in Spanish democracy was severely diminished. When the military coup failed and civil war in Spain followed, the British Government were determined to stand aside and let events take their course. At no time did they consider intervening to save Spanish democracy as represented by the Spanish Republic.

II

From the outset of the civil war in Spain the British Government maintained a strict policy of political and military non-intervention, refusing to recognise the belligerent rights of either party in the struggle and organising the proceedings of the International Committee for Non-Intervention in Spain which was located in London. In pursuing non-intervention the Government sought to be impartial between the Republican and Nationalist administrations despite the fact that the former represented the continuation of the democratic second Spanish Republic whilst the latter had no such legitimacy, based as it was on an unsuccessful attempt to militarily overthrow Spanish democracy in the time honoured tradition of a military *pronunciamento*. In fact, and despite the appearance of impartiality, the Conservative dominated National Governments of Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain tended to sympathise more with General Francisco Franco and his Nationalist cause whilst the Labour and Liberal opposition's sympathies lay with the Republic. Anti-Republican sentiment was particularly strong at the Admiralty which continued to condemn unreservedly the killing of Spanish naval officers by Republican sailors during the early weeks of the

civil war, regardless of the fact that these officers were in open revolt and committing treason against the democratically elected government of Spain. The Foreign Office was equally dismissive of Spanish democracy, denying the legitimacy of the Republican Government because of its failure to restore law and order prior to the civil war and condemning its arming of the civilian militias, even though the alternative was almost certainly surrender in the face of the military rebellion.³¹

The Cabinet did not perceive the Spanish conflict as one between fascism and democracy and the continuing intervention of Soviet Russia in Spain confirmed their view that it was a struggle between fascist and communist totalitarianism. Whilst Eden and Vansittart were converted during 1937 to the view that the survival of Republican Spain was in Britain's best political and strategic interests, the passage of time converted few others.³² Indeed, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was compelled to warn his Cabinet colleagues in January 1939 that the Government 'should avoid showing any satisfaction at the prospect of a Franco victory'.³³ As for the Prime Minister himself, according to Eden's admission to the Spanish Prime Minister, Juan Negrín, in September 1937, he feared that 'Communism would get its clutches into western Europe' through the Spanish Civil War.³⁴ Chamberlain, like most of his government, was strongly anti-communist and did not trust the Soviets whether in the Spanish or other contexts, with a large degree of justification as events after the civil war ended demonstrated, notably the Nazi-Soviet pact.³⁵ At the same time, there was a perception on the Nationalist side that Chamberlain desired their victory and that he sympathised with their cause.³⁶ In contrast to the nationalists, the perception on the Republican side was one of British hostility towards them. According to the Spanish Historian, Angel Viñas, the last Republican Prime Minister, Negrín, did not hesitate to characterise Chamberlain and 'his acolytes' as 'the worst enemies of the Republic'.³⁷

Despite their anti-Republican prejudices, the British Government did not actively support the Spanish Nationalists as did Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. They pursued non-intervention in concert with France to contain the civil war and prevent its escalation into a general European conflict based on ideological divisions, to temper political complications at home in view of the pro-Republican stance of the Labour and Liberal parties, to maintain the appeasement policy in the well-intended but ultimately ill-fated pursuit of European security and stability, to protect British strategic interests in the western Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic and to safeguard British economic interests within Spain itself.³⁸

The loss of Spanish democracy did not rest heavily on the consciousness or consciences of the British Government during the period preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. Whilst they had avoided taking such a step before, the impending defeat of the Spanish Republic in February 1939 persuaded the British Government to grant *de jure* recognition to the Franco regime, at the same time as the French, in order to restore favourable Anglo-Spanish relations and to counter German and Italian influence in Spain with the ultimate aim of securing Spanish neutrality in the event of a European war.³⁹ This aim was reiterated in May 1939 to Edouard Daladier, by Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, who stressed to the French Prime Minister that it was important 'to get on as friendly terms as possible' with Franco in order to secure Spanish neutrality in the event of a European conflict.⁴⁰

Between March and August 1939, despite Spain's adhesion to the Anti-Comintern Pact and exit from the League of Nations, the British endeavoured to wean Franco's regime from the Rome-Berlin Axis but with little or no success though they had insisted and achieved the withdrawal of all German and Italian forces from Spain by June 1939.⁴¹ They sought to persuade the Spanish dictator of their good intentions, for example, through economic assistance which he rejected, and to dispel any doubts or suspicions he might have concerning British attitudes towards developments within Spain, in particular the question of a restoration of the Monarchy; it was stressed that the future form of government in Spain was a matter for Spaniards alone to decide.⁴² Unfortunately, following the outbreak of the Second World War, Franco's Spain did not remain strictly neutral. Instead, it pursued a policy of neutrality which was benevolent towards Germany, notably in the provision of refuelling bases for German submarines engaged in attacking British Atlantic shipping, and after June 1940 towards Italy.⁴³ Indeed, when Italy joined the war and the threat of a French invasion had been removed, Spain became a non-belligerent, fulfilling Franco's promise to the Italian Foreign Minister, Galeazzo Ciano, of 19 July 1939, that Spain intended, in the event of a short war, to maintain 'a very favourable – even more than very favourable – neutrality towards Italy'. The Spanish leader had intimated that should there be a long war it would not be possible to maintain neutrality, for events would lead Spain 'to take up a more definite position'.⁴⁴ As Paul Preston has shown, Franco did not take up a more definite position because the German Führer, Adolf Hitler, preferring to retain good relations with Vichy France, refused to pay his price for belligerence, namely the dismemberment of the French North African Empire and its acquisition by Spain.⁴⁵ Despite his increasing dependency on British and

American economic assistance, particularly wheat and oil, Franco maintained Spanish non-belligerency in favour of Germany until 1944 when, confronted with the impressive military successes of the western allies and the Soviet Union, he resumed a policy of neutrality.⁴⁶

III

The British Government went to war in 1939 to challenge Nazi Germany's intention to dominate the European continent rather than to create a new and democratic order in Europe. Accordingly, as long as Spain did not enter the war on the Axis side Franco's regime had nothing to fear from the British. At no point during the Second World War did they seriously contemplate intervening in Spain to defeat Franco and install a democratic regime. Along with their American allies, they came to despise the Franco regime but they would not contemplate an alternative in case this resulted either in Spain's intervention on the side of the Axis or in a German invasion of the Iberian peninsula which would destroy not only Spain but Portugal as well and result in the loss of Gibraltar and threaten Britain's strategic position in the western Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic. During the first three years of the war the Chiefs of Staff continually emphasised the strategic importance of keeping Spain out of the war, for example, in November 1940 when a memorandum was presented at the War Cabinet which stressed the strategic dangers of Spain entering the Axis.⁴⁷ Until the end of 1942 whilst the outcome of the war remained in the balance the British Government, led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, continuously repeated that they had no intention of intervening in the internal affairs of Spain. Indeed, as early as October 1940 Churchill stressed in a speech before the House of Commons that his government had no wish to interfere in the political affairs of Spain or to see interference by other powers and that the form of government there was a question 'exclusively for Spaniards to settle themselves'. There was no intention of 'meddling in the internal affairs of any country, and certainly not of Spain, where the sentiment of national independence is so firmly rooted in the national character.'⁴⁸ Unfortunately in this case, Churchill's reassurance was deliberately withheld from the Spanish people by Franco's regime, a point of constant complaint by the Foreign Office and the Embassy in Madrid.⁴⁹

Denial of any intention to intervene in Spain's internal politics accompanied by reassurances to that effect became a constant theme of the former Foreign and Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare's tenure as special Ambassador at Madrid, where he was sent in June 1940 and

remained until the end of 1944. Indeed, after arriving in Madrid, Hoare took the earliest opportunity on 22 June 1940, in conversation with Colonel Juan Beigbeder, the Spanish Foreign Minister, to deny rumours spread in the Spanish capital that the British Government were plotting to overthrow the Franco regime and added the reassurance that he had been appointed to help 'the present government in the much needed work of reconstruction and its efforts to keep out of the war.'⁵⁰ Churchill and his Foreign Secretaries, Lord Halifax, and following his despatch to the Washington Embassy in December 1940, Eden, sought to moderate British press attacks on the Franco regime but to their annoyance could not suppress their publication.⁵¹ Moreover, the Prime Minister was sufficiently impressed to circulate to the War Cabinet a communication from the Naval Attaché at the Madrid Embassy, Captain Alan Hillgarth, which claimed that Franco had lost almost all his prestige and that Spain was 'not really governed at all'. Yet, according to Hillgarth, no one wanted the return of the Republic and whilst a constitutional monarchy might work it would be blamed for 'too many mistakes of its predecessors'. Spain, in his opinion, was 'not yet enough advanced to deserve a parliamentary system at all'.⁵²

Apart from the anti-Franco sentiments of part of the British press, the Foreign Office and the Madrid Embassy lost no opportunity in expressing their anxiety concerning the presence of leading Spanish Republican exiles in the United Kingdom in case it undermined their assurances of British disinterest in the internal politics of Spain. The presence of the last Republican Prime Minister was regarded as particularly threatening. When it became clear in July 1940 that the United States Government was not prepared to grant Negrín a visa, Hoare, who was 'terribly disappointed that you could not push him off to the USA', expressed the hope that he might be removed to 'Mexico or South America'.⁵³ Subsequently, Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax told the War Cabinet that Negrín's continued presence in the country lent support to the view that the British Government was intriguing in Spanish politics and plotting the overthrow of the Franco regime and this provided admirable material for German propaganda. It was essential to keep Spain out of the war and to achieve this objective the leaders of the Spanish Government had to be kept 'friendly to us'. Churchill supported this view and stressed that by keeping Negrín in the United Kingdom a further strain was imposed on the country. But the Labour and Liberal leaders, Clement Attlee and Sir Archibald Sinclair who, as Lord Privy Seal and Secretary of State for Air, were both members of the War Cabinet, remained unconvinced. Attlee believed that Negrín's departure would have 'a most discouraging effect

on those people, the world over, who believed that we were fighting for democracy and on those who might otherwise carry on disruptive activities in the occupied territories'. Sinclair believed that many Liberals would 'take it amiss if Dr Negrín was asked to leave this country'.⁵⁴ In the event, Negrín was only prepared to go to the United States or Canada and since neither of these countries were prepared to grant him a visa he was allowed to remain in the United Kingdom.⁵⁵

In view of its implacable opposition and antipathy towards communism, a sharp deterioration in relations with the Franco regime might have been expected when, following the German invasion of 22 June 1941, Soviet Russia came into the war and entered into alliance with Britain. However, the Foreign Office, encouraged by the Cabinet, took steps to distance themselves from their Soviet ally, so successfully that Hoare was able to report in late July 1941 that the effect of Britain's alliance with Soviet Russia had been much less hostile than expected in Spanish military circles in which there was an appreciation that 'our alliance with the USSR was dictated for purely military reasons and was not a step towards communism, in spite of German propaganda to the contrary'.⁵⁶ At the same time, when on 17 July 1941 Franco, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the military *pronunciamento* which provoked the Spanish Civil War, made a hostile speech in which he declared publicly that Britain had lost the war the Government remained resolutely determined not to interfere in the internal affairs of Spain; not even when in response to the speech Sir Auckland Geddes, chairman of the Rio Tinto Company, which had the largest foreign holdings in Spain, sought to persuade the Foreign Office that the time had come for the Government to encourage a wide resistance movement to the Falange dominated Franco regime. He suggested that Negrín and other Republican leaders in Britain and France should be approached to organise such resistance against what he considered to be the weakest of the fascist governments in Europe.⁵⁷ There was no intention of supporting and encouraging an anti-Francoist movement although Eden was prepared to consider applying further pressure with regard to economic assistance to the Franco regime.⁵⁸ However, Churchill was less convinced and by mid August he had persuaded himself that Franco's speech was not so hostile after all.⁵⁹

The Government remained resolutely opposed to any interference in Spanish internal affairs when confronted by an increasing number of reports from the Madrid Embassy during the final months of 1941 which focused on what appeared to be an intensifying power struggle within the Franco regime itself, between leading military figures such

as General Alfredo Kindelán and General Antonio Aranda and the pro Falange elements led by the pro-Axis Foreign Minister, Ramón Serrano Suñer.⁶⁰ At this time, Eden remained sceptical of the likelihood of a coup d'état by the Spanish Generals and he expressed his doubts 'whether a change of regime in Spain would be to our advantage until German influence lessens and the new regime is therefore able to carry out a truly independent policy'.⁶¹ Although he regarded the Generals as 'broken reeds' and incapable of challenging the existing regime, he admitted he 'would love to see Suñer go and maybe Franco too' and he was 'certainly not prepared to pretend otherwise'.⁶²

The apparent revival of the monarchical movement in opposition to the Franco regime failed to shake British determination to maintain the policy of strict non-interference in the affairs of Spain. Even Churchill, who confessed himself to be a 'strong monarchist' and 'in principle in favour of Constitutional Monarchism as a barrier against Dictatorship', believed it would be 'a mistake for Great Britain to try to force her systems on other countries' as it would only 'create prejudice and opposition'.⁶³ This, despite Hoare's conviction that town and country were united in favour of a royal restoration, in the person of the Spanish Pretender, Don Juan de Bourbon, supported not only by the parties of the Right but also by the professional classes, formerly Republicans, and by the thousands of socialists and communists still left in prisons who believed that only by the return of the King would they receive political amnesty.⁶⁴ Whilst there were those, including the Duke of Alba, Ambassador at London, who believed that Franco might wish to play the role of General Monck, the Spanish dictator was not one of them. In 1942 there was as little prospect of a monarchist restoration as there was of a return of the Republic and in December 1941 the Foreign Office had already concluded that the activities of Spanish republican refugee groups did not suggest that they possessed 'any leaders of outstanding ability likely to command a following in Spain' or that the different groups 'would themselves acknowledge any one leader'.⁶⁵ As a result, the British Government resisted any temptation to interfere and the BBC Spanish programmes continued to reproduce Churchill's statement to the House of Commons of 8 October 1940.⁶⁶ At the same time, the removal of Serrano Suñer and his replacement by the less offensive General Francisco Gómez Jordana y Sousa in September 1942 was welcomed by the War Cabinet.⁶⁷

The improved fortunes of war for the allies later in 1942 had no impact on Britain's Spanish policy which remained committed to non-intervention and was, indeed, underlined by the need to keep Spain

completely neutral during the projected allied invasion of North Africa under 'Operation Torch'. Instructed by the Foreign Office, Hoare told Jordana, in October 1942, that the policy of the British Government towards Spain remained unchanged in its two fundamental principles, namely, no British intervention in the internal affairs of Spain both during and after the war and no invasion of Spanish territory on the mainland or overseas.⁶⁸ These reassurances were repeated on a number of occasions, including in a speech by Churchill at the Mansion House on 10 November 1942 when he assured Spain and Portugal that the Government's only policy was that 'they shall be independent and free, prosperous and at peace', and by Eden on 4 December when he told the Spanish Ambassador, the Duke of Alba, that the British Government had 'no intention to interfere in the internal affairs of Spain and we only wished to see that country prosper'.⁶⁹ At the same time, the British Legation at Berne, which was regularly approached by exiled Spanish Monarchists, was warned that 'His Majesty's Government have no views or preferences concerning any future regime in Spain which is a matter for Spaniards alone to decide' and that the restoration was 'a purely Spanish question which we do not desire to encourage or discourage'. It was only on this assumption that the Legation was 'authorised to touch on Spanish internal problems'.⁷⁰ This approach was underscored at the beginning of 1943 by a report from the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, brought to the War Cabinet's attention by Churchill himself, which emphasised that experience had shown that Franco had throughout 'effectively controlled the situation' and that he had invariably curbed any activities 'likely to endanger Spain's policy of neutrality'. Moreover, there was no reason to think that Franco's power had lessened recently.⁷¹

It was only during 1943 with German reverses in Soviet Russia and Italy's exit from the war that a perceptible change took place in British policy though it continued to fall short of direct interference in Spanish affairs. The Government dismissed Franco's attempt to drive a wedge in the Grand Alliance through a proposed negotiated peace between Germany and the western powers.⁷² The Spanish Government was reminded of the Allies' commitment to the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers and their satellites.⁷³ Moreover, Jordana was warned that when the time came to integrate the few remaining neutrals into the post-war international community based upon the United Nations it would 'inevitably be influenced by the policy and attitude shown during the war...by individual neutrals such as Spain'.⁷⁴ At the same time, there appeared no realistic alternative to the Franco regime. In

July Eden saw fit to express his view that a monarchy established under 'Franco auspices with the same corrupt gang of generals' would be no improvement.⁷⁵ Yet, in August he recognised that in the event of 'the present Government [being] overthrown' he knew of 'no group in Spain capable of establishing an alternative government without serious disorders, nor a government which in the long run could guarantee the maintenance of a regime less corrupt, inefficient and oppressive than the present one'.⁷⁶ It was clear that the British Government had no wish to make significant difficulties for the Franco regime and in December 1943 Hoare was informed that no major modification of policy was called for unless and until it was decided that the Government should work for a change in the internal Spanish regime.⁷⁷

Before 1944 Franco had always been able to plead that his pro-Axis policy was directed by the constant threat of German armed forces invading the Iberian Peninsula from their base in France; an argument which was accepted by the Chiefs of Staff who in February 1944 advised that 'there would be no solid military advantage in attempting to bring about the fall of Franco at present'.⁷⁸ By the time of D Day in June 1944 this excuse on the part of Franco appeared increasingly tenuous. Yet, Churchill continued to give Franco the benefit of the doubt. In a speech in the House of Commons on 24 May he praised Spain's role in keeping out of the war when Britain was at her most vulnerable in 1940 and at the time of the North Africa landings in 1942. In the case of the latter he stated that he would always consider that 'a service was rendered at this time by Spain, not only to the United Kingdom and to the British Empire and Commonwealth, but to the cause of the United Nations.' He insisted that internal political problems in Spain were a matter for the Spaniards themselves and it was not for the Government 'to meddle in such affairs'.⁷⁹ These remarks aroused much criticism in the United States press and Churchill justified them to Roosevelt on the grounds that whilst he did not care about Franco he did not wish 'to have the Iberian peninsula hostile to the British after the war'. He did not know whether there was more freedom in Stalin's Russia than in Franco's Spain but he 'had no intention to seek a quarrel with either'.⁸⁰

Increased repression within Spain, including the acceleration of political executions during the summer and autumn of 1944 failed to move the British Prime Minister. There were, however, other members of the War Cabinet prepared to explore the possibility of bringing about a more democratic regime in Spain. In November 1944 Deputy Prime Minister Attlee wrote a paper for the War Cabinet in which he argued that there was not one of Britain's allies who would not wish to see the Franco

regime destroyed and he warned that the Government was 'running into the danger of being considered Franco's sole external support'. He argued that it should aim at getting in Spain a government which would be tolerant and which would prepare the way for developments towards a democracy.⁸¹ Eden also advocated tougher measures against the Franco regime believing its survival would be a 'serious anomaly in post-war Europe'. For the Foreign Secretary there was certainly no intention of provoking another revolution or civil war in Spain, from which 'only extremist and very possibly anti-British elements might profit' but he was not averse to 'the replacement of the present regime by a more moderate regime, whether a moderate Republic or a Constitutional Monarchy'. However, at that moment in time the only practicable possibility of an improvement in Spain was a modification of the present regime by 'the elimination or suppression of its most undesirable elements'.⁸² Churchill remained unconvinced. On 11 November, in a personal minute, he warned Eden that definitely to interfere in the internal government of a country 'with whom one has not been at war and who has done us much more good than harm in the war' was a serious step. He was 'no more in agreement with the internal Government of Russia than I am with that of Spain, but I certainly would rather live in Spain than Russia'. The Prime Minister feared that if they laid hands on Spain they would 'be making needless trouble for ourselves and very definitely taking sides in ideological matters'. Accordingly, it would be better to allow 'Spanish tendencies to work themselves out instead of precipitating a renewal of the Civil War' which he was convinced would be the outcome if Eden pressed 'the matter'.⁸³

Although resolutely determined to maintain a non-interventionist approach towards Spain, Churchill was compelled in late 1944 to reply to a personal communication from Franco in which the Spanish dictator referred to the 'deplorable effect' on Anglo-Spanish relations during the last five years of the activities of the British secret service and British propaganda involving 'a clash with the nation's most live and most sensitive elements – in the Army, the Police and the Falange with its three million active members'. He warned against Britain making a rapprochement with 'bad Spaniards who from outside the country speculate on the possibility of internal changes' and stressed that 'any such hypothetical change of regime, I say this with all due emphasis, would serve the interests of Russia alone'.⁸⁴ At the War Cabinet on 27 November Churchill reaffirmed his view that there was great danger in interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and that Britain's traditional policy had been to refrain from doing so. Whilst he was prepared to be critical

of the Franco regime and accepted that it should not be represented at the peace conference when the war ended, he remained determined that there would be no active intervention in the internal affairs of Spain. At the same time, he recognised that Franco, possibly encouraged by misinterpretation of his speech in the Commons on 24 May, had provided an opportunity to reply in terms designed 'to disabuse him of any illusions that we needed his help or that we were anxious to work hand in hand with Spain under his government'. The wise course was to send 'a tough reply to General Franco and leave him and his government "to stew in their own juice", while refraining from any active steps to encourage the overthrow of that government.'⁸⁵

With the War Cabinet's approval Churchill and Eden drafted a reply to Franco, finally sent in late January 1945, which refuted his charges concerning British secret service activities and propaganda, recognised that his regime did not oppose the British war effort at the time of the fall of France in June 1940 and in 1942 with regard to the Anglo-American invasion of North Africa, but recalled that it had adopted an active policy of non-belligerency favourable to Britain's German enemy. It was made clear that there could be no question of Britain supporting Spanish claims to participate in the eventual peace settlement and that it was unlikely that an invitation to admit Spain into the future United Nations would be granted. Franco was also disillusioned of any prospect of driving a wedge between Britain and her Soviet ally as far as future cooperation within the United Nations and Europe as a whole was concerned. No mention was made, however, with regard to Spain's internal politics.⁸⁶ As Churchill reminded Eden on 11 January 1945, he had not 'the slightest intention of starting an anti-Franco crusade any more than I wish to walk down the street with him arm in arm.'⁸⁷

In keeping Spain isolated and abstaining from interference in its internal affairs the Government was on the same wavelength as the United States Government who in April 1945 informed Lord Halifax that whilst American public sentiment was profoundly opposed to the Franco regime, because of its record of unfriendly acts and its reliance on undemocratic principles, the official policy was not 'in normal circumstances to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries'. At the same time, the hope was expressed that 'any successor regime in Spain will be based on democratic principles, moderate in tendency, stable and not indebted for its existence to any outside influences.'⁸⁸ Previously in March, President Roosevelt had instructed his new Ambassador to Spain, Norman Armour, to inform Franco he would be lacking in candour if he did not tell him that he 'could see no place in the community of nations

for governments founded on fascist principles'.⁸⁹ However, other than strong diplomatic language, there was no serious consideration given by either government to alternative forms of pressure on the Franco regime, such as applying economic sanctions. Indeed, both were concerned to increase trade with Spain and were even prepared to consider exports of a semi-military nature, such as dockyard equipment, meteorological equipment, ordinary transport vehicles, training aircraft and engines for training aircraft, provided they were destined for civilian purposes and calculated not to increase the strength of the Spanish armed forces.⁹⁰

IV

In view of their pre-war sympathies for the Spanish Republic and their critical attitude towards the Franco regime throughout the Second World War, it might have been anticipated that the sweeping general election victory of the Labour Party in July 1945 would herald a change of policy to one of positively supporting regime change in Spain. When on 26 July the new British Ambassador at Madrid, Sir Victor Mallet, saw the Spanish Foreign Minister, Martin Artajo, he informed him that there had been practical unanimity amongst all parties during the general election that really cordial relations between any British Government and the present Spanish regime were not possible. On the following day, Mallet repeated to Franco personally that it was quite clear that there was a universal feeling of distrust towards the existing regime in Spain.⁹¹ A fortnight later on 9 August he was instructed to tell Artajo that for any Spanish regime to meet with the British Government's approval it should be based on democratic principles, namely freedom of speech, free elections, free press and impartial justice.⁹² The low esteem in which the Franco regime was held within the wider international community was, moreover, confirmed at the Potsdam Conference on 2 August when Spain was singled out as the only 'neutral state' not to be admitted as a member of the United Nations, because of its origins, nature and record which did not justify its membership.⁹³

Aware of this near universal hostility towards the Franco regime and its near total isolation, the Labour Government were inclined to consider regime change. However, whilst they wanted to establish a democratic regime in Spain, there was no prospect of armed intervention to bring this about; the fear of another civil war was too strong. The Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, made this patently clear when, in reference to Spain, he told the House of Commons on 20 August that 'His Majesty's Government are not prepared to take any steps which

would promote or encourage civil war in that country'.⁹⁴ Consequently, the only means available of bringing about a change of regime in Spain were economic sanctions and even these proved extremely problematic. In October 1945 Bevin told the Labour Cabinet that he was averse to doing anything which would strengthen the Franco regime but he persuaded his colleagues that if the Government adopted too strict a policy in controlling exports, other than arms to Spain the result would be to divert valuable export orders from the United Kingdom to the United States.⁹⁵ The decision to continue supplying semi-military goods to Spain, including transport vehicles and training aircraft and engines for training aircraft, demonstrated no strong will on the part of the Labour Government to force changes in Spain by economic sanctions or otherwise.

The lack of will was partly a result of the Government's perception of the opposition forces both within Spain and outside as divided and fragmented, lacking the essential unity to realistically challenge the Franco regime.⁹⁶ It was for this reason that in November 1945 they rejected the call of the Republican Government in exile in Mexico for all countries to break with Franco and recognise the Republic as the only legitimate regime for Spain.⁹⁷ As Bevin explained, in a letter to the American labour leader, Matthew Woll, reports he had received from Spain⁹⁸ confirmed that the Republican Government in exile, led by a former Prime Minister, José Giral, did not enjoy any real support in the country. Moreover, the fact that even amongst Spanish republican exiles Giral's Government did not 'by any means enjoy full support' could not be overlooked. The Foreign Secretary insisted that it was essential that the Government, to replace the Franco regime, 'should have wide and general support in Spain'.⁹⁹

It was such reasoning which led the Government in December 1945 to reject a call from the French Government to break off relations with Spain on the grounds of the disclosure of Franco's secret correspondence with Hitler and Mussolini, within captured German documents, which had led to a sharp reaction of French public opinion; this was reflected in strong pressure on Premier Charles de Gaulle and Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, both of whom were previously opposed to taking action against Franco.¹⁰⁰ The British Ambassador at Paris, Alfred Duff Cooper, was instructed to inform the French Government that Britain would indeed 'be ready and glad' to break off relations with the Franco regime immediately if they were satisfied that such action would bring about its fall and replacement by 'a solid, representative and stable regime, acceptable to the majority of Spaniards'. But in the light of the

information at their disposal they were 'by no means convinced that this would be the case.'¹⁰¹

With further repression in Franco Spain in late 1945 and early 1946, in the form of executions and long term prison sentences for opponents of the regime, the subject of a series of parliamentary questions,¹⁰² diplomatic pressure in Madrid was increased. At the beginning of February 1946 Bevin told his Cabinet colleagues that the pressure was intended to bring about change to the political regime in Spain. He advised them that it was important not to appear to favour either monarchists or republicans as the successors to the Franco regime as there was no clear indication whether majority opinion in Spain favoured a Monarchist or Republican solution though there was reason to think that 'many people in Spain would now prefer a Republican regime if they were satisfied it could be secured without civil war'.¹⁰³ Be that as it may, the Government continued with an even-handed attitude towards potential successors to the Franco regime. Despite a number of efforts by Giral and his supporters to persuade them to recognise their cause and to establish an exclusive relationship through diplomatic contacts in Paris where they received encouragement from the French authorities, the Government in London refused to provide either throughout the rest of the year.¹⁰⁴

At the beginning of March 1946, faced with French intention to refer the Spanish question to the Security Council of the United Nations, Bevin and his officials were prepared to apply pressure in Paris to dissuade the French Government from taking such action, particularly because it was essential 'to avoid provoking another civil war, fear of which is effectively preventing Spaniards themselves from overthrowing Franco.'¹⁰⁵ There was an increasing suspicion that the Soviet Union was not opposed to a civil war in Spain. Ivan Maiskii, former Soviet Ambassador at London, told the Chargé d'Affaires at the Moscow Embassy, Frank Roberts, that the British Government was too cautious and that 'a small civil war in Spain would do no harm'.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, according to the American Chargé d'Affaires at Moscow, George Kennan, the Soviets were 'not the least worried by the danger of reproducing the conditions of the civil war; in fact, the contrary, they realise that this is their best chance of success.'¹⁰⁷ However, the Labour Government was soon persuaded, along with France, to support a public declaration promoted by the United States which expressed the hope that 'the Spanish people might find soon the means to bring about the peaceful withdrawal of Franco, the abolition of the Falange, and the establishment of an interim Government which would give the Spanish people the opportunity to determine freely the

type of government they wished to have and to choose their leaders.' It was anticipated that the interim Government would be prepared 'to facilitate a political amnesty, the return of exiled Spaniards, freedom of assembly and political association and free public elections.'¹⁰⁸ In agreeing to the statement and its publication, the Labour Cabinet were apprised of the risks by Bevin. The Foreign Secretary stressed that there was some danger in that by forcing Franco's withdrawal Spain might be plunged into another civil war or that he might be succeeded by a Government that was scarcely more acceptable. Despite the apparent risks, the Cabinet agreed that it was necessary that firm action should be taken to bring about regime change in Spain.¹⁰⁹

Without effective action, however, the declaration was merely words. In the summer of 1946 the Labour Government was not prepared to consider either the rupture of relations with Franco Spain or the recognition of the Giral Republican Government despite the pleas of the Trades Union Congress which had previously endorsed the decisions of the World Federation of Trades Unions to do both at the latest meeting in Moscow.¹¹⁰ It was only in November 1946 that the United Nations Assembly passed a resolution, proposed by the United States, urging the withdrawal of all members' ambassadors from Spain. The British Government complied with this resolution.¹¹¹ But the withdrawal of ambassadors was hardly calculated to persuade Franco to step aside, especially as the resolution did not include other diplomats in the embassies which remained open for business.

The only really effective means of challenging his regime remained armed intervention or economic sanctions. No one seriously suggested the former, not even the exiled Republicans, and the latter were never implemented despite strong support for their implementation by Labour MPs in the House of Commons. The Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Hector McNeil, was quick to disabuse them by referring to the great difficulties of organising an economic blockade. Apart from deciding which commodities to include in a sanctions list, a wide community of nations 'taking in primarily the United States, Brazil and the Argentine' would have to be organised and the wartime system of navicerts would have to be recreated which required a wide area of 'international cooperation to make it at all effective'.¹¹²

In deference to Labour parliamentary opinion the Cabinet did consider applying sanctions in January 1947 but no one doubted that from the point of view of British economic interests, and against the background of the bleak winter of 1946–1947, the Government could ill afford to impose economic sanctions on Spain. Moreover, the effect of sanctions

could not be rapid unless they were universally applied and there seemed little prospect that all countries would cooperate in imposing them. In this connection, it was anticipated that there would be no assurance that the United States would embargo oil supplies to Spain and oil sanctions were recognised as being the most effective economic sanction. It was also the case that the United Nations would not consider economic sanctions to change the regime in Spain unless it could be demonstrated that Franco's Government was a threat to world peace and there was agreement that 'it could not be maintained that the present situation in Spain constituted a danger to world peace'. As a result, the Cabinet agreed that they should not take any initiative in raising the application of sanctions to Spain at the United Nations.¹¹³

It is doubtful that even if economic sanctions had been applied, they would have persuaded Franco to abdicate his power. By the end of 1946 it was clear that he had succeeded in turning external pressure to his own advantage to consolidate his regime by playing the national card. On 9 December a huge crowd, variously estimated as at least 300,000 strong, demonstrated in the Plaza de Oriente in Madrid against United Nations interference in the affairs of the Spanish sovereign state, crying the slogan 'ni rojos ni azules, solo espanoles' (neither red nor blue, only Spaniards).¹¹⁴

Although the Labour Government continued to maintain some contacts with the anti-Franco opposition in 1947, the inauguration of the Truman doctrine of containment of communism the same year meant that the Franco regime was secure.¹¹⁵ As the Cold War increased its momentum it would come into its full political inheritance for no one, with the possible exception of Antonio Oliveira Salazar of Portugal, had better anti-communist credentials than Generalissimo Francisco Franco and the strategic significance of Spain to the western world was undeniable.¹¹⁶ Neither Labour nor Conservative Governments were prepared to challenge the authoritarian nature of the Franco regime and this remained the case until Franco's death in 1975.

V

Britain's traditional attitude and response of non-intervention and non-interference towards the internal affairs of Spain, were certainly continued during the period under review. Whilst the Foreign Office were increasingly critical of the failure of the Spanish Republicans to consolidate their regime and to establish their authority over all sections of Spanish society, there was no question of seeking to support or help

bring about regime change in Spain during the Republican period. Although acknowledging the constitutional nature of the Second Spanish Republic at the time, doubt would be cast later with regard to the actual legality and legitimacy of the Republican regime. For instance, in 1944 the Madrid Embassy claimed that during 'the greater part of its existence the Republic was virtually a dictatorship', and that the Popular Front Government had ruined the Republic by its 'violent sectarianism and anti-constitutional acts'.¹¹⁷

The top priority for the British Government after 17 July 1936 was to contain the civil war in Spain and, in view of the intervention of Germany, Italy and Soviet Russia, prevent it from escalating beyond the Spanish frontier. Accordingly, the traditional policy of non-intervention was considered the best means of achieving containment which it did. Economic and strategic considerations also played their part in the decision to pursue non-intervention and whilst there were ideological prejudices and preferences expressed by both Government and opposition the military outcome of the civil war alone determined the subsequent recognition of the Franco regime.

Recognition was predicated on the assumption that Spain could be kept neutral in the event of a European war. When it eventually came, Britain was confronted by an increasingly hostile Spain which only kept out of the war because Franco could not persuade Hitler to cede French territory in North Africa to him and, his speech of 17 July 1941 notwithstanding, because he was not entirely convinced that Britain had lost the war. At least until 1942, the realistic response, in view of the strategic importance of limiting Spain's support for the Axis powers, expressed constantly by the Chiefs of Staff, was to avoid provoking the Franco regime, particularly by avoiding any interference in internal Spanish affairs. From 1943 onwards, with the allied successes in North Africa, there was less excuse to consider the possibility of regime change in Spain which continued to support the Axis powers and engage in hostile propaganda against the allies; even more so after D Day in 1944. Towards the end of the war, Eden, Attlee and others, including Hoare in Madrid, began to consider and support the idea of regime change but Churchill proved more reluctant and warned against interfering in Spanish politics though he was not averse to keeping the Franco regime from participating in the end of war settlement and out of the United Nations.

When the Labour Government came to power in the summer of 1945 their inclination was to wish for regime change in Spain but their deep concern that it was essential not to take any action that might precipitate a renewal of the civil war acted as a brake and warning and military

intervention was emphatically ruled out. Economic sanctions against the Franco regime were regarded as impracticable and ineffective in the absence of a universal intention to impose them, not least American reluctance to do so, and as a result only diplomatic pressure was available which, though condemning the Franco regime, did nothing to disturb its domination within Spain and, indeed, served only to ensure its further consolidation. Matters were also made more difficult by the incapacity and failure of the divided anti-Franco opposition within and outside Spain to provide a viable and practical alternative. The developing Cold War destroyed any residual hope that regime change was possible in Spain and, as in the past, British Governments were compelled to tolerate the existence of an undemocratic and authoritarian Spanish regime.

Notes

1. Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson (eds), *Foundations of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)* (London, 1966), p. 61.
2. George Canning, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to William A'Court, British Minister at Madrid, 18 September 1823. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 83 and James Joll (ed.), *Britain and Europe: Pitt to Churchill, 1993–1940* (London, 1961), p. 93.
3. Speech to the electors of Tiverton, 31 July 1847. Cited in Temperley and Penson (eds), *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, pp. 106–7.
4. Richard Millman, *British Foreign Policy and the Coming of the Franco-Prussian War* (Oxford, 1965), p. 178.
5. T[h]e N[at]ional A[rchives], F[oreign] O[ffice], 371/9490, W7311/W7602/623/41, Sir Esme Howard, British Ambassador at Madrid, to Lord Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 15 Sept. 1923; Howard to Curzon, 21 Sept. 1923.
6. TNA, CAB 23/46, CM 47(23). For the origins of the coup see Shlomo Ben-Ami, *The Origins of the Second Republic in Spain*, (Oxford, 1978), pp. 1–10. For the shortcomings of the parliamentary system in Spain before 1923 see Charles Esdaile, *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808–1939* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 206–56.
7. FO371/9493, W8827/6376/41, Curzon to Howard, 9 Nov. 1931.
8. Sir George Grahame, the British Ambassador at Madrid, reported that the former Prime Minister and Minister of the Army, General Damaso Berenguer, had told his colleagues on 13 April that the army which might have withstood a revolution before the result of the municipal elections on 12 April could not be relied upon to do so after. FO371/15771, W4251/W4453/46/41, Grahame to the Foreign Office, 16 April 1931; Grahame to Arthur Henderson, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 April 1931.
9. FO371/15771, W4251/46/41, minute by Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, 16 April 1931. See also D. Little, *Malevolent Neutrality: the United States, Great Britain and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Ithaca, New York, and London, 1985), p. 65.

10. FO371/15771, W4251/46/41, minutes by Assistant Under Secretary George Mounsey and Vansittart, 15–16 April 1931. See also Little, *Malevolent Neutrality*, p. 64.
11. FO 371/15771, W4366/46/41, Ronald Hugh Campbell, British Minister at Paris, to the Foreign Office, 18 April 1931.
12. FO371/15771, W4453/46/41, minute by Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Hugh Dalton, 23 April 1931.
13. CAB23/66, CM 24(31), Cabinet meeting, 22 April 1931. FO371/15772, W5330/46/41, Vansittart to Sir Edward Harding, Dominions Office, 8 May 1931.
14. FO371/15771, W4453/46/31, minute by Dalton, 23 April 1931.
15. FO371/16511, W3959/3959/41, Grahame to Vansittart, 29 March 1932; and Vansittart to Grahame, 5 April 1932. FO371/15773, W5798/46/41, Henderson to Vansittart, 16 May 1931.
16. FO371/15773, W6087/46/41, Sir Ronald Graham, British Ambassador at Rome, to Henderson, 22 May 1931; minute by Vansittart, 28 May 1931.
17. For communist activity in Spain at this time see Little, *Malevolent Neutrality*, pp. 72–3.
18. FO371/17426, W5425/116/41, Grahame to Sir John Simon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 5 May 1933.
19. Enrico Moradiellos, 'The origins of British non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Anglo-Spanish relations in early 1936', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 21, 1991, pp. 341–4. See also Enrico Moradiellos, *Neutralidad Benévola: el Gobierno Británico y la insurrección Militar Española de 1936* (Oviedo, 1990), pp. 95–103.
20. See Little, *Malevolent Neutrality*, pp. 99–110.
21. See, for example: FO 371/18596, W8926/W8988/W8731/W9132/27/41, Grahame to the Foreign Office, 7 and 9 Oct. 1934; and Grahame to Simon, 8 and 10 October 1934.
22. See: FO371/18596 W9132/27/41, minutes by Charles Stirling, Second Secretary in the League of Nations and Western Department; and Sir Orme Garton Sargent, Assistant Under Secretary, 16 and 19 Oct. 1934.
23. See TNA, FO371/19735, W1473/W1630/W1840/18/41.
24. Jean Herbette, French Ambassador at Madrid, to Pierre Laval, French Foreign Minister, 18 Sept. 1935. *Documents Diplomatiques Français, 1932–1939*, 1st series, vol. XII (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1984), no. 193, pp. 282–3.
25. FO371/20520, W1355/62/41, Sir Henry Chilton, British Ambassador at Madrid, to Anthony *Neutrality*, p. 190.
26. FO371/20520, W1936/622/41, Chilton to Eden, 26 February 1936.
27. Moradiellos, 'Origins of British non-intervention', pp. 347–58.
28. FO371/20522, W5693/62/41, unsigned FO memorandum, 23 June 1936.
29. See FO371/20522, W5693/62/41, minute by Vansittart, 24 June 1936.
30. For details see Little, *Malevolent Neutrality*, pp. 215–16; and C.E. Harvey, *The Rio Tinto Company: An Economic History of a Leading Mining Concern*, (Penzance, 1984), pp. 264–6.
31. Glyn Stone, 'The European Great Powers and the Spanish Civil War', in Robert Boyce and Esmonde Robertson (eds), *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War* (London, 1939), pp. 213–14.

32. For Vansittart's conversion see Glyn Stone, 'Sir Robert Vansittart and Spain, 1931–1941', in T.G. Otte and Constantine Pagedas (eds), *Personalities, War and Diplomacy: Essays in International History* (London, 1997), pp. 144–6.
33. CAB27/624, FP(36), 35th meeting of the Cabinet Foreign Policy Committee, 23 Jan. 1939.
34. Denis Smyth, 'We are with you: solidarity and self-interest in Soviet policy towards Republican Spain, 1936–1939', in Paul Preston and Ann Mackenzie (eds), *The Republic Besieged: Civil War in Spain, 1936–1939* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 105.
35. For Chamberlain's strong distrust of Soviet aims and intentions see, for example, his letter to his sister, Ida Chamberlain, on 20 March 1938. Neville Chamberlain papers (Library, University of Birmingham), NC 18/1/987.
36. Duke of Alba, Nationalist Agent in London, to Gómez Jordana y Sousa, Nationalist Foreign Minister, 22 June 1938, cited in Enrico Moradiellos, *La perfida de Albi6n: El Gobierno británico y la Guerra civil española* (Madrid, 1996), p. 285.
37. Angel Viñas, *El Honor de la República Entre el acoso fascista la hostilidad británica y la política de Stalin* (Barcelona, 2009), p. 444.
38. See Glyn Stone, *Spain, Portugal and the Great Powers, 1931–1941* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 54–6, pp. 57–60.
39. See Glyn Stone, 'Britain, France and Franco's Spain in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 6, 1995, pp. 375.
40. FO371/24159, W8295/3719/41, extract from record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and MM. Daladier and Bonnet at the Ministry of War, 20 May 1939.
41. Stone, *Spain, Portugal and the Great Powers*, p. 105.
42. Stone, 'Britain, France and Franco's Spain', pp. 381–2.
43. For details of the submarine bases see Charles Burdick, "'Moro": the Resupply of German Submarines in Spain, 1939–1942', *Central European History*, vol. 3, 1970, pp. 256–83. See also Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography* (London, 1993), pp. 336–7 and Heinz Höhne, *Canaris* (London), pp. 426–7.
44. Malcolm Muggeridge (ed.), *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers* (London, Odhams, 1948), p. 291.
45. Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the Myth of Hendaye 1940', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 1, 1992, pp. 1–16.
46. Franco's policy of non-belligerency included economic cooperation on a large scale with the Third Reich. See Christian Leitz, *Economic Relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain 1936–1945* (Oxford, 1996).
47. CAB66/13, WP (40)460 (Also COS (40) 968), Spain: Report by the Chiefs of Staff, 23 Nov. 1940.
48. 9 Oct. 1940. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 5th series, vol. 365, c. 302.
49. See, for example, FO371/26904, C986/46/41, FO to Sir Samuel Hoare, Ambassador at Madrid, 2 Feb. 1941.
50. FO371/24515, C7281/113/41, Hoare to Lord Halifax, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 22 June 1940.
51. Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and Strategy of Survival: British Policy and Franco's Spain, 1940–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 53. As an indication of the continuing anxiety concerning anti-Franco opinion,

- when Franco made a number of ministerial changes in May 1941, which appeared to be to Britain's advantage, Eden felt compelled on two separate occasions to warn his Cabinet colleagues that it was 'most necessary that the Press should not comment on these changes'. CAB65/18, WM 47(41) and WM 49(41), War Cabinet meetings, 5 and 12 May 1941. In October 1941 Churchill was particularly incensed by an article in the *Daily Mirror* which contained a violent attack on Spain. He emphasised that it was 'clearly contrary to the national interest that articles which increased the risk of Spain coming into the war against us should be published'. CAB65/19, WM 101(41), War Cabinet meeting, 9 Oct. 1941.
52. CAB66/12, WP(40)382, Situation in Spain: Note by the Prime Minister, 20 September 1940.
 53. FO371/24510, C6473/75/41, Hoare to Halifax, 30 July 1940.
 54. CAB65/10, WM 281(40), War Cabinet meeting, 1 November 1940.
 55. CAB65/10, WM 298(40), War Cabinet meeting, 28 Nov. 1940. For a full discussion of the Negrín case see Denis Smyth, 'The politics of asylum, Juan Negrín and the British Government in 1940', in Richard Langhorne (ed.), *Diplomacy and Intelligence during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 126–46.
 56. FO 371/26940, C8416/222/41, Hoare to Eden, 23 July 1941.
 57. FO371/26906, C8104/46/41, minute by Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, 18 July 1941.
 58. CAB66/17, WP(41)174, Our Policy in Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 20 July 1941.
 59. CAB65/19, WM 72(41), War Cabinet meeting, 21 July 1941. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 5th series, vol. 373, cc. 1074–5. FO371/26906, C8311/46/41, FO to Madrid Embassy, 23 July 1941. FO371/26907, C9813/47/41, Churchill to Eden, 16 August 1941.
 60. See, for example, FO371/26898, C9976/C10462/C11957/33/41 and FO371/26899, C12278/C12972/C13057/33/41, Madrid to the FO, 4 Sept. 1941, 18 Sept. 1941, 28 Oct. 1941, 5 Nov. 1941, 22 Nov. 1941, 25 Nov. 1941.
 61. CAB66/19, WP(41)266, Situation in Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 10 Nov. 1941.
 62. FO371/26899, C13225/33/41, minute by Eden, 1 December 1941.
 63. FO371/26895, C3152/24/41, Prime Minister's personal minute, 18 March 1941.
 64. FO371/31234, C514/220/41, Hoare to Eden, 5 Jan. 1942.
 65. FO371/26964, C14354/1111/41, FO to Madrid, 27 Dec. 1941. For the Spanish opposition during the Second World War see David J. Dunthorn, *Britain and the Anti-Franco Opposition, 1940–1950* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 11–27.
 66. FO371/31230, C704/175/41, Eden to Hoare, 31 Jan. 1942.
 67. CAB65/27, WM 124(42), War Cabinet meeting, 14 Sept. 1942.
 68. FO371/31230, C10035/175/41, Hoare to FO, 20 Oct. 1942.
 69. *The Times*, 11 Nov. 1942. FO371/31230 C12161/175/ 41, Eden to Hoare, 4 Dec. 1942.
 70. FO371/31228, C11982/180/41, FO to Berne, 7 Dec. 1942.
 71. CAB66/33, WP(43)19, The Spanish Situation: Note by the Secretary of the War Cabinet, 13 Jan. 1943.
 72. FO371/34810, C2507/75/41, Hoare to Eden, 1 March 1943.
 73. CAB65/34, WM 56(43), War Cabinet meeting, 19 April 1943.

74. FO371/34811, C3399/75/41, Eden to Hoare, 16 April 1943.
75. FO371/34820, C8388/217/41, marginal comment on telegram from Madrid to FO, 21 July 1943.
76. FO371/34788, C8919/63/41, FO to Madrid, 13 Aug. 1943.
77. FO425/421, C14756/C14887/623/41, Hoare to Eden, 11 Dec. 1943; Eden to Hoare, 20 December 1943.
78. FO371/39667, C2236/23/41, Policy towards Spain, 43rd meeting of the Chiefs of Staff, 10 Feb. 1944.
79. 24 May 1944. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 5th series, vol. 400, c. 771. Hugh Dalton, Labour MP and President of the Board of Trade, noted in his diary that, according to Gladwyn Jebb of the Foreign Office, Churchill had 'made up his praise of Franco and his Government' at 2.30 a.m. on the morning of his speech. The Foreign Office did not see a draft of the Prime Minister's speech until an hour before it had to be delivered and although they had done their best to tone it down they had met with hardly any success. B. Pimlott, *The Second World War Diaries of Hugh Dalton, 1940–1945* (London, 1986), diary entry, 9 June 1944, pp. 755–6.
80. Churchill to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 4 June 1944. Warren F. Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. Vol. 3 Alliance Declining* (Princeton NJ, 1984), pp. 162–3. See also W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Vol. 5. Closing the Ring* (London, 1954), p. 554.
81. CAB66/57, WP(44)622, Policy towards Spain: Note by the Lord President of the Council and Deputy Prime Minister, 4 Nov. 1944.
82. CAB66/58, WP(44)665, Policy towards Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 18 Nov. 1944.
83. FO371/39671 C16068/23/41, Personal Minute: Churchill to Eden, 10 Nov. 1944.
84. CAB66/59, WP(44)735, Franco to the Duke of Alba, Spanish Ambassador at London, 18 Oct. 1944. Annex II in 'Policy towards Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 12 Dec. 1944.
85. CAB65/48, WM 157(44), Confidential Annex, War Cabinet meeting, 27 Nov. 1944.
86. CAB65/44, WM 171(44), War Cabinet meeting, 18 Dec. 1944. CAB66/59, WP(44)735, Annex I: Draft letter to General Franco from the Prime Minister, December 1944 in 'Policy towards Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 12 Dec. 1944. FO371/49610, Z971/537/41, Eden to Churchill, 14 Jan. 1945. Copies of the letter were sent to Stalin and the State Department in Washington. It was subsequently leaked to the press (for example, *The Times*, 9–10 February 1945) and the Foreign Office suspected the Americans. FO371/49593, Z2367/234/41, FO to Washington, 1 March 1945.
87. FO371/49610, Z971/537/41, Churchill to Eden, 11 Jan. 1945.
88. Aide Mémoire, State Department to the British Embassy, 6 April 1945. *Foreign Relations United States, 1945, Volume V*, (Washington, 1945), pp. 672–3. Hereafter FRUS. See also: FO371/49611, Z4450/537/41, Lord Halifax, British Ambassador at Washington, to FO, 7 April 1945.
89. President Roosevelt to the Ambassador in Spain (Norman Armour), 10 March 1945. FRUS, 1945, vol. V, p. 667. For Roosevelt's policy towards Spain see Joan Maria Thomàs, *Roosevelt, Franco and the End of the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 2011).

90. CAB66/64, WP(45)230, Supply of Equipment to Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 10 April 1945. CAB65/50, WM 49(45), War Cabinet meeting, 23 April 1945. CAB129/3, CP(45)220, Eden to Halifax, 1 May 1945 and Halifax to Churchill, 5 July 1945. Supply of Equipment to Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 11 Oct. 1945: Annexes I and II.
91. FO371/49612, Z9172/Z9229/537/41, Sir Victor Mallet, British Ambassador at Madrid, to Churchill, 26 July 1945. Mallet to Ernest Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 27 July 1945.
92. FO371/49612, Z9143/537/41, Madrid to San Sebastian, 9 August 1945.
93. *Documents on British Policy Overseas: The Conference at Potsdam*, series I, vol. I (London, 1984), pp. 424–7. For details relating to Spain and the Potsdam Conference see Enrique Moradiellos, 'The Potsdam Conference and the Spanish Problem', *Central European History*, vol. 10, 2001, pp. 73–90.
94. 20 August 1945. *Hansard*, HCDeb, 5th series, vol. 413, c. 296.
95. CAB129/3, CP(45)220. Cabinet meeting, 23 Oct. 1945. TNA, CAB128/1, CM 45(45), Supply of Equipment to Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 11 October 1945.
96. See FO371/49590 Z11644/233/41, Mallet to Bevin, 6 Oct. 1945.
97. FO371/49558, Z13180/18/41, Charles Bateman, Ambassador at Mexico City, to Bevin, 13 Nov. 1945.
98. See, for example, FO371/49557, Z12287/18/41, Bevin to Prime Minister Clement Attlee, 14 Nov. 1945.
99. FO371/60333, Z39/9/41, Matthew Woll to Bevin, 21 Nov. 1945; Bevin to Woll, 7 Jan. 1946.
100. Jefferson Caffery, Ambassador at Paris, to the Secretary of State, 12 December 1945. FRUS, 1945, vol. V, pp. 698–9. Preston, *Franco*, p. 543. For French policy and attitudes towards the Franco regime after the Second World War see David Messenger, *L'Espagne Républicaine: French Policy and Spanish Republicanism in Liberated France* (Brighton, 2008), pp. 75–138.
101. FO371/49614, Z13532/537/41, FO to Paris, 21 Dec. 1945.
102. 5 December 1945. *Hansard*, HCDeb, 5th series, vol. 416, cc. 2314–5. 4 March 1946. *Hansard*, HCDeb, 5th series, vol. 420, cc. 17–8. See also *Hansard*, HLDeb, 5th series, vol. 139, c. 1296.
103. CAB128/5, CM 11(46), Cabinet meeting, 4 Feb. 1946. See also CAB128/5, CM 18(46), Cabinet meeting, 25 Feb. 1946.
104. See: FO371/60350, Z1788/36/41; FO371/60353, Z2736/36/41; FO371/60335, Z3788/Z4316/Z5740/9/41; FO371/ 60337, Z8657/9/41; FO371/60364, Z8663/36/41; FO to Paris, 22 Feb. 1946; Bevin to Alfred Duff Cooper, British Ambassador at Paris, 19 March 1946; Duff Cooper to FO, 19 April 1946; FO to Paris, 18 May 1946; Bevin to FO, 22 June 1946; Duff Cooper to FO, 14 Sept. 1946; and Long Minute by Sir Oliver Harvey, Deputy Under Secretary of State (Political) at the FO, 7 Oct. 1946.
105. FO371/60351, Z1931/36/41 and FO371/60352, Z2265/Z2420/36/41, FO to Paris, 2 March 1946; Harvey to Mallet, 7 March 1946; FO to Paris, 16 March 1946.
106. FO371/60441, Z3091/1636/41, Frank Roberts, Chargé d'Affaires at Moscow, to Frederick Hoyer Millar, Head of the Western Department, 2 March 1946.
107. FO371/60441, Z1863/1636/41, Mallet to Harvey, 12 Feb. 1946.

108. FO371/60352, Z2128/36/41, FO to Paris, Moscow, Lisbon, Tangier, Madrid, 4 March 1946.
109. CAB128/5 CM 20(46), Cabinet meeting, 4 March 1946.
110. FO371/60364, Z8056/36/41, H.V. Tewson, Acting General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, to Attlee, 29 Aug. 1946.
111. See Qashin Ahmad, *Britain, Franco Spain and the Cold War, 1945–1950* (Kuala Lumpur, 1995), pp. 47–58.
112. 14 October 1946. *Hansard*, HCDeb, 5th series, vol. 427, cc. 756–7.
113. CAB129/16 CP(47)2, Economic Sanctions against Spain: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 3 Jan. 1947. CAB128/9, CM 2(47), Cabinet meeting, 6 Jan. 1947.
114. F. Portero, *Franco aislado: La cuestión española, 1945–1950* (Madrid, 1989), p. 216. According to Paul Preston, Francoist sources claim there were 700,000 attending in the Plaza. Whatever the veracity of this claim, as he says, it was a very impressive demonstration. *Franco*, p. 561. The Madrid Embassy calculated that there may have been more than 300,000 attending. FO371/60370, Z10464/36/41, Mallet to the Foreign Office, 11 Dec. 1946.
115. Dunthorn, *Britain and the Anti-Franco Opposition*, pp. 103–31.
116. Paul Preston and Denis Smyth, *Spain, the EEC and NATO* (London: 1984).
117. FO371/39675, C5151/26/41, Hoare to Churchill, 15 April 1944, enclosing a memorandum by Bernard Malley of the Press Department. Eden responded by informing the Ambassador that the memorandum was a 'valuable contribution' and had been 'read with much interest in this Department'. Eden to Hoare, 29 April 1944.

9

‘To Gamble All on a Single Throw’: Neville Chamberlain and the Strategy of the Phoney War

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As Carl von Clausewitz wrote in his celebrated book *On War*, ‘no other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance’.¹ The long history of inferior armies winning battles against superior foes supports his observation. Although Clausewitz insight about the play of chance in victory is a truism in modern strategic studies, defeat still retains some of its former stigma as an expression of divine judgement. Defeat is never just a gamble lost, but a damning verdict on the war preparations and commanders of the fallen side. This tendency to interpret what precedes a military misfortune in a harsh light is particularly evident in the historiography of British policy from September 1939 to May 1940. Scholars are especially critical of the leadership of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.² British strategy during the Phoney War was once dismissed as nothing more than a token effort to wage war whilst sustaining a forlorn hope that peace could be restored with the Nazi regime through further ‘appeasement’. More recent studies regard this period as the last stage in Britain’s belated but inevitable adjustment to the demands of waging total war and as a hapless prelude to the triumphant leadership of Winston Churchill.³

This chapter reassesses Chamberlain’s wartime strategy. To describe Britain’s strategy in the Phoney War as Chamberlain’s personal strategy is somewhat misleading. His grasp of the dilemmas presented by industrial age total war and how the war would be won corresponded with two decades of military thinking about future war and seven years of military advice he had been privy to as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister.⁴ What we now know about Germany’s economic situation in 1939–40 and recent studies that show that Germany’s victory

in May–June 1940 was far more contingent than previously thought, cast Chamberlain's strategic thinking in a more favourable light. That Hitler's gamble against the odds in the Battle for France paid off in the short run is evidence that Clausewitz was correct about the ungovernable role played by chance in war and not that Chamberlain's Phoney War strategy was wrong.

What was Chamberlain's strategy? Like his top military advisers, the Prime Minister conceived of the war as a gigantic siege, a race between the fast mobilising economies of the British and French empires against that of Germany. Before the war, British planners had emphasised that the advantage of an Anglo-French alliance lay in their superior military-economic potential and command of the sea. Winning was about the competitive management of time. Germany had a temporary lead in offensive forces, but the military balance would turn. As long as the western allies blocked any German attempt to obtain a rapid victory, the German high command would face the certainty of losing a long war because the Third Reich's limited resources would be consumed and its forces would be depleted. Blockade and bombing would shorten the war by attacking the German economy, but until the allies achieved supremacy in offensive forces, they had no feasible options for a swift victory. How would the allies win once they had realised their full economic-military potential? The presumption in the war plans was that the allies after two or three years of defensive warfare would mount crushing air and land offensives to destroy the German armed forces, topple Hitler's regime and occupy Germany, or perhaps the Nazi state might implode under the combined weight of military and economic pressure.⁵

Chamberlain hoped that economic pressure alone would be enough to win earlier than the war planners predicted. He defined victory in terms of what is now called 'regime change'. Before the war he believed that a lasting deal with the Führer was obtainable, but once the war began he argued that 'it is essential to get rid of Hitler. ... His entourage must also go,' Chamberlain explained, 'with the possible exception of Göring, who might have some ornamental position in a transition government. Having once got rid of the Nazis I don't think we should find any serious difficulty in Germany over Poland, Czechoslovakia, Jews, disarmament &c.'⁶ The Prime Minister's confidence that 'Hitlerism' could be replaced with a moderate regime that could play a constructive role in Europe originated in diplomatic and secret intelligence dating from November 1938 onwards, which indicated that the German people lacked the 'enthusiasm and confidence of 1914'.⁷

Germany's vulnerability was the link between the government and the people. Economic pressure exploited that weakness by inflicting ever-mounting pain on ordinary Germans to turn them against their rulers. 'It won't be by defeat in the field,' he explained on 5 November, 'but by German realisation that they *can't* win and that it isn't worth their while to go on getting thinner & poorer when they might have instant relief and perhaps not give up anything that they really care about. My belief is that a great many Germans are near that position now and that their number, in the absence of any striking military success, will go on growing with increasing rapidity.'⁸

Chamberlain was optimistic that the war would be won by the spring of 1940, especially if Hitler launched a big offensive. According to the war planners, the Germans had three options in the west. First, the least likely, the German army could mount a frontal assault on France's powerful frontier fortifications known as the Maginot line, which ran along the Franco-German borderlands from Switzerland to Belgium. Second, the Germans might begin with a massive air offensive to pave the way for a ground offensive. And third, the Germans might push rapidly through Holland and Belgium to strike a major blow against the allied armies. At first, the Prime Minister believed that option three was unlikely. 'I cannot see how [Hitler] can get a smashing military victory', he wrote on 22 October 1939, 'and the attempt whether successful or unsuccessful would entail such frightful losses as to endanger the whole Nazi system.'⁹ He thought it more likely that Hitler would try to wear down allied morale through the boredom of inactivity and a drumbeat of peace offers. From December his position began to change. Intelligence now suggested that German opinion had hardened against Britain and that the Germans might need a 'real hard punch in the stomach' to turn them against Hitler. He reckoned that Hitler was 'getting madder' and that economic and political pressure might push him to act recklessly. 'Hair-raising' rumours of a great offensive and secret weapons of 'unheard of power' circulated.¹⁰ British officials expected that Germany's economic position would peak by the spring of 1940, and that was thus the moment to expect decisive military action.¹¹ Though he remained sceptical about an offensive against France because the allied armies had grown very fast since the war began, Chamberlain did not exclude the possibility and on 30 March 1940 framed Hitler's strategic options in a way that Clausewitz would have appreciated. 'To try the offensive is to gamble all on a single throw,' he wrote. 'If [Hitler] succeeds, well and good; he has won the war. But if he doesn't succeed he has lost it, for he will never have another chance as good.'¹²

Chamberlain's calculation that economic pressure would achieve victory either by causing the Nazi state to collapse or by forcing Hitler to make a gamble that he would in all probability lose made sense as long as time worked for the allies. Yet his preference for an indirect strategy was not based entirely on long-term military-economic trends. For one thing, an indirect strategy promised to limit casualties. 'If we can achieve our purpose without a holocaust,' he wrote, then 'what a relief! But we must not abandon the cause for the sake of relief and it is difficult to see how we can expect the Nazis to beat a retreat when the necessity is not apparent,' he added.¹³ Apart from an aversion to the needless loss of life, economic and political considerations came into play. Before the war, Chamberlain feared that the economic effects of the arms race would irreversibly weaken Britain's global standing. Once war came, he feared that a total war on the scale of 1914–18 would again reduce Britain's economic and political status vis-à-vis the United States. A way to limit the damage was to calibrate the intensity of Britain's economic mobilisation to his expectation of how and when the war would be won. The parallel with his pre-war policy of confronting Germany with a combination of diplomacy and deterrence through air-sea power is striking: before the war Chamberlain aimed to arm enough to force Hitler into talks to address Germany's grievances in Europe; once the war started his strategy aimed to arm enough to withstand a German offensive in the west and to convince the German people that they could not win the war. Arming all-out at top speed would convert much more of industry to munitions output than was necessary to obtain that goal and so bankrupt the country. As a result, Britain would win the war but lose the peace. To mobilise the economy, therefore, Chamberlain's cabinet set up state bureaucracies such as the Ministry of Supply to manage industry, labour and raw materials, but the Treasury retained influence over the rate of munitions production in order to maintain a healthy export industry and foreign-currency balance.¹⁴ An even more basic ideological political-economic calculation came into play here. Like so many conservatives at that time, Chamberlain believed that the survival of free-market capitalism at home and abroad was the ultimate guarantor of a liberal political order; years of total war waged between ever-more centralised command economies would not only extinguish a democratic way of life in Britain, but across Europe.¹⁵

Most Anglo-French war planners shared the Prime Minister's confidence that superior allied staying power would ultimately prevail and that in the early stages of the conflict a defensive strategy made sense. Few, however, shared his hope that the German home front would

disintegrate without two or three years of gruelling defensive and offensive action on the western front and elsewhere. Some soldiers and politicians on both sides of the English Channel questioned whether time was in fact working for the allies. Talbot Imlay interprets the debate about the long war strategy as an objective discussion about large-scale military-economic trends.¹⁶ To some extent those who questioned the prevailing wisdom voiced genuine concerns and a healthy scepticism that was essential to good strategy. Asking what could be done to prevent the Germans from profiting from the defensive phase of the allied strategy also made sense. But it is also important to appreciate that undermining the thesis that time worked for the allies was an *intellectual precondition* for criticising the war's conduct and for promoting various pet projects for alleged war-winning action. It was after all no coincidence that French Prime Minister Daladier's chief principal and political rival, Finance Minister Paul Reynaud, lobbied for aggressive action, or that Chamberlain's detractors in Parliament and Fleet Street associated rumours of future offensives with Churchill driving an otherwise lethargic leadership.¹⁷ In military circles doubts about the long war came from staffers who were prone to inflate German capabilities and cunning. For example, doubts about the allied advantage in a long war put forward by officers on the Allied Military Committee, which was established just before the war to liaise between the British and French staffs, stemmed from the unnerving effect that Berlin's 'waiting policy' had on those officers. They (wrongly) assumed that the German high command had gone to war with a master plan to win it quickly. If they adopted a waiting policy instead of immediately launching a knock-out blow, so ran their circular logic, then time must be working for Germany and not the allies.¹⁸

Of the various proposals for offensive operations put forward during the Phoney War, the French suggestion to open a second front in the Balkans had few supporters in London. Chamberlain's rejection of a Balkan expedition was entirely in harmony with the views of his chief military and diplomatic advisers. The proposal envisaged allied divisions landing either at Istanbul or Salonika to encourage the Balkan states to unite against Germany. Not only did the French proposal overlook staggering logistical and political complications, it also ignored the unhappy experience of the last war. Back in 1915, the French had convinced the British to land an army at Salonika on similar strategic grounds. But instead of a Balkan league spontaneously forming around the Entente forces to rescue Serbia and menace Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary, the allies ended up stationing an army of 150,000 men there

at a great cost in shipping and provisions to no strategic advantage.¹⁹ Twenty-four years later a similar French proposal for a Balkan bloc thus raised serious reservations in London.²⁰ In the Balkans, Chamberlain and his cabinet preferred a Romanian suggestion to organise a bloc of neutrals to resist German and Soviet economic penetration. That bloc would include Italy, an enemy that Chamberlain preferred to contain with economic measures rather than provoke into war.²¹

Chamberlain likewise resisted schemes that would bring the Soviet Union actively into the war. The signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact in the midst of the triple alliance talks and on the eve of the German invasion of Poland had embittered officials in both Paris and London. That deal confirmed to them that the Soviet Union was a malign power bent on engulfing Europe in war and revolution. Not only did the pact offer Hitler the raw materials he needed to nullify the allied blockade, so ran the indictment, but it also cleared the way for Stalin's aggression against Poland in September and Finland in November 1939. Planners in Paris and London, therefore, had few qualms about attacking Russia, including plans to bomb the Caucasian oil refineries at Baku from French bases in Syria and to sink Russian oil freighters in the Black Sea with submarines. Chamberlain flew into a rage when he learned of the plan to bomb Baku facilities.²² Hardly a Russophile and no less outraged by Stalin's 'treachery' than anyone else, he nevertheless saw the Nazi-Soviet pact as a fragile accord likely to break down as soon as the war turned decisively one way or another. 'I believe Russia will always act just as she thinks her own interests demand and I cannot believe that she would think her interest served by German victory,' he argued.²³ The poor performance of the Red Army against Finland, he speculated, would draw the Soviets deeper into the German sphere. Once the Finns came to terms with the Russians in March 1940, Chamberlain expected the Soviet Union 'to prove once again as elusive & unreliable in negotiation with Germany as she was before'.²⁴

Whilst Chamberlain rejected action that would expend resources without achieving strategic effects, or which might expand and prolong the conflict, he was willing to take risks (even of provoking Russia) if it would hasten the collapse of the German economy. Offensive action in Scandinavia with the object of severing the flow of Swedish iron ore to Germany promised to do just that. Having lost the Lorraine ore fields to France in 1919, Germany relied on Sweden for most of its iron ore imports, a commodity that, like oil, an industrial economy could not do without. Proposals to block the Swedish ore trade originated in the Admiralty and with economic warfare enthusiasts in Whitehall,

especially Major Desmond Morton, the head of economic intelligence.²⁵ As First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill was the most vocal advocate of cutting the ore supply, but Chamberlain and others supported it too. Chamberlain's interest in the idea arose from mounting evidence of the hardening of German morale, which meant that another way to weaken Germany was required. On 22 December he described the decision to cut off the Swedish ore traffic as 'of the utmost importance. It might be one of the turning points of the war...it certainly seemed that there was a chance of dealing a mortal blow to Germany.'²⁶ To his mind causing the German economy to grind to a halt within a year by starving it of iron ore, as the experts in the Ministry of Economic Warfare argued, seemed like another way to topple Hitler without paying the human, economic and political costs of a long war. On 26 December Chamberlain confessed in a private letter that he 'would like to see the Germans involved in war with Sweden & Norway, but the advantages to us are so obvious that I fear it won't happen.'²⁷

Amongst the ideas floated over the winter of 1940, the British war cabinet focused on two: a plan to mine Norway's coastal waters to disrupt the four-month winter shipping route for the ore from the ice-free port of Narvik, and a larger plan to occupy Sweden's Gällivare ore mines under the cover of sending forces to assist Finland.²⁸ Opinion favoured the more ambitious operation, which would deny Germany access to the Gällivare ore *permanently* rather than just during the winter. The refusal of Norway and Sweden to permit allied forces to transit their territory to assist the Finns, however, made the idea less attractive. Having taken up arms to uphold the rights of small nations, the allies could not simply trample on the sovereignty of Norway and Sweden without 'a reasonable appearance of decency'.²⁹ Aside from the moral factor, operational, economic and diplomatic issues discouraged acting without the consent of Oslo and Stockholm. If the Swedes fought back, the allies lacked expert ski troops to make a dash for Gällivare. The Finns after all had shown what well-trained ski troops could do against much larger forces operating across unfamiliar ground in winter.³⁰ Executing the Narvik operation would also disrupt British imports of Swedish ore and temporarily reduce British steel production, which could not be made up for quickly and without great expense. An attack would also endanger a British deal with the Norwegians to employ their merchant fleet – the fourth largest in the world – to support the allied war effort. Like Churchill, Chamberlain criticised Norway and Sweden for refusing to risk war by cooperating with the allies against Germany, but he also shared the concerns of his Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax about what

impact violating their neutrality would have on American opinion.³¹ All the same, once the Finish–Russian war ended, the impetus behind action in Scandinavia mounted, even if that meant violating Norwegian and Swedish neutrality, because the pressure on the allied leaders to take action increased. In Paris, Daladier was forced to step down as prime minister for failing to help Finland and in London Chamberlain shuffled his cabinet in response to similar criticism. He concluded that some sort of bold action was needed to restore allied prestige. The allies now turned to using a mining operation in Norwegian waters to provoke a German invasion of southern Norway, which would in turn provide a pretext for the allies to land troops at Narvik and to extend the war into Scandinavia.³² On 28 March 1940, at a meeting of the Supreme War Council, Chamberlain and the new French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud agreed to lay the mines and to prepare landing forces.³³

Unfortunately for France and Britain, the Germans anticipated the allied threat to their iron ore supply. On 9 April, just before the allies intended to begin laying mines in Norwegian waters, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway.³⁴ The contrast between the brilliantly executed German parachute and seaborne landing at Norway's major ports with the hastily organised allied counter landings could not have been sharper. British, French, Polish and Norwegian infantry fought bravely, but the Germans forced them to withdraw. The defeat galvanised Chamberlain's critics. On 7 May, the Prime Minister won a vote of confidence in the House of Commons, but too many Conservatives voted against him or abstained for him to remain Prime Minister.³⁵ To Chamberlain, the German invasion of Denmark and Norway showed that Hitler had decided against an offensive in the west and had decided instead to secure his northern flank for a long war. He was, as we know, wrong. The German offensive in the west began on 10 May, the same day that Churchill replaced him. That 'gamble [of] all on a single throw', as Chamberlain had put it a month earlier, would end in the fall of France and the retreat of the British army from Dunkirk.

The crises of 1940 not only altered the course of the conflict by knocking France out of the war and isolating Britain until June 1941, but it also shaped how those events would be remembered. Chamberlain's flaws made defeat inevitable; Churchill's virtues turned tragedy into triumph.³⁶ But as Clausewitz understood, the meaning that we construct out of the drama of war does not correspond with the nature of war. Victory cannot be reduced to a few formulas, for war is inherently interactive and chance plays a universal role. Waging war is like gambling, because victory can never be made certain in advance.³⁷ When assessing

Chamberlain's strategy, scholars need allow for the fact that war is an interactive process and that chance can upset the right strategy and produce improbable results.

Examining German strategy in 1939–40 reveals three things: first, German war planners agreed with their counterparts in London and Paris about the long-term military-economic trend working for the allies; second, both Chamberlain and Hitler agreed that all might turn on a gamble; and third, Hitler and his war planners knew that a single large operation against France had a very slim chance of success, but decided to attempt it for want of a better option. German war planners understood the dilemmas of industrial age total war and how future wars would be won, in the same way military strategists in London and Paris did. They knew that the military-economic advantage lay with the allies, who could also count on American aid. Although some believed that Germany had stolen a march in offensive forces by arming early, especially in the air, they also knew that Britain, France, the Soviet Union and Germany's other potential foes had begun to arm in earnest in 1936 and would, by the early 1940s, surpass Germany in the arms race.³⁸ In November 1937, when Hitler first spoke about using force to alter the *status quo* in Europe by moving against Austria and Czechoslovakia because the Third Reich's lead in offensive weapons was a wasting asset, his then War Minister, General Werner von Blomberg and Chief of the Army, General Werner von Fritsch protested that Germany lacked the strength to defeat Britain and France. The Army Chief of Staff, General Ludwig Beck was even more forthcoming. In May 1938, he argued that Germany had not even achieved a short-term advantage in offensive arms that would justify the risk of losing a long war against Britain and France for the sake of winning a quick one against Czechoslovakia. 'The military-economic situation of Germany is bad,' he wrote, 'worse than in 1917–18. With its current allies, armaments and economy, Germany cannot expose itself to the danger of a long war.'³⁹ Hitler refused to be deterred by the shifting arms balance. His aggressive diplomacy in 1938–39 was driven by the knowledge that Germany could not out arm his potential foes. In 1939, Hitler had hoped to fight Poland in isolation, but was content to risk a larger European war against a superior coalition because he knew that Germany's prospects would only decline anyway.⁴⁰

After the conquest of Poland, Hitler offered the allies peace talks, but they rejected them. Hitler knew that his deal with Stalin and Poland's defeat had not altered Germany's predicament. On 27 September 1939, he ordered Army Chief General Walther von Brauchitsch and his deputy

General Franz Halder to attack France without delay. "Time" will, in general,' he said, 'work against us when we do not use it effectively.'⁴¹ On 9 October, Hitler wrote a directive describing the strategic context. He understood what kind of war the allies would wage and reached the same conclusion that strategists on both sides had reached. The armies and air forces of France and Britain were growing rapidly. 'Time in this war, as in all historical processes,' the Führer noted, emphasising the shifting arms balance, 'is not a factor valuable in itself but must be weighed up. As things stand time is an ally of the western powers and not of ours.' Hitler grasped that France and Britain would wage a long siege. A long war meant that the United States would eventually join the conflict. The allied blockade would reduce Germany's importation of armaments-related raw materials and allied aircraft would bomb German factories. 'The longer this war lasts,' the dictator predicted, 'all the more difficult it will become to maintain German air superiority.' Losses to industrial capacity could not be replaced. 'Surely, the less Britain and France can hope to destroy the German army through a series of battles,' Hitler correctly reasoned, 'the more they will strive to create the general conditions for an effective and long lasting war of attrition and annihilation.'⁴²

On 23 November, at a meeting of his top commanders, Hitler once again explained that an offensive against France was essential because Germany lacked the staying power to win a long war. As Chamberlain had correctly deduced, Hitler was forced to choose between a long war that he could not win and a short and perilous one that he had little chance of winning. In terms that Clausewitz would have recognised, Hitler framed his decision to mount an all-or-nothing attack on France as a gamble. 'It is a difficult decision for me,' he said. 'No one has ever achieved what I have achieved. My life is of no importance in all this. I have led the German people to a great height, even if the world does hate us now. I am staking my life's work on a gamble.' Also as Chamberlain had recognised and counted on for victory, Hitler saw that the longer the war went on or if the offensive against France failed, the link between his regime and the people would weaken. 'Behind me stands the German people,' Hitler told his military chiefs, 'whose morale can only grow worse.'⁴³

Although officials in London and Paris who disputed the long war strategy assumed that the absence of a German attack on France in 1939 was evidence that Berlin had a master plan to win a long war, the opposite was true. Hitler's reckless foreign policy landed Germany's generals into a European war that they had repeatedly warned against.

Brauchitsch and Halder regarded the Führer's order to attack France in the autumn of 1939 as sheer madness. Some senior officers and officials, including Brauchitsch and Halder, talked about a coup if Hitler persisted with his 'insane' order. On 5 November, Brauchitsch and Halder tried to reason with their supreme commander. They told him that the army did not have the equipment and ammunition for a big offensive in the west. Hitler exploded with rage and revealed that he knew about the budding conspiracy and threatened to destroy it. 'Any sober discussion of these things is impossible with him,' Halder concluded.⁴⁴ The generals lost their nerve, and the conspiracy folded. Brauchitsch decided to resign, but Hitler refused to let him go.⁴⁵ As it turned out, poor weather delayed the offensive until 10 May 1940.

Brauchitsch and Halder believed that an offensive in the west would end in disaster. Yet their alternative of hunkering down for a long war – what allied strategists called a 'waiting policy' – was not much of an alternative. They probably reckoned that if the situation remained in stalemate long enough, some other factor, such as a peace initiative by the Pope, Roosevelt or Mussolini might intervene to rescue them from catastrophe. The trouble with a waiting strategy was the state of the German economy. As Richard Overly and Adam Tooze have shown, Hitler had always intended to prepare the armed forces and the economy to wage total war by the early 1940s. That intention, however, was undercut by the consequences of his foreign policy. The big war that he had planned to fight for 'living space' against Russia in the 1940s came in 1939 against Britain and France over Poland. The resulting shift in industrial and armaments priorities in 1939–40 disrupted Hitler's programme to lay down the industrial foundations for autarky and to achieve military supremacy. In 1939, half-finished arms factories and chemical plants could not make weapons and explosives. Shifting priorities, skilled workers and resources would take months, and not all of the big industrial projects envisaged in Hitler's Four-Year Plan of August 1936 could be cancelled because no one knew how long the war would last, even if the opening battle was won. The result was a relatively sluggish mobilisation for all-out war production in the first two years of the war. Even so, Hitler's ambitions always outpaced Germany's limited economic and military means.⁴⁶

Officials in London and Paris, including Chamberlain, who concluded that Germany did not have the capacity to beat the allies in a long war, and who read the economic intelligence coming out of the Reich as disclosing a dire crisis, were right. After September 1939, Germany's exports and imports shrank rapidly, the latter down by 80 per cent.

Despite the imports from the Soviet Union, the allied blockade was in fact working.⁴⁷ War economy experts in the German high command predicted that if raw material and foreign exchange supplies were carefully rationed, and if no big offensives took place, Germany could hold out for three years at most. Hitler understood the economic situation and knew what would happen if his big gamble did not pay off, but a long drawn-out defeat owing to economic breakdown had no appeal. 'All historical successes come to nothing when they are not continued,' he declared. Hitler wanted the economy geared up for a big burst of all-out arming, even at the cost of consuming in one shot all the resources to hold out for three years. When economic planners petitioned the dictator to ration raw materials and boost exports to earn foreign exchange, the reply came that 'the Führer himself has recognised that we cannot last out a war of long duration. The war must be finished rapidly.'⁴⁸

Whilst betting all on one great offensive was a far riskier strategy than his generals advised, Hitler correctly assessed the wider political implications of not taking that risk. As he wrote on 9 October 1939, the victory over Poland offered Germany a chance to fight the west without a threat from the east. These conditions were fleeting. No deal with Stalin, he observed, could last indefinitely. Only military success could keep Russia neutral. As Chamberlain correctly believed, the Soviet–German non-aggression pact was a short-lived deal between two powers whose fundamental interests clashed. Contrary to the red-brown nightmares dreamed up by some in London and Paris about the Germans taking over Soviet factories, oil wells and iron mines to win a long war, Soviet purchasing officers in fact used the leverage they had over the resource-hungry Reich to buy up machine tools and blueprints for advanced weapons. Stalin saw the pact with Germany as a means to redirect the war to the west so that Russia could, amongst other things, profit in armaments.⁴⁹ Hitler and his top advisers resented the Soviet grab for advanced German technology as well as the Reich's reliance on Soviet raw materials.⁵⁰ In the same way that Hitler knew that a mighty display of military force was essential to browbeat Moscow, he also realised that it was needed to keep Tokyo and especially Italy on side. Mussolini never seriously considered leading a bloc of Balkan neutrals, as some in Berlin feared he might, but the big war against France and Britain that the Axis allies had discussed had come too soon for Rome. Military weakness and a reliance on seaborne supplies vulnerable to the allied naval blockade meant that Mussolini and his advisers had to play a waiting game. The conditional relationship of the Axis alliance was summed up in talks at the Brenner Pass on 17 March 1940. Hitler explained that he had to

end the war quickly with one big offensive against France. If the attack succeeded, Mussolini replied, then he would 'lose no time' in joining the fight. If the war became a protracted one, 'then he would wait'.⁵¹

As we know, the stunning triumph Hitler wanted against France came in May and Italy joined the war on 10 June. The orthodox explanation for this remarkable turn of events is summed up by the word 'Blitzkrieg'. According to this view, Hitler encouraged his soldiers to perfect a revolutionary operational-tactical doctrine that exploited the manoeuvrability of tanks and dive-bombers to achieve surprise; Hitler and his generals applied that doctrine to a bold plan to break through the French defences at Sedan and to encircle the northern wing of the allied armies by means of a thrust towards the Channel coast, all in an effort to avoid domestic unrest caused by the hardship of all-out mobilisation for long total war. However, as noted above, the relatively low intensity of German mobilisation in 1939-40 was the result of rapid policy shifts in those years rather than a deliberate Hitlerian strategy of avoiding social unrest by waging quick wars. The idea that the victory was the inevitable result of a revolutionary operational-tactical doctrine called Blitzkrieg has been challenged by Karl-Heinz Frieser's *Blitzkrieg-Legende: Der Westfeldzug 1940* (1995) and by Ernest May's *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France* (2000). The upshot of these two revisionist studies and others was that the German victory was a far more fortuitous event than had been assumed. As Frieser put it, the German victory sprang from 'the accidental coincidence of the most varied factors'.⁵²

To begin with, the revisionist work dispels the myth that the victory was the inevitable outcome of superior numbers or the quality of German arms. In terms of quantity, the German army did benefit from the delay between Hitler's first order for the western offensive in October 1939 and May 1940, eight months that gave it more time to acquire more weapons and ammunition, but the allies still had a broad and fast-growing lead in the numbers of men and equipment available when the battle began. In 1940, Germany put 5.4 million into uniform, with 3 million of them available in the west. France mobilised 6.1 million men; the army had 5.5 million, with about 2.24 million on the northwest front when Germany struck. By June 1940 Britain had put 1.65 million men into uniform and sent 500,000 of them to France. If the Dutch and Belgian armies are added, then 3 million Germans, or 135 divisions, faced 4 million allies, or 151 divisions. In artillery, the allies had 14,000 guns whilst the Germans fielded 7,378. The four western allies likewise outnumbered the Germans in tanks, 4,204 against 2,439. The allied air

strength was greater too: 4,469 allied bombers and fighters against 3,578 German aircraft available for combat operations on 10 May 1940.⁵³

Turning to the comparative quality of arms, in tanks the allies also came out ahead. The firepower and armour of most allied tanks were superior to those of Germany. Two thirds of the German machines were light machine-gun/light cannon-carriers rather than medium and heavy tanks. The French heavy models, the SOMUA and Char Bs, outgunned anything that the German models fielded. Much to the shock of German infantry, French and British heavies took multiple hits from anti-tank guns without stopping. German tanks had advantages too, including excellent radios, higher speeds and mileage, and better turret designs, all suitable for the offensive, but in tank-on-tank fights, the Germans often came off the worse. The German army fielded more modern anti-aircraft guns and had a bigger stock of modern anti-tank guns. The French 47mm anti-tank gun easily penetrated the thin-skinned German tanks, but in May 1940 they were in short supply. Still, the French proved adept at siting old and new guns together to form strong points. German tank crews at times had to dismount to dislodge them.⁵⁴ No yawning qualitative gap existed in the air either. The *Luftwaffe's* ME 109 was better than the French Morane 406 and Potez 63 fighters, but not superior to the Dewoitine 520 or the American-made Curtiss Hawk. The German fighter had the edge on the British Hurricane, but not the Spitfire. Allied pilots proved to be able dogfighters and inflicted heavy casualties on their foe. The latest allied bombers also compared well with German ones. Britain and France had nothing like the Stuka dive-bomber, but its tactical value has been overstated.⁵⁵

Did the German victory stem from a superior doctrine – a way of thinking about operations and organising and training the army to execute them as one – that gave them an edge in manoeuvre warfare? The German army's doctrine, which was never formally called Blitzkrieg, did emphasise teamwork between tanks and aircraft to breakthrough enemy formations and offered wide scope for low-level initiative. In contrast French doctrine, called methodical battle, emphasised teamwork between infantry and artillery and, when at hand, tanks and planes to fight carefully controlled engagements. Some historians have suggested that the German doctrine reflected the youthful dynamism of the German army, whilst methodical battle reflected the blinkered and hidebound mindsets (or organisational cultures) of the allied generals.⁵⁶ That sort of analysis, however, owes much more to the mythology of 1940 than to what in fact happened on the battlefield. Long before the battle of France, French and British military

intelligence had monitored the elaboration of German doctrine.⁵⁷ Both armies raised tank units and debated how to use them effectively in cooperation with other arms. In the French army, methodical battle became the doctrine because it offered the most promising way to blunt attacks from the more numerous Germans in the defensive phase of the allied war and made the best use of short-term conscripts and France's huge advantage in artillery. When German armoured units struck second- and third-rate allied units, the German doctrine worked brilliantly. When elite allied formations clashed with the panzers, however, the infantry–artillery teams fought the tank–aircraft teams to a standstill. On 14–15 May, when elite French and German units clashed near Gembloux in Belgium, the French doctrine won the day. What happened in June 1940, when the Germans regrouped to conquer the rest of France after their breakthrough at Sedan was even more revealing about how the two rival doctrines worked on the battlefield. Rather than a lightning run into the Gallic hinterland, the Germans slammed into a resolute and well-executed defence. French guns took a heavy toll on the Germans, who had to pound away at the so-called 'hedgehogs' (dug-in defensive positions bristling with guns).⁵⁸

Even if we concede that Germany had an edge owing to a doctrine that emphasised manoeuvre, the explanation of why Hitler's gamble succeeded lies in the interaction between allied and German operational plans, which pitted the armoured spearhead of the German army against a weak spot in the allied defences and sent the allied armoured spearhead into a trap. The German plan was born of desperation. Although Hitler had realised that he needed a rapid decision against France, he only had a vague notion of how to obtain it. His directive of 9 October mentioned improving Germany's strategic position by pushing into Belgium and Holland, smashing as many allied divisions as possible and then using airfields in the Low Countries to begin a bombing campaign on Britain. Hoping to discourage Hitler from attacking at all, Brauchitsch and Halder drafted an uninspired plan that envisaged the two northernmost of three army groups in the west (A and B) pushing into Belgium. General Erich von Manstein, the chief of staff Army Group A, suggested a daring 'sickle cut' plan to push the bulk of Germany's tank and motorised divisions into Luxemburg, through the Ardennes forest and then north towards the Channel. Halder tried to suppress the proposal, but Hitler heard about it and adopted it. According to Ernest May, Manstein's original idea had evolved by late February 1940 into a developed operational plan through a creative process involving Manstein, Hitler, the army

staff, including Halder, and intelligence officers, who correctly anticipated what the allies would do.⁵⁹ Even so, few senior officers thought the plan would work. Hitler ordered preparations for a long war to continue alongside plans for the big offensive. Armaments production prioritised ammunition and barbed wire for positional warfare on the western front and Ju-88 bombers and U-boats for a strangulation campaign against Britain. Halder took a lead role in drafting the sickle cut plan, even though he knew that victory in the opening battle could do little to halt the vastly superior global forces mobilising against the Reich. But Halder, like many other top soldiers, concluded that an all-or-nothing gamble was the only option. 'Even if the operation only had a 10% chance of success,' he argued, 'I would stick to it. It alone will lead to the enemy's annihilation.'⁶⁰

What increased the probabilities of the German plan succeeding was the way in which General Maurice Gamelin, the allied commander, and his staff drew up the allied war plan. During the 1930s Gamelin built up a large mobile force of tank and motorised infantry to advance into Belgium, where the Germans were most likely to try to attack. Until 1936, Belgium was formally a French ally, and the two general staffs planned to form a defensive barrier on Belgian soil that linked up the Maginot Line to the North Sea. But that year Brussels declared itself neutral. Secretly, the two armies continued to exchange plans, but now the French army was faced with the problem of waiting until Belgium was attacked and asked for help before it could come to its rescue. Stage one of Gamelin's plan was, therefore, a dash into Belgium to form the most advantageous defensive front he could before the Germans arrived to offer him battle. Gamelin decided on the Dyle line, which extended from Antwerp south along the Dyle River to the Belgian province of Namur, where it would join up with the Maginot Line. If that front could be held, it would leave much of Belgium's coast, its ports and Brussels in allied hands. Forming the Dyle line became the goal of the allies, with one crucial addition: Gamelin, who ignored warnings about the risk, wanted to push the line much further north, towards the Dutch town of Breda. The Breda variant, as it became known, placed even more urgency on the race into Belgium. To execute his Dyle-Breda plan, Gamelin committed thirty divisions, the bulk of his reserves, including the crack tank and motorised units of the French and British armies. On 10 May, when German forces attacked Holland and Belgium, thirty allied divisions raced into Belgium to block what Gamelin expected to be the main thrust of the German army. For three days, his mind remained fixed on the progress of his Dyle-Breda manoeuvre, whilst the German breakthrough at the Ardennes unfolded

largely unnoticed. By the time Gamelin grasped what was happening, like all military surprises, it was too late to do much about it. On 14–15 May the allies counter-attacked and bombed the German breakthrough point across the River Meuse at Sedan, but they failed to stop the oncoming flow of German tanks and trucks. Without knowing it, he had made France's defeat catastrophic by sending the whole of his mobile reserves, the cream of the allied divisions, deep into Belgium. It was as though the two opposing armies had each pushed on a revolving door, with the allies charging northeast into the trap, whilst the German spearhead swept into their rear, enveloping them.⁶¹

Even though Gamelin's plan helped to make France's defeat catastrophic, the German victory was still a near-run thing. Success took the Germans by surprise. 'This is a miracle,' Hitler shouted when he heard the news, 'an absolute miracle!' At one point in the battle he ordered his tanks to halt for fear that they were falling into an allied trap.⁶² If allied intelligence had picked up clues about the German plan or even detected it early enough to foil it, then things could have gone differently. The colossal traffic jam of tanks and trucks backed up waiting to punch through the Ardennes presented a superb target for allied aircraft, for instance, one that they failed to detect. Had Gamelin not taken the risk of his Dyle-Breda plan and held back a mobile reserve, then some elite allied divisions could have been available to block the German advance.

Considering the counterfactual not only locates the source of the allied defeat in operations on the battlefield, but it also casts Chamberlain's Phoney War strategy in a more favourable light. As the Prime Minister had concluded, the factor of time, which was working for the allies, forced Hitler to choose between a long war that he was bound to lose and a short and perilous one that he had little chance of winning. Hitler knew that he was wagering everything on a single shot. Had the German sickle cut plan gone wrong and the allies blocked the German breakthrough, there is every reason to suppose that the Nazi regime, as Chamberlain expected, would have imploded. Alternatively, perhaps Hitler's generals would have deposed him and sued for peace. The German war effort might have staggered on for another year or so, but eventually the long war of attrition would have turned overwhelmingly in favour of the allies. Had Hitler's gamble failed, Italy would not have joined the war and Russia might have used its leverage over a weakened Third Reich to extract greater concessions and ration its exports. A German defeat in the west would have made the allied defeat in Norway look like a minor setback. Had the

Nazi regime collapsed from economic breakdown or a collapse of the home front, Chamberlain's attempt to calibrate the intensity of British economic mobilisation would have struck historians as remarkable foresight instead of a last belated stage in the nation's adjustment to all-out mobilisation for total war. On 30 March 1940, Chamberlain acknowledged that Hitler's gamble of 'all on a single throw' might pay off. When it did, he yielded like everyone else to the temptation to blame the defeat on allied military weakness rather than on the play of chance in war. Yet we know that the British and French forces were stronger and growing in strength each day.⁶³ As Clausewitz understood, chance could and in this case did overturn a sound strategy and produce an improbable outcome.

Notes

1. Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York, 1990), p. 2.
2. The polemic *Guilty Men* (London, 1940) written by Michael Foot, Frank Owen, and Peter Howard under the pseudonym 'Cato', which crystallised for a whole generation the indictment of the Chamberlain and appeasement, was written in July 1940, just after the defeat of France and the British retreat from Dunkirk. See Patrick Finney, *Remembering the Road to World War Two: International History, National Identity, Collective Memory* (London, 2010), pp. 191–99.
3. For example Graham Stewart's *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (London, 1999), pp. 385–420, and Talbot Imlay's *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics and Economics in Britain and France, 1938–40* (Oxford, 2003), take this line. For a more sympathetic interpretation, see Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 383–410.
4. Joseph Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: How the Arms Race Drove the World to War, 1931–1941* (New York, 2010). For an insight into contemporary thinking about future war, see in Norman Angell et al. (eds), *What would be the Character of a New War?* (London, 1933).
5. The National Archives (TNA), CAB 53/45, COS843, 'European Appreciation', 20 Feb. 1939; CAB 29/160, AFC(J)19 'Anglo-French Policy for the Conduct of the War', 30 March 1939; in later study the Chiefs of Staff pressed for greater urgency to bring forward the day when the Allies could mount offensive operations: CAB 80/9, COS(40)270, 'Certain Aspects of the Present Situation', 26 March 1940.
6. Robert Self, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters: Volume 4 The Downing Street Years, 1934–40* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 445; Chamberlain was not alone in framing the war as not against the German people but against their rulers: see Peter W. Ludlow, 'The Unwinding of Appeasement', in Lothar Kettenacker (ed.), *Das 'Andere Deutschland' in Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1977), pp. 15–19, and John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: 10 Downing Street Diaries 1939–1955* (London, 1985), p. 26, pp. 46–7, p. 55.

7. See, for example, CAB 104/43, 'Germany: The Crisis and After', 15 Nov. 1938; Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 337–9, pp. 445, 498; Self, *Chamberlain*, pp. 395–7.
8. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 450–1, p. 467.
9. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 450–1, p. 460; and PM's comments in CAB 65/1, WM9 and 14(39), War Cabinet, 9 and 13 Sept. 1939.
10. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 475.
11. CAB 81/95, JIC (39) 37, Joint Intelligence Committee, 'Possible German action in the Spring of 1940', 18 Dec. 1939 and CAB 81/96, MR(J)(40)10, 'Possible German action in the Spring of 1940' 22 Jan. 1940.
12. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 502, 514.
13. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 451, 462.
14. Peter Howlett, 'The Wartime Economy, 1939–1945', in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (eds), *The Economic History of Britain since 1700: 1939–1992* (Cambridge, 2004). Not surprisingly, Treasury officials considered themselves best placed to run the war economy. See T175/117, 'Economic Coordination' 7 Dec. 1939; Colville, *Fringes of Power*, p. 78.
15. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, pp. 241–68.
16. Imlay, *Facing the Second World War*, pp. 105–22.
17. Talbot Imlay, 'Paul Reynaud and France's Response to Nazi Germany, 1938–1940', *French Historical Studies* 26/3 (2003), pp. 497–538; David Dilks, 'The Twilight War and the Fall of France: Chamberlain and Churchill in 1940', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (1978), pp. 61–86.
18. CAB 21/1371, 'Germany's Next Move', 2 Nov. 1939.
19. David Dutton, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Britain and France in the Balkans in the First World War* (London, 1998). For the Chiefs of Staff view, see CAB 80/1, COS (39)15, 'Balkan Neutrality', 9 Sept. 1939.
20. CAB 65/1, WM7, 15, 21 and 39(39), War Cabinet, 7, 14 and 20 Sept., and 6 Oct. 1939.
21. Frank Marzaria, 'Projects for an Italian-led Balkan Bloc of Neutrals, September–December 1939', *Historical Journal* 13/4 (1970), 767–88; and CAB 80/5, COS(239)135, 'Strategical Situation in South East Europe', 28 Nov. 1939.
22. Roderick Macleod and Denis Kelly, (eds), *Ironside Diaries, 1937–1940* (London, 1963), pp. 235–9.
23. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 453, 464, 482.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 503, 506, 510.
25. Patrick Salmon, 'British Plans for Economic Warfare against Germany, 1937–1939: The Problem of Swedish Iron Ore', *Journal of Contemporary History* 16 (1981), pp. 53–71.
26. CAB 65/4, WM (39)122, 22 Dec. 1939. Imlay, in *Facing the Second World War*, p. 120, writes that the Prime Minister opposed Churchill's proposals for action in Scandinavia.
27. Self, *Chamberlain*, p. 415.
28. For the detailed discussions, see CAB 65/11–12, War Cabinet Minutes, 2 Jan.–30 April 1940. For a detailed analysis of British military advice see Bernard Kelly, 'Drifting Towards War: The British Chiefs of Staff, the USSR and the Winter War, November 1939–March 1940', *Contemporary British History* 23/3 (2009), pp. 267–291.

29. Alexander Cadogan, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945*, David Dilks (ed.), (London, 1971), 240. CAB 80/6, COS(39)160(JP), 'Stoppage of Iron Ore from Narvik', 11 Dec. 1939 and COS(39)166(JP), 'Stoppage of Iron Ore from Narvik', 18 Dec. 1939.
30. See the comments of the Chief of the Imperial General staff, General Ironside, in CAB 65/11, WM(40)1, 2 Jan. 1940. A few weeks later, Ironside wrote: 'Provided we can, by political action, induce Norway and Sweden to stop, or allow us to stop, the supply of iron ore to Germany, the military effort required to support those countries against Germany might prove within our power.' See CAB 80/104, COS (40)216(S), 'The Major Strategy of the War', 23 Jan. 1940.
31. Self, *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 492–3, pp. 499–500, p. 503. CAB 65/5, WM50/55(40), War Cabinet Minutes, 23 and 29 Feb. 1940.
32. Colville, *Fringes of Power*, pp. 82–3, p. 87, pp. 96–7. Kelly, in 'Drifting Towards War', 283–7, argues that the British Chiefs of Staff advice, though erratic, shifted in favour of action in Scandinavia after the Soviet–Finnish war ended.
33. Cadogan, *Diaries*, p. 265.
34. Adam Claasen, 'Blood and Iron, and der geist des Atlantiks: Assessing Hitler's decision to invade Norway', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20/3 (1997), pp. 71–96.
35. Self, *Chamberlain*, pp. 415–30.
36. John D. Fair, 'The Norwegian Campaign and Winston Churchill's Rise to Power in 1940: A Study of Perception and Attribution', *International History Review* 9, 3(1987), pp. 410–437.
37. Alan Beyerchen, 'Clausewitz, Nonlinearity and the Unpredictability of War', *International Security* 17/3 (Winter, 1992), pp. 59–90. Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2010).
38. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, pp. 141–58, pp. 211–27.
39. Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *General Ludwig Beck: Studien und Dokumente zur politisch-militärischen Vorstellungswelt und Taetigkeit des Generalstabschefs des deutschen Heeres 1933–1938* (Boppard, 1980), pp. 502–62 and his *Generaloberst Ludwig Beck: Eine Biographie* (Paderborn, 2007), pp. 307–64.
40. Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London, 2007), pp. 285–325. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, pp. 289–95.
41. Nicolaus Below, *At Hitler's Side: the Memoirs of Hitler's Luftwaffe Adjutant 1937–1945* (London, 2001), pp. 40–41. Charles Burdick and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, (eds) *The Halder War Diary 1939–1942* (New York, 1988), pp. 62–66. *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1919–39* (London, 1956), [Hereafter cited as DGFP] Series D, Vol. IX, Document No. 1.
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43. DGFP, D, VIII, No. 384. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936–45 Nemesis* (London, 1998–2000), p. 221, pp. 275–9.
44. Burdick and Jacobsen, *Halder War Diary*, pp. 77–8.
45. Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler: Armee und nationalsozialistisches Regime 1933–1940* (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 471–573. G.R. Ueberschär, 'General

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 48. Burdick and Jacobsen, *Halder War Diary*, p. 63. Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 333–7.
 49. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, pp. 207–9, pp. 355–9.
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 51. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, pp. 344–51. Brian R. Sullivan, "'Where one man, and only one man, led": Italy's Path from Non-Alignment to Non-Belligerency to War, 1937–1940', in N. Wylie, (ed.), *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 147–8. Fortunato Minniti, 'Profilo dell'iniziativa strategica italiana dalla non belligeranza alla guerra parallela', *Storia Contemporanea* (1987), pp. 1113–1195.
 52. The English translation of the 1995 German book is by Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The Campaign in the West 1940* (Annapolis MD, 2005), p. 2.
 53. Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, pp. 28–36, pp. 44–9. Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 17–21.
 54. Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, pp. 36–44; Jackson, *Fall of France*, pp. 12–17.
 55. Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, pp. 44–54. F.R. Kirkland, 'The French Air Force in 1940: Was it Defeated by the Luftwaffe or by Politics?' *Air University Review* (1985), pp. 101–18. Williamson Murray, *Luftwaffe 1933–1945: Strategy for Defeat* (London, 1996), pp. 42–5.
 56. Douglas Porch, 'Military "Culture" and the Fall of France in 1940: A Review Essay', *International Security* (2000) pp. 157–80. Jackson, *Fall of France*, pp. 21–5.
 57. Peter Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace: Intelligence and Policy-making, 1933–1939* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 117–8, pp. 184–91, pp. 324–6. J.P. Harris, 'British Military Intelligence and the Rise of German Mechanized Forces, 1929–40', *Intelligence and National Security* (1991). David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany 1919–1945* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 12–47.
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 59. Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, pp. 59–74. Earnest R. May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France* (London, 2000), pp. 240–68.

60. Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, pp. 94–9.
61. Jackson, *Fall of France*, pp. 25–59. May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 306–433, pp. 448–52.
62. Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, pp. 1–3, pp. 100–290.
63. Self, *Chamberlain*, pp. 431–5.

10

The Committee on American Opinion on the British Empire, 1942–1944

Andrew Stewart

Relations between Britain and the United States, both before and during the Second World War, were nothing like as cordial as was generally portrayed in the post-conflict accounts.¹ On both shores of the Atlantic there were many senior officials, both political and military, who had little time for one another and the sense that some form of ‘Special Relationship’ existed is a somewhat fanciful interpretation of the actual situation.² Even Field Marshal Bill Slim, perhaps Britain’s greatest wartime commander, and widely respected for his objective and reasoned outlook and sage common-sense words, apparently found it a challenge. About his country’s key ally he was driven to write that he found Americans ‘so difficult to understand, so unreasonable; they approach quite straightforward problems from such extraordinary angles’ and were prone to ‘introduce consideration of their own national politics and hangovers from their past history, none of which have the faintest bearing on the matter of immediate issue.’³ Swayed by ‘petty jealousies, narrow nationalistic outlook [and] selfish manoeuvrings’, it was all too apparent that having to work in Burma alongside such virulent Anglophobes as American Joe Stilwell had proven to be a trying experience.⁴ And there were many others who had similar wartime experiences and held much worse opinions. As one of the foremost writers on Transatlantic relations, C.J. Bartlett has put it, the real issue was that: ‘On the British side of the Atlantic there were many who tended to dismiss the Americans as moralisers who would be generous with advice and opinions but who could not be trusted to back up their words with actions.’⁵ It would eventually become recognised within Whitehall that the level of tensions that existed represented a potentially serious challenge to

relations between the two countries. As a result the decision was taken to form a committee.

Whilst there were a range of issues about which the two countries held different views, what one writer has chosen to refer to as 'an increasingly close relationship' during the war's early years was in fact seriously undermined by two of them.⁶ The first was the virulently American isolationist sentiment which clearly existed. In the summer of 1940 so intense was it that the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee felt he could openly advise the British leadership to abandon the British Isles in the face of any German invasion, warning that there would be no intervention from his country in the war.⁷ As the war developed the position appeared to change: one letter writer to the *New York Times* commenting in July 1941 noted approvingly that in increasing defence spending and providing armaments to England the authorities in Washington had effectively made the decision about 'peace or war'.⁸ But just a few months later Sir Arthur Harris, who prior to taking the lead of Bomber Command headed the RAF's Washington delegation, wrote back to the Vice-Chief of the Air Staff with a very different set of conclusions. He had attended the showing of an RAF propaganda film after which a speech had been shown in which an isolationist Senator had accused President Franklin D. Roosevelt of failing to keep his promises not to send American troops to fight into Europe: 'The entire audience of thousands (mainly extra Administrative employees or their dependents who are so employed because of America's need for preparedness!) burst into riotous, rapturous, prolonged and genuinely enthusiastic applause such as one seldom hears on any occasion anywhere in response to anything.'⁹ The reality was that there would remain a significant audience of Americans who would never accept the need for the country to be involved in another European war.

The other great challenge was the overwhelming degree of anti-imperialism which existed on the western side of the Atlantic. The oldest ideal of American foreign policy, the Roosevelt administration 'was staunchly anti-imperialist in word and deed' and resolute that self-government needed to be made universally available if the war were to be won.¹⁰ Agreements such as the Atlantic Charter, and the public acclaim this had received when it had been signed in August 1941, appeared to confirm that the American public's anti-colonial stance was equally implacable.¹¹ As a consequence, according to one distinguished American historian, 'the typical American representative overseas saw the British as arrogant, swaggering snobs determined to maintain

their superiority by trampling on the rights of native peoples'.¹² This assessment went on to note that 'the British, in turn considered the Americans brash, ignorant intruders who preached freedom simply to oust [them] and take over the colonial areas for their own selfish purposes'. According to one parliamentarian in London this response, certainly within Whitehall, was in large part the result of jealousy at a perceived 'passing of power'.¹³ As a result, the tendency was simply to view all Americans as being either pro- or anti-British.

Typically, overseas diplomatic posts provide advice to governments about why such tensions develop and the British Embassy in Washington had traditionally been at the vanguard of monitoring the situation and trying to influence American opinions. On the eve of war there were just 18 people working in it, but these numbers would swell rapidly even before the two countries became formal wartime allies and by the war's end there were over 1000 people working in the embassy and a further several thousand working on the periphery. These were involved in bodies ranging from the British Joint Staff Mission through to the Security Division, more commonly referred to as 'British Security Co-ordination'.¹⁴ Many other committees were also formed but none of these included within their activities any formal requirement to try and counter negative American opinion about Britain. This, it would later be established, was at least part of the reason why the problem had arisen.

Of these two issues, support for isolationism, although never entirely overcome, was to a large degree resolved by the Japanese decision to expand the conflict in the Asia-Pacific region and Adolf Hitler's almost inexplicable post-Pearl Harbor declaration of war against the United States on behalf of the German people. This meant that President Roosevelt could lead his country into war and American disquiet could focus on British attitudes towards colonialism. As it was infamously put in the 'Open Letter to the People of England', published by *Life* magazine in October 1942, the American people were 'not fighting... to hold the British Empire together' and any sense that they were would soon lead to their withdrawal from the war.¹⁵ Such statements were clearly meant for popular consumption but for the country's leader in the White House, who in any case had his own strong views on the issue, this was a firm reminder that this would be something about which he would need to remain mindful throughout the war. For the British government the article's publication also, perhaps, gave some impetus to the need for more official investigation about the state of the relationship and just a few months later, in December 1942, a 'Committee on

American Opinion on the British Empire' was formed. This was tasked with establishing the position as it existed and to then propose measures which might counter what appeared to many to be an overly negative attitude on the part of their new Transatlantic allies. In many respects this new committee's task was more far-reaching than the wording of its initial mandate. The job at hand was actually to try and identify a strategy that would help shape American views that the British Empire was a suitable partner with which to conduct affairs in the post-war world. Or put another way, it was to try and create what in modern terms would be described as an influence strategy, working to shape the thinking of journalists and academics about the British approach to international affairs and relying upon them, in turn, to report positively on the subject.

Richard Law, married to an American and with distinguished Canadian parents, seemed an obvious choice to be the chairman. Lord Coleraine, as he would later be titled, had worked before the war as a journalist both in Britain and the United States. As the son of Andrew Bonar Law, he was said to have 'attracted attention less by any striking speeches or actions than as the son of a respected former party leader'.¹⁶ With his excellent political credentials and his strong opposition to appeasement – which included attendance at meetings of the fluid group that formed around Anthony Eden and was disparagingly referred to as the 'glamour boys' – there should have been little surprise that Churchill included him in his initial wartime government. The immediate years that followed were to represent the peak of his political career: initially serving as financial secretary to the War Office before in 1941, he moved to the Foreign Office as parliamentary undersecretary of state. Two years later a further promotion made him minister of state with cabinet rank and membership of the Privy Council. Although his wartime service would be more commonly related to plans for organising supplies of food and raw materials to the liberated countries of Europe, the eponymous committee which he chaired also saw him investigating what was in many respects destined to be one of the most delicate and important of post-war issues.¹⁷

The origins of the committee actually pre-dated its establishment drawing its basis from the visit Law had made in September 1942 to Washington and New York and the detailed report he submitted upon his return to London.¹⁸ It had offered a generally optimistic assessment of the position and the challenges that lay ahead, but stressed that good relations with the United States were critical not just in terms of the war's outcome but also for Britain's future. As he concluded:

Above all, we must remember that the United States is not a cypher. There are infinite possibilities in America for good or evil. There is immense strength and a wealth of good intention. There is what must strike us as a childish over-simplification of problems of great complexity, and there is great inexperience. But America is not a cypher. The Americans are going to make our world or mar it. Which they do will depend very largely upon us and upon the extent to which we are able, first, to gain their confidence, and, secondly, to influence their policies.

This report also confirmed the degree to which hostility to imperialism threatened the wider relationship between the two countries.¹⁹ During his travels Law had found it impossible to get away from an issue that was intensely debated by an American public although there existed 'an astonishing ignorance of the subject'. There were ghosts haunting the American mind, 'ghosts of North and Hessian troops, ghosts, too, of ancient tyrannies from which so many of the American people have fled in the last hundred and fifty years'. So serious was the issue the minister even wondered whether it was actually possible to provide instruction on the British Empire's true nature. Unless the issue was tackled and the 'misunderstandings' that existed removed, he feared that 'the chances of genuine Anglo-American collaboration would be small'.

At the committee's first meeting it was quickly determined that there were four main lines of research that needed to be undertaken.²⁰ Two of these were essentially administrative in nature focusing on how it might prove possible to communicate any strategies that were agreed upon and it was decided that these could be treated as a single issue. The committee's major work, however, would be to analyse and assess American opinions about the British Empire, both in terms of the criticisms and the more favourable aspects that had been expressed. As a result three sub-committees were established drawn from all four Whitehall offices involved in the management of Britain's external relations, added to which were representatives from the Ministry of Information and the War Office. It was felt by those present that it would be helpful if in the process of this investigation an improved understanding could also be provided to the United States of the actual conditions then prevailing in the Empire. In order to do this, as one of those who came to speak to one of the early full committee's meetings put it, 'it was in America necessary to tell a plain and simple story truthfully'.²¹ This approach would, however, be something of a challenge as it had been agreed even before its establishment that the enquiries were to be kept 'strictly confidential' and not mentioned to any Americans.²²

Within their assigned groups immediate progress began in tackling each of the agreed tasks and it was not long before suggestions were being put forward. The first sub-committee produced a whole series of recommendations. Amongst them was the suggestion that leaving false statements unanswered or making defensive comments would be the least effective response possible, it instead being proposed that 'exploitation of favourable factors and removal of causes of criticism (where desirable) are much more valuable'.²³ As long as the Empire was seen to be visibly successful Americans would be inclined to think well of it, even though 'Empire' was an un-American concept. Conversely, failures – the disastrous military campaign in Malaya was mentioned prominently in this context – would lead to criticism about its existence. As the writer highlighted, 'if we can demonstrate our success and efficiency in running an Empire we can count on solid approval from certain substantial classes, even if the liberals assail us'. There was also agreement about the foundations of the problem they were now examining:

The chief single reason for antipathetic feeling towards Britain... lies in United States history. The Declaration of Independence is the greatest American expression of a belief in the right of men to form new nations and govern themselves. Americans learn it by heart at school. It is fundamental to the American national tradition to believe that the status of a colony is a bad status of which the inhabitants will always and rightly wish to rid themselves. The United States began in a revolt from colonial status, and the whole folk-lore and mythology of the American people derives from that revolution.²⁴

Whilst this may have been seen as the principle reason for prejudices in the American mind towards the British Empire, it was only the first of a total of nineteen that had been identified by the committee. Amongst these perhaps the most pointed was the reference to a weakness in the American mind which prevented any inconsistency being registered between how other 'Empires' were viewed and American practice in relation to its negro and American Indian populations. The same was true in regard to the territory it had acquired from France, Spain and Mexico, as well as Alaska and various islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific. As the writer concluded, 'because of this "blind spot" it merely irritates Americans to be reminded that there is "a beam in their own eye"'.²⁵ Although it was not said explicitly the inference was clear; the interpretation of history was not merely entirely subjective but, in many respects, also deeply hypocritical.

Aside from the Whitehall meetings the process of assessing American opinion contained within it a number of other elements. A counterpart committee was established at the British Embassy in Washington to also consider methods by which relations with the United States could be improved. Law had written in the first week of January 1943 to the ambassador Lord Halifax informing him that a high-level group had been convened in London and this was seized upon as an opportunity to do the same.²⁶ The decision to create two committees was a source of great excitement for one British diplomat who wrote back to London that American criticism had at last roused a response, and those involved in the review would have the opportunity to 'think once again of the Romance of Empire – to think out whether we really have a purpose in the 20th Century and, if so, what that purpose is'.²⁷ At the American group's first meeting, the chair was taken by Sir George Sansom, a professional diplomat and scholar much better known for his close connections with Japan than the United States. Appointed with ministerial rank in October 1942 to provide the ambassador with dedicated advice on Far Eastern Affairs, this additional role was slightly perplexing when one of his fellow Ministers was Sir Gerald Campbell, former high commissioner in Ottawa, head of the British Information Service and something of an expert on Anglo-American relations.²⁸ The chairman was nonetheless reportedly keen to take on the role which he believed would be 'very interesting'.²⁹

Another task was to undertake a field survey and produce an accompanying report. This was in fact a critical element of the committee's work and would form an integral part of its ultimate findings. In early 1943 Graham Spry, who had been a personal assistant to Sir Stafford Cripps and had visited India and the United States with him, was asked to return to the latter and 'make a report on American attitudes, favourable or unfavourable, to Britain and the British Empire'.³⁰ Remembered fondly as 'the father of Canadian public broadcasting', Spry had been a social and cultural activist who had led a campaign to halt American media expansion during the 1930s and popularised such phrases as 'the State or the United States'.³¹ Pre-war he was a regular broadcaster for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, reporting back home on the growing threat from Hitler's Germany. From an early age he had held left-wing political views which would hinder him professionally during the inter-war years. This perhaps was part of the reason why he spent much of his life overseas although he never swayed from trying to safeguard Canadian interests. He was at the same time 'a thorough-going Anglophile', although his efforts in regard to the Law Committee

do not appear to have been so widely recognised. Indeed the *Canadian Encyclopaedia* mistakenly describes his wartime roles, aside from the senior position he held with Standard Oil of California, as membership of the Home Guard and acting as a minister's personal assistant. With Cripps' fall from political grace in November 1942, Spry's 'loan' to the Law Committee would result in his most significant wartime position.

The tour of the United States undertaken by Graham Spry began at the end of May 1943 and did not finish until the following November. It began in Washington DC before moving on to New York and then Vermont, and then travelled on through the Southern States to Louisiana and Texas before returning to the capital via the Eastern Mississippi States of Indiana, Michigan and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He then made a circle through Chicago, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Colorado to the Pacific Coast before once again returning to Washington DC by air from Los Angeles. His long journey complete, back at the British Embassy he was able to draw upon support from members of the Survey Department, Commercial Department, the Raw Materials Mission and the War Trade Department who all offered information and advice. Finally, and in addition to his own findings, the Colonial and India Offices also submitted memoranda for his use and other Whitehall departments provided verbal briefings.³² Some of these contributed more to the process than others; back in London the committee's influential secretary, Alan Dudley, found the Colonial Office's paper to be 'rather a depressing document' lacking in any positive or constructive elements with its 'implicit assumption that American interest in the Colonies is not to be welcomed'.³³

The information contained within a number of other reports also made a contribution to Spry's study and the final report he produced. For example, there was the British diplomat who made a 3000 mile tour of the South in January 1943 visiting Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina, and submitted a long account detailing what he had encountered.³⁴ This provided a detailed analysis of domestic and regional considerations but made no attempt to assess what impact these had on relations with Britain. Prior to his arrival another useful document had been produced by Ernest Davies, a Fabian and wartime BBC journalist who was elected to parliament at the war's end as part of the Labour landslide. In June 1943 he produced a long report detailing American attitudes towards Britain and the war, a fascinating account of domestic opinion based upon his travels around the country and the people he had encountered.³⁵ His conclusions were that there were many misunderstandings and these were based largely on ignorance,

but there was an extreme isolationist element who played up to the fears of others. Commonly heard complaints were that Britain was not democratic, the ruling class dominated, the British could not be trusted and even that it got others to do its fighting. In terms of the British Empire, about which there was universal ignorance, it was 'partly regarded as an unscrupulous business venture gained by conquest' that was now 'held in bondage by Britain for her own monetary gain'. At least one commentator questioned some of the report's tone noting that opinion polls indicated only four per cent of the population considered themselves to be 'strongly anti-British' with another 21 per cent describing themselves as 'mildly anti-British'.³⁶ As such it was suggested that it would be more accurate to conclude that 'indifference toward England is a much more widespread and serious problem than is active antagonism'.

Spry would of course draw his own conclusions and to this end he began collecting notes and almost immediately produced his first aide-memoire. His initial discussions had led him to believe that there was actually little interest in the British Empire and it was a subject that was not brought up unless it was raised by him. A later draft would also conclude that there was very limited interest in Britain's colonies amongst American popular opinion compared with the interest in India.³⁷ Yet at the same time it was also clear that no other country exercised so much influence in the United States, with Britain and the British Empire 'major aspects of the American mind'.³⁸ There was, however, a long list of issues – such as the manner in which the peace had been secured at the end of the First World War, the causes of that same conflict, the meaning of the British Commonwealth, the question of appeasement, and what he termed as 'popular concepts of English life and governance' – which had the potential to be exploited. He had found the American public to be not only poorly informed about each of them but also 'pathetically misled'. And even when there was some interest he concluded that this was 'derived from the concepts of American nationalism and American history'. This 'vague' interest could, at the same time, be 'fairly readily translated into a vigorous and perhaps embarrassing public opinion', particularly by American business interests keen on securing greater post-war access to colonial territories. He also noted that interest in India was found in every part of the country and amongst all classes, indeed it was 'the test which Americans apply in any attempt to arrive at an understanding of the British Empire, it is the first criticism of the British Empire and it is the first of the obstacles in the American mind to a better attitude towards the Empire'.³⁹ It was admittedly seized upon most vocally by the isolationists, or what

Spry termed 'the rabidly anti-imperialists... who find pleasure or profit in attacking "the British"', but everywhere he went he was questioned closely about events in India.

This is not to say that there was not some cause for optimism. In writing very early drafts of what would become his final submission Spry had concluded that the attitude of the American people was more favourable 'than at any other time in recent decades', in part down to the shared experience of the war but also as a result of a changing outlook about their allies and the role they were playing. He found that 'Before El Alamein the British were regarded as brave, but rather incompetent, decent enough as a people but ineffective if not almost degenerate as a state or power; the attitude now is that the British are tough, highly competent, even dangerously competent, and more powerful than expected.'⁴⁰ In terms of the British Empire he retained his initial view that whilst there was some public interest this tended to become most apparent 'when some policy or episode in the Empire arouses the normal predisposition of the American public to criticize Britain'. Interestingly he highlighted that there were two contradictory attitudes influencing the average American, the first a sense of rivalry or opposition to Britain, alongside which there co-existed a sense of community. Together these combined to act as 'a powerful impediment to clear thinking on external relations'. This was a country though that was maturing, and with a greater sense of unity there was a more developed sense of nationalism; this, the writer concluded, could only ultimately lead to a reduced feeling of rivalry and a greater level of cooperation between the two countries. Pressure groups and lobbies represented a challenge to this process as did the inadequacies of the American political system and the future potential for competition for resources and global economic advantage. But Spry's draft was at this stage an essentially positive one.

Returning to Britain in the first week of the New Year, he was interviewed by the committee twice, attending meetings in Whitehall in late January and February 1944 where he was questioned at some length about his investigations and the findings he had made. There were sixteen people present at the first verbal briefing on 17 January 1944, representatives from the Foreign, India, Colonial and Dominion Offices and the Ministry of Information.⁴¹ Having presented his findings, Spry later wrote to his wife back in Canada, 'I met the great for whom I laboured in the USA... Never before have I spoken to so many Rt Hons and knights... and contrary to all my better judgement, I am beginning to think myself an authority though on what, I have less doubts.'⁴²

The intervening period between producing his early drafts and his return to London had not apparently seen any great change in outlook. He emphasised to the committee that to a great degree the real problem lay with 'the self-contradiction in American psychology between respect and rivalry for Britain [which] was a constant impediment to American clarity of thought and judgement on external affairs'. Ultimately, however, he had found that his hosts were not particularly interested in the question of the British Empire. It was also not necessary to take seriously American references to this body breaking up as 'even American intellectuals knew so little about it that many of them could not distinguish between the Commonwealth and the dependent Empire.'

This was not to say that there were no grounds for concern.⁴³ As his initial investigations had led him to conclude, India was a different issue as there were groups at work 'trading on the parallels with the American Revolution'; the Colonies were not yet the subject of similar interest, though there was no reason to believe that this would always remain the case. In conclusion, he summed up by saying that if the report had been about American 'attitudes' only he would be reporting that 'they were, on balance, more favourable than unfavourable' and that 'almost instinctively the American people felt closer to Britain and the British than to any others'. To these, however, there needed to be added both 'interests' and 'conditions'. Under the former he included civil aviation, oil, communications and a number of other commercial areas. The latter was based around what he termed 'the great enigma of prosperity or depression, full employment or crash in the future'. When it was all added together he was less optimistic. There were, however, three further considerations which needed to be taken into account and these were important as each was dependent on self-interest and 'worked in the direction of greater friendliness'. Spry believed there to be a growing sense of insecurity in the United States and a 'feeling that America needs a friend'. There was also a growing realisation about overseas 'commercial opportunities' some of which were to be found in Britain's Empire. Finally, there was a still evolving awareness of 'the negro issue' which it was clear he believed had a limiting influence on complaints about Britain's dependent colonies.

In the lengthy discussion that followed Spry's briefing, Law welcomed what he had heard, noting that he had only ever encountered the same feeling of community and respect and never any sense of anti-British feeling. Nonetheless he wondered if offering the United States the use of British military bases would help to emphasise the Empire's potential value. Spry believed that the response to such a move would be

favourable, but he felt that Americans did not want to take over any territory from the British and did not want any of the responsibilities of government or administration. There was also some discussion about pressure groups and their significance as a driver influencing the American public. As Spry put it, whilst they did not reveal their aims and policies to the public, 'what they tried to do was to create an atmosphere favourable to their objectives'. Some members of the committee wondered if more could be done to understand how they worked and, presumably, how they could be countered. At the very least it was suggested that their activities be better observed in order that some measure of anticipation might be available in terms of what pressures they might try and exert. A great deal of reference was also made to the need to develop an effective media strategy and the need for Britain to be more forceful in responding to criticisms directed at it or the Empire. Spry himself believed there was much to be gained for 'answering back' and 'making firm and immediate replies', although he stressed these should be good humoured, factual, friendly, and directed to the person who had made the accusation although not personal in terms of naming the personalities involved. There was also an interesting reference to the need to ensure such responses played upon the American recognition of insecurity, in essence reiterating that the British represented the greatest source of future support. Finally when asked to list the friendly elements in the United States through which such efforts might be directed, Spry listed five potential allies. These included a majority of the press, periodicals, the Universities, the left-wing and, perhaps most significantly, the Trade Unions; all were held to be friendly.

Discussions continued within the committee throughout the spring of 1944; in March, during a conversation about the American appreciation of the Commonwealth war effort, Spry told those present that he had been in the United States during the Salerno landings 'and hadn't known there were British troops on the beachhead'.⁴⁴ At the same time the committee secretary was concerned that it should not be forgotten that the evidence provided by Home Intelligence and Gallup polls revealed that, with the possible exception of American aircrew, 'the British public thinks even less well of the American war effort than the Americans do of us'.⁴⁵ Comments were also being received throughout this period about the early drafts of the final document that had been circulated. According to another Foreign Office reviewer the report was different from what Spry had officially planned it to be but it was still a most valuable survey.⁴⁶ A committee member from the same department concluded that it was 'full of good points' and there was nothing

within it about which he believed his colleagues would dissent.⁴⁷ The final report was published on the first day of May 1944 and, at some 54 pages in length, represented a broad survey not just of American attitudes towards the British Empire but the Anglo-American relationship as a whole.⁴⁸ In terms of addressing the principle subject of his enquiry Spry's conclusion was that the American public could not 'clearly or intelligently differentiate between [it] and the dependent empire'. He was surprised to discover how wide the misperception existed, running to the 'highest levels of the Administration' and 'even in university circles'. One example quoted of the lack of knowledge was the idea that 'the Dominions were taxed by Britain for Britain'. As he was forced to conclude, however, ignorance alone was not to blame, 'the pattern of 1776 is used in the interpretation and the term empire or commonwealth acquires not the content of the present but of the past'.

Commenting on the report's findings from far distant New Zealand, one British official was in strong agreement and one theme in particular resonated. In the High Commission in Wellington it had been noticed:

...increasingly of late that the Americans, and in particular the American government, tend to see in any endeavours to secure joint or concerted action by the several Members of the British Commonwealth an attempt to 'gang up' against the United States. The contradiction between this attitude and the equally familiar attitude of objecting to the various Members of the Commonwealth acting separately and demanding separate voices is striking.⁴⁹

The official went on to conclude that Britain's allies saw 'the bogey of encirclement, or at any rate of competition, and shudder at the sight, without first asking themselves whether or not the policy which the Commonwealth is together considering is one which is directed against them'. The conclusion was that such fears were in fact often misplaced as the goals of the Commonwealth were often akin to those of the United States. Writing from the Ministry of Information Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who was also a senior member of the committee, believed that the report revealed that 'the American attitude to the Empire, although it has a history and a set of problems of its own, is conditioned by the general state of relations between Britain and America'.⁵⁰ He highlighted two of Spry's own comments as being the report's really critical aspects. The first of these was that American attitudes did 'not present very serious problems', the other that those misconceptions which did exist were 'due as much to ignorance as prejudice'. The challenge as he saw it

therefore was how to find 'imaginative use of the arts of explanation to a people who have, on this particular subject, a long-standing reluctance to be explained to'.

Despite having initially indicated he would include recommendations, the published report actually contained none. Confirmation that the project was not yet finished could be seen with the suggestion that a revised version of the document might yet be produced which would be sufficiently sanitised for a non-Whitehall audience, specifically across the Dominions. Indeed there was even a proposal that if such a version was written it might be published as a *Penguin* paperback.⁵¹ Spry was, however, said to be 'very tired' by this stage and planning to go away for a few weeks, and Dudley noted that in his absence he would be given the file containing the author's 'jotting and suggestions' and if it was required from these a series of recommendations would be produced.⁵² By this stage Spry was in fact in Italy having reverted to his pre-war role as a correspondent and accompanying the Canadian forces in the military campaign they were fighting.

It was therefore left to Dudley to produce a conclusion and this ran to three pages.⁵³ Also drawing upon a report that had been submitted by another author examining opinion on India, it proved to be a shrewd assessment of what had been discovered. According to the committee's secretary the most obvious lesson to come from the report was that 'what Americans think about the Empire in the future will depend chiefly on the development of events, and that what he calls "conditions" are not only more important than "attitudes" but also are the principal forces which created new "attitudes" and modified old ones'. In his view American opinion about the Empire was 'a symptom rather than a state of health or disease' and, as he had noted before, it would be more as a result of what was done than what was said that Britain would be judged.⁵⁴ The 'attitudes' which Spry had noted were 'a complex product of history, of feelings about imperialism, and of ignorance of the facts'.⁵⁵ Education and information would not be enough to counter this and it would not be possible 'in a short time to correct the record of history', and Dudley highlighted that 'all the evidence goes to show that the present and the future are more important than the past'. In essence his suggestion was that there was little point trying to change the established American view of historical events. The focus should instead be on using 'the functions of publicity and explanation' to explain current actions and policy and stress how they related to the prosperity and welfare of the United States. He was also not alone by this stage of the war in suggesting that there was special concern about the war against Japan

and how this would develop. Although not stated explicitly, the intention to reclaim the territory that had been lost in 1941 and 1942 had the potential to profoundly affect the British Empire's reputation in the United States and not necessarily in a positive sense. And Britain would need American military cooperation if it was to achieve these aims. The suggestion therefore was that 'British intentions and British actions, and their effective representation' should be the theme on which publicity specialists concentrated. Finally, it was also proposed that greater recognition should be given to legitimate American interests, the clear inference being that there was a need to recognise the growing power of the United States and its potential for further expansion. The world was changing and this needed to be understood by the representatives of the various Whitehall departments on the committee.

With the report agreed and published it seems clear that enthusiasm for the committee dissipated quickly. The fact that the main body of Spry's work was complete had a large part to play in this process. There was also perhaps a sense following the successful invasion of France in June 1944 that the war was drawing to a close, an appreciation that would have been significant for Richard Law and the key role he had come to play in post-war planning and humanitarian issues. Even the number of committee members who took leave during the summer had a part to play as it all meant that momentum was lost and focus moved elsewhere. In mid-August the Ministry of Information intimated that this 'matter has now been taken as far as the Committee can take it', a statement Dudley thought would lead to a suggestion that the group be dissolved.⁵⁶ This seems to have been an accurate assessment as the evidence available suggests that a meeting held in early September proved to be the committee's final substantive discussion.⁵⁷

In terms of trying to assess the impact and contribution made by the Law Committee to Anglo-American relations, it has largely been seen as playing a very minor part in a much broader initiative. This in large part is a result of Christopher Thorne's argument that the body was only established in response to suggestions that the British government appeared to have stagnated in terms of its thinking and policy towards the colonies.⁵⁸ And even then as he put it, such a step 'was far from solving the problem' and his subsequent brief comments made scant reference to its achievements. Yet the Law Committee had actually produced a series of significant conclusions based in part on its own internal discussions, but largely as a result of what it had learnt from the reports submitted to it from investigators who had travelled extensively within the United States.⁵⁹ Graham Spry's contribution was by

far the most significant, a body of research which was so great that it was suggested that it should form the basis of a much larger study. His findings were interpreted as indicating that there needed to be a much greater sense of *Realpolitik* about the growing strength of the United States and where power would lie in the post-war system. This in turn required recognition of American interests whilst at the same time trying to highlight with much greater energy the contribution Britain would be making in the future to Transatlantic security. Writing in his diary in May 1944 Harold Macmillan warned, 'they [the US] either wish to revert to isolation combined with suspicion of British imperialism, or to intervene in a pathetic desire to solve in a few months problems which have baffled statesmen for many centuries. Somewhere between these two extremes we have got to guide them both for their own advantage and ours and for that of the future peace of the world.'⁶⁰ Macmillan of course remained committed to such an approach, but despite his attempts 'to play Greece to their Rome', relations between the two countries have remained a subject of enduring debate.⁶¹ As for the Law Committee, with wartime events moving on rapidly, its good work would be largely forgotten despite the highly relevant and scrupulously researched recommendations it had laboured for two years to produce.

Notes

1. David Reynolds, 'Roosevelt, Churchill and the Wartime Anglo-American Alliance, 1939–45: Towards a New Synthesis', in Wm. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds), *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 17–41. For more detailed descriptions of the challenges see Andrew Stewart, *Empire Lost: Britain, the Dominions and the Second World War* (London, 2008), pp. 75–86; and *A Very British Experience: Coalition, Defence and Strategy in the Second World War* (Eastbourne, 2012), pp. 99–118.
2. This remains an often intensely emotive debate. Philip Sherwell, 'The relationship is special once more', *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), 11 March 2012.
3. Alex Danchev, *Very Special Relationship – Field-Marshal Sir John Dill and the Anglo-American Alliance* (London, 1986), pp. 39–40.
4. Stilwell was renowned for his contempt for British military commanders with the notable exception of Slim who he believed was the only 'good Limey'. Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Triumph, 1942–1945* (London, 2010), pp. 93–94.
5. C.J. Bartlett, *'The Special Relationship': A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (London, 1992), pp. 1–2.
6. John Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939–1980: The Special Relationship* (London, 1981), p. 8. Brian L. Villa, 'Review – Anxious Moments, London Surveys Wartime Washington', *Reviews in American History* (Vol. 10, No. 3; September 1982), pp. 435–436.
7. Senator Key Pittman of Nevada; 'Lord Lothian's Job', *Time*, July 8, 1940.

8. 'Letters to the Times: Hitler Seen as Sole Issue', Henry Phillips Jr, July 7, 1941, *The New York Times*.
9. RAF Museum, Hendon, Harris MSS., Folder H98, Harris to Air Chief Marshal Sir Wilfred R. Freeman, 15 September 1941.
10. Wm. Roger Louis, 'American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire', in Wm. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds), *The 'Special Relationship' – Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 262–264; *Ibid.*, Lord Beloff, 'The End of the British Empire and the Assumption of World-wide Commitments by the United States', pp. 252–253.
11. 'Manifest destiny warmed up?', *The Economist*, August 16, 2003; 'Points on the Points', *Time*, 25 Aug. 1941.
12. Gaddis Smith, *American Diplomacy during the Second World War, 1941–1945* (New York, 1965), pp. 81–83.
13. Sir Arthur Salter, the Independent MP for Oxford University, cited in Hugh Dalton's diary; Diary, 8 July 1942, Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940–45* (London, 1986), p. 465.
14. John Wheeler-Bennett, *Special Relationships* (London, 1975), p. 86; Alex Danchev, *Establishing the Anglo-American Alliance – The Second World War Diaries of Brigadier Vivian Dykes* (London, 1990), pp. 6–13; Keith Jeffrey, *The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949* (London, 2010), pp. 438–449; William S. Stephenson (ed.), *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the America 1940–1945* (New York, 1998).
15. 'An Open Letter for the Editors of LIFE to the People of England', *Life*, 12 Oct. 1942.
16. J. Enoch Powell, 'Law, Richard Kidston, first Baron Coleraine (1901–1980)', rev., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), online edn., Jan 2011; D. R. Thorpe, 'Glamour boys (act. 1938–1940)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (May 2006), online edn., Jan 2012.
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11

The Colonial versus the Anti-Colonial: The Failure of Anglo–American Planning on the Future of the Italian Colonies, September 1943–June 1945

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This chapter seeks to reassess Anglo–American post-war planning for the Italian colonies in Africa, conquered by British, Imperial and Commonwealth forces in 1941–2. The British government attempted to obtain American acquiescence to Britain securing its strategic interests in these territories. Their failure to obtain it during the war was due largely to American anti-colonialism and the determination of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff to avoid a possible confrontation with the Soviet Union over this issue, and thus to prejudice a US–Soviet deal over the Japanese mandated islands in the Pacific and other mandated territories. In fact in the first half of 1945 the Roosevelt/Truman Administration, unduly influenced by the Soviet agent Alger Hiss, seemed to be prepared to acquiesce in a Soviet trusteeship of an Italian colony, which would have posed a direct threat to Britain's interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and her standing as a global power. Using UK and US primary sources, this essay will seek to add to our understanding of the true nature of the Anglo–American relationship during the Second World War.

The question of the Italian colonies arose as a result of Fascist Italy's declaration of war against Britain and France in June 1940 and its subsequent attacks on the British position in Egypt, the Sudan, Somaliland and Kenya. In a series of hard-fought campaigns between 1940 and

1943, British, Imperial, Commonwealth and Allied forces conquered Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Libya. After honouring its pledge to restore Ethiopia's independence, Britain put the remaining territories under its military administration in accordance with the Hague Convention of 1907 on the laws of war (with the exception of the Fezzan in south-western Libya, which was conquered and administered by the Fighting French). The British and the Fighting French were required to administer these territories on 'a care and maintenance' basis until their fate was decided in the post-war peace settlement.¹ But this did not stop the British and the Americans, and to a certain extent the Fighting French and the Soviets, from trying to influence the nature of that final decision through planning and *faits accomplis* during the war, with serious consequences at the international, regional and local levels.

The restoration of Ethiopia independence and the occupation of Eritrea and Somalia by Britain in 1941–2 threatened to lead to a clash between the territorial ambitions of the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie (who laid claim to Eritrea and Somalia) and the desire of British officials in East Africa and London to rationalise the frontiers in the Horn of Africa by dividing Eritrea between Ethiopia and the Sudan and uniting the Somalis under one administration. This, in turn, drove Ethiopia and Britain to compete for the support of the United States, which had recently entered the war.² The differing nature of the military administrations in Libya (the maintenance of Cyrenaica as a purely Arab country in accordance with Britain's pledges in 1940 and 1942 that the predominantly Sanusi inhabitants of that territory would not be returned to Italian rule; the balancing of Arab, Italian and Jewish interests in Tripolitania; and French control of the Fezzan) led British administrators in the Middle East and the Foreign Office to favour the partition of the territory.³

In contrast, the US State Department hoped to persuade the British to accept direct international control of Libya, Eritrea and Somalia and to respect Ethiopian independence. It hoped that this would further its aim of creating viable new states in Africa and the Middle East which would look to the United States as their natural trading partner and moral guardian.⁴ The Foreign Office, but not the Colonial Office, was prepared to consider indirect international control through trusteeship by individual states, in return for American support for the dismantlement of Italy's colonial empire in accordance with British security requirements in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.⁵ If, for reasons of imperial strategy, the Foreign Office sought cooperation in the summer of 1943 with the State Department, the latter was anxious to ascertain the

views of the Foreign Office since the colonies were largely under British control. This fact also prevented the US government from giving its full backing to Ethiopian aspirations in the Horn of Africa.⁶

Following the armistice with Italy in September 1943 (which omitted any reference to the future of its colonies), the post-war planners in the Foreign Office and the State Department sought to exchange views on this question. During his visit to Washington the same month, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Nigel Ronald, had an informal and exploratory meeting with State Department officials, the outcome of which was the drawing up of a questionnaire which was to be submitted for a detailed analysis to the Division of Political Studies of the State Department, and the Research Department of the Foreign Office. It should be stressed that the post-war planners in the Foreign Office hoped that this heralded the start of joint planning on post-war problems which would enable the British to implant their ideas on the future in the American sub-conscious.⁷

The questionnaire, as subsequently amended (at the initiative of the Foreign Office, in order to draw out the State Department on 'international trusteeship') posed the basic questions concerning the future of the Italian colonies: should Italy be allowed to retain all or some of its colonies, or should they be annexed by other nations (and, if so, which), or should they be put under international trusteeship? If the last solution was adopted, how would it differ from the mandates established by the League of Nations? Should Italy be allowed to hold a trusteeship of any or all of the colonies, or should they be administered directly by the envisaged United Nations organisation, or by individual powers, and which ones?

Apart from these general points, the questionnaire asked specific questions about each colony. Should Tripolitania and Cyrenaica be treated separately, and should the Sanusis receive autonomy? Should a Greater Somalia be created? Should Eritrea be ceded, either whole or in part, to Ethiopia, to allow the latter access to the sea, thus helping it to bolster its independence, and should this be made conditional upon Ethiopia agreeing to abandon its territorial claims elsewhere? In addition, the questionnaire asked the researchers to consider the possibilities for economic development of the Italian colonies, and whether there was a need for frontier rectifications and defence arrangements at Tobruk, Benghazi and Massawa.⁸

The research unit at the Foreign Office, F.O.R.D., was quicker off the mark than its equivalent in the State Department, the Political Studies Division. By March 1944 it had produced, with the help of information

from the Colonial Office, the Dominions Office and interested individuals serving in the Middle East, a series of memoranda which addressed most of the basic questions pertaining to the future of the Italian colonies (the Foreign Office was keen to draw out the State Department on 'international trusteeship' before giving its views on the subject).⁹ F.O.R.D considered it desirable to strip Italy of its overseas empire, acquired for reasons of strategy and prestige and an onerous economic burden, in order to reduce its ability to act aggressively, either alone or in combination with other powers. Despite the danger that this might create revanchist feeling in Italy, which could be a destabilising force in Europe, it was pointed out that 'there are not in fact many colonies where the United Nations will be free to choose whether Italy shall or shall not retain her sovereignty'. Italy's return to Ethiopia and Cyrenaica was ruled out by the British government's recognition of the restoration of Ethiopian independence and the pledge that the Sanusi in Cyrenaica would not fall again under Italian domination. Apart from these 'irrevocable commitments' there were good reasons for transferring Eritrea and Somalia to other sovereignty. Tripolitania was the only territory where there seemed no obvious alternative to Italian rule. It was thought that it might be possible to reconcile Italy to the loss of its overseas empire if Italian settlers were allowed to stay in Tripoli or to emigrate to Great Britain's African possessions and if Italy was represented on any international 'board of control' set up to administer the Italian colonies and any other territories which might be placed under international trusteeship.¹⁰

F.O.R.D concluded that Libya, which was a country without 'natural unity', should be split up into its constituent parts, and that Cyrenaica might become an autonomous Sanusi amirate under Egyptian suzerainty (with some degree of international supervision and provision for United Nations military, naval and air bases at Benghazi), and the Fezzan could be absorbed into the French Saharan Empire. The alternatives for Tripolitania were either its restoration to Italy, with guarantees for its demilitarisation, or its being put under international trusteeship, or a combination of both, whereby Italy would become the trustee. It is worth noting that these arrangements would render unnecessary the rectification of the disputed southern and eastern frontiers (with the exception of the Sarra Triangle, including the springs found in the Jabal Uweinat, which it was hoped would be retroceded to the Sudan), leaving for definition only the border between Cyrenaica and the two halves of Tripolitania, which was to be determined by the western limit of the Sanusi tribes.¹¹

F.O.R.D held that there were strategic objections to Italy remaining in Somalia and Eritrea, thereby posing a continued threat to British imperial communications and Ethiopian independence. If Italy were not to return to these territories there was little point in maintaining them as political entities, since they were incapable of becoming independent. As the continued partition of the nomadic Somali tribes in the Horn of Africa between four different administrations would hamper any plans for the development of the pastoral economy of Somalia and maintain the risk of frontier incidents, it was recommended that all the Somali country (including French Somaliland, which was inhabited mainly by the 'Afar') – or at the very least British Somaliland and Somalia, if the French and the Ethiopians refused, as seemed likely, to cede their Somali territories – should come under a unitary authority. This should be put under international trusteeship, to be administered by either Great Britain or a friendly power.¹²

F.O.R.D had a clearer idea of the future of Eritrea than has been made out. In order to unite the Coptic Christian cultivators of Tigrai, the Muslim tribes of Dancalia and the Muslim nomads of the Baraka, as well as meeting Ethiopia's desire for an outlet to the Red Sea at Assab and Massawa, F.O.R.D advocated the division of Eritrea 'along the natural lines of cleavage'. Thus the central highlands and southern coastal plain would be ceded to Ethiopia, and the western lowlands to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The alternatives for the northern highlands and coastal plain were either to put them under international trusteeship, if the United Nations needed a base there with guaranteed transit rights for Ethiopia at Massawa, or, if not, to incorporate them in the Sudan, with Ethiopia obtaining sovereignty over Massawa. The rationalisation of the political geography of East Africa was to be achieved through an agreement with Emperor Haile Selassie, whereby in return for ceding part of his eastern provinces to a Greater Somalia, and agreeing to accept rectification of his frontiers with the Sudan and Kenya, he would be granted the most important part of Eritrea.¹³

It should be noted that F.O.R.D.'s findings stirred up considerable controversy both at home and abroad. Before being conveyed to the State Department their substance was considered by the Dominions Office, the Colonial Office, the Chiefs of Staff, the British military, political and diplomatic authorities in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and East Africa, Churchill and the Dominion Prime Ministers. The latter seemed to favour international trusteeship for the ex-Italian colonies, administered by individual powers acting as trustees for the new international organisation. The Foreign Office thought it was the

only solution. But both the Dominions Office and the Colonial Office opposed it, arguing that it was not in accord with official British policy which aimed at setting-up 'purely consultative Regional Commissions in colonial areas'. Moreover, the Colonial Office was against the admission of Italy to any regional commission whose authority extended over British territory, and was opposed to Italian emigration to Great Britain's African colonies, as this smacked of 'appeasement'. Instead, Italy and the world should be taught that aggression would not pay. Furthermore, the Colonial Office favoured British control of a Greater Somalia in order to safeguard British interests.¹⁴

The Colonial Office received support for its views from the British Ambassador to Egypt, Lord Killearn, who was opposed to Italy's return to Tripolitania and discounted the value of Cyrenaica as a bargaining counter with Egypt, instead favouring direct British control, 'working through a Sanusi leader'. The G.O.C., East Africa Command, William Platt, who thought a British Commonwealth country should hold the trusteeship for Greater Somalia in order to ensure the security of British communications and territories in East Africa also opposed international trusteeship. Platt thought, in contrast to the Post-Hostilities Planning (P.H.P) Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, that the United Nations would probably need a base at Massawa and Asmara and that it was necessary for the Sudan to have Teclesan, thus giving the British a bridgehead on the escarpment and ensuring that they would not have to fight another battle for Keren. The ex-Chief Political Officer, East Africa Command, Lord Rennell of Rodd, wanted to go even further and give the Sudan access to the sea at Massawa with Asmara made available as a hill station for Aden. But the Civil Secretary in Khartoum, Sir Douglas Newbold, made clear that although the Sudan Government would be prepared to take over part of northern and western Eritrea, which was inhabited by the Muslim Beja people, it did not want Massawa.¹⁵

Although the British Embassy in Washington did not formally convey F.O.R.D.'s findings to the State Department until June 1944, their substance had been revealed to the Americans in April during the Stettinius Mission to London, and as a result of what Churchill called, 'an astonishing piece of presumption and ineptitude'.¹⁶ This was a reference to an administrative blunder by the Vice-Chiefs of Staff who mistakenly asked Allied Force Headquarters (A.F.H.Q.) in Algiers (which was concerned only with operational matters and had a large American staff), instead of General Headquarters Middle East (G.H.Q., M.E.) in Cairo for its views on strategic aspects of F.O.R.D.'s findings.¹⁷ Churchill was furious at the constitutional and diplomatic

impropriety of this action, and to remedy this he ordered the Vice-Chiefs of Staff to cancel their instructions and to issue a disclaimer, which was intended for American eyes, that F.O.R.D.'s findings did not represent the British government's policy on the question of the future of the Italian colonies which had not yet been discussed by the War Cabinet. Although Churchill's intervention effectively put a damper upon the issue in London (the Chiefs of staff refused to discuss this question without specific authorisation from the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister), it had the opposite effect in Washington.¹⁸

The Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, had indeed taken note of this exchange between London and Algiers (courtesy of the American Staff at A.F.H.Q., Algiers), but had advised President Roosevelt and his Chief of Staff, Admiral William D. Leahy, in view of the remedial action taken by the Vice-Chiefs of Staff, that he did not think it was necessary to broach the subject with the British. If the latter raised the issue, however, the American Ambassador in London had been instructed to inform them, in accordance with American policy, 'that no definite territorial commitments should be made except as part of a general settlement. Whilst we realise that exploration of such subjects must go forward, we would not wish to see thinking crystallised at this point, concerning distribution of Italian overseas territories as this might well tend to set a pattern for the distribution of other territories.'¹⁹

The Joint Chiefs of Staff followed the advice of 'the elder statesmen' of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (J.S.S.C.), rather than the views of the 'brains trust', the Strategy and Policy Group of the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff, in recommending that the United States should not support the British proposals, to which there were no direct objections, until it had ascertained Soviet views. It was thought that the Soviet Union 'might well have a political interest' in the future of the Italian colonies and might react violently, with serious consequences for the Grand Alliance, if it were confronted with an Anglo-American agreement upon which they had not been consulted beforehand. In addition, the British suggestion of United Nations bases in the Italian colonies raised the whole question of whether post-war bases should be controlled either collectively or individually by the United Nations, which the Joint Chiefs, given their continuing battle with the State Department on this issue, were reluctant to discuss. With exclusive American control of the Japanese mandated islands in the Pacific in mind, the Joint Chiefs recommended that each case should be decided on its merits. In effect, the Joint Chiefs, under the influence of the J.S.S.C., would not support British security requirements in the

Italian Colonies in case it endangered their main aim, which was a *quid pro quo* understanding between the Soviet Union and the United States on the Balkans and the Pacific.²⁰

In contrast to the Foreign Office the State Department had not, to date, devoted much attention to the question of the future of the Italian colonies. The memoranda produced by the Division of Political Affairs were very general and did not answer at all the various points of the questionnaire. On Roosevelt's instructions, however, the State Department devoted considerable time and effort in the summer of 1944 to analysing what they erroneously believed to be the proposals of the British Chiefs of Staff and to formulating a response, which was conveyed to Churchill by Roosevelt at the Second Quebec Conference in September 1944. The American response not only confirmed the State Department's conviction that international trusteeship was the solution to this problem, but reflected its increasing desire to protect potential American interests in Ethiopia, in particular trade.

In commenting on the British proposals, the memorandum stated American preferences, thus avoiding the recommendations being construed as commitments. The State Department preferred that all of Eritrea be assimilated into Ethiopia, but that the latter assume certain obligations in agreement with the new international organisation to safeguard proper administration and the security interests of the United Nations. So, Ethiopia would undertake 'to open all ports, airfields, and means of communications in Eritrea to the forces of the United Nations' in the event of a threat to the security of the Red Sea or North-East Africa. Also, technical personnel (no doubt American), would be employed in central and provincial government and in operating the ports, railways and roads. If the British insisted, however, for pressing strategic reasons, that part of Eritrea should be incorporated into the Sudan, the Americans had no strong reasons to object as long as only the area north and west of Asmara and Massawa was ceded.

There was no doubt about the American refusal to acquiesce in the cession of the Ogaden to a Greater Somalia, as this was 'an integral part of the territory of an independent sovereign state and ally' and, therefore, 'a change in its status should not be considered.' There did not seem to be the same objection to the inclusion of British Somaliland, French Somaliland (if the French agreed), and perhaps the Northern Frontier district of Kenya, along with Somalia, in a Greater Somalia, under an international trusteeship to be administered by an authority appointed by and responsible to the new international organisation, and composed of representatives and experts of the interested powers.

If the French did not agree to the inclusion of French Somaliland, it was proposed that Djibouti become a genuinely free port, and that Ethiopia might purchase the Franco-Ethiopian railway.

The preferred solution for Libya was 'International Trusteeship to be administered by a commission of experts responsible to the International Organisation', but this did not preclude the establishment of an autonomous Sanusi amirate in Cyrenaica. If the British objected to this it would be possible, though less desirable, to set up an autonomous Sanusi amirate under Egyptian or perhaps British trusteeship, and Italy could be given Tripolitania under international trusteeship. The security requirements of the United Nations were to be met by the location of air and naval bases in the Benghazi area, and at the Castel Benito airfield in Tripolitania, if necessary. France would be permitted only to seek frontier rectifications in the Fezzan, not outright cession of the province.²¹

Churchill treated the American response as an 'official communication' and instructed the Foreign Office to take prompt action on it. But Anglo-American cooperation received a setback when the State Department decided to postpone the transmission of the memoranda drawn up by the Political Studies Division, in answer to the joint questionnaire, which they had intended to hand over to their British counterparts at the Dunbarton Oaks Conference in the autumn of 1944. The head of the Political Studies Division, Harley Notter, told Paul Gore-Booth (who handled post-war planning for the British Embassy in Washington) that until the dispute was resolved between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff over the desirability of international trusteeship for dependent areas, no progress could be made on the question of the future of the Italian colonies.²²

Any hopes that Churchill had for a quick response by the British government to the State Department's memorandum on the Italian colonies were swiftly dashed. Since the subject raised contentious issues it took time for the various interested departments in Whitehall to formulate their views and to reach an agreement on an appropriate reply. One Foreign Office official was struck by the fact that the Americans seemed to have returned to the idea of international administration for colonies, which they were thought to have abandoned. Lord Hood saw the need for the British to draw nearer the American position, and lamented the 'unconstructive' attitude of the Colonial Office, which prevented the desired accommodation with the Americans. Although Hood opposed international administration, he was interested in 'the possibility of an International Colonial Bureau or Committee perhaps with some International Development Fund'.²³

But the Foreign Office was forced to defer to the Colonial Office's deep-rooted objection to international trusteeship for the Italian colonies, which the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir George Gater, thought 'cut across our general Colonial Policy'.²⁴ The Colonial Office was at this time busy drawing up a scheme for a new international system of collaboration in regard to dependent territories which, if accepted, would result in winding-up the existing mandates and avoiding the creation of new forms of supervision or trusteeship for ex-enemy colonies after the war. The Colonial Office was anxious to avoid any system which involved the creation of different kinds of international status for different dependent territories. Until the British government had decided their general policy on this subject, the Colonial Office was against agreeing to any suggestions for international trusteeship for the Italian colonies.²⁵

Both the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office had noted the State Department's comment that if the British insisted on the partition of Eritrea the Americans would acquiesce. Therefore, the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office agreed to insist on British proposals for the partition of Eritrea, which they regarded as an artificial creation, on ethnic grounds, in their reply to the State Department. But the British were prepared to make concessions to the Americans. The cession of a major portion of Eritrea to Ethiopia was to be made conditional upon the guarantees suggested by the State Department as well as on the British desiderata, namely, the rectification of Ethiopia's frontiers with British Somaliland, Kenya and the Sudan (all of which were in the interests of the inhabitants) and the cession of the Ogaden (although the last was dependent upon American agreement).

The Colonial Office and the Foreign Office were opposed to the American concept of a genuine international administration either of Somalia or an amalgamation of British Somaliland and Somalia, which they thought impracticable. Instead they favoured, as the United States government was aware, administration by a single power (although they differed, as had been noted, over whether this power should act as an international trustee). The elimination of Italy from the scene made it possible to unify all the Somali-inhabited territories. The Colonial Office and the Foreign Office recommended this in principle as a 'forward-looking' step because it would eliminate the constant border raids and frontier friction. But it was pointed out that any proposal for unification would fail in its main object unless the Somali-inhabited Ogaden was included. If this proved practicable then a single power should assume responsibility for the administration of this Greater Somalia.

In contemplating the future of Somalia, the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, was extremely reluctant to see the British government assume any more colonial responsibilities, but he was not prepared to see any other power administer it, with the sole exception of the United States. The Colonial Office regarded its primary interest in Somalia as being to ensure that its future administration did not fall into hostile hands and thus become a military threat to British Somaliland, Aden and Kenya. It was proposed, therefore, that the United States should contemplate assuming responsibility for a Greater Somalia providing, as insisted upon by the Colonial Office, that the British Government succeeded in convincing the British Somali tribes to agree to the suggested change of allegiance. If the United States refused to accept this responsibility, as seemed likely, and no other power proved willing to take on the responsibility, or strategic considerations made it vital for it to be under British control, then the only solution would be for the Colonial Office to assume responsibility for Somalia, providing it included the Ogaden and the reserved areas (which included the Haud grazing grounds to the south of the border with Ethiopia) and that special financial assistance was made available by the Treasury. The Colonial Office envisaged 'a straightforward British protectorate'.

However, if a proposal to include the Ogaden in a Greater Somalia prejudiced the chances of other essential frontier adjustments being negotiated with Ethiopia (because of Ethiopian opposition to the cession of the Ogaden), the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office preferred that it should not be put forward (which would effectively scupper the Greater Somalia plan). The Colonial Office was adamant on this point. It regarded the negotiation of other frontier rectifications with Ethiopia as more important. These were, in order of priority, the redrawing of the southern frontier of British Somaliland (which as of 1897 excluded the grazing areas of the tribes centred in British Somaliland, areas extending into Ethiopia proper and part of the Ogaden, without which British Somaliland was not a viable economic entity); a slight readjustment of the Kenya-Ethiopia frontier in the Moyale area (to include within Kenya the water supplies of Kenyan tribes and to facilitate administration on both sides of the frontier); and the inclusion of the Baro Salient in the Sudan.

The Colonial Office and the Foreign Office had noted that the State Department seemed prepared to consider separate fates for Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, if the British so insisted. They were prepared to see Tripolitania revert to Italian rule provided the Italians accepted the proposed general obligations with regard to the administration of

dependent territories, that the rights of the Maltese residents were guaranteed, that the Fezzan was ceded to France and the Uweinat Oasis (although not the Sarra Triangle) was returned to the Sudan, and that Great Britain was given special facilities at Castel Benito airfield. The Colonial Office and the Foreign Office reiterated their preference for an autonomous amirate under Egyptian or British suzerainty or alternatively an Anglo–Egyptian Condominium along the lines of the Sudan. But the Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office stressed the importance of the British not being committed by the Americans to a fixed line on Cyrenaica as there were a number of imponderables involved, namely, whether the Egyptians were prepared or able to assume responsibility for Cyrenaica; whether Cyrenaica could be used as a bargaining counter with the Egyptian government over the Suez Canal; and whether oil was present in Cyrenaica, as suspected by both the British and the Americans. The Egyptian Department wanted the British political and military authorities in Cairo to be consulted before any conclusions were reached.²⁶

In commenting upon the joint proposals of the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office, the Chiefs of Staff, following the recommendations of their Post-Hostilities Planning Staff (P.H.P.S.), said that it was ‘strategically important’ that none of the Italian colonies, or Italy for that matter, ‘should come under the control of any state which might become a potential enemy since they flank our sea and air communications through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea’. The Italian colonies also provided ‘bases from which Egypt, the Sudan and Kenya could be attacked’. This assessment is significant in that, apart from a resurgent Italy, the only potential enemy was the Soviet Union, which had shown signs of interference in Italy (which contained a large Communist party) since April 1944 and was regarded by the P.H.P.S. and the Chiefs of Staff as the most likely threat to British interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Furthermore, the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that Great Britain would require the use of military facilities in some Italian colonies. It was important, therefore, that they be controlled either by Great Britain or a friendly power.

The Chiefs of Staff approved of the proposal for Eritrea provided they could rely upon Ethiopian guarantees of the use of facilities at Massawa and access to the Asmara plateau, which was essential for the defence of Massawa, if required in an emergency. The Chiefs of Staff did not insist on a bridgehead on the Keren escarpment if it was felt to be politically disadvantageous. They thought that only Great Britain should control British Somaliland and Somalia as air bases on both shores of the Gulf

of Aden were held to be desirable, since they would boost considerably Great Britain's strategic position in the area.

The Chiefs of Staff had no objections to the proposal on Cyrenaica, provided Britain had air or naval bases in the 'Benghazi area', control of El Adem (an important link on the main strategic air route to the Middle East), the right to station troops anywhere in Cyrenaica, and could develop road and rail communications in the province. But they questioned the wisdom of the proposal that Italy should return to Tripolitania. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, General Sir Bernard Paget, had warned that the Italians would not be able to cope with the likely resistance of the Arab population. This would necessitate British military intervention, which would be unpopular in the Arab world and damaging to Great Britain's prestige in the Middle East. The Chiefs of Staff were against the return of the Uweinat Oasis to the Sudan as it might create a precedent for similar demands by other powers.²⁷

The strategic appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff had raised a number of questions, notably over Somalia, which had to be resolved before a reply to the State Department's memorandum on the future of the Italian colonies could be drafted. Neither the Colonial Office nor the Foreign Office were convinced by the argument of the Chiefs of Staff that Great Britain needed to control Somalia for strategic reasons and it was thought to be contrary to declarations by the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary that Great Britain desired no territory. Furthermore, a reply to the State Department could not be sent until British ideas on the future of dependent territories in general, which were then under consideration by the British and the Dominion governments, had been conveyed to the Americans. But pressure of events forced the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office to draw up an interim reply. It was possible that President Roosevelt might raise the question of the British reply to the State Department's proposals on the Italian colonies at the next Heads of State meeting at Yalta, and Churchill demanded prompt action on this by the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office.

There was no time to seek a ruling from the War Cabinet over Somalia so the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office drew up a draft reply to Roosevelt from Churchill with a covering minute summarising the British proposals on the Italian colonies within the context of the British government's proposed policy on the administration of dependent territories. The draft reply reflected the views of the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office rather than the Chiefs of Staff on controversial points. It also indicated a change in the views of the Foreign Office on the future of the Cyrenaica. The permanent officials had been

impressed by the proposals of the Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Middle East, Brigadier Arundell, backed by the Middle East Defence Council in Cairo, for British, rather than Egyptian, protection of an autonomous Sanusi amirate and the recognition of Sayyid Idris as the Amir of his people. At the same time the Egyptian Department discounted the value of Cyrenaica as a bargaining counter with Egypt over the Suez Canal. The Foreign Office also decided that it would be necessary to secure American agreement to a British solution for Cyrenaica, and this could not be done until after the Yalta conference. But the draft reply was never given to Roosevelt at Yalta because the 'Big Three', Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt, reached decisions on international trusteeship contrary to the line of the draft reply.²⁸

Yalta marked an important point in the Anglo-American debate on the future of the Italian colonies, as it did on so many other issues of post-war importance. At Yalta, Roosevelt and the State Department (in particular the pro-Soviet Deputy Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs, Alger Hiss), with Stalin's support, forced a poorly-briefed Churchill to agree in principle to the American idea of placing any dependent territories taken away from the enemy (such as the Italian colonies), along with existing mandates and any other territories volunteered, under international trusteeship, and to the setting-up of the necessary machinery by the new international organisation. Since the Joint Chiefs of Staff objected to territorial negotiations that might prolong the war, no discussion was envisaged at the forthcoming United Nations conference or in preliminary talks as to which territories within the above categories were to be put under international trusteeship. Indeed, the State Department thought it advisable to postpone a decision on the future of the Italian colonies until the peace settlement when the United Nations could better judge Italy's contribution to the war effort.²⁹

Yalta not only determined the context in which the debate on the Italian colonies would be carried on, it was significant in two other respects. It implied that the United States was no longer interested in joint planning with Great Britain on the Italian colonies and it also signified that the Americans and the Soviets might be prepared to cooperate in determining the future of the Italian colonies without giving due weight to British interests, with the consequent damage to Great Britain's standing as a great power. There was even an indication of this when, on New Year's Day 1945, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Andrei Gromyko, had informed Leo Pasvolosky, Special Adviser to the Secretary of State, that since the Soviet Union had fought Italy it should assume responsibility concerning the Italian colonies. And

Roosevelt had talked to Stalin at Yalta about trusteeships in the Far East (Korea and Indochina) in which the Soviets could share. It would have been natural, therefore, for the Soviets to have expected to participate in the new trusteeship system to be elaborated by the United Nations, and for their agent of influence, Alger Hiss, to help them to achieve it. These new factors need to be taken into account in any consideration of the debate over the future of the Italian colonies after Yalta.³⁰

The lack of American interest in joint planning with the British on the future of the Italian colonies was illustrated by Roosevelt's rapid departure from Yalta for his meeting with Haile Selassie (and King Faruk and King Ibn Saud) in the Suez Canal Zone, the citadel of British power in the Middle East, in February 1945. Roosevelt displayed a sympathetic interest in Ethiopian aspirations to secure access to the sea by controlling the Franco-Ethiopian railway and the French port of Djibouti and annexing Eritrea and perhaps Somalia. He was also keen to encourage the internal development of Ethiopia, but he seems to have made 'no commitments, promises or assurances of any kind'. In fact, in evaluating the Ethiopian bid for US support, the US Minister to Ethiopia, John Caldwell, did not favour putting what he regarded as the relatively advanced Eritreans under the more backward rule of Ethiopia and favoured Ethiopia's control of the railway to Djibouti to give it access to the sea.³¹

In his separate meeting with Haile Selassie, Churchill rejected the Emperor's thinly-veiled attempts to increase his influence in Eritrea by appointing an Ethiopian consul to Asmara and abolishing the customs barrier between Ethiopia and Eritrea. But Churchill was prepared to confirm Lord De La Warr's statement during the negotiations for the new Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 19 December 1944, that Great Britain viewed with sympathy Ethiopia's claim to Eritrea but could make no commitment as the final decision rested with the Great Powers at the peace conference, adding that the desires of the inhabitants of Eritrea would also have to be taken into consideration. It was to secure the possibility of British support for the return of Eritrea that Haile Selassie had agreed in December 1944 to continued British control of the Ogaden and the Reserved Areas (ostensibly for military reasons but in reality so as not to prejudice the chances of creating a Greater Somalia or at least securing frontier rectifications after the war). This was 'in order as an ally to contribute to the effective prosecution of the war, and without prejudice to the underlying sovereignty'.³²

This did not, as has been claimed, appease anti-colonial sentiment in Washington. The State Department remained opposed to the continued

presence of the British Military administration in the Ogaden and the Reserved Areas which, in conjunction with known British plans for including these territories in a future Greater Somalia, continued to pose a threat not only to the integrity of Ethiopia but perhaps more importantly to the unrestricted operation of American commercial interests (oil and aviation) in Ethiopia. The State Department was also worried that it might set an unfortunate precedent for the Soviet Union in northern Iran. The American adviser to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, John Spencer, had informed the Soviet Minister to Ethiopia in October 1944 of British plans for a Greater Somalia. Here was a ready-made issue for Soviet–American cooperation at the expense of British interests.³³

In the aftermath of Yalta, both the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office argued that it was impossible to answer Hull's memorandum of September 1944, and by extension formulate the policy of the British government on the future of the Italian colonies until the 'conception of international trusteeship' was made clear at the United Nations Conference at San Francisco. An interim reply was sent to this effect by Churchill on 1 May 1945 to assure the State Department that the issue had not been allowed 'to sink without trace'. But the State Department exhibited no interest in the matter or in showing their memoranda, in answer to the joint questionnaire on the future of the Italian colonies, to the Foreign Office.³⁴

The Charter for the new world organisation, which the United Nations drew up at the San Francisco Conference, contained three chapters which directly affected the future of the Italian colonies. Chapter XI ('Declaration Regarding Non Self-Governing Territories') bound member states responsible for non self-governing territories 'to develop self-government according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement' (Article 73). Chapter XII ('International Trusteeship System') specified that 'territories which may be detached from enemy states as a result of the Second World War 'were to be put under trusteeship' (Article 77). A distinction was made between strategic and non-strategic territories in order to give the United States unfettered control of the Japanese mandated islands in the North Pacific. Also at American insistence the 'states directly concerned' were to reach agreement between them as to which power should be the administering authority (Article 79), which could be 'one or more states or the organisation itself' (Article 81). This meant that any power, not least the Soviet Union, could argue direct concern. It was to give rise to the lengthy post-war dispute over the future of the Italian colonies. Lastly, under Chapter XIII, the Trusteeship Council was empowered to

examine annual reports, to receive petitions and to despatch visiting missions to the trust territories at the invitation of the administering authority.³⁵

There is fragmentary evidence to suggest that, in order to persuade the Soviets to accept the American concept of strategic and non-strategic trust territories, the Chairman of the United States Delegation, the Secretary of State, Stettinius, and his deputy, in charge of trusteeship negotiations, Commander Harold Stassen (a former Governor of North Dakota and prospective presidential candidate who was on active service with the US Navy), with the encouragement of Alger Hiss (acting Secretary-General of the UN), bought them off by promising American support for the Soviet Union in acquiring territories under trusteeship. On 23 June, Stettinius informed the head of the Soviet Delegation at the San Francisco Conference, Andrei Gromyko, 'that we should be happy to support in principle the Soviet proposal as to the eligibility of your Government as a potential administering authority'.³⁶ This letter proved to be a great embarrassment to the Americans at subsequent conferences when the Soviets pressed their claim for a trusteeship.

Although the post-war planners in the Foreign Office and the State Department engaged in desultory conversations on the future of the Italian colonies during the war, the Foreign Office failed to win American support for the break-up of the Italian colonial empire in accordance with British imperial security interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Foreign Office was thwarted by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff who in May 1944, in what appears to be the earliest American assessment of the Soviet Union as a possible enemy, were anxious that the United States should not be drawn into a possible area of conflict with the Soviet Union. A more ominous development for the British imperial strategists was the American-sponsored Yalta agreement on international trusteeship for those colonies taken away from Italy after the war and the subsequent Soviet demand at the Potsdam conference in July 1945 for the trusteeship of an Italian colony. This posed a direct threat to British interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and to Britain's global strategy. Britain needed American support to resist it, but there was no sign in the summer of 1945 that this would be forthcoming. It would take the onset of the Cold War to align British and American strategic aims over the Italian colonies. It was not until 1949 that Britain and the United States reached an agreement on this question and sponsored the successful UN resolutions on Libyan independence, Italian trusteeship of Somalia and the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia. This enabled the British and the Americans to secure

their desired strategic facilities in Libya and Eritrea. It represented a hard-fought success for British policy-makers after their failure to co-opt American planning on this question during the Second World War.³⁷

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