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IN

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(continued from front flap)

THE

ANGLO-AMERICAN

ESTABLISHMENT

On rare occasions a book is publish-

ed which must forever alter the way in

which we view the world around us.

Within a short while, it becomes diffi-

cult to understand how we could have

functioned without the knowledge

gained from it. The Anglo-American

Establishment is such a book. Tn it

Professor Carroll Quigley presents

crucial "keys" without which 20th

century political, economic , and

military events can never be fully

understood. The reader will see that

this applies to events past— present

— and future-

While the notion of conspiratorial in-

fluence on world events has gained

Credence with both extremities of the

American political spectrum, and to a

degree with the general public, the

more academically-oriented person

has tended to downplay such in-

fluence, largely because of the lack of

scholarship in the presentation and

analysis of the facts by those support-

ing the conspiracy theories. In addi-

tion, many such supporters have

made themselves easy to ignore and,

in fact, have themselves always

assumed that they would be ignored.

Professor Quigley 's work does not suf-

fer from these defects. The evidence

he presents here appears irrefutable:

(continued from front flap)

the analysis— brilliant. In his own

words:

"It is not easy for an outsider to

write the history of a secret group of

this kind. but. . , it should be done, for

this group i$. as I shall show, one of

the most important historical facts of

the twentieth century, . , I suppose in

the long view my attitude would not

be far different from that of the {socie-

ty}, , . but agreeing with the group on

goals, I cannot agree with them on

methods, . . In this group were per-

sons who must command the admira-

tion and affection of all who know of

them. On the other hand, in this group

were persons whose lives have been a

disaster to our way of life. Unfortu-

nately . . . the influence of the latter

kind has been stronger. , . I have been

told that the story I relate here would

be better left untold. . . the last thing

I should wish is that anything I write

could be used by the anglophobes. . ,

but I feel the truth , , , once told , . .

can be of injury to no men of good

will.”

Carroll Quigley {1910-1977) was a

highly respected professor at the

School of Foreign Service at George-

town University, He was an instructor

at Princeton and Harvard: a consul-

tant to the U.S. Department of De-

fense, the House Committee on As-

tronautics and Space Exploration; and

the U.S, Navy. His other major works

include Evolution of Civilization

and Tragedy and Hope —a History of

The World in Our Time,

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Carroll Quigley

( 1910 \* 1977 }

“No country that values its safety should allow what the Milner

group accomplished— that is. that a small number of men would

be able to wield such power in administration and politics, should

be given almost complete control over the publication of docu-

ments relating to their actions, should be able to exercise such in-

fluence over the avenues of information that create public opinion,

and should be able to monopolize so completely the writing and

the teaching of the history of their own period."

Carroll Quigley

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ISBN 0-9 1 6728-50- 1

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The Anglo-American Establishment

The

Anglo-American

Establishment

FROM RHODES TO CLIVEDEN

Carroll Quigley

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Publisher’s Note

ON very rare occasions a book appears which forever changes the

way in which we perceive the world around us. Within a short while it

becomes hard to understand how we could have functioned without

the knowledge gained from it. The Anglo-American Establishment is

such a book. In it Professor Carroll Quigley presents certain “keys”

crucial to the understanding of 20th century political, economic and

military events - events of the past, present, and future. That the nar-

rative ends in 1949 does not detract in any way from what is presented,

and its great value. It does, however, break open the way for current

w 7 riters and students to work more effectively in their areas.

The fact that Carroll Quigley, a highly respected professor at

Georgetown University and an instructor at Princeton and Harvard,

could not find a publisher for this work, is in itself significant.

How Books in Focus came to discover the existence of the

manuscript is a story in itself, which began on a beach in Lindos on the

Mediterranean island of Rhodes, in 1967, eight years before the com-

pany was formed; but that story will have to be told at a later time.

Stephen A. Zarlenga

Publisher

January 8, 1981

Preface

The Rhodes Scholarships, established by the terms of Cecil Rhodes’s

seventh will, are known to everyone. What is not so widely known is

that Rhodes in five previous wills left his fortune to form a secret

society, which was to devote itself to the preservation and expansion of

the British Empire, And w r hat does not seem to be known to anyone is

that this secret society was created by Rhodes and his principal trustee,

Lord Milner, and continues to exist to this day. To be sure, this secret

society is not a childish thing like the Ku Klux Klan, and it does not

have any secret robes, secret handclasps, or secret passwords. It does

not need any of these, since its members know each other intimately. It

probably has no oaths of secrecy nor any formal procedure of initia-

tion. It does, however, exist and holds secret meetings, over which the

senior member present presides. At various times since 1891, these

meetings have been presided over by Rhodes, Lord Milner, Lord

Selborne, Sir Patrick Duncan, Field Marshal Jan Smuts, Lord Lothian,

and Lord Brand. They have been held in all the British Dominions,

starting in South Africa about 1903; in various places in London,

chiefly 175 Piccadilly; at various colleges at Oxford, chiefly All Souls;

and at many English country houses such as Tring Park, Blickling Hall,

Cliveden, and others.

This society has been known at various times as Milners

Kindergarten, as the Round Table Group, as the Rhodes crowd, as The

Times crowd, as the All Souls group, and as the Cliveden set. All of

these terms are unsatisfactory, for one reason or another, and I have

chosen to call it the Milner Group. Those persons who have used the

other terms, or heard them used, have not generally been aware that

all these various terms referred to the same Group.

It is not easy for an outsider to write the history of a secret group of

this kind, but, since no insider is going to do it, an outsider must at-

tempt it. It should be done, for this Group is, as I shall show, one of the

most important historical facts of the twentieth century. Indeed, the

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Group is of such significance that evidence of its existence is not hard to

find, if one knows where to look. This evidence I have sought to point

out without overly burdening this volume with footnotes and bib-

liographical references. While such evidences of scholarship are kept at

a minimum, I believe I have given the source of every fact which I

mention. Some of these facts came to me from sources which I am not

permitted to name, and I have mentioned them only where I can pro-

duce documentary evidence available to everyone. Nevertheless, it

would have been very difficult to write this book if I had not received a

certain amount of assistance of a personal nature from persons close to

the Group. For obvious reasons, I cannot reveal the names of such per-

sons, so I have not made reference to any information de-

rived from them unless it was information readily available from other

sources.

Naturally, it is not possible for an outsider to write about a secret

group without falling into errors. There are undoubtedly errors in

what follows. I have tried to keep these at a minimum by keeping the

interpretation at a minimum and allowing the facts to speak for

themselves. This will serve as an excuse for the somewhat excessive use

of quotations. I feel that there is no doubt at all about my general inter-

pretation. I also feel that there are few misstatements of fact, except in

one most difficult matter. This difficulty arises from the problem of

knowing just who is and who is not a member of the Group. Since

membership may not be a formal matter but based rather on frequent

social association, and since the frequency of such association varies

from time to time and from person to person, it is not always easy to say

who is in the Group and who is not. I have tried to solve this difficulty

by dividing the Group into two concentric circles: an inner core of in-

timate associates, who unquestionably knew that they were members

of a group devoted to a common purpose; and an outer circle of a

larger number, on whom the inner circle acted by personal persuasion,

patronage distribution, and social pressure. It is probable that most

members of the outer circle were not conscious that they were being

used by a secret society. More likely they knew it, but, English fashion,

felt it discreet to ask no questions. The ability of Englishmen of this

class and background to leave the obvious unstated, except perhaps in

obituaries, is puzzling and sometimes irritating to an outsider. In

general, I have undoubtedly made mistakes in my lists of members, but

the mistakes, such as they are, are to be found rather in my attribution

of any particular person to the outer circle instead of the inner core,

rather than in my connecting him to the Group at all. In general, I

have attributed no one to the inner core for whom I do not have

evidence, convincing to me, that he attended the secret meetings of the

Group. As a result, several persons whom I place in the outer circle,

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such as Lord Halifax, should probably be placed in the inner core.

I should say a few words about my general attitude toward this sub-

ject. I approached the subject as a historian. This attitude I have kept.

I have tried to describe or to analyze, not to praise or to condemn. I

hope that in the book itself this attitude is maintained. Of course I have

an attitude, and it would be only fair to state it here. In general, I

agree with the goals and aims of the Milner Group. I feel that the

British way of life and the British Commonwealth of Nations are

among the great achievements of all history. I feel that the destruction

of either of them would be a terrible disaster to mankind. I feel that the

withdrawal of Ireland, of Burma, of India, or of Palestine from the

Commonwealth is regrettable and attributable to the fact that the per-

sons in control of these areas failed to absorb the British way of life

while they were parts of the Commonwealth. I suppose, in the long

view, my attitude would not be far different from that of the members

of the Milner Group. But, agreeing with the Group on goals, I cannot

agree with them on methods. To be sure, I realize that some of their

methods were based on nothing but good intentions and high

ideals — higher ideals than mine, perhaps. But their lack of perspective

in critical moments, their failure to use intelligence and common sense,

their tendency to fall back on standardized social reactions and verbal

cliches in a crisis, their tendency to place power and influence into

hands chosen by friendship rather than merit, their oblivion to the con-

sequences of their actions, their ignorance of the point of view of per-

sons in other countries or of persons in other classes in their own coun-

try— these things, it seems to me, have brought many of the things

which they and I hold dear close to disaster. In this Group were persons

like Esher, Grey, Milner, Hankey, and Zimmern, who must command

the admiration and affection of all who know of them. On the other

hand, in this Group were persons whose lives have been a disaster to

our way of life. Unfortunately, in the long run, both in the Group and

in the world, the influence of the latter kind has been stronger than the

influence of the former.

This has been my personal attitude. Little of it, I hope, has

penetrated to the pages which follow. I have been told that the story I

relate here would be better left untold, since it would provide ammuni-

tion for the enemies of what I admire. I do not share this view. The last

thing I should wish is that anything I write could be used by the

Anglophobes and isolationists of the Chicago Tribune. But I feel that

the truth has a right to be told, and, once told, can be an injury to no

men of good will. Only by a knowledge of the errors of the past is it

possible to correct the tactics of the future.

1949

C.Q.

The Anglo-American Establishment

Introduction

One wintry afternoon in February 1891, three men were engaged in

earnest conversation in London. From that conversation were to flow

consequences of the greatest importance to the British Empire and to

the world as a whole. For these men were organizing a secret society

that was, for more than fifty years, to be one of the most important

forces in the formulation and execution of British imperial and foreign

policy.

The three men who were thus engaged were already well known in

England. The leader was Cecil Rhodes, fabulously wealthy empire-

builder and the most important person in South Africa. The second was

William T. Stead, the most famous, and probably also the most sensa-

tional, journalist of the day. The third was Reginald Baliol Brett, later

known as Lord Esher, friend and confidant of Queen Victoria, and

later to be the most influential adviser of King Edward VII and King

George V.

The details of this important conversation will be examined later. At

present we need only point out that the three drew up a plan of

organization for their secret society and a list of original members. The

plan of organization provided for an inner circle, to be known as “The

Society of the Elect,” and an outer circle, to be known as “The Associa-

tion of Helpers.” Within The Society of the Elect, the real power was to

be exercised by the leader, and a “Junta of Three.” The leader was to

be Rhodes, and the Junta was to be Stead, Brett, and Alfred Milner. In

accordance with this decision, Milner was added to the society by Stead

shortly after the meeting we have described. 1

The creation of this secret society was not a matter of a moment. As

we shall see, Rhodes had been planning for this event for more than

seventeen years. Stead had been introduced to the plan on 4 April

1889, and Brett had been told of it on 3 February 1890. Nor was the

society thus founded an ephemeral thing, for, in modified form, it ex-

ists to this day. From 1891 to 1902, it was known to only a score of per-

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sons. During this period, Rhodes was leader, and Stead was the most

influential member. From 1902 to 1925, Milner was leader, while

Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian) and Lionel Curtis were probably the most

important members. From 1925 to 1940, Kerr was leader, and since his

death in 1940 this role has probably been played by Robert Henry

Brand (now Lord Brand).

During this period of almost sixty years, this society has been called

by various names. During the first decade or so it was called “the secret

society of Cecil Rhodes” or “the dream of Cecil Rhodes.” In the second

and third decades of its existence it was known as “Milner’s

Kindergarten” (1901-1910) and as “the Round Table Group”

(1910-1920). Since 1920 it has been called by various names, depending

on which phase of its activities was being examined. It has been called

“ The Times crowd,” “the Rhodes crowd,” the “Chatham House

crowd,” the “All Souls group,” and the “Cliveden set.” All of these

terms were more or less inadequate, because they focused attention on

only part of the society or on only one of its activities. The Milner

Kindergarten and the Round Table Group, for example, were two dif-

ferent names for The Association of Helpers and were thus only part of

the society, since the real center of the organization, The Society of the

Elect, continued to exist and recruited new members from the outer

circle as seemed necessary. Since 1920, this Group has been in-

creasingly dominated by the associates of Viscount Astor. In the 1930s,

the misnamed “Cliveden set” was close to the center of the society, but

it would be entirely unfair to believe that the connotations of super-

ficiality and conspiracy popularly associated with the expression

“Cliveden set” are a just description of the Milner Group as a whole. In

fact. Viscount Astor was, relatively speaking, a late addition to the

society, and the society should rather be pictured as utilizing the Astor

money to further their own ideals rather than as being used for any

purpose by the master of Cliveden.

Even the expression “Rhodes secret society,” which would be per-

fectly accurate in reference to the period 1891-1899, would hardly be

accurate for the period after 1899. The organization was so modified

and so expanded by Milner after the eclipse of Stead in 1899, and

especially after the death of Rhodes in 1902, that it took on quite a dif-

ferent organization and character, although it continued to pursue the

same goals. To avoid this difficulty, we shall generally call the

organization the “Rhodes secret society” before 1901 and “the Milner

Group” after this date, but it must be understood that both terms refer

to the same organization.

This organization has been able to conceal its existence quite suc-

cessfully, and many of its most influential members, satisfied to possess

the reality rather than the appearance of power, are unknown even to

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close students of British history. This is the more surprising when we

learn that one of the chief methods by which this Group works has been

through propaganda. It plotted the Jameson Raid of 1895; it caused the

Boer War of 1899-1902; it set up and controls the Rhodes Trust; it

created the Union of South Africa in 1906-1910; it established the

South African periodical The State in 1908; it founded the British Em-

pire periodical The Round Table in 1910, and this remains the

mouthpiece of the Group; it has been the most powerful single in-

fluence in All Souls, Balliol, and New Colleges at Oxford for more than

a generation; it has controlled The Times for more than fifty years,

with the exception of the three years 1919-1922; it publicized the idea

of and the name "British Commonwealth of Nations" in the period

1908-1918; it was the chief influence in Lloyd George’s war ad-

ministration in 1917-1919 and dominated the British delegation to the

Peace Conference of 1919; it had a great deal to do with the formation

and management of the League of Nations and of the system of man-

dates; it founded the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1919

and still controls it; it was one of the chief influences on British policy

toward Ireland, Palestine, and India in the period 1917-1945; it was a

very important influence on the policy of appeasement of Germany

during the years 1920-1940; and it controlled and still controls, to a

very considerable extent, the sources and the writing of the history of

British Imperial and foreign policy since the Boer War.

It would be expected that a Group which could number among its

achievements such accomplishments as these would be a familiar sub-

ject for discussion among students of history and public affairs. In this

case, the expectation is not realized, partly because of the deliberate

policy of secrecy which this Group has adopted, partly because the

Group itself is not closely integrated but rather appears as a series of

overlapping circles or rings partly concealed by being hidden behind

formally organized groups of no obvious political significance.

This Group, held together, as it is, by the tenuous links of friendship,

personal association, and common ideals is so indefinite in its outlines

(especially in recent years) that it is not always possible to say who is a

member and who is not. Indeed, there is no sharp line of demarkation

between those who are members and those who are not, since

"membership" is possessed in varying degrees, and the degree changes

at different times. Sir Alfred Zimmern, for example, while always close

to the Group, was in its inner circle only for a brief period in

1910-1922, thereafter slowly drifting away into the outer orbits of the

Group. Lord Halifax, on the other hand, while close to it from 1903,

did not really become a member until after 1920. Viscount Astor, also

close to the Group from its first beginnings (and much closer than

Halifax), moved rapidly to the center of the Group after 1916, and

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especially after 1922, and in later years became increasingly a decisive

voice in the Group.

Although the membership of the Milner Group has slowly shifted

with the passing years, the Group still reflects the characteristics of its

chief leader and, through him, the ideological orientation of Balliol in

the 1870s. Although the Group did not actually come into existence un-

til 1891, its history covers a much longer period, since its origins go

back to about 1873. This history can be divided into four periods, of

which the first, from 1873 to 1891, could be called the preparatory

period and centers about the figures of W. T. Stead and Alfred Milner.

The second period, from 1891 to 1901, could be called the Rhodes

period, although Stead was the chief figure for most of it. The third

period, from 1901 to 1922, could be called the New College period and

centers about Alfred Milner. The fourth period, from about 1922 to the

present, could be called the All Souls period and centers about Lord

Lothian, Lord Brand, and Lionel Curtis. During these four periods,

the Group grew steadily in power and influence, until about 1939. It

was badly split on the policy of appeasement after 16 March 1939, and

received a rude jolt from the General Election of 1945. Until 1939,

however, the expansion in power of the Group was fairly consistent.

This growth was based on the possession by its members of ability,

social connections, and wealth. It is not possible to distinguish the rela-

tionship of these three qualities — a not uncommon situation in

England.

Milner was able to dominate this Group because he became the focus

or rather the intersection point of three influences. These we shall call

“the Toynbee group,” “the Cecil Bloc,” and the “Rhodes secret soci-

ety.” The Toynbee group was a group of political intellectuals formed

at Balliol about 1873 and dominated by Arnold Toynbee and Milner

himself. It was really the group of Milner’s personal friends. The Cecil

Bloc was a nexus of political and social power formed by Lord

Salisbury and extending from the great sphere of politics into the fields

of education and publicity. In the field of education, its influence was

chiefly visible at Eton and Harrow and at All Souls College, Oxford. In

the field of publicity, its influence was chiefly visible in The Quarterly

Review and The Times. The “Rhodes secret society” was a group of im-

perial federalists, formed in the period after 1889 and using the

economic resources of South Africa to extend and perpetuate the

British Empire.

It is doubtful if Milner could have formed his Group without

assistance from all three of these sources. The Toynbee group gave him

the ideology and the personal loyalties which he needed; the Cecil Bloc

gave him the political influence without which his ideas could easily

have died in the seed; and the Rhodes secret society gave him the

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economic resources which made it possible for him to create his own

group independent of the Cecil Bloc. By 1902, when the leadership of

the Cecil Bloc had fallen from the masterful grasp of Lord Salisbury

into the rather indifferent hands of Arthur Balfour, and Rhodes had

died, leaving Milner as the chief controller of his vast estate, the Milner

Group was already established and had a most hopeful future. The

long period of Liberal government which began in 1906 cast a tem-

porary cloud over that future, but by 1916 the Milner Group had made

its entrance into the citadel of political power and for the next twenty-

three years steadily extended its influence until, by 1938, it was the

most potent political force in Britain.

The original members of the Milner Group came from well-to-do,

upper-class, frequently titled families. At Oxford they demonstrated

intellectual ability and laid the basis for the Group. In later years they

added to their titles and financial resources, obtaining these partly by

inheritance and partly by ability to tap new sources of titles and

money. At first their family fortunes may have been adequate to their

ambitions, but in time these were supplemented by access to the funds

in the foundation of All Souls, the Rhodes Trust and the Beit Trust, the

fortune of Sir Abe Bailey, the Astor fortune, certain powerful British

banks (of which the chief was Lazard Brothers and Company), and, in

recent years, the Nuffield money.

Although the outlines of the Milner Group existed long before 1891,

the Group did not take full form until after that date. Earlier, Milner

and Stead had become part of a group of neo-imperialists who justified

the British Empire’s existence on moral rather than on economic or

political grounds and who sought to make this justification a reality by

advocating self-government and federation within the Empire. This

group formed at Oxford in the early 1870s and was extended in the

early 1880s. At Balliol it included Milner, Arnold Toynbee, Thomas

Raleigh, Michael Glazebrook, Philip Lyttelton Gell, and George R.

Parkin. Toynbee was Milner’s closest friend. After his early death in

1883, Milner was active in establishing Toynbee Hall, a settlement

house in London, in his memory. Milner was chairman of the

governing board of this establishment from 1911 to his death in 1925.

In 1931 plaques to both Toynbee and Milner were unveiled there by

members of the Milner Group. In 1894 Milner delivered a eulogy of his

dead friend at Toynbee Hall, and published it the next year as Arnold

Toynbee: A Reminiscence . He also wrote the sketch of Toynbee in the

Dictionary of National Biography. The connection is important

because it undoubtedly gave Toynbee’s nephew, Arnold J. Toynbee,

his entree into government service in 1915 and into the Royal Institute

of International Affairs after the war.

George R. Parkin (later Sir George, 1846-1922) was a Canadian who

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spent only one year in England before 1889. But during that year

(1873-1874) he was a member of Milner s circle at Balliol and became

known as a fanatical supporter of imperial federation. As a result of

this, he became a charter member of the Canadian branch of the Im-

perial Federation League in 1885 and was sent, four years later, to

New Zealand and Australia by the League to try to build up imperial

sentiment. On his return, he toured around England, giving speeches

to the same purpose. This brought him into close contact with the Cecil

Bloc, especially George E. Buckle of The Times , G. W. Prothero, J. R.

Seeley, Lord Rosebery, Sir Thomas (later Lord) Brassey, and Milner.

For Buckle, and in support of the Canadian Pacific Railway, he made a

survey of the resources and problems of Canada in 1892. This was

published by Macmillan under the title The Great Dominion the

following year. On a subsidy from Brassey and Rosebery he wrote and

published his best-known book. Imperial Federation , in 1892. This

kind of work as a propagandist for the Cecil Bloc did not provide a very

adequate living, so on 24 April 1893 Milner offered to form a group of

imperialists who would finance this work of Parkin’s on a more stable

basis. Accordingly, Parkin, Milner, and Brassey, on 1 June 1893,

signed a contract by which Parkin was to be paid £450 a year for three

years. During this period he was to propagandize as he saw fit for im-

perial solidarity. As a result of this agreement, Parkin began a steady

correspondence with Milner, which continued for the rest of his life.

When the Imperial Federation League dissolved in 1894, Parkin

became one of a group of propagandists known as the “Seeley lecturers”

after Professor J. R. Seeley of Cambridge University, a famous im-

perialist. Parkin still found his income insufficient, however, although

it was being supplemented from various sources, chiefly The Times. In

1894 he went to the Colonial Conference at Ottawa as special cor-

respondent of The Times. The following year, when he was offered the

position of Principal of Upper Canada College, Toronto, he consulted

with Buckle and Moberly Bell, the editors of The Times , hoping to get

a full-time position on The Times. There was none vacant, so he ac-

cepted the academic post in Toronto, combining with it the position of

Canadian correspondent of The Times. This relationship with The

Times continued even after he became organizing secretary of the

Rhodes Trust in 1902. In 1908, for example, he was The Times s cor-

respondent at the Quebec tercentenary celebration. Later, in behalf of

The Times and with the permission of Marconi, he sent the first press

dispatch ever transmitted across the Atlantic Ocean by radio.

In 1902, Parkin became the first secretary of the Rhodes Trust, and

he assisted Milner in the next twenty years in setting up the methods by

which the Rhodes Scholars would be chosen. To this day, more than a

quarter-century after his death, his influence is still potent in the

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Milner Group in Canada. His son-in-law, Vincent Massey, and his

namesake, George Parkin de T. Glazebrook, are the leaders of the

Milner Group in the Dominion. 2

Another member of this Balliol group of 1875 was Thomas Raleigh

(later Sir Thomas, 1850-1922), close friend of Parkin and Milner, Fel-

low of All Souls (1876-1922), later registrar of the Privy Council (1896-

1899), legal member of the Council of the Viceroy of India

(1899-1904), and member of the Council of India in London (1909-

1913). Raleigh’s friendship with Milner was not based only on associa-

tion at Balliol, for he had lived in Milner's house in Tubingen, Ger-

many, when they were both studying there before 1868.

Another student, who stayed only briefly at Balliol but remained as

Milner's intimate friend for the rest of his life, was Philip Lyttelton Gell

(1852-1926). Gell was a close friend of Milner's mother's family and

had been with Milner at King's College, London, before they both

came up to Balliol. In fact, it is extremely likely that it was because of

Gell, two years his senior, that Milner transferred to Balliol from Lon-

don. Gell was made first chairman of Toynbee Hall by Milner when it

was opened in 1884, and held that post for twelve years. He was still

chairman of it when Milner delivered his eulogy of Toynbee there in

1894. In 1899 Milner made Gell a director of the British South Africa

Company, a position he held for twenty-six years (three of them as

president).

Another intimate friend, with whom Milner spent most of his college

vacations, was Michael Glazebrook (1853-1926). Glazebrook was the

heir of Toynbee in the religious field, as Milner was in the political

field. He became Headmaster of Clifton College (1891-1905) and

Canon of Ely (1905-1926) and frequently got into conflict with his ec-

clesiastical superiors because of his liberal views. This occurred in its

most acute form after his publication of The Faith of a Modern

Churchman in 1918. His younger brother, Arthur James Glazebrook,

was the founder and chief leader of the Canadian branch of the Milner

Group until succeeded by Massey about 1935.

While Milner was at Balliol, Cecil Rhodes was at Oriel, George E.

Buckle was at New College, and H. E. Egerton was at Corpus. It is not

clear if Milner knew these young men at the time, but all three played

roles in the Milner Group later. Among his contemporaries at Balliol

itself, we should list nine names, six of whom were later Fellows of All

Souls: H. H. Asquith, St. John Brodrick, Charles Firth, W. P. Ker,

Charles Lucas, Robert Mowbray, Rowland E. Prothero, A. L. Smith,

and Charles A. Whitmore. Six of these later received titles from a

grateful government, and all of them enter into any history of the

Milner Group.

In Milner’s own little circle at Balliol, the dominant position was

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held by Toynbee. In spite of his early death in 1883, Toynbee’s ideas

and outlook continue to influence the Milner Group to the present day.

As Milner said in 1894, “There are many men now active in public life,

and some whose best work is probably yet to come, who are simply

working out ideas inspired by him.” As to Toynbees influence on

Milner himself, the latter, speaking of his first meeting with Toynbee

in 1873, said twenty-one years later, “I feel at once under his spell and

have always remained under it.” No one who is ignorant of the ex-

istence of the Milner Group can possibly see the truth of these quota-

tions, and, as a result, the thousands of persons who have read these

statements in the introduction to Toynbee s famous Lectures on the In-

dustrial Revolution have been vaguely puzzled by Milner’s insistence

on the importance of a man who died at such an early age and so long

ago. Most readers have merely dismissed the statements as sentimen-

tality inspired by personal attachment, although it should be clear that

Alfred Milner was about the last person in the world to display sen-

timentality or even sentiment.

Among the ideas of Toynbee which influenced the Milner Group we

should mention three: (a) a conviction that the history of the British

Empire represents the unfolding of a great moral idea — the idea of

freedom — and that the unity of the Empire could best be preserved by

the cement of this idea; (b) a conviction that the first call on the atten-

tion of any man should be a sense of duty and obligation to serve the

state; and (c) a feeling of the necessity to do social service work

(especially educational work) among the working classes of English

society. 3 These ideas were accepted by most of the men whose names

we have already mentioned and became dominant principles of the

Milner Group later. Toynbee can also be regarded as the founder of the

method used by the Group later, especially in the Round Table Groups

and in the Royal Institute of International Affairs. As described by

Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, in his preface to the 1884 edition of

Toynbee’s Lectures on the Industrial Revolution , this method was as

follows: “He would gather his friends around him; they would form an

organization; they would work on quietly for a time, some at Oxford,

some in London; they would prepare themselves in different parts of

the subject until they were ready to strike in public.” In a prefatory

note to this same edition, Toynbee’s widow wrote: “The whole has

been revised by the friend who shared my husband’s entire intellectual

life, Mr. Alfred Milner, without whose help the volume would have

been far more imperfect than it is, but whose friendship was too close

and tender to allow now of a word of thanks.” After Milner published

his Reminiscence of Arnold Toynbee , it was reprinted in subsequent

editions of the Industrial Revolution as a memoir, replacing Jowett’s.

After leaving Oxford in 1877, Milner studied law for several years

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but continued to remain in close contact with his friends, through a

club organized by Toynbee. This group, which met at the Temple in

London as well as at Oxford, worked closely with the famous social

reformer and curate of St. Jude’s, Whitechapel, Samuel A. Barnett.

The group lectured to working-class audiences in Whitechapel, Milner

giving a course of speeches on “The State and the Duties of Rulers” in

1880 and another on “Socialism” in 1882. The latter series was pub-

lished in the National Review in 1931 by Lady Milner.

In this group of Toynbee’s was Albert Grey (later Earl Grey,

1851-1917), who became an ardent advocate of imperial federation.

Later a loyal supporter of Milner’s, as we shall see, he remained a

member of the Milner Group until his death. Another member of the

group, Ernest Iwan-Muller, had been at King’s College, London, with

Milner and Gell, and at New College while Milner was at Balliol. A

close friend of Milner’s, he became a journalist, was with Milner in

South Africa during the Boer War, and wrote a valuable work on this

experience called Lord Milner in South Africa (1903). Milner

reciprocated by writing his sketch in the Dictionary of National

Biography when he died in 1910.

At the end of 1881 Milner determined to abandon the law and devote

himself to work of more social benefit. On 16 December he wrote in his

diary: “One cannot have everything. I am a poor man and must choose

between public usefulness and private happiness. I choose the former,

or rather, I choose to strive for it.” 4

The opportunity to carry out this purpose came to him through his

social work with Barnett, for it was by this connection that he met

George J. (later Lord) Goschen, Member of Parliament and director of

the Bank of England, who in the space of three years (1880-1883)

refused the posts of Viceroy of India, Secretary of State for War, and

Speaker of the House of Commons. Goschen became, as we shall see,

one of the instruments by which Milner obtained political influence.

For one year (1884-1885) Milner served as Goschen’s private secretary,

leaving the post only because he stood for Parliament himself in 1885.

It was probably as a result of Goschen’s influence that Milner

entered journalism, beginning to write for the Pall Mall Gazette in

1881. On this paper he established a number of personal relationships

of later significance. At the time, the editor was John Morley, with

William T. Stead as assistant. Stead was assistant editor in 1880-1883,

and editor in 1883-1890. In the last year, he founded The Review of

Reviews. An ardent imperialist, at the same time that he was a violent

reformer in domestic matters, he was “one of the strongest champions

in England of Cecil Rhodes.” He introduced Albert Grey to Rhodes

and, as a result, Grey became one of the original directors of the British

South Africa Company when it was established by royal charter in

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1889. Grey became administrator of Rhodesia when Dr. Jameson was

forced to resign from that post in 1896 as an aftermath of his famous

raid into the Transvaal. He was Governor-General of Canada in

1904-1911 and unveiled the Rhodes Memorial in South Africa in 1912.

A Liberal member of the House of Commons from 1880 to 1886, he was

defeated as a Unionist in the latter year. In 1894 he entered the House

of Lords as the fourth Earl Grey, having inherited the title and 17,600

acres from an uncle. Throughout this period he was close to Milner and

later was very useful in providing practical experience for various

members of the Milner Group. His son, the future fifth Earl Grey,

married the daughter of the second Earl of Selborne, a member of the

Milner Group.

During the period in which Milner was working with the Pall Mall

Gazette he became associated with three persons of some importance

later. One of these was Edward T. Cook (later Sir Edward,

1857-1919), who became a member of the Toynbee-Milner circle in

1879 while still an undergraduate at New College. Milner had become

a Fellow of New College in 1878 and held the appointment until he

was elected Chancellor of the University in 1925. With Edward Cook

he began a practice which he was to repeat many times in his life later.

That is, as Fellow of New College, he became familiar with under-

graduates whom he later placed in positions of opportunity and respon-

sibility to test their abilities. Cook was made secretary of the London

Society for the Extension of University Teaching (1882) and invited to

contribute to the Pall Mall Gazette. He succeeded Milner as assistant

editor to Stead in 1885 and succeeded Stead as editor in 1890. He

resigned as editor in 1892, when Waldorf Astor bought the Gazette ,

and founded the new Westminister Gazette, of which he was editor for

three years (1893-1896). Subsequently editor of the Daily News for five

years (1896-1901), he lost this post because of the proprietors’ objec-

tions to his unqualified support of Rhodes, Milner, and the Boer War.

During the rest of his life (1901-1919) he was leader-writer for the

Daily Chronicle , edited Ruskin’s works in thirty-eight volumes, wrote

the standard biography of Ruskin and a life of John Delane, the great

editor of The Times.

Also associated with Milner in this period was Edmund Garrett

(1865-1907), who was Stead’s and Cook’s assistant on the Pall Mall

Gazette for several years (1887-1892) and went with Cook to the

Westminister Gazette (1893-1895). In 1889 he was sent by Stead to

South Africa for his health and became a great friend of Cecil Rhodes.

He wrote a series of articles for the Gazette , which were published in

book form in 1891 as In Afrikanderland and the Land of Ophir . He

returned to South Africa in 1895 as editor of the Cape Times, the most

important English-language paper in South Africa. Both as editor

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(1895-1900) and later as a member of the Cape Parliament

(1898-1902), he strongly supported Rhodes and Milner and warmly ad-

vocated a union of all South Africa. His health broke down completely

in 1900, but he wrote a character analysis of Rhodes for the Contem -

porary Review (June 1902) and a chapter called “Rhodes and Milner”

for The Empire and the Century (1905). Edward Cook wrote a full

biography of Garrett in 1909, while Milner wrote Garrett’s sketch in

the Dictionary of National Biography , pointing out “as his chief title to

remembrance” his advocacy “of a United South Africa absolutely

autonomous in its own affairs but remaining part of the British Em-

pire.

During the period in which he was assistant editor of the Gazette ,

Milner had as roommate Henry Birchenough (later Sir Henry,

1853-1937). Birchenough went into the silk-manufacturing business,

but his chief opportunities for fame came from his contacts with

Milner. In 1903 he was made special British Trade Commissioner to

South Africa, in 1906 a member of the Royal Commission on Shipping

Rings (a controversial South African subject), in 1905 a director of the

British South Africa Company (president in 1925), and in 1920 a

trustee of the Beit Fund. During the First World War, he was a

member of various governmental committees concerned with subjects

in which Milner was especially interested. He was chairman of the

Board of Trade’s Committee on Textiles after the war; chairman of the

Royal Commission of Paper; chairman of the Committee on Cotton-

Growing in the Empire; and chairman of the Advisory Council to the

Ministry of Reconstruction.

In 1885, as a result of his contact with such famous Liberals as

Goschen, Morley, and Stead, and at the direct invitation of Michael

Glazebrook, Milner stood for Parliament but was defeated. In the

following year he supported the Unionists in the critical election on

Home Rule for Ireland and acted as head of the “Literature Commit-

tee” of the new party. Goschen made him his private secretary when he

became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Salisbury’s government in

1887. The two men were similar in many ways: both had been ed-

ucated in Germany, and both had mathematical minds. It was

Goschen’s influence which gave Milner the opportunity to form the

Milner Group, because it was Goschen who introduced him to the

Cecil Bloc. While Milner was Goschen’s private secretary, his

parliamentary private secretary was Sir Robert Mowbray, an older

contemporary of Milner’s at Balliol and a Fellow of All Souls for forty-

six years (1873-1919).

As a result of Goschen’s influence, Milner was appointed successively

Under Secretary of Finance in Egypt (1887-1892), chairman of the

Board of Inland Revenue (1892-1897), and High Commissioner to

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South Africa (1897-1905). With the last position he combined several

other posts, notably Governor of the Cape of Good Hope (1897-1901)

and Governor of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony

(1901-1905). But Goschen’s influence on Milner was greater than this,

both in specific matters and in general. Specifically, as Chancellor of

Oxford University in succession to Lord Salisbury (1903-1907) and as

an intimate friend of the Warden of All Souls, Sir William Anson,

Goschen became one of the instruments by which the Milner Group

merged with All Souls. But more important than this, Goschen in-

troduced Milner, in the period 1886-1905, into that extraordinary

circle which rotated about the Cecil family.

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The Cecil Bloc

The Milner Group could never have been built up by Milner’s own ef-

forts. He had no political power or even influence. All that he had was

ability and ideas. The same thing is true about many of the other

members of the Milner Group, at least at the time that they joined the

Group. The power that was utilized by Milner and his Group was

really the power of the Cecil family and its allied families such as the

Lyttelton (Viscounts Cobham), Wyndham (Barons Leconfield),

Grosvenor (Dukes of Westminster), Balfour, Wemyss, Palmer (Earls of

Selborne and Viscounts Wolmer), Cavendish (Dukes of Devonshire

and Marquesses of Hartington), and Gathorne-Hardy (Earls of Cran-

brook). The Milner Group was originally a major fief within the great

nexus of power, influence, and privilege controlled by the Cecil family.

It is not possible to describe here the ramifications of the Cecil in-

fluence. It has been all-pervasive in British life since 1886. This Cecil

Bloc was built up by Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, Viscount

Cranborne and third Marquess of Salisbury (1830-1903). The methods

used by this man were merely copied by the Milner Group. These

methods can be summed up under three headings: (a) a triple-front

penetration in politics, education, and journalism; (b) the recruitment

of men of ability (chiefly from All Souls) and the linking of these men to

the Cecil Bloc by matrimonal alliances and by gratitude for titles and

positions of power; and (c) the influencing of public policy by placing

members of the Cecil Bloc in positions of power shielded as much as

possible from public attention.

The triple-front penetration can be seen in Lord Salisbury’s own life.

He was not only Prime Minister for a longer period than anyone else in

recent history (fourteen years between 1885 and 1902) but also a Fel-

low of All Souls (from 1853) and Chancellor of Oxford University

(1869-1903), and had a paramount influence on The Quarterly Review

for many years. He practiced a shameless nepotism, concealed to some

extent by the shifting of names because of acquisition of titles and

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female marital connections, and redeemed by the fact that ability as

well as family connection was required from appointees.

Lord Salisbury’s practice of nepotism was aided by the fact that he

had two brothers and two sisters and had five sons and three daughters

of his own. One of his sisters was the mother of Arthur J. Balfour and

Gerald W. Balfour. Of his own daughters, one married the Second

Earl of Selborne and had a son, Lord Wolmer, and a daughter, Lady

Mabel Laura Palmer. The daughter married the son of Earl Grey,

while the son married the daughter of Viscount Ridley. The son,

known as Lord Wolmer until 1942 and Lord Selborne since that date,

was an M.P. for thirty years (1910-1940), a figure in various Con-

servative governments since 1916, and Minister of Economic Warfare

in 1942-1945.

Of Lord Salisbury’s five sons, the oldest (now fourth Marquess of

Salisbury), was in almost every Conservative government from 1900 to

1929. He had four children, of whom two married into the Cavendish

family. Of these, a daughter. Lady Mary Cecil, married in 1917 the

Marquess of Hartington, later tenth Duke of Devonshire; the older son.

Viscount Cranborne, married Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, niece of the

ninth Duke of Devonshire. The younger son, Lord David Cecil, a well-

known writer of biographical works, was for years a Fellow of

Wadham and for the last decade has been a Fellow of New College.

The other daughter. Lady Beatrice Cecil, married W. G. A. Ormsby-

Gore (now Lord Harlech), who became a member of the Milner

Group. It should perhaps be mentioned that Viscount Cranborne was

in the House of Commons from 1929 to 1941 and has been in the House

of Lords since. He was Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in

1935-1938, resigned in protest at the Munich agreement, but returned

to office in 1940 as Paymaster General (1940), Secretary of State for

Dominion Affairs (1940-1942), and Colonial Secretary (1942). He was

later Lord Privy Seal (1942-1943), Secretary for Dominion Affairs

again (1943-1945), and Leader of the Conservative Party in the House

of Lords (1942-1945).

Lord Salisbury’s second son, Lord William Cecil (1863- ), was

Rural Dean of Hertford (1904-1916) and Bishop of Exeter (1916-1936),

as well as chaplain to King Edward VII.

Lord Salisbury’s third son, Lord Robert Cecil (Viscount Cecil of

Chelwood since 1923), was an M.P. from 1906 to 1923 as well as

Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1915-1916), Assis-

tant Secretary in the same department (1918), Minister of Blockade

(1916-1918), Lord Privy Seal (1923-1924), and Chancellor of the

Duchy of Lancaster (1924-1927). He was one of the original drafters of

the Covenant of the League of Nations and was the Englishman most

closely associated in the public mind with the work of the League. For

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this work he received the Nobel Prize in 1937.

Lord Salisbury’s fourth son, Lord Edward Cecil (1867-1918), was

the one most closely associated with Milner, and, in 1921, his widow

married Milner. While Lord Edward was besieged with Rhodes in

Mafeking in 1900, Lady Cecil lived in close contact with Milner and his

Kindergarten. After the war, Lord Edward was Agent-General of the

Sudan (1903-1905), Under Secretary of Finance in Egypt (1905-1912),

and financial adviser to the Egyptian government (1912-1918). He was

in complete control of the Egyptian government during the interval

between Kitchener’s departure and the arrival of Sir Henry McMahon

as High Commissioner, and was the real power in McMahon’s ad-

ministration (1914-1916). In 1894 he had married Violet Maxse,

daughter of Admiral Frederick Maxse and sister of General Sir Ivor

Maxse. Sir Ivor, a good friend of Milner’s, was the husband of Mary

Caroline Wyndham, daughter of Baron Leconfield and niece of Lord

Rosebery.

Lord Edward Cecil had a son and a daughter. The daughter, Helen

Mary Cecil, married Captain Alexander Hardinge in the same year

(1921) in which she became Milner’s stepdaughter. Her husband was

the heir of Baron Hardinge of Penshurst and a cousin of Sir Arthur

Hardinge. Both Hardinges were proteges of Lord Salisbury, as we shall

see.

The fifth son of Lord Salisbury was Lord Hugh Cecil (Baron

Quickswood since 1941). He was a Member of Parliament for Green-

wich (1895-1906) and for Oxford University (1910-1937). He is now a

Fellow of New College, after having been a Fellow of Hertford for over

fifty years.

The degree to which Lord Salisbury practiced nepotism can be seen

by a look at his third government (1895-1902) or its successor, Balfour’s

first government (1902-1905). The Balfour government was nothing

but a continuation of Salisbury’s government, since, as we have seen,

Balfour was Salisbury’s nephew and chief assistant and was made pre-

mier in 1902 by his uncle. Salisbury was Prime Minister and Foreign

Secretary; Balfour was First Lord of the Treasury and Party Leader in

Commons (1895-1902); his brother, Gerald Balfour, was Chief

Secretary for Ireland (1895-1900) and President of the Board of Trade

(1900-1905); their cousin-in-law Lord Selborne was Under Secretary

for the Colonies (1895-1900) and First Lord of the Admiralty

(1905-1910). Arthur Balfour’s most intimate friend, and the man who

would have been his brother-in-law except for his sister’s premature

death in 1875 (an event which kept Balfour a bachelor for the rest of his

life), Alfred Lyttelton, was chairman of a mission to the Transvaal in

1900 and Colonial Secretary (1903-1906). His older brother, Neville,

was Assistant Military Secretary in the War Office (1897-1898),

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Commander-in-Chief in South Africa under Milner (1902-1904), and

Chief of the General Staff (1904-1908). Another intimate friend of

Balfour’s, George Wyndham, was Parliamentary Under Secretary for

War (1898-1900) and Chief Secretary for Ireland (1900-1905). St. John

Brodrick (later Lord Midleton), a classmate of Milner’s, brother-in-law

of P. L. Gell and son-in-law of the Earl of Wemyss, was Under

Secretary for War (1895-1898), Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs

(1898-1900), Secretary of State for War (1900-1903), and Secretary of

State for India (1903-1905). James Cecil, Viscount Cranborne, Lord

Salisbury’s heir, was Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1900-1903)

and Lord Privy Seal (1903-1905). Evelyn Cecil (Sir Evelyn since 1922),

nephew of Lord Salisbury, was private secretary to his uncle

(1895-1902). Walter Long (later Lord Long), a creation of Salisbury’s,

was President of the Board of Agriculture (1895-1900), President of the

Local Government Board (1900-1905), and Chief Secretary for Ireland

(1905-1906). George N. Curzon, (later Lord Curzon) a Fellow of All

Souls, ex-secretary and protege of Lord Salisbury, was Under Secretary

for Foreign Affairs (1895-1898) and Viceroy of India (1899-1905).

In addition to these personal appointees of Lord Salisbury, this

government had the leaders of the Unionist Party, which had split off

from the Liberal Party in the fight over Home Rule in 1886. These in-

cluded the eighth Duke of Devonshire and his nephew, the Marquess of

Hartington (the Cavendish family), the latter’s father-in-law (Lord

Lansdowne), Goschen, and Joseph Chamberlain. The Duke of Devon-

shire was Lord President of the Council (1895-1903); his nephew and

heir was Treasurer of H.M. Household (1900-1903) and Financial

Secretary to the Treasury (1903-1905). The latter's father-in-law, Lord

Lansdowne, was Secretary for War (1895-1900) and Foreign Secretary

(1900-1905); Goschen was First Lord of the Admiralty (1895-1900) and

rewarded with a viscounty (1900). Joseph Chamberlain was Secretary

for the Colonies (1895-1903).

Most of these persons were related by numerous family and marital

connections which have not yet been mentioned. We should point out

some of these connections, since they form the background of the

Milner Group.

George W. Lyttelton, fourth Baron Lyttelton, married a sister of

Mrs. William E. Gladstone and had eight sons. Of these, Neville and

Alfred have been mentioned; Spencer was secretary to his uncle, W. E.

Gladstone, for three extended periods between 1871 and 1894, and was

an intimate friend of Arthur Balfour (world tour together in 1875); Ed-

ward was Headmaster of Haileybury (1890-1905) and of Eton

(1905-1916); Arthur was chaplain to the Queen (1896-1898) and

Bishop of Southampton (1898-1903). Charles, the oldest son, fifth

Baron Lyttelton and eighth Viscount Cobham (1842-1922), married

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Mary Cavendish and had four sons and three daughters. The oldest

son, now ninth Viscount Cobham, was private secretary to Lord

Selborne in South Africa (1905-1908) and Parliamentary Under

Secretary of War (1939-1940). His brother George was assistant master

at Eton. His sister Frances married the nephew of Lady Chelmsford.

The youngest son of the fourth Baron Lyttelton, Alfred, whom we

have already mentioned, married twice. His first wife was Laura

Tennant, whose sister Margot married Herbert Asquith and whose

brother Baron Glenconner married Pamela Wyndham. Pamela mar-

ried, for a second husband, Viscount Grey of Fallodon. For his second

wife, Alfred Lyttelton married Edith Balfour. She survived him by

many years and was later deputy director of the women’s branch of the

Ministry of Agriculture (1917-1919), a substitute delegate to the

Assembly of the League of Nations for five sessions (1923-1931), and a

member of the council of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Her son. Captain Oliver Lyttelton, has been an M.P. since 1940, was

managing director of the British Metals Corporation, Controller of

Non-ferrous Metals (1939-1940), President of the Board of Trade

(1940-1941, 1945), a member of the War Cabinet (1941-1945), and

Minister of Production (1942-1945).

Almost as ramified as the Lyttelton clan were the Wyndhams,

descendants of the first Baron Leconfield. The Baron had three sons.

Of these, the oldest married Constance Primrose, sister of Lord

Rosebery, daughter of Lord Dalmeny and his wife, Dorothy Grosvenor

(later Lady Brassey), and granddaughter of Lord Henry Grosvenor and

his wife, Dora Wemyss. They had four children. Of these, one, Hugh

A. Wyndham, married Maud Lyttelton and was a member of Milner’s

Kindergarten. His sister Mary married General Sir Ivor Maxse and was

thus the sister-in-law of Lady Edward Cecil (later Lady Milner).

Another son of Baron Leconfield, Percy Scawen Wyndham, was the

father of Pamela (Lady Glenconner and later Lady Grey), of George

Wyndham (already mentioned), who married Countess Grosvenor,

and of Mary Wyndham, who married the eleventh Earl of Wemyss. It

should perhaps be mentioned that Countess Grosvenor’s daughter

Lettice Grosvenor married the seventh Earl of Beauchamp, brother-in-

law of Samuel Hoare. Countess Grosvenor (Mrs. George Wyndham)

had two nephews who must be mentioned. One, Lawrence John

Lumley Dundas (Earl of Ronaldshay and Marquess of Zetland), was

sent as military aide to Curzon, Viceroy of India, in 1900. He was an

M.P. (1907-1916), a member of the Royal Commission on Public Ser-

vices in India (1912-1914), Governor of Bengal (1917-1922), a member

of the Indian Round Table Conference of 1930-1931 and of the

Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on India in 1933. He was

Secretary of State for India (1935-1940) and for Burma (1937-1940), as

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well as the official biographer of Lord Curzon and Lord Cromer.

The other nephew of Countess Grosvenor, Laurence Roger Lumley

(Earl of Scarbrough since 1945), a cousin of the Marquess of Zetland,

was an M.P. as soon as he graduated from Magdalen (1922-1929,

1931-1937), and later Governor of Bombay (1937-1943) and

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India and Burma (1945).

Countess Grosvenor’s sister-in-law Mary Wyndham (who married

the Earl of Wemyss) had three children. The younger son, Guy

Charteris, married a Tennant of the same family as the first Mrs.

Alfred Lyttelton, the second Mrs. Herbert Asquith, and Baron

Glenconner. His sister, Cynthia Charteris, married Herbert Asquith’s

son Herbert. In an earlier generation, Francis Charteris, tenth Earl of

Wemyss, married Anne Anson, while his sister Lady Hilda Charteris

married St. John Brodrick, eighth Viscount Midleton of first Earl

Midleton. Lord Midleton s sister Edith married Philip Lyttelton Cell.

This complicated interrelationship of family connections by no

means exhausts the links between the families that made up the Cecil

Bloc as it existed in the period 1886-1900, when Milner was brought

into it by Goschen. Nor would any picture of this Bloc be complete

without some mention of the persons without family connections who

were brought into the Bloc by Lord Salisbury. Most of these persons

were recruited from All Souls and, like Arthur Balfour, Lord Robert

Cecil, Baron Quickswood, Sir Evelyn Cecil, and others, frequently

served an apprenticeship in a secretarial capacity to Lord Salisbury.

Many of these persons later married into the Cecil Bloc. In recruiting

his proteges from All Souls, Salisbury created a precedent that was

followed later by the Milner Group, although the latter went much

further than the former in the degree of its influence on All Souls.

All Souls is the most peculiar of Oxford Colleges. It has no un-

dergraduates, and its postgraduate members are not generally in pur-

suit of a higher degree. Essentially, it consists of a substantial endow-

ment originally set up in 1437 by Henry Chichele, sometime Fellow of

New College and later Archbishop of Canterbury, from revenues of

suppressed priories. From this foundation incomes were established

originally for a warden, forty fellows, and two chaplains. This has

been modified at various times, until at present twenty-one fellowships

worth £300 a year for seven years are filled from candidates who have

passed a qualifying examination. This group usually join within a year

or two of receiving the bachelor’s degree. In addition, there are eleven

fellowships without emolument, to be held by the incumbents of

various professorial chairs at Oxford. These include the Chichele

Chairs of International Law, of Modern History, of Economic History,

of Social and Political Theory, and of the History of War; the Drum-

mond Chair of Political Economy; the Gladstone Chair of Govern-

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ment; the Regius Chair of Civil Law; the Vinerian Chair of English

Law; the Marshal Foch Professorship of French Literature; and the

Chair of Social Anthropology. There are ten Distinguished Persons

fellowships without emolument, to be held for seven years by persons

who have attained fame in law, humanities, science, or public affairs.

These are usually held by past Fellows. There are a varying number of

research fellowships and teaching fellowships, good for five to seven

years, with annual emoluments of £300 to £600. There are also twelve

seven-year fellowships with annual emoluments of £50 for past

Fellows. And lastly, there are six fellowships to be held by incumbents

of certain college or university offices.

The total number of Fellows at any one time is generally no more

than fifty and frequently considerably fewer. Until 1910 there were

usually fewer than thirty-five, but the number has slowly increased in

the twentieth century, until by 1947 there were fifty-one. In the whole

period of the twentieth century from 1900 to 1947, there was a total of

149 Fellows. This number, although small, was illustrious and influen-

tial. It includes such names as Lord Acton, Leopold Amery, Sir

William Anson, Sir Harold Butler, G. N. Clark, G. D. H. Cole, H, W.

C. Davis, A. V. Dicey, Geoffrey Faber, Keith Feiling, Lord

Chelmsford, Sir Maurice Gwyer, Lord Halifax, W. K. Hancock, Sir

Arthur Hardinge, Sir William Holdsworth, T. E. Lawrence, C. A.

Macartney, Friedrich Max Muller, Viscount Morley of Blackburn, Sir

Charles Oman, A. F. Pollard, Sir Charles Grant Robertson, Sir James

Arthur Salter, Viscount Simon, Sir Donald Somervell, Sir Arthur Ram-

say Steel-Maitland, Sir Ernest Swinton, K. C. Wheare, E. L. Wood-

ward, Francis de Zulueta, etc. In addition, there were to be numbered

among those who were fellows before 1900 such illustrious persons as

Lord Curzon, Lord Ernie, Sir Robert Herbert, Sir Edmund Monson,

Lord Phillimore, Viscount Ridley, and Lord Salisbury. Most of these

persons were elected to fellowships in All Souls at the age of twenty-

two or twenty-three years, at a time when their great exploits were yet

in the future. There is some question whether this ability of the Fellows

of All Souls to elect as their younger colleagues men with brilliant

futures is to be explained by their ability to discern greatness at an early

age or by the fact that election to the fellowship opens the door to

achievement in public affairs. There is some reason to believe that the

second of these two alternatives is of greater weight. As the biographer

of Viscount Halifax has put it, “It is safe to assert that the Fellow of All

Souls is a man marked out for a position of authority in public life, and

there is no surprise if he reaches the summit of power, but only disap-

pointment if he falls short of the opportunities that are set out before

him.” 1

One Fellow of All Souls has confessed in a published work that his

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career was based on his membership in this college. The Right Rev-

erend Herbert Hensley Henson, who rose from humble origins to

become Bishop of Durham, wrote in his memoirs: “My election to a

fellowship, against all probability, and certainly against all expecta-

tion, had decisive influence on my subsequent career. It brought me

within the knowledge of the late Lord Salisbury, who subsequently

recommended me to the Crown for appointment to a Canonry of

Westminister. ... It is to All Souls College that all the ‘success’ [ 1 ] of

my career is mainly due.” 2

It would appear that the College of All Souls is largely influenced not

by the illustrious persons whose names we have listed above (since they

are generally busy elsewhere) but by another group within the college.

This appears when we realize that the Fellows whose fellowships are

renewed for one appointment after another are not generally the ones

with famous names. The realization is increased when we see that these

persons with the power to obtain renewing appointments are members

of a shadowy group with common undergraduate associations, close

personal relationships, similar interests and ideas, and surprisingly

similar biographical experience. It is this shadowy group which in-

cludes the All Souls members of the Milner Group.

In the nineteenth century, Lord Salisbury made little effort to in-

fluence All Souls, although it was a period when influence (especially

in elections to fellowships) was more important than later. He con-

tented himself with recruiting proteges from the college and ap-

parently left the wielding of influence to others, especially to Sir

William Anson. In the twentieth century, the Milner Group has

recruited from and influenced All Souls. This influence has not ex-

tended to the elections to the twenty-one competitive fellowships.

There, merit has unquestionably been the decisive factor. But it has

been exercised in regard to the seventeen ex-officio fellowships, the ten

Distinguished Persons fellowships, and the twelve reelective fellow-

ships. And it has also been important in contributing to the general

direction and policy of the college.

This does not mean that the Milner Group is identical with All Souls,

but merely that it is the chief, if not the controlling, influence in it,

especially in recent years. Many members of the Milner Group are not

members of All Souls, and many members of All Souls are not members

of the Milner Group.

The fact that All Souls is influenced by some outside power has been

recognized by others, but no one so far as I know has succeeded in iden-

tifying this influence. The erratic Christopher Hobhouse, in his recent

book on Oxford, has come closer than most when he wrote: “The senior

common room at All Souls is distinguished above all others by the great

brains which meet there and by the singular unfruitfulness of their col-

laboration. ... But it is not these who make the running. Rather is it

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the Editor of The Times and his circle of associates — men whom the

public voice has called to no office and entrusted with no respon-

sibility. These individuals elect to consider themselves the powers

behind the scenes. The duty of purveying honest news is elevated in

their eyes into the prerogative of dictating opinion. It is at All Souls

that they meet to decide just how little they will let their readers know;

and their newspaper has been called the All Souls Parish Magazine

The inaccuracy and bitterness of this statement is caused by the scorn

which a devotee of the humanities feels toward the practitioners of the

social sciences, but the writer was shrewd enough to see that an outside

group dominates All Souls. He was also able to see the link between All

Souls and The Times , although quite mistaken in his conclusion that

the latter controls the former. As we shall see, the Milner Group dom-

inates both.

In the present chapter we are concerned only with the relationship

between the Cecil Bloc and All Souls and shall reserve our considera-

tion of the relationships between the Milner Group and the college to a

later chapter. The former relationship can be observed in the following

list of names, a list which is by no means complete:

Name

C. A. Alington, 1872-

W. R. Anson, 1843-1914

G, N. Curzon, 1859-1925

A. H. Hardinge, 1859-1933

A. C. Headlam, 1862-

H. H. Henson, 1863-

C. G. Lang, 1864-1945

F. W. Pember, 1862-

W. G. F. Phillimore,

1845-1929

R. E, Prothero, 1852-1937

E. Ridley, 1843-1928

M. W. Ridley, 1842-1904

J. Simon, 1873-

F. J. N. Thesiger, 1868-1933

College

Trinity, Oxford

1891-1895

Balliol 1862-1866

Balliol 1878-1882

Balliol 1878-1881

New College

1881-1885

Non-Collegiate

1881-1884

Balliol 1882-1886

Balliol 1880-1884

Christ Church

1863-1867

Balliol 1871-1875

Corpus Christi

1862-1866

Balliol 1861-1865

Wadham 1892-1896

Magdalen 1887-1891

Fellow of

All Souls

1896- 1903

1867-1914; warden

1881-1914

1883- 1890

1881-

1885-1897, 1924-

1884-1891, 1896-

1903; 1939

1888-1928

1884-

1910-

Warden, 1914-1932

1867-

1875-1891

1866-1882

1865-1874

1897-

1892-1899,

1929-1933

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The Reverend Cyril A. Alington married Hester Lyttelton, daughter

of the fourth Baron Lyttelton and sister of the famous eight brothers

whom we have mentioned. He was Headmaster of Eton (1916-1933) in

succession to his brother-in-law Edward Lyttelton, and at the same

time chaplain to King George V (1921-1933). Since 1933 he has been

Dean of Durham.

Sir William Anson can best be discussed later. He, Lord Goschen,

and H. A. L. Fisher were the chief instruments by which the Milner

Group entered into All Souls.

George Nathaniel Curzon (Lord Curzon after 1898, 1859-1925)

studied at Eton and Balliol (1872-1882). At the latter he was intimate

with the future Lords Midleton, Selborne, and Salisbury. On grad-

uating, he went on a trip to the Near East with Edward Lyttelton.

Elected a Fellow of All Souls in 1883, he became assistant private

secretary to Lord Salisbury two years later. This set his future career.

As Harold Nicolson says of him in the Dictionary of National

Biography , “His activities centered from that moment on obedience to

Lord Salisbury, an intense interest in foreign and colonial policy, and

the enjoyment of the social amenities.” A Member of Parliament from

1886 to 1898, he traveled widely, chiefly in Asia (1887-1894), financing

his trips by writing for The Times. He was Under Secretary in the India

Office (1891-1892), Under Secretary in the Foreign Office (1895-1898),

and Viceroy of India (1899-1905) by Lord Salisbury's appointment. In

the last-named post he had many controversies with the “Balfour-

Brodrick combination” (as Nicolson calls it), and his career was more

difficult thereafter, for, although he did achieve high office again, he

failed to obtain the premiership, and the offices he did obtain always

gave him the appearance rather than the reality of power. These offices

included Lord Privy Seal (1915-1916, 1924-1925), Leader in Lords

(1916-1924), Lord President of the Council (1916-1919), member of

the Imperial War Cabinet (1916-1918), and Foreign Secretary

(1919-1924). Throughout this later period, he was generally in opposi-

tion to what was being supported by the Cecil Bloc and the Milner

Group, but his desire for high office led him to make constant com-

promises with his convictions.

Arthur Henry Hardinge (Sir Arthur after 1904) and his cousin,

Charles Hardinge (Baron Hardinge of Penshurst after 1910), were both

aided in their careers by Lord Salisbury. The former, a Fellow of All

Souls in 1881 and an assistant secretary to Lord Salisbury four years

later, rose to be Minister to Persia, Belgium, and Portugal (1900-1913)

and Ambassador to Spain (1913-1919). The latter worked up in the

diplomatic service to be First Secretary at the Embassy in St.

Petersburg (1898-1903), then was Assistant Under Secretary and Per-

manent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1903-1904, 1906-1910,

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1916-1920), Ambassador at St. Petersburg (1904-1906), Viceroy of

India (1910-1916), and Ambassador at Paris (1920-1922). Charles Har-

dinge, although almost unknown to many people, is one of the most

significant figures in the formation of British foreign policy in the

twentieth century. He was the close personal friend and most impor-

tant adviser on foreign policy of King Edward VII and accompanied

the King on all his foreign diplomatic tours. His post as Under

Secretary was kept available for him during these trips and in later life

during his service as Ambassador and Viceroy. He presents the only

case in British history where an ex-Ambassador and ex-Viceroy was to

be found in the position of Under Secretary. He was probably the most

important single person in the formation of the Entente Cordiale in

1904 and was very influential in the formation of the understanding

with Russia in 1907. His son, Captain Alexander Hardinge, married

Milners stepdaughter, Helen Mary Cecil, in 1921 and succeeded his

father as Baron Hardinge of Penshurst in 1944. He was equerry and

assistant private secretary to King George V (1920-1936) and private

secretary and extra equerry to both Edward VIII and George VI

(1936-1943). He had a son, George Edward Hardinge (born 1921),

who married Janet Christian Goschen, daughter of Lieutenant Colonel

F. C. C. Balfour, granddaughter of the second Viscount Goschen and

of Lady Goschen, the former Lady Evelyn Gathorne-Hardy (fifth

daughter of the first Earl of Cranbrook). Thus a grandchild of Milner

was united with a great-grandchild of his old benefactor, Lord

Goschen. 4

Among the persons recruited from All Souls by Lord Salisbury were

two future prelates of the Anglican Church. These were Cosmo

Gordon Lang, Fellow for forty years, and Herbert Hensley Henson,

Fellow for twenty-four years. Lang was Bishop of Stepney

(1901-1908), Archbishop of York (1908-1928), and Archbishop of

Canterbury (1928-1942). Henson was Canon of Westminister Abbey

(1900-1912), Dean of Durham (1912-1918), and Bishop of Hereford

and of Durham (1918-1939).

The Right Reverend Arthur Cayley Headlam was a Fellow of All

Souls for about forty years and, in addition, was editor of the Church

Quarterly Review , Regius Professor of Divinity, and Bishop of

Gloucester. He is chiefly of interest to us because his younger brother,

James W. Headlam-Morley (1863-1929), was a member of the Milner

Group. James (Sir James in 1929) was put by the Group into the

Department of Information (under John Buchan, 1917-1918), and the

Foreign Office (under Milner and Curzon, 1918-1928), went to the

Peace Conference in 1919, edited the first published volume of British

Documents on the Origin of the War (1926), and was a mainstay of the

Royal Institute of International Affairs, where his portrait still hangs.

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His daughter, Agnes, was made Montague Burton Professor of Inter-

national Relations at Oxford in 1948, This was a position strongly in-

fluenced by the Milner Group.

Francis W. Pember was used by Lord Salisbury from time to time as

assistant legal adviser to the Foreign Office. He was Warden of All

Souls in succession to Anson (1914-1932).

Walter Phillimore (Lord Phillimore after 1918) was admitted to All

Souls with Anson in 1867. He was a lifelong friend and associate of the

second Viscount Halifax (1839-1934). The latter devoted his life to the

cause of church union and was for fifty-two years (1868-1919, 1934)

president of the English Church Union. In this post he was succeeded

in 1919 by Lord Phillimore, who had been serving as vice-president for

many years and who was an intimate friend of the Halifax family. It

was undoubtedly through Phillimore that the present Earl of Halifax,

then simple Edward Wood, was elected to All Souls in 1903 and

became an important member of the Milner Group. Phillimore was a

specialist in ecclesiastical law, and it created a shock when Lord

Salisbury made him a judge of the Queen’s Bench in 1897, along with

Edward Ridley, who had entered All Souls as a Fellow the year before

Phillimore. The echoes of this shock can still be discerned in Lord

Sankey’s brief sketch of Phillimore in the Dictionary of National

Biography. Phillimore became a Lord Justice of Appeal in 1913 and in

1918 drew up one of the two British drafts for the Covenant of the

League of Nations. The other draft, known as the Cecil Draft, was at-

tributed to Lord Robert Cecil but was largely the work of Alfred

Zimmern, a member of the Milner Group.

Rowland Edmund Prothero (Lord Ernie after 1919) and his brother,

George W. Prothero (Sir George after 1920), are two of the most im-

portant links between the Cecil Bloc and the Milner Group. They grew

up on the Isle of Wight in close contact with Queen Victoria, who was

a family friend. Through the connection, the elder Prothero was asked

to tutor the Duke of Bedford in 1878, a position which led to his ap-

pointment in 1899 as agent-in-chief of the Duke. In the interval he was

a Fellow of All Souls for sixteen years and engaged in literary work,

writing unsigned articles for the Edinburgh Review , the Church

Quarterly Review and The Quarterly Review. Of the last, possibly

through the influence of Lord Salisbury, he became editor for five

years (1894-1899), being succeeded in the position by his brother for

twenty-three years (1899-1922).

As agent of the extensive agricultural holdings of the Duke of Bed-

ford, Prothero became familar with agricultural problems and began

to write on the subject. He ran for Parliament from Bedfordshire as a

Unionist, on a platform advocating tariff reform, in 1907 and again in

1910, but in spite of his influential friends, he was not successful. He

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wrote of these efforts: “I was a stranger to the political world, without

friends in the House of Commons. The only men prominent in public

life whom I knew with any degree of real intimacy were Curzon and

Milner.’’ 5 In 1914, at Anson’s death, he was elected to succeed him as

one of Oxford’s representatives in Parliament. Almost immediately he

was named a member of Milner’s Committee on Home Production of

Food (1915), and the following year was on Lord Selborne’s committee

concerned with the same problem. At this point in his autobiography,

Prothero wrote: “Milner and I were old friends. We had been under-

graduates together at Balliol College. . . . The outside world thought

him cold and reserved. . . . But between Milner and myself there was

no barrier, mainly, I think, because we were both extremely shy men.”

The interim report of the Selborne Committee repeated the recommen-

dations of the Milner Committee in December 1916. At the same time

came the Cabinet crisis, and Prothero was named President of the

Board of Agriculture with a seat in the new Cabinet. Several persons

close to the Milner Group were put into the department, among them

Sir Sothern Holland, Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, Lady Evelyn Cecil, and

Lord Goschen (son of Milner’s old friend). Prothero retired from the

cabinet and Parliament in 1919, was made a baron in the same year,

and a Fellow of Balliol in 1922.

Sir George W. Prothero (1848-1922), brother of Lord Ernie, had

been lecturer in history at his own college at Cambridge University and

the first professor in the new Chair of Modern History at Edinburgh

before he became editor of The Quarterly Review in 1899. He was

editor of the Cambridge Modern History (1902-1912), Chichele

Lecturer in History (1915), and director of the Historical Section of the

Foreign Office and general editor of the Peace Handbooks , 155

volumes of studies preparatory to the Peace Conference (1917-1919).

Besides his strictly historical works, he wrote a Memoir of J.R. Seeley

and edited and published Seeley’s posthumous Growth of British

Polity. He also wrote the sketch of Lord Selborne in the Dictionary of

National Biography . His own sketch in the same work was written by

Algernon Cecil, nephew of Lord Salisbury, who had worked with Pro-

thero in the Historical Section of the Foreign Office. The same writer

also wrote the sketches of Arthur Balfour and Lord Salisbury in the

same collective work. All three are very revealing sources for this

present study.

G. W. Prothero’s work on the literary remains of Seeley must have

endeared him to the Milner Group, for Seeley was regarded as a

precursor by the inner circle of the Group. For example, Lionel Curtis,

in a letter to Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian) in November 1916, wrote:

“Seeley’s results were necessarily limited by his lack of any knowledge

at first hand either of the Dominions or of India. With the Round

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Table organization behind him Seeley by his own knowledge and in-

sight might have gone further than us. If we have been able to go fur-

ther than him it is not merely that we followed in his train, but also

because we have so far based our study of the relations of these coun-

tries on a preliminary field-study of the countries concerned, con-

ducted in close cooperation with people in those countries.” 6

Matthew White Ridley (Viscount Ridley after 1900) and his younger

brother, Edward Ridley (Sir Edward after 1897), were both proteges

of Lord Salisbury and married into the Cecil Bloc. Matthew was a

Member of Parliament (1868-1885, 1886-1900) and held the offices of

Under Secretary of the Home Department (1878-1880), Financial

Secretary of the Treasury in Salisbury’s first government (1885-1886),

and Home Secretary in Salisbury’s third government (1895-1900). He

was made a Privy Councillor during Salisbury's second government.

His daughter, Grace, married the future third Earl of Selborne in

1910, while his son married Rosamond Guest, sister of Lady

Chelmsford and future sister-in-law of Frances Lyttelton (daughter of

the eighth Viscount Cobham and the former Mary Cavendish).

Edward Ridley beat out Anson for the fellowship to All Souls in

1866, but in the following year both Anson and Phillimore were admit-

ted. Ridley and Phillimore were appointed to the Queen’s Bench of the

High Court of Justice in 1897 by Lord Salisbury. The former held the

post for twenty years (1897-1917).

John Simon (Viscount Simon since 1940) came into the Cecil Bloc

and the Milner Group through All Souls. He received his first govern-

mental task as junior counsel for Britain in the Alaska Boundary Ar-

bitration of 1903. A Member of Parliament as a Liberal and National

Liberal (except for a brief interval of four years) from the great elec-

toral overturn of 1906 to his elevation to the upper house in 1940, he

held governmental posts for a large portion of that period. He was

Solicitor General (1910-1913), Attorney General (1913-1915), Home

Secretary (1915-1916), Foreign Secretary (1931-1935), Home Secretary

again (1935-1937), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1937-1940), and,

finally, Lord Chancellor (1940-1945). He was also chairman of the In-

dian Statutory Commission (1927-1930).

Frederic John Napier Thesiger (Lord Chelmsford after 1905) was

taken by Balfour from the London County Council in 1905 to be

Governor of Queensland (1905-1909) and later Governor of New South

Wales (1907-1913). In the latter post he established a contact with the

inner circle of the Milner Group, which was useful to both parties

later. He was Viceroy of India in 1916-1921 and First Lord of the Ad-

miralty in the brief Labour government of 1924. He married Frances

Guest in 1894 while still at All Souls and may have been the contact by

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which her sister married Matthew Ridley in 1899 and her brother mar-

ried Frances Lyttelton in 1911.

The Cecil Bloc did not disappear with the death of Lord Salisbury in

1903 but was continued for a considerable period by Balfour. It did

not, however, continue to grow but, on the contrary, became looser

and less disciplined, for Balfour lacked the qualities of ambition and

determination necessary to control or develop such a group. Ac-

cordingly, the Cecil Bloc, while still in existence as a political and

social power, has largely been replaced by the Milner Group. This

Group, which began as a dependent fief of the Cecil Bloc, has since

1916 become increasingly the active portion of the Bloc and in fact its

real center. Milner possessed those qualities of determination and am-

bition which Balfour lacked, and was willing to sacrifice all personal

happiness and social life to his political goals, something which was

quite unacceptable to the pleasure-loving Balfour. Moreover, Milner

was intelligent enough to see that it was not possible to continue a

political group organized in the casual and familiar way in which it

had been done by Lord Salisbury. Milner shifted the emphasis from

family connection to ideological agreement. The former had become

less useful with the rise of a class society based on economic conflicts

and with the extension of democracy. Salisbury was fundamentally a

conservative, while Milner was not. Where Salisbury sought to build

up a bloc of friends and relatives to exercise the game of politics and to

maintain the Old England that they all loved, Milner was not really a

conservative at all. Milner had an idea — the idea he had obtained from

Toynbee and that he found also in Rhodes and in all the members of his

Group. This idea had two parts: that the extension and integration of

the Empire and the development of social welfare were essential to the

continued existence of the British way of life; and that this British way

of life was an instrument which unfolded all the best and highest

capabilities of mankind. Working with this ideology derived from

Toynbee and Balliol, Milner used the power and the general strategic

methods of the Cecil Bloc to build up his own Group. But, realizing

that conditions had changed, he put much greater emphasis on prop-

aganda activities and on ideological unity within the Group. These

were both made necessary by the extension of political democracy and

the rise of economic democracy as a practical political issue. These new

developments had made it impossible to be satisfied with a group held

together by no more than family and social connections and animated

by no more far-sighted goal than the preservation of the existing social

structure.

The Cecil Bloc did not resist this change by Milner of the aims and

tactics of their older leader. The times made it clear to all that methods

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must be changed. However, it is possible that the split which appeared

within the Conservative Party in England after 1923 followed roughly

the lines between the Milner Group and the Cecil Bloc.

It should perhaps be pointed out that the Cecil Bloc was a social

rather than a partisan group — at first, at least. Until 1890 or so it con-

tained members of both political parties, including the leaders,

Salisbury and Gladstone. The relationship between the two parties on

the topmost level could be symbolized by the tragic romance between

Salisbury’s nephew and Gladstone’s niece, ending in the death of the

latter in 1875. After the split in the Liberal Party in 1886, it was

the members of the Cecil Bloc who became Unionists — that is, the

Lytteltons, the Wyndhams, the Cavendishes. As a result, the Cecil Bloc

became increasingly a political force. Gladstone remained socially a

member of it, and so did his protege, John Morley, but almost all the

other members of the Bloc were Unionists or Conservatives. The chief

exceptions were the four leaders of the Liberal Party after Gladstone,

who were strong imperialists: Rosebery, Asquith, Edward Grey, and

Haldane. These four supported the Boer War, grew increasingly anti-

German, supported the World War in 1914, and were close to the

Milner Group politically, intellectually, and socially. 7

Socially, the Cecil Bloc could be divided into three generations. The

first (including Salisbury, Gladstone, the seventh Duke of Devonshire,

the eighth Viscount Midleton, Goschen, the fourth Baron Lyttelton,

the first Earl of Cranbrook, the first Duke of Westminster, the first

Baron Leconfield, the tenth Earl of Wemyss, etc.) was not as “social”

(in the frivolous sense) as the second. This first generation was born in

the first third of the nineteenth century, went to both Oxford and

Cambridge in the period 1830-1855, and died in the period 1890-1915.

The second generation was born in the second third of the nineteenth

century, went almost exclusively to Oxford (chiefly Balliol) in the

period 1860-1880, and died in the period 1920-1930. This second

generation was much more social in a spectacularly frivolous sense,

much more intellectual (in the sense that they read books and talked

philosophy or social problems) and centered on a social group known at

the time as “The Souls.” The third generation of the Cecil Bloc, con-

sisting of persons born in the last third of the nineteenth century, went

to Oxford almost exclusively (New College or Balliol) in the period

1890-1905 and began to die off about 1940. This third generation of the

Cecil Bloc was dominated and organized about the Milner Group. It

was very serious-minded, very political, and very secretive.

The first two generations did not regard themselves as an organized

group but rather as “Society.” The Bloc was symbolized in the first two

generations in two exclusive dining clubs called “The Club” and

“Grillion’s.” The membership of the two was very similar, with about

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forty persons in each and a total of not over sixty in both together. Both

organizations had illustrious pasts. The Club, founded in 1764, had as

past members Joshua Reynolds (founder), Samuel Johnson, Edmund

Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, James Boswell, Edward Gibbon, Charles

Fox, David Garrick, Adam Smith, Richard B. Sheridan, George

Canning, Humphry Davy, Walter Scott, Lord Liverpool, Henry

Hallam, Lord Brougham, T. B. Macauley, Lord John Russell, George

Grote, Dean Stanley, W. E. H. Lecky, Lord Kelvin, Matthew Arnold,

T. H. Huxley, Bishop Wilberforce, Bishop Stubbs, Bishop Creighton,

Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, Balfour, John Morley, Richard Jebb, Lord

Goschen, Lord Acton, Lord Rosebery, Archbishop Lang, F. W.

Pember (Warden of All Souls), Lord Asquith, Edward Grey, Lord

Haldane, Hugh Cecil, John Simon, Charles Oman, Lord Tennyson,

Rudyard Kipling, Gilbert Murray, H. A. L. Fisher, John Buchan,

Maurice Hankey, the fourth Marquess of Salisbury, Lord Lansdowne,

Bishop Henson, Halifax, Stanley Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain, Lord

Carnock, and Lord Hewart. This list includes only members up to

1925. There were, as we have said, only forty members at any one

time, and at meetings (dinner every fortnight while Parliament was in

session) usually only about a dozen were present.

Grillion’s was very similar to The Club. Founded in 1812, it had the

same members and met under the same conditions, except weekly (din-

ner when Parliament was in session). The following list includes the

names I can find of those who were members up to 1925: Gladstone,

Salisbury, Lecky, Balfour, Asquith, Edward Grey, Haldane, Lord

Bryce, Hugh Cecil, Robert Cecil, Curzon, Neville Lyttelton, Eustace

Percy, John Simon, Geoffrey Dawson, Walter Raleigh, Balfour of

Burleigh, and Gilbert Murray. 8

The second generation of the Cecil Bloc was famous at the time that

it was growing up (and political power was still in the hands of the first

generation) as “The Souls,” a term applied to them partly in derision

and partly in envy but used by themselves later. This group, flitting

about from one great country house to another or from one spectacular

social event to another in the town houses of their elders, has been

preserved for posterity in the autobiographical volumes of Margot

Tennant Asquith and has been caricatured in the writings of Oscar

Wilde. The frivolity of this group can be seen in Margot Tennant’s

statement that she obtained for Milner his appointment to the chair-

manship of the Board of Inland Revenue in 1892 merely by writing to

Balfour and asking for it after she had a too brief romantic interlude

with Milner in Egypt. As a respected scholar of my acquaintance has

said, this group did everything in a frivolous fashion, including enter-

ing the Boer War and the First World War.

One of the enduring creations of the Cecil Bloc is the Society for

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Psychical Research, which holds a position in the history of the Cecil

Bloc similar to that held by the Royal Institute of International Affairs

in the Milner Group. The Society was founded in 1882 by the Balfour

family and their in-laws, Lord Rayleigh and Professor Sidgwick. In the

twentieth century it was dominated by those members of the Cecil Bloc

who became most readily members of the Milner Group. Among these

we might mention Gilbert Murray, who performed a notable series of

experiments with his daughter, Mrs. Arnold J. Toynbee, in the years

before 1914, and Dame Edith Lyttelton, herself a Balfour and widow

of Arthur Balfour’s closest friend, who was president of the Society in

1933-1934,

The third generation was quite different, partly because it was

dominated by Milner, one of the few completely serious members of

the second generation. This third generation was serious if not pro-

found, studious if not broadly educated, and haunted consistently by

the need to act quickly to avoid impending disaster. This fear of

disaster they shared with Rhodes and Milner, but they still had the

basic weakness of the second generation (except Milner and a few other

adopted members of that Group), namely that they got everything too

easily. Political power, wealth, and social position came to this third

generation as a gift from the second, without the need to struggle for

what they got or to analyze the foundations of their beliefs. As a result,

while awake to the impending disaster, they were not able to avoid it,

but instead tinkered and tampered until the whole system blew up in

their faces.

This third generation, especially the Milner Group, which formed its

core, differed from its two predecessors in its realization that it formed

a group. The first generation had regarded itself as “England,” the

second regarded itself as “Society,” but the third realized it was a secret

group — or at least its inner circles did. From Milner and Rhodes they

got this idea of a secret group of able and determined men, but they

never found a name for it, contenting themselves with calling it “the

Group,” or “the Band,” or even “Us.” 9

3

The Secret Society

of Cecil Rhodes 1

When Milner went to South Africa in 1897, Rhodes and he were

already old acquaintances of many years’ standing. We have already

indicated that they were contemporaries at Oxford, but, more than

that, they were members of a secret society which had been founded in

1891. Moreover, Milner was, if not in 1897, at least by 1901, Rhodes’s

chosen successor in the leadership of that society.

The secret society of Cecil Rhodes is mentioned in the first five of his

seven wills. In the fifth it was supplemented by the idea of an educa-

tional institution with scholarships, whose alumni would be bound

together by common ideals — Rhodes’s ideals. In the sixth and seventh

wills the secret society was not mentioned, and the scholarships

monopolized the estate. But Rhodes still had the same ideals and still

believed that they could be carried out best by a secret society of men

devoted to a common cause. The scholarships were merely a facade to

conceal the secret society, or, more accurately, they were to be one of

the instruments by which the members of the secret society could carry

out his purpose. This purpose, as expressed in the first will (1877), was:

The extension of British rule throughout the world, the perfecting of a

system of emigration from the United Kingdom and of colonization by

British subjects of all lands wherein the means of livelihood are attainable

by energy, labour, and enterprise, . . . the ultimate recovery of the United

States of America as an integral part of a British Empire, the consolida-

tion of the whole Empire, the inauguration of a system of Colonial

Representation in the Imperial Parliament which may tend to weld to-

gether the disjointed members of the Empire, and finally the foundation

of so great a power as to hereafter render wars impossible and promote

the best interests of humanity.

To achieve this purpose, Rhodes, in this first will, written while he

was still an undergraduate of Oxford at the age of twenty-four, left all

his wealth to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Carnarvon)

and to the Attorney General of Griqualand West (Sidney Shippard), to

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be used to create a secret society patterned on the Jesuits. The reference

to the Jesuits as the model for his secret society is found in a “Confession

of Faith” which Rhodes had written two years earlier (1875) and which

he enclosed in his will. Thirteen years later, in a letter to the trustee of

his third will, Rhodes told how to form the secret society, saying, “In

considering questions suggested take Constitution of the Jesuits if ob-

tainable and insert ‘English Empire\* for ‘Roman Catholic Religion/ ”

In his “Confession of Faith” Rhodes outlined the types of persons

who might be useful members of this secret society. As listed by the

American Secretary to the Rhodes Trust, this list exactly describes the

group formed by Milner in South Africa:

Men of ability and enthusiasm who find no suitable way to serve their

country under the current political system; able youth recruited from the

schools and universities; men of wealth with no aim in life; younger sons

with high thoughts and great aspirations but without opportunity; rich

men whose careers are blighted by some great disappointment. All must

be men of ability and character. . . . Rhodes envisages a group of the

ablest and the best, bound together by common unselfish ideals of service

to what seems to him the greatest cause in the world. There is no mention

of material rewards. This is to be a kind of religious brotherhood like the

Jesuits, “a church for the extension of the British Empire.”

In each of his seven wills, Rhodes entrusted his bequest to a group of

men to carry out his purpose. In the first will, as we have seen, the

trustees were Lord Carnarvon and Sidney Shippard. In the second will

(1882), the sole trustee was his friend N. E. Pickering. In the third will

(1888), Pickering having died, the sole trustee was Lord Rothschild. In

the fourth will (1891), W. T. Stead was added, while in the fifth

(1892), Rhodes’s solicitor, B. F. Hawksley, was added to the previous

two. In the sixth (1893) and seventh (1899) wills, the personnel of the

trustees shifted considerably, ending up, at Rhodes’s death in 1902,

with a board of seven trustees: Lord Milner, Lord Rosebery, Lord

Grey, Alfred Beit, L. L. Michell, B. F. Hawksley, and Dr. Starr

Jameson. This is the board to which the world looked to set up the

Rhodes Scholarships.

Dr. Frank Aydelotte, the best-known American authority on

Rhodes’s wills, claims that Rhodes made no reference to the secret

society in his last two wills because he had abandoned the idea. The

first chapter of his recent book, The American Rhodes Scholarships ,

states and reiterates that between 1891 and 1893 Rhodes underwent a

great change in his point of view and matured in his judgment to the

point that in his sixth will “he abandons forever his youthful idea of a

secret society.” This is completely untrue, and there is no evidence to

support such a statement. 2 On the contrary, all the evidence, both

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direct and circumstantial, indicates that Rhodes wanted the secret

society from 1875 to his death in 1902. By Dr. Aydelotte’s own admis-

sion, Rhodes wanted the society from 1877 to 1893, a period of sixteen

years. Accepted practice in the use of historical evidence requires us to

believe that Rhodes persisted in this idea for the remaining nine years

of his life, unless there exists evidence to the contrary. There is no such

evidence. On the other hand, there is direct evidence that he did not

change his ideas. Two examples of this evidence can be mentioned

here. On 5 February 1896, three years after his sixth will, Rhodes

ended a long conversation with R. B. Brett (later Lord Esher) by say-

ing, “Wish we could get our secret society/’ And in April 1900, a year

after he wrote his seventh and last will, Rhodes was reprimanding

Stead for his opposition to the Boer War, on the grounds that in this

case he should have been willing to accept the judgment of the men on

the spot who had made the war. Rhodes said to Stead, “That is the

curse which will be fatal to our ideas — insubordination. Do not you

think it is very disobedient of you? How can our Society be worked if

each one sets himself up as the sole judge of what ought to be done? Just

look at the position here. We three are in South Africa, all of us your

boys ... I myself, Milner, and Garrett, all of whom learned their

politics from you. We are on the spot, and we are unanimous in declar-

ing this war to be necessary. You have never been in South Africa, and

yet, instead of deferring to the judgment of your own boys, you fling

yourself into a violent opposition to the war.’’ 3

Dr. Aydelotte’s assumption that the scholarships were an alternative

to the secret society is quite untenable, for all the evidence indicates

that the scholarships were but one of several instruments through

which the society would work. In 1894 Stead discussed with Rhodes

how the secret society would work and wrote about it after Rhodes’s

death as follows: “We also discussed together various projects for pro-

paganda, the formation of libraries, the creation of lectureships, the

dispatch of emissaries on missions of propaganda throughout the Em-

pire, and the steps to be taken to pave the way for the foundation and

the acquisition of a newspaper which was to be devoted to the service

of the cause.” This is an exact description of the way in which the

society, that is the Milner Group, has functioned. Moreover, when

Rhodes talked with Stead, in January 1895, about the scholarships at

Oxford, he did not abandon the society but continued to speak of it as

the real power behind the scholarships. It is perfectly clear that Rhodes

omitted mentioning the secret society in his last two wills because he

knew that by that time he was so famous that the one way to keep a

society from being secret would be to mention it in his will. Obviously,

if Rhodes wanted the secret society after 1893, he would have made no

mention of it in his will but would have left his money in trust for a

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legitimate public purpose and arranged for the creation of the secret

society by a private understanding with his trustees. This is clearly

what happened, because the secret society was established, and Milner

used Rhodes’s money to finance it, just as Rhodes had intended. 4

The creation of the secret society was the essential core of Rhodes’s

plans at all times. Stead, even after Rhodes's death, did not doubt that

the attempt would be made to continue the society. In his book on

Rhodes’s wills he wrote in one place: “Mr. Rhodes was more than the

founder of a dynasty. He aspired to be the creator of one of those vast

semi-religious, quasi-political associations which, like the Society of

Jesus, have played so large a part in the history of the world. To be

more strictly accurate, he wished to found an Order as the instrument

of the will of the Dynasty, and while he lived he dreamed of being both

its Caesar and its Loyola. It was this far-reaching, world-wide aspira-

tion of the man which rendered, to those who knew him, so absurdly

inane the speculations of his critics as to his real motives.” Sixty pages

later Stead wrote: “The question that now arises is whether in the

English-speaking world there are to be found men of faith adequate to

furnish forth materials for the Society of which Mr. Rhodes dreamed.”

This idea of a society throughout the world working for federal

union fascinated Milner as it had fascinated Rhodes. We have already

mentioned the agreement which he signed with George Parkin in 1893,

to propagandize for this purpose. Eight years later, in a letter to Parkin

from South Africa, Milner wrote at length on the subject of imperial

union and ended: “Good-bye for today. Keep up the touch. I wish we

had some like-minded persons in New Zealand and Australia, who

were personal friends. More power to your elbow.” 5 Moreover, there

were several occasions after 1902 when Milner referred to his desire to

see “a powerful body of men” working “outside the existing political

parties” for imperial unity. He referred to this desire in his letter to

Congdon in 1904 and referred to it again in his “farewell speech” to the

Kindergarten in 1905. There is also a piece of negative evidence which

seems to me to be of considerable significance. In 1912 Parkin wrote a

book called The Rhodes Scholarships , in which he devoted several

pages to Rhodes’s wills. Although he said something about each will

and gave the date of each will, he said nothing about the secret society.

Now this secret society, which is found in five out of the seven wills, is

so astonishing that Parkin's failure to mention it must be deliberate. He

would have no reason to pass it by in silence unless the society had been

formed. If the existing Rhodes Trust were a more mature alternative

for the secret society rather than a screen for it, there would be no

reason to pass it by, but, on the contrary, an urgent need to mention it

as a matter of great intrinsic interest and as an example of how

Rhodes’s ideas matured.

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As a matter of fact, Rhodes’s ideas did not mature. The one fact

which appears absolutely clearly in every biography of Rhodes is the

fact that from 1875 to 1902 his ideas neither developed nor matured.

Parkin, who clearly knew of the secret society, even if he did not men-

tion it, says in regard to Rhodes’s last will: “It is essential to remember

that this final will is consistent with those which had preceded it, that

it was no late atonement for errors, as some have supposed, but was the

realization of life-long dreams persistently pursued.”

Leaving aside all hypothesis, the facts are clear: Rhodes wanted to

create a worldwide secret group devoted to English ideals and to the

Empire as the embodiment of these ideals, and such a group was

created. It was created in the period after 1890 by Rhodes, Stead, and,

above all, by Milner.

The idea of a secret international group of propagandists for federal

imperialism was by no means new to Milner when he became Rhodes

Trustee in 1901, since he had been brought into Rhodes’s secret society

as the sixth member in 1891. This was done by his old superior, W. T.

Stead. Stead, as we have indicated, was the chief Rhodes confidant in

England and very close to Milner. Although Stead did not meet Rhodes

until 1889, Rhodes regarded himself as a disciple of Stead’s much

earlier and eagerly embraced the idea of imperial federation based on

Home Rule. It was in pursuit of this idea that Rhodes contributed

£10,000 to Parnell in 1888. Although Rhodes accepted Stead’s ideas, he

did not decide that Stead was the man he wanted to be his lieutenant in

the secret society until Stead was sent to prison in 1885 for his articles

on organized vice in the Pall Mall Gazette. This courageous episode

convinced Rhodes to such a degree that he tried to see Stead in prison

but was turned away. After Stead was released, Rhodes did not find

the opportunity to meet him until 4 April 1889. The excitement of that

day for Stead can best be shown by quoting portions of the letter which

he wrote to Mrs. Stead immediately after the conference. It said:

Mr. Rhodes is my man! I have just had three hours talk with him. He is

full of a far more gorgeous idea in connection with the paper than even I

have had. I cannot tell vou his scheme because it is too secret. But it in-

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volves millions. He had no idea that it would cost £250,000 to start a

paper. But he offered me down as a free gift £20,000 to buy a share in the

P.M . Gazette as a beginning. Next year he would do more. He expects to

own before he dies 4 or 5 millions, all of which he will leave to carry out

the scheme of which the paper is an integral part. He is giving £500,000 to

make a railway to Matabeleland, and so has not available, just at this mo-

ment, the money necessary for starting the morning paper. His ideas are

federation, expansion, and consolidation of the Empire. ... He took to

me. Told me some things he has told no other man — save Lord

Rothschild — and pressed me to take the £20,000, not to have any return,

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to give no receipt, to simply take it and use it to give me a freer hand on

the P.M.G. It seems all like a fairy dream. . . . He said he had taken his

ideas from the P.M.G . , that the paper permeated South Africa, that he

met it everywhere. . . . How good God is to me. . . . Remember all the

above about R. is very private.

The day following this sensational conversation Stead lost a libel ac-

tion to the amount of £2000 damages. Rhodes at once sent a check to

cover it and said: “You must keep my confidence secret. The idea is

right, but until sure of the lines would be ruined in too many hands.

Your subsidiary press idea can be discussed without risk, but the inner

circle behind would never be many, perhaps three or four.” 6

About the same time, Rhodes revealed to Stead his plans to establish

the British South Africa Company and asked him who in England

could best help him get the necessary charter. Stead recommended

Albert Grey, the future Earl Grey, who had been an intimate friend of

Stead’s since 1873 and had been a member of the Milner-Toynbee

group in 1880-1884. As a result, Grey became one of the original direc-

tors of the British South Africa Company and took the first steps which

eventually brought him into the select circle of Rhodes’s secret society.

This society took another step forward during Rhodes’s visit to

England in February 1890. The evidence for this is to be found in the

Journals of Lord Esher (at that time R. B. Brett), who had obviously

been let in on the plan by Stead. Under date of 3 February 1890, we

read in these Journals : “Cecil Rhodes arrived last night from South

Africa. I was at Stead’s today when he called. I left them together.

Tonight I saw Stead again. Rhodes had talked for three hours of all his

great schemes. . . . Rhodes is a splendid enthusiast. But he looks upon

men as ‘machines.’ This is not very penetrating.” Twelve days after

this, on 15 February, at Lord Rothschild’s country house, Brett wrote

in his journal: “Came here last night. Cecil Rhodes, Arthur Balfour,

Harcourts, Albert Grey, Alfred Lyttelton. A long talk with Rhodes to-

day. He has vast ideas. Imperial notions. He seems disinterested. But

he is very ruse and, I suspect, quite unscrupulous as to the means he

employs.” 7

The secret society, after so much preliminary talk, took form in

1891, the same year in which Rhodes drew up his fourth will and made

Stead as well as Lord Rothschild the trustee of his fortune. It is per-

fectly clear from the evidence that he expected Rothschild to handle

the financial investments associated with the trust, while Stead was to

have full charge of the methods by which the funds were used. About

the same time, in February 1891, Stead and Rhodes had another long

discussion about the secret society. First they discussed their goals and

agreed that, if necessary in order to achieve Anglo-American unity,

Britain should join the United States. Then they discussed the organiza-

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tion of the secret society and divided it into two circles: an inner circle,

“The Society of the Elect”, and an outer circle to include “The Associa-

tion of Helpers” and The Review of Reviews (Stead’s magazine,

founded 1890). Rhodes said that he had already revealed the plan for

“The Society of the Elect” to Rothschild and “little Johnston.” By “little

Johnston” he meant Harry H. Johnston (Sir Harry after 1896), African

explorer and administrator, who had laid the basis for the British

claims to Nyasaland, Kenya, and Uganda. Johnston was, according to

Sir Frederick Whyte, the biographer of Stead, virtually unknown in

England before Stead published his portrait as the frontispiece to the

first issue of The Review of Reviews in 1890. 8 This was undoubtedly

done on behalf of Rhodes. Continuing their discussion of the member-

ship of “The Society of the Elect,” Stead asked permission to bring in

Milner and Brett. Rhodes agreed, so they telegraphed at once to Brett,

who arrived in two hours. They then drew up the following “ideal ar-

rangement” for the society:

1. General Of the Society: Rhodes

2. Junta of Three: Stead

Brett

Milner

3. Circle of Initiates: Cardinal Manning

General Booth

Bramwell Booth

“Little” Johnston

Albert Grey

Arthur Balfour

4. The Association of Helpers

5. A College, under Professor Seeley, to be established

“to train people in the English-speaking idea.”

Within the next few weeks Stead had another talk with Rhodes and a

talk with Milner, who was “filled with admiration” for the scheme, ac-

cording to Stead’s notes as published by Sir Frederick Whyte.

The “ideal arrangement” for the secret society, as drawn up in 1891,

never came into effect in all its details. The organization as drawn on

paper reflected the romantic and melodramatic ideas of Cecil Rhodes

and Stead, and doubtless they envisioned formal initiations, oaths,

secret signs of recognition, etc. Once Milner and Brett were made

initiates, the atmosphere changed. To them secret signs or oaths were

so much claptrap and neither necessary nor desirable, for the initiates

knew each other intimately and had implicit trust in each other

without the necessity of signs or oaths. Thus the melodrama envisioned

by Rhodes was watered down without in any way reducing the

seriousness with which the initiates determined to use their own per-

sonal influence and Rhodes’s wealth and power to achieve the con-

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solidation of the British Empire, which they shared as an ideal with

Rhodes.

With the elimination of signs, oaths, and formal initiations, the

criteria for membership in “The Society of the Elect" became

knowledge of the secret society and readiness to cooperate with the

other initiates toward their common goal. The distinction between the

initiates and The Association of Helpers rested on the fact that while

members of both circles were willing to cooperate with one another in

order to achieve their common goal, the initiates knew of the secret

society, while the “helpers" probably did not. This distinction rapidly

became of little significance, for the members of The Association of

Helpers would have been very stupid if they had not realized that they

were members of a secret group working in cooperation with other

members of the same group. Moreover, the Circle of Initiates became

in time of less importance because as time passed the members of this

select circle died, were alienated, or became less immediately con-

cerned with the project. As a result, the secret society came to be

represented almost completely by The Association of Helpers — that is,

by the group with which Milner was most directly concerned. And

within this Association of Helpers there appeared in time gradations of

intimacy, the more select ones participating in numerous areas of the

society’s activity and the more peripheral associated with fewer and

less vital areas. Nevertheless, it is clear that “The Society of the Elect"

continued to exist, and it undoubtedly recruited additional members

now and then from The Association of Helpers. It is a very difficult task

to decide who is and who is not a member of the society as a whole, and

it is even more difficult to decide if a particular member is an initiate or

a helper. Accordingly, the last distinction will not usually be made in

this study. Before we abandon it completely, however, an effort should

be made to name the initiates, in the earlier period at least.

Of the persons so far named, we can be certain that six were

initiates. These were Rhodes, Lord Rothschild, Johnston, Stead, Brett,

and Milner. Of these, Rothschild was largely indifferent and par-

ticipated in the work of the group only casually. Of the others,

Johnston received from £10,000 to £17,000 a year from Rhodes for

several years after 1889, during which period he was trying to

eliminate the influence of slave-traders and the Portuguese from

Nyasaland. About 1894 he became alienated from Rhodes because of

Johnston’s refusal to cooperate with him in an attack on the Portuguese

in Manikaland. As a result Johnston ceased to be an active member of

the society. Lord Grey’s efforts to heal the breach were only nominally

successful. 9

Stead was also eliminated in an informal fashion in the period

1899-1904, at first by Rhodes’s removing him from his trusteeship and

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later by Milner’s refusal to use him, confide in him, or even see him,

although continuing to protest his personal affection for him. Since

Milner was the real leader of the society after 1902, this had the effect

of eliminating Stead from the society. 10

Of the others mentioned, there is no evidence that Cardinal

Manning or the Booths were ever informed of the scheme. All three

were friends of Stead and would hardly be acceptable to the rising

power of Milner. Cardinal Manning died in 1892. As for “General”

Booth and his son, they were busily engaged in directing the Salvation

Army from 1878 to 1929 and played no discernible role in the history of

the Group.

Of the others who were mentioned, Brett, Grey, and Balfour can

safely be regarded as members of the society, Brett because of the

documentary evidence and the other two because of their lifelong

cooperation with and assistance to Milner and the other members of

the Group.

Brett, who succeeded his father as Viscount Esher in 1899, is one of

the most influential and one of the least-known men in British politics

in the last two generations. His importance could be judged better by

the positions he refused than by those he held during his long life

(1852-1930). Educated at Eton and Cambridge, he was a lifelong and

intimate friend of Arthur Balfour, Albert Grey, Lord Rosebery, and

Alfred Lyttelton. He was private secretary to the Marquess of

Hartington (Duke of Devonshire) in 1878-1885 and a Liberal M.P. in

1880-1885. In the last year he was defeated in an attempt to capture

the seat for Plymouth, and retired from public life to his country house

near Windsor at the advanced age of thirty-three years. That he

emerged from this retirement a decade later may well be attributed to

his membership in the Rhodes secret society. He met Stead while still in

public life and by virtue of his confidential position with the future

Duke of Devonshire was able to relay to Stead much valuable informa-

tion. These messages were sent over the signature “XIII.”

This assistance was so highly esteemed by Stead that he regarded

Brett as an important part of the Pali Mall Gazette organization.

Writing in 1902 of Milner and Brett, Stead spoke of them, without

mentioning their names, as “two friends, now members of the Upper

House, who were thoroughly in sympathy with the gospel according to

the Pall Mall Gazette and who had been as my right and left hands

during my editorship of the paper.” In return Stead informed Brett of

Rhodes’s secret schemes as early as February 1890 and brought him

into the society when it was organized the following year.

The official positions held by Brett in the period after 1895 were

secretary of the Office of Works (1895-1902), Lieutenant Governor and

Governor of Windsor Castle (1901-1930), member of the Royal Com-

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mission on the South African War (1902-1903), permanent member of

the Committee of Imperial Defence (1905-1930), chairman and later

president of the London County Territorial Force Association

(1909-1921), and chief British member of the Temporary Mixed Com-

mission on Disarmament of the League of Nations (1922-1923).

Although some of these posts, especially the one on the Committee of

Imperial Defence, play an important role in the history of the Milner

Group, none of them gives any indication of the significant position

which Esher held in British political life. The same thing could be said

of the positions which he refused, although they, if accepted, would

have made him one of the greatest names in recent British history.

Among the positions which he refused we might mention the following:

Permanent Under Secretary in the Colonial Office (1899), Governor of

Cape Colony (1900), Permanent Under Secretary in the War Office

(1900), Secretary of State for War (1903), Director of The Tunes

(1908), Viceroy of India (1908), and an earldom (date unknown).

Esher’s reasons for refusing these positions were twofold: he wanted to

work behind the scenes rather than in the public view, and his work in

secret was so important and so influential that any public post would

have meant a reduction in his power. When he refused the exalted posi-

tion of viceroy in 1908, he wrote frankly that, with his opportunity of

influencing vital decisions at the center, India for him “would be (it

sounds vain, but it isn’t) parochial.” 11 This opportunity for influencing

decisions at the center came from his relationship to the monarchy. For

at least twenty-five years (from 1895 to after 1920) Esher was probably

the most important adviser on political matters to Queen Victoria,

King Edward VII, and King George V. This position arose originally

from his personal friendship with Victoria, established in the period

1885-1887, and was solidified later when, as secretary to the Office of

Works and Lieutenant Governor of Windsor Castle, he was in charge

of the physical properties of all the royal residences. These oppor-

tunities were not neglected. He organized the Diamond Jubilee of

1897, the royal funeral of 1901, and the coronation of the same year. In

the latter case he proved to be indispensable, for in the sixty-four years

without a coronation the precedents had been forgotten. In this way

Esher reached a point where he was the chief unofficial representative

of the King and the “liaison between King and ministers.” As an exam-

ple of the former role, we might mention that in 1908, when a

purchaser known only as “X” acquired control of The Times , Esher

visited Lord Northcliffe on behalf of “a very high quarter” to seek

assurance that the policy of the paper would not be changed.

Northcliffe, who was “X,” hastened to give the necessary assurances,

according to the official History of The Times . Northcliffe and the

historian of The Times regarded Esher on this occasion as the emissary

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of King Edward, but we, who know of his relationship with the Rhodes

secret society, are justified in asking if he were not equally the agent of

the Milner Group, since it was as vital to the Group as to the King that

the policy of The Times remain unchanged. As we shall see in a later

chapter, when Northcliffe did adopt a policy contrary to that of the

Group, in the period 1917-1919, the Group broke with him personally

and within three years bought his controlling interest in the paper.

Certain other persons were probably taken into “The Society of the

Elect” in the next few years. Hawksley, Rhodes’s lawyer, was one. He

obviously knew about the secret society, since he drew up the wills in

which it was mentioned. This, combined with the fact that he was an

intimate confidant of Rhodes in all the activities of the society and was

made a trustee of the last three wills (1892), makes it probable that he

should be regarded as an initiate.

Likewise it is almost certain that Milner brought in Sir Thomas

Brassey (later Lord Brassey), the wealthy naval enthusiast whose name

is preserved in Brassey 9 s Naval Annual. Brassey was treasurer and most

active figure in the Imperial Federation League during its ten years’ ex-

istence. In 1889, as we have mentioned, he hired George Parkin to go

to Australia on behalf of the League to make speeches in support of im-

perial federation. We have already indicated that Milner in 1893 ap-

proached Parkin in behalf of a mysterious and unnamed group of

wealthy imperialists, and, some time later, Milner and Brassey signed a

contract with Parkin to pay him £450 a year for three years to prop-

agandize for imperial federation. Since this project was first broached

to Parkin by Milner alone and since the Imperial Federation League

was, by 1893, in process of dissolution, I think we have the right to

assume that the unnamed group for which Milner was acting was the

Rhodes secret society. If so, Brassey must have been introduced to the

scheme sometime between 1891 and 1893. This last interpretation is

substantiated by the numerous and confidential letters which passed

between Milner and Brassey in the years which followed. Some of these

will be mentioned later. It is worth mentioning here that Brassey was

appointed Governor of Victoria in 1895 and played an important role

in the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1900.

The propaganda work which Parkin did in the period 1893-1895 in

fulfillment of this agreement was part of a movement that was known

at the time as “Seeley’s lecturers.” This movement was probably all that

ensued from the fifth portion of the “ideal arrangement” — that is, from

the projected college under Professor Seeley.

Another person who was brought into the secret society was Edmund

Garrett, the intimate friend of Stead, Milner, and Rhodes, who was

later used by Milner as a go-between for communications with the

other two. Garrett had been sent to South Africa originally by Stead

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while he was still on the Pall Mall Gazette in 1889. He went there for a

second time in 1895 as editor of the Cape Times , the most influential

English-language newspaper in South Africa. This position he un-

doubtedly obtained from Stead and Rhodes. Sir Frederick Whyte, in

his biography of Stead, says that Rhodes was the chief proprietor of the

paper. Sir Edward Cook, however, the biographer of Garrett and a

man who was very close to the Rhodes secret society, says that the

owners of the Cape Times were Frederick York St. Leger and Dr.

Rutherfoord Harris. This is a distinction without much difference,

since Dr. Harris, as we shall see, was nothing more than an agent of

Rhodes.

In South Africa, Garrett was on most intimate personal relationships

with Rhodes. Even when the latter was Prime Minister of Cape

Colony, Garrett used to communicate with him by tossing pebbles at

his bedroom window in the middle of the night. Such a relationship

naturally gave Garrett a prestige in South Africa which he could never

have obtained by his own position or abilities. When High Commis-

sioner Hercules Robinson drew up a proclamation after the Jameson

Raid, he showed it to Garrett before it was issued and cut out a

paragraph at the latter's insistence.

Garrett was also on intimate terms with Milner during his period as

High Commissioner after 1897. In fact, when Rhodes spoke of political

issues in South Africa, he frequently spoke of “I myself, Milner, and

Garrett/’ We have already quoted an occasion on which he used this

expression to Stead in 1900. Milner’s relationship with Garrett can be

gathered from a letter which he wrote to Garrett in 1899, after Garrett

had to leave South Africa to go to a sanatorium in Germany: “It is no

use protesting against the decrees of fate, nor do I want to say too much

on what Rhodes calls 4 the personal.’ But this really was a great blow to

me, and I have never quite got over your breakdown and departure,

never quite felt the same man since, either politically or privately.

. . . Dear Friend, I miss you fearfully, always shall miss you. So does

this young country.” 12

I think we are justified in assuming that a man as intimate as this

with Rhodes and Milner, who was used in such confidential and impor-

tant ways by both of them, who knew of the plans for the Johan-

nesburg revolt and the Jameson Raid before they occurred, and who

knew of the Rhodes secret society, was an initiate. That Garrett knew

of the Jameson plot beforehand is recorded by Sir Edward Cook in his

biography. That Garrett knew of the secret society is recorded by Gar-

rett himself in an article which he published in the Contemporary

Review after Rhodes’s death in 1902. The words in which Garrett

made this last revelation are of some significance. He spoke of “that

idea of a sort of Jesuit-like Secret Society for the Promotion of the Em-

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pire, which for long he hugged and which — minus, perhaps, the

secrecy and the Jesuitry — I know to have had a good deal of fascination

for others among our contemporaries not reckoned visionaries by the

world."

We have said that Garrett was used by Milner as an intermediary

with both Rhodes and Stead. The need for such an intermediary with

Rhodes arose from Milner’s feeling that it was politically necessary to

conceal the intimacy of their relationship. As Rhodes told Stead,

speaking of Milner, on 10 April 1900, “I have seen very little of him. He

said to me, ‘The less you and I are seen together the better.’ Hence, I

never invited him to Groote Schuur.” 13

Garrett was also used by Milner as an intermediary with Stead after

the latter became alienated from the initiates because of his opposition

to the Boer War. One example of this is of some significance. In 1902

Milner made a trip to England without seeing Stead. On 12 April of

that year, Garrett, who had seen Milner, wrote the following letter to

Stead: “I love the inner man, Stead, in spite of all differences, and

should love him if he damned me and my policy and acts ten times

more. So does Milner — in the inner court — we agreed when he was

over — only there are temporary limitations and avoidances. . . . He

told me why he thought on the whole he’d better not see you this time.

I quite understood, though I’m not sure whether you would, but I’m

sure you would have liked the way in which, without any prompting at

all, he spoke of his personal feelings for you being unaffected by all

this. Someday let us hope, all this tyranny will be overpast, and we

shall be able to agree again, you and Milner, Cook and I.” It is possible

that the necessity for Milner to overrule his personal feelings and the

mention of “the inner court’’ may be oblique references to the secret

society. In any case, the letter shows the way in which Stead was

quietly pushed aside in that society by its new leader.

Another prominent political figure who may have been an initiate in

the period before 1902 is Lord Rosebery, Like his father-in-law, Lord

Rothschild, who was an initiate, Rosebery was probably not a very ac-

tive member of The Society of the Elect, although for quite different

reasons. Lord Rothschild held aloof because to him the whole project

was incomprehensible and unbusinesslike; Lord Rosebery held aloof

because of his own diffident personality and his bad physical health.

However, he cooperated with the members of the society and was on

such close personal relationships with them that he probably knew of

the secret society. Brett was one of his most intimate associates and in-

troduced him to Milner in 1885. As for Rhodes, Rosebery’s official

biographer, the Marquess of Crewe, says that he “both liked and ad-

mired Cecil Rhodes who was often his guest.” He made Rhodes a Privy

Councillor, and Rhodes made him a trustee of his will. These things,

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and the fact that the initiates generally assumed that Rosebery would

grant their requests, give certain grounds for believing that he was a

member of their society. 14 If he was, he played little role in it after

1900.

Two other men, both fabulously wealthy South Africans, may be

regarded as members of the society and probably initiates. These were

Abe Bailey and Alfred Beit.

Abe Bailey (later Sir Abe, 1864-1940) was the largest landowner in

Rhodesia, a large Transvaal mine-owner, and one of the chief, if not

the chief, financial supporters of the Milner Group in the period up to

1925. These financial contributions still continue, although since 1925

they have undoubtedly been eclipsed by those of Lord Astor. Bailey

was an associate of Rhodes and Alfred Beit, the two most powerful

figures in South Africa, and like them was a close friend of Milner. He

named his son, born in 1900, John Milner Bailey. Like Rhodes and

Beit, he was M illing that his money be used by Milner because he sym-

pathized with his aims. As his obituary in The Times expressed it, “In

politics he modeled himself deliberately on Rhodes as his ideal of a

good South African and a devoted Imperialist. ... He had much the

same admiration of Milner and remained to the end a close friend of

‘Milner s young men/ ” This last phrase refers to Milners Kindergarten

or The Association of Helpers, which will be described in detail later.

Abe Bailey was one of the chief plotters in the Jameson Raid in 1895.

He took over Rhodes’s seat in the Cape Parliament in 1902-1907 and

was Chief Whip in the Progressive Party, of which Dr. Jameson was

leader. When the Transvaal obtained self-government in 1907, he

went there and M f as Whip of the same party in the Legislative Assembly

at Pretoria. After the achievement of the Union of South Africa, in the

creation of which, as we shall see, he played a vital role, he was a

member of the Union Parliament and a loyal supporter of Botha and

Smuts from 1915 to 1924. After his defeat in 1924, he divided his time

between South Africa and London. In England, as The Times said at

his death, he “took a close interest behind the scenes in politics.” This

“close interest” was made possible by his membership in the innermost

circle of the Milner Group, as we shall see.

Certain others of Rhodes’s chief associates cooperated with Milner in

his designs after Rhodes’s death and might well be regarded as

members of Rhodes’s society and of the Milner Group. Of these we

might mention Alfred Beit, Dr. Starr Jameson and his assistant R. S.

Holland, J. Rochfort Maguire, and Lewis Loyd Michell.

Alfred Beit (1853-1906) was the business genius who handled all

Rhodes’s business affairs and incidentally had most to do with making

the Rhodes fortune. He was a Rhodes Trustee and left much of his own

fortune for public and educational purposes similar to those endowed

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by Rhodes. This will be discussed later. His biography was written by

George Seymour Fort, a protege of Abe Bailey, who acted as Bailey’s

agent on the boards of directors of many corporations, a fact revealed

by Fort himself in a letter to The Times, 13 August 1940.

Leander Starr Jameson (later Sir Starr, 1853-1917) was Rhodes’s

doctor, roommate, and closest friend, and had more to do with the

opening up of Rhodesia than any other single man. His famous raid

into the Transvaal with Rhodesian police in 1895 was one of the chief

events leading up to the Boer War. After Rhodes’s death, Jameson was

leader of his party in Cape Colony and served as Premier in 1904-1908.

A member of the National Convention of 1908-1909, he was also

director of the British South Africa Company and a Rhodes Trustee. He

was a great admirer of Milner and, even before the death of Rhodes,

had given evidence of a desire to shift his allegiance from Rhodes to

Milner. In 1898 he wrote to his brother: “Rhodes had done absolutely

nothing but go backwards. ... I hate it all and hate the people more

than ever; would clear out by the next boat, but have not pluck enough

to acknowledge myself beaten. . . . Milner is the only really healthy

personality in the whole crowd.’’ 15 This feeling may have been only a

temporary reaction, resulting from the way in which Rhodes received

news of the Jameson Raid, but it is likely that more basic issues were

concerned, since more than two years had elapsed between the raid

and these statements. At any rate, Milner and Jameson were able to

cooperate loyally thereafter. Jameson’s biographical sketch in The Dic-

tionary of National Biography was written by Dougal Malcolm of

Milner’s Kindergarten.

Reginald Sothern Holland (now Sir Sothern) was private secretary to

Dr. Jameson in 1904 and later for three years permanent head of the

Prime Minister’s Department (1905-1908). He was secretary to the

South African Shipping Freights Conference (1905-1906) with

Birchenough and succeeded Birchenough as His Majesty’s Trade Com-

missioner to South Africa (1908-1913). During the war he was in

charge of supply of munitions, at first in the War Office and later

(1915) in the Ministry of Munitions. He was also on various commis-

sions in which Milner was interested, such as the Royal Commission on

Paper Supplies (with Birchenough), and ended the war as Controller of

the Cultivation Division of the Food Production Department (which

was seeking to carry out recommendations made by the Milner and

Selborne Committee on Food Production). He became a Rhodes

Trustee in 1932.

Lewis Loyd Michell (later Sir Lewis, 1842-1928) was Rhodes’s

banker in South Africa and after his death took over many of his in-

terests. A Minister without Portfolio in Jameson’s Cabinet in the Cape

Colony (1904-1905), he was also a director of the British South Africa

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Company and a Rhodes Trustee. He published a two-volume Life of

Rhodes in 1910.

J. Rochfort Maguire (1855-1925), Fellow of All Souls, was an exact

contemporary of Milner’s at Oxford (1873-1877) and Rhodes’s most in-

timate friend in college. He worked for Rhodes for the rest of his life.

He obtained the original mining concession (which became the basis of

the British South Africa Company) from Lobengula in 1883, was

Rhodes’s representative in the House of Commons for five years

(1890-1895), 16 and his personal representative in Rhodesia or London

during Rhodes’s absences from either place. Director of the British

South Africa Company for twenty-seven years (1898-1925), he was

president for the last two. His sketch in the Dictionary of National

Biography was written by Dougal Malcolm.

Of these six men whom Milner inherited from Rhodes, only one was

young enough to become an active member of the Milner Group. This

was Sothern Holland, born 1876, who did become a member, although

perhaps not of the inner circle. The other five were Milner s own age,

with established positions and power of their own. They all knew

Milner well and cooperated with him. Even if they were initiates, they

played no vital role in the history of the Milner Group after 1905.

As we have indicated, the character of the secret society and its per-

sonnel were changed after 1902. This was the result of the activities of

Lord Milner. The death of Rhodes and the elimination of Stead gave

the organization a much less melodramatic form while making it a

much more potent political instrument. Moreover, as a result of the

personal ascendancy of Milner, the membership of the organization

was drastically changed. Of the initiates or probable initiates whom we

have mentioned, Rothschild, Johnston, Hawksley, Rosebery, Jameson,

Michell, and Maguire played little or no role in the society after 1902.

Beit died in 1906, and Garrett the following year. Of the others, Grey,

Brassey, Esher, and Balfour continued in active cooperation with the

members of the Group. The real circle of initiates in the twentieth cen-

tury, however, would appear to include the following names: Milner,

Abe Bailey, George Parkin, Lord Selborne, Jan Smuts, A. J.

Glazebrook, R. H. Brand (Lord Brand), Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian),

Lionel Curtis, Geoffrey Dawson, H. A. L. Fisher, Edward Grigg,

Leopold Amery, and Lord Astor, Since 1925, when Milner died, others

have undoubtedly been added. This circle, with certain additional

names, we shall call the “inner core” or the “inner circle” of the Milner

Group. The history of these men’s activities and the evidence which en-

titles us to attribute them to the circle of initiates will occupy most of

the remainder of this volume.

The changes which Milner made in the Rhodes secret society were

not important. There was no change in goals, and there was very little

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change in methods. In fact, both of these were modified more by Lord

Lothian and his friends after Milner’s death than they were by Milner

after Rhodes’s death.

Rhodes and Milner were aiming at the same goals, and had been for

twenty-five years, in 1902. They differed slightly on how these goals

could be obtained, a difference based on different personalities. To

Rhodes it seemed that the ends could be won by amassing great wealth,

to Milner it seemed that they could be won by quiet propaganda, hard

work, and personal relationships (as he had learned from Toynbee).

Neither rejected the other’s methods, and each was willing to use the

other and his methods to achieve their common dream as the occasion

arose. With the death of Rhodes in 1902, Milner obtained control of

Rhodes’s money and was able to use it to lubricate the workings of his

propaganda machine. This is exactly as Rhodes had wanted and had

intended. Milner was Rhodes’s heir, and both men knew it. Rhodes

himself said before his death, “They tell me I can only live five years. I

don’t mean to die. I want to live. But if I go, there is one man — Sir

Alfred Milner. Always trust Milner. You don’t know yet what you have

got in him.” In 1898, in conversation with Stead, Rhodes said, “You

will support Milner in any measure that he may take short of war. I

make no such limitation. I support Milner absolutely without reserve.

If he says peace, I say peace; if he says war, I say war. Whatever hap-

pens, I say ditto to Milner.” 17

The goals which Rhodes and Milner sought and the methods by

which they hoped to achieve them were so similar by 1902 that the two

are almost indistinguishable. Both sought to unite the world, and

above all the English-speaking world, in a federal structure around

Britain. Both felt that this goal could best be achieved by a secret band

of men united to one another by devotion to the common cause and by

personal loyalty to one another. Both felt that this band should pursue

its goal by secret political and economic influence behind the scenes

and by the control of journalistic, educational, and propaganda agen-

cies. Milner’s intention to work for this goal, and to use Rhodes’s money

and influence to do it, is clearly implied in all his actions (both before

and after 1902), in his correspondence with Rhodes (some of it un-

published), and in letters to Parkin in September 1901 and to Lord

Grey in May 1902. 18

It is very likely that, long before Rhodes died, this plan was discussed

in private conversations of which no record was kept. For example,

three of the Rhodes Trustees under the last will — Grey, Milner, and

Beit — with Lyttelton Gell had dinner at Beit’s house and talked over

important matters far into the night of 30 November 1898. It is quite

clear that Rhodes talked over with his associates the ways in which his

ideals would be carried out after his death. He lived constantly under

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the fear of death and regarded his whole life as a race in which he must

achieve as much of his purpose as possible before he died. The

biographer of Alfred Beit is quite confident that Rhodes discussed with

Beit a plan by which Rhodes would omit from his will all mention of a

project close to his heart — the Cape to Cairo Railway — leaving this

project to be covered, as it was, by Beit’s own will. There can be little

doubt that Rhodes would have discussed a project even closer to his

heart — the worldwide group of Anglo-Saxon sympathizers — with the

trustees of his own will, and, above all, with the one most clearly

devoted to his ideas, Milner.

Milner’s Kindergarten,

1897-1910

The appointment as High Commissioner of South Africa was the

turning point in Milner's life. It was obtained, apparently, through his

membership in Rhodes’s secret society, through the influence of Stead,

Brett, and Rhodes. Stead, in his book on Rhodes's wills, claims the

chief credit for the nomination, while Brett was with Milner at Wind-

sor when he received the appointment and returned with him to Lon-

don. Sir Harry Johnston, who had already been offered the appoint-

ment for himself by a Foreign Office official, felt that it was Rhodes’s

influence which gave it to Milner. In his autobiography he wrote: “At

last the decision was made — Sir Alfred Milner. I suspect very much on

the personal pleadings of Cecil Rhodes, who professed himself

delighted with the choice. . . . The non-selection of myself for a work

that would have greatly interested me, was a disappointment, and I

felt it was due to Rhodes’ enmity more than to any other cause."

As High Commissioner, Milner was subordinate to the Secretary of

State for the Colonies, a post held at that time by Joseph Chamberlain,

who was already acquainted with Milner. They had fought Home Rule

together in the election of 1886 and had both been in Egypt in 1889.

They already agreed on most of the important issues of the day, com-

bining, like other members of the Milner Group, advocacy of social

welfare and imperialism. Moreover, both were strong believers in

union with Ireland and a new tariff policy based on imperial

preference. When Chamberlain joined Lord Salisbury’s government as

Secretary of State for the Colonies (1895-1903), he was eager to accept

the suggestion that Milner be sent to South Africa. As Colonial

Secretary, Chamberlain did a number of things that won the complete

support of Milner. Among these we might mention the new constitu-

tion for Jamaica (1899), the federation of the Malay States (1895), and

the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia (1900). When

Chamberlain resigned from the Colonial Office in 1903 on the issue of

tariff reform, the post was offered by Balfour to Milner. The latter

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refused in order to complete the work he had started in South Africa.

When he was ready to retire from his post, he recommended that his

successor be either Alfred Lyttelton or Lord Selborne. The latter ob-

tained the appointment and not only carried Milner s work to comple-

tion but did it with Milner’s picked personnel. That personnel regarded

Selborne as second leader to Milner in the Group. 1

As High Commissioner, Milner built up a body of assistants known

in history as “Milner’s Kindergarten.” The following list gives the chief

members of the Kindergarten, their dates of birth and death (where

possible), their undergraduate colleges (with dates), and the dates in

which they were Fellows of All Souls.

Name

Patrick Duncan (later

Dates

College

All Souls

Sir Patrick

Philip Kerr (later Lord

1870-1946

Balliol 1890-1894

Never

Lothian)

Robert Henry Brand

1882-1940

New 1897-1901

Never

(later Lord Brand)

1878-1963

New 1897-1901

1901-

Lionel Curtis

Geoffrey Dawson (until

1872-1955

New 1891-1905

1921-

1917 Robinson)

John Buchan (later Lord

1874-1944

Magdalen

1893-1897

1898-1905;

1915-1944

Tweedsmuir)

Dougal Orme Malcolm

1875-1940

Brasenose

1895-1899

Never

(later Sir Dougal)

1877-1955

New 1895-1899

1899-1955

William Lionel Hichens

1874-1941

New 1894-1898

Never

Richard Feetham

1874-1965

New 1893-1898

Never

John Dove

1872-1934

New 1891-1895

Never

Basil Williams

1867-1950

New 1886-1891

1924-1925

Lord Basil Blackwood

1870-1917

Balliol 1891-

Never

Hugh A. Wyndham

George V. Fiddes (later

1877-

New 1896-1900

Never

Sir George

John Hanbury-Williams

1858-1925

Brasenose

1880-1884

Never

(later Sir John)

1859-1946

Wellington, N.Z.

Never

Main S. 0. Walrond

Fabian Ware (later Sir

1870-

Balliol

Never

Fabian)

William Flavelle

1869-1949

Univ. of Paris

Never

Monypenny

1866-1912

Balliol

1888-1890

Never

To these eighteen names should be added five others who were pre-

Milner's Kindergarten: 1897-1910 / 53

sent in South Africa between the Boer War and the creation of the

Union and were members of the Milner Group but cannot be listed

under the Kindergarten because they were not members of Milners

civil service. 2 These five are:

Name

Dates

College

All Souls

Leopold Amery

1873-1955

Balliol

1892-1896

1897-1911,

1938-

Edward Grigg (later

Lord Altrincham)

1879-1955

New 1898-1902

Nev r er

H. A. L. Fisher

1865-1940

New 1884-1888

Never

Edward F. L. Wood

(later Lord Irwin and

Lord Halifax)

1881-1959

Christ Church

1899-1903

1903-1910

Basil K. Long

1878-1944

Brasenose

1897-1901

Never

Of these twenty-three names, eleven were from New College. Seven

were members of All Souls, six as Fellows. These six had held their

fellowships by 1947 an aggregate of one hundred and sixty-nine years,

or an average of over twenty-eight years each. Of the twenty-three,

nine were in the group which founded, edited, and wrote The Round

Table in the period after 1910, five were in close personal contact with

Lloyd George (two in succession as private secretaries) in the period

1916-1922, and seven were in the group which controlled and edited

The Times after 1912.

Eleven of these twenty-three men, plus others whom we have men-

tioned, formed the central core of the Milner Group as it has existed

from 1910 to the present. These others will be discussed in their proper

place. At this point we should take a rapid glance at the biographies of

some of the others.

Two members of the Kindergarten, Patrick Duncan and Richard

Feetham, stayed in South Africa after the achievement of the Union in

1910. Both remained important members of the Milner Group and, as

a result of this membership, rose to high positions in their adopted

country. Patrick Duncan had been Milner s assistant on the Board of

Internal Revenue from 1894 to 1897 and was taken with him to South

Africa as private secretary. He was Treasurer of the Transvaal in 1901,

Colonial Secretary of the Transvaal in 1903-1906, and Acting

Lieutenant Governor in 1906. He remained in South Africa as a

lieutenant to Jan Smuts, becoming an advocate of the Supreme Court

there, a member of the South African Parliament, Minister of Interior,

Public Health, and Education (1921-1924), Minister of Mines

(1933-1936), and finally Governor-General of South Africa

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(1936-1946). He frequently returned to England to confer with the

Group (in September 1932, for example, at Lord Lothian’s country

house, Blickling).

Richard Feetham was made Deputy Town Clerk and later Town

Clerk of Johannesburg (1902-1905). He was legal adviser to Lord

Selborne, the High Commissioner, in 1907 and a member of the

Legislative Council of the Transvaal later (1907-1910). He was chair-

man of the Committee on Decentralization of Powers in India in

1918-1919; a King’s Counsel in Transvaal (1919-1923); a judge of the

Supreme Court of South Africa (1923-1930); chairman of the Irish

Boundary Commission (1924-1925); chairman of the Local Govern-

ment Commission in Kenya Colony (of which Edward Grigg was

Governor) in 1926; adviser to the Shanghai Municipal Council

(1930-1931); chairman of the Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Commis-

sion (1930-1935); Vice-Chancellor of the University of Witwatersrand,

Johannesburg (1938); and has been a judge of the Supreme Court of

South Africa since 1939. Most of these positions, as we shall see, came

to him as a member of the Milner Group.

Hugh A. Wyndham also remained in South Africa after 1910 and

was a member of the Union Parliament for ten years (1910-1920). He

had previously been secretary to Milner. In spite of the prominence of

his family and his own position as heir presumptive to the third Baron

Leconfield, it is difficult to obtain any adequate information about

him. His biography in Who's Who does not mention his experiences in

South Africa or his other connections with the Milner Group. This is

obviously the result of a deliberate policy, since editions of Who’s Who

of thirty-five years ago do mention the South African connection.

Wyndham wrote Problems of Imperial Trusteeship (1933); Britain and

the World; and the chapter on “The Formation of the Union of South

Africa, 1901-1910” in volume VIII of the Cambridge History of the

British Empire (1936). He was, like all the members of the Milner

Group, a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, wrote

many book reviews for its Journal , and at the outbreak of war in 1939

became the usual presiding officer at its meetings (in the absence of

Lord Astor). When publication of the Journal was resumed after the

war, he became chairman of its editorial board, a position he still

holds. Married to Maude Lyttelton, daughter of Viscount Cobham, he

is also a brother-in-law of Sir Ivor Maxse (the brother of Lady Milner)

and a nephew of Lord Rosebery.

Dougal Malcolm (Sir Dougal since 1938), a grandson of Lord

Charles Wellesley, joined the Colonial Office in 1900 and served there

under Chamberlain and Alfred Lyttelton for several years. In 1905 he

went to South Africa as private secretary to Lord Selborne and re-

mained there until Union was achieved. He was secretary to Lord

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Grey, Governor-General of Canada, during the last year of his tenure

(1910-1911); an official of the British Treasury for a year; and, in 1913,

became a director of the British South Africa Company (president since

1938). He is also vice-president of the British North Borneo Company,

of which his brother-in-law, General Sir Neill Malcolm, is president. 3

Sir Dougal wrote the biographies of Otto Beit, of Dr. Jameson, and of

J. Rochford Maguire for the Dictionary of National Biography.

William Lionel Hichens (1874-1940), on graduating from New Col-

lege, served briefly as a cyclist messenger in the Boer War and then

joined the Egyptian Ministry of Finance (1900). After only nine

months’ service, he was shifted by Milner to South Africa to join the

Kindergarten as Treasurer of Johannesburg. He at once went to

England to float a loan, and on his return (in 1902) was made Colonial

Treasurer of the Transvaal and Treasurer of the Intercolonial Council.

Later he added to his responsibilities the role of Acting Commissioner

of Railways. In 1907 he went to India as a member of the Royal Com-

mission on Decentralization, following this with a stint as chairman of

the Board of Inquiry into Public Service in Southern Rhodesia (1909).

In 1910 he went into private business, becoming chairman of the board

of a great steel firm, Cammell Laird and Company, but continued as a

member of the Milner Group. In 1915, Lloyd George sent Hichens and

Brand to organize the munitions industry of Canada. They set up the

Imperial Munitions Board of Canada, on which Joseph Flavelle (Sir

Joseph after 1917) was made chairman, Charles B. Gordon (Sir Charles

after 1917) vice-chairman, and Brand a member. In later years

Hichens was a prominent businessman, one of the great steel masters of

England, director of the Commonwealth Trust Company (which sent

John Dove to India in 1918), of the London Northwestern Railway and

its successor, the London, Midlands and Scottish. He was a member of

the Executive Committee of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust for

over twenty years (1919-1940), which may help to explain the extra-

ordinary generosity of the Carnegie Foundation toward the Royal In-

stitute of International Affairs (of which Hichens was a member). He

was an enthusiastic supporter of adult education programs and spent

years of effort on Birkbeck College, the graduate evening school of the

University of London. He was chairman of the board of governors of

this institution from 1927 until his death, by a German bomb, in

December of 1940. From 1929 onwards, like most of the inner circle of

the Milner Group, he lived close to Oxford (at North Aston). He mar-

ried Hermione Lyttelton, daughter of Sir Neville Lyttelton, niece of

Viscount Cobham, and cousin of the present Oliver Lyttelton.

George Vandeleur Fiddes (Sir George after 1912) had been private

secretary to the Earl of Onslow, father of Lady Halifax, before he was

secretary to Milner in South Africa (1897-1900). Later he was political

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secretary to the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa (1900), secretary

to the Transvaal administration (1900-1902), Assistant Under

Secretary of State for the Colonies (1909-1916), and Permanent Under

Secretary for the Colonies (1916-1921),

John Hanbury-Williams (Sir John after 1908) had been in the

regular army for nineteen years, chiefly as aide to various colonial ad-

ministrators, when he was assigned to Milner as military secretary in

1897. After three years of that, he went to London as secretary to the

Secretary of State for War (St. John Brodrick, 1900-1903), and to

Canada as secretary and military secretary to the Governor-General,

Earl Grey (1904-1909). Then he was brigadier general in charge of ad-

ministration in Scotland (1909-1914) and on the General Staff (1914),

Chief of the British Military Mission to Russia (1914-1917), in charge of

the British Prisoners of War Department at The Hague (1917-1918)

and in Switzerland (1918), and ended his career in a blaze of glory as a

major general, marshal of the diplomatic corps (1920-1934), and extra

equerry to three Kings of England (1934-1946).

John Buchan was not a member of the inner core of the Milner

Group, but was close to it and was rewarded in 1935 by being raised to

a barony as Lord Tweedsmuir and sent to Canada as Governor-

General. He is important because he is (with Lionel Curtis) one of the

few members of the inner circles of the Milner Group who have written

about it in published work. In his autobiography, Pilgrim's Way (Bos-

ton, 1940), he gives a brief outline of the personnel of the Kindergarten

and their subsequent achievements, and a brilliant analysis of Milner

himself. He wrote:

He (Milner) had received — chiefly from Arnold Toynbee — an inspiration

which centered all his interests on the service of the state. He had the in-

stincts of a radical reformer joined to a close-textured intellect which re-

formers rarely possess. He had a vision of the Good Life spread in a wide

commonalty; and when his imagination apprehended the Empire, his

field of vision was marvellously enlarged. So at the outset of his career he

dedicated himself to a cause, putting things like leisure, domestic happi-

ness, and money-making behind him. In Bacon s phrase he espoused the

State. On the intellectual side he found that which wholly satisfied him in

the problems of administration, when he confronted them as Goschen’s

secretary, and in Egypt, and at Somerset House. He had a mind re-

markable both for its scope and its mastery over details — the most power-

ful administrative intelligence, I think, which Britain has produced in our

day. If I may compare him with others, he was as infallible as Cromer in

detecting the center of gravity in a situation, as brilliant as Alfred Beit in

bringing order out of tangled finances, and he had Curzon’s power of

keeping a big organization steadily at work. He was no fanatic — his in-

telligence was too supreme for that — but in the noblest sense of the word,

he was an enthusiast. He narrowed his interests of set purpose, and this

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absorption meant a certain rigidity. He had cut himself off from some of

the emollients of life. Consequently, the perfect administrator was a less

perfect diplomatist. . . [Later, Buchan adds,] I was brought into close

touch with a great character. Milner was the most selfless man I have ever

known. He thought of his work and his cause, much of his colleagues,

never of himself. He simply was not interested in what attracts common

ambition. He could not be bribed, for there was nothing on the globe

wherewith to bribe him; or deterred by personal criticism, for he cared

not at all for fame; and it would have been as easy to bully the solar

system, since he did not know the meaning of fear.

The effect Milner had on Buchan was shared by the other members

of the Kindergarten and provided that spiritual bond which animated

the Milner Group. This spirit, found in Toynbee, in Goschen, in

Milner, and later in Lionel Curtis, was the motivating force of the

Milner Group until after 1922. Indeed, much of what Buchan says here

about Milner could be applied with slight change to Lionel Curtis, and

Curtis, as we shall see, was the motivating force of the Milner Group

from 1910 to 1922. After 1922, as the influence of Lord Lothian, Lord

Astor, and Lord Brand increased and that of Milner declined, the spirit

of the Group became somewhat tarnished but not completely lost.

Buchan went to Brasenose College, but, as he says himself, “I lived a

good deal at Balliol and my closest friends were of that college.'" He

mentions as his closest friends Hilaire Belloc, F. E. Smith (the future

Lord Birkenhead), John Simon, Leo Amery, T. A. Nelson, Arthur

Salter, Bron Lucas, Edward Wood (the future Lord Halifax), and Ray-

mond Asquith. Of this list, five were future Fellows of All Souls, and

four of these were important members of the Milner Group.

Buchan went to South Africa in 1901, on Milner's personal invita-

tion, to be his private secretary, but stayed only two years. Placed in

charge of resettlement of displaced Boers and agricultural reform (both

close to Milner’s heart), he left in 1903 to take an important position in

the administration of Egypt. This appointment was mysteriously can-

celed after his return to England because, according to Buchan, he was

too young for the task. It is more than likely that Milner, who had ob-

tained the appointment for him, changed his mind because of Buchan’s

rapidly declining enthusiasm for imperial federation. This was a sub-

ject on which Milner and other members of his Group were adamant

for many years. By 1915 most members of the Group began to believe

that federation was impossible, and, as a compromise, took what we

know now as the Commonwealth of Nations — that is, a group of na-

tions joined together by common ideals and allegiances rather than by

fixed political organization. Lionel Curtis remains to this day a

fanatical believer in federation, and some of the decline in his influence

after 1922 may be attributed to inability to obtain federation in the

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face of world — and above all Dominion — opposition. The present

Commonwealth is in reality the compromises worked out when the

details of the Milner Group clashed with the reality of political facts.

As a result of Buchan’s failure to obtain the appointment of Egypt,

he continued to practice law in London for three years, finally aban-

doning it to become a partner in the publishing firm of his old

classmate Thomas A. Nelson (1906-1916). In 1907 he married Susan

Grosvenor, whose family (Dukes of Westminister) was allied, as we

have seen, to the Wyndhams, Cavendishes, Lytteltons, and Primroses

(Earls of Rosebery and Lords Dalmeny). As a result of this family con-

nection, Buchan wrote a memoir on Lord Rosebery for Proceedings of

the British Academy in 1930 and a book on the Grosvenor twins, who

were killed in the war.

During the war, Buchan was a correspondent for The Times , wrote

Nelson's History of the Great War in twenty-four volumes (1915-1919),

was the military intelligence in France (1916-1917), and finally was

Director of Information for the War Office (1917-1918). During this

period and later, he was a prolific writer of travel, historical, and

adventure stories, becoming eventually, by such works as Greenrnan -

tie , The Three Hostages , and The Thirty-nine Steps , the most famous

writer of adventure stories in Britain. His connection with South Africa

gained him the post of official historian of the South African forces in

France. He was a close friend of Lord Haldane and Lord Rosebery,

both of whom can be regarded as members of the Milner Group. Of

Haldane, Buchan wrote: “What chiefly attracted me to him was his

loyalty to Milner. Milner thought him the ablest man in public life,

abler even than Arthur Balfour, and alone of his former Liberal allies

Haldane stood by him on every count." Haldane, with Rosebery, As-

quith, and Edward Grey, had formed the Liberal League to support

liberal imperialism, with which Milner was closely associated.

Buchan was representative of the Scottish universities in the House of

Commons for eight years (1927-1935), Lord High Commissioner for

the Church of Scotland in 1933-1934, president of the Scottish His-

torical Society (1929-1933), and Chancellor of Edinburgh University,

before he obtained his last post, Governor-General of Canada

(1935-1940).

Basil Williams graduated from New College in 1891 and almost im-

mediately became clerk in the House of Commons, holding this post for

nine years before he went soldiering in the Boer War. He became

Secretary of the Transvaal Education Department, wrote Volume IV

of The Times History of the South African War , and was The Times

special correspondent at the South African Convention of 1908-1919,

which made the Union. A major on the General Staff in 1918-1909, he

was later Ford Lecturer at Oxford (in 1921), Professor of History at

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McGill (1921-1925), and Professor of History at Edinburgh

(1925-1937). He wrote the very revealing article on Milner in the Dic-

tionary of National Biography and numerous other works, including

Cecil Rhodes (1921), The British Empire (for the Home University

Library, 1928), Volume XI of the Oxford History of England ( The

Whig Supremacy , 1714-1760 ), Botha , Smuts, and South Africa (1946),

and edited The Makers of the Nineteenth Century (1915-1928).

Lord Basil Blackwood, son and heir of Lord Dufferin, went to

Balliol in 1891 but never graduated, being an adventurer of the first

order. Taken to South Africa by Milner, he was employed in the Judge

Advocate’s Department for a year (1900-1901), then was Assistant Co-

lonial Secretary of Orange River Colony for six years (1901-1907). He

became Colonial Secretary of Barbados in 1907 and Assistant Secretary

of the Land Development Commission in England in 1910. He would

have been an important member of the Milner Group but was killed in

France in 1917.

Of the major members of the Kindergarten, Robert H. Brand (since

1946 Baron Brand) stands close to the top. His father was second Vis-

count Brand, twenty-fourth Baron Dacre (created 1307), son of a

Speaker of the House of Commons (1872-1884), while his mother was

Susan Cavendish, daughter of Lord George Cavendish, and niece of

the seventh Duke of Devonshire. His father, as Governor of New South

Wales in 1895-1899, was one of the original instigators of the federa-

tion of the Australian Colonies, which came into effect in 1900. His

older brother, the third Viscount Hampden, was a lord-in-waiting to

the King (1924-1936), while another brother, Admiral Sir Hubert

Brand, was extra equerry to the King (1922) and principal naval aide

to the King (1931-1932). His nephew. Freeman Freeman-Thomas

(Baron Willingdon after 1910; Marquess of Willingdon after 1936), in

1892 married the daughter of Lord Brassey, and became Governor-

General of Canada (1926-1931) and Viceroy of India (1931-1936).

Brand, who has been a Fellow of All Souls since 1901, is chiefly

responsible for the Astor influence in the Milner Group. He went to

South Africa in 1902 and was made secretary of the Intercolonial

Council of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony and secretary of the

Railway Committee of the Central South African Railways, with

Philip Kerr (the future Lord Lothian) as assistant secretary on both

organizations. He was secretary to the Transvaal Delegation at the

South African National Convention (1908-1909) and at once wrote a

deliberately naive work published by Oxford University Press in 1909

with the title The Union of South Africa. In this work there is no men-

tion of the Kindergarten, and where it is necessary to speak of its work,

this is done as if it were performed by persons unknown to the writer.

He says, for example (page 40): “The Transvaal Delegation alone was

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assisted throughout the convention by a staff of legal advisers and ex-

perts, ” and thus dismisses the Kindergarten’s essential work. His own

work is passed over in silence, and at the front of the volume is placed a

quotation in Dutch from President Sir John Brand of the Orange River

Colony, possibly to mislead the ordinary reader into believing that

there was a family connection between the South African politician

and the author of the book.

Brand s role in the Milner Group after 1910 is too great to be covered

adequately here. Suffice it to say that he was regarded as the economist

of the Round Table Group and became a partner and managing direc-

tor of Lazard Brothers and Company, a director of Lloyd’s Bank, and a

director of The Times , retiring from these positions in 1944 and 1945.

During the First World War, he was a member of the Imperial Muni-

tions Board of Canada (1915-1918) and deputy chairman of the British

Mission in Washington (1917-1918). While in Washington, he married

Nancy Astor’s sister, daughter of Chiswell Dabney Langhorne of

Viginia. It was this connection which gave him his entree to Cliveden

in the period when that name became notorious.

Brand was one of the important figures in international finance in

the period after 1918. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 he was

financial adviser to Lord Robert Cecil, chairman of the Supreme

Economic Council. He was later vice-president of the Brussels Con-

ference (1920) and financial representative for South Africa at the

Genoa Conference (1922). He was a member of the committee of ex-

perts on stabilization of the German mark in 1923, the committee

which paved the way for the Dawes Plan. After an extended period in

private business, he was head of the British Food Mission to

Washington (1941-1944), chairman of the British Supply Council in

North America (1942-1945, 1946), and His Majesty’s Treasury

Representative in Washington (1944-1946). In this last capacity he had

much to do with negotiating the enormous American loan to Britain for

postwar reconstruction. During the years 1942-1944, Brand put in his

own place as managing director of Lazard Brothers his nephew,

Thomas Henry Brand, son of Viscount Hampden, and, when Brand

left Lazard in 1944, he brought the same nephew to Washington as

chief executive officer on the British side of the Combined Production

and Resources Board, and later (1945) as chairman of the official Com-

mittee on Supplies for Liberated Areas. In all of his activities Brand has

remained one of the most central figures in the core of the Milner

Group.

Just as important as Brand was his intimate friend Philip Kerr (later

Lord Lothian), whom we have already seen as Brand’s assistant in

South Africa. Kerr, grandson, through his mother, of the fourteenth

Duke of Norfolk, originally went to South Africa as private secretary to

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a friend of his father’s, Sir Arthur Lawley, Lieutenant Governor of the

Transvaal (1902). Kerr was Brand’s assistant on the Intercolonial

Council and on the Committee of the Central South African Railways

(1905-1908). Later, as secretary to the Transvaal Indigency Commis-

sion (1907-1908), he wrote a report on the position of poor white

laborers in a colored country which was so valuable that it was

republished by the Union government twenty years later.

From 1908 on, Kerr was, as we shall see, one of the chief organizers

of publicity in favor of the South African Union. He was secretary to

the Round Table Group in London and editor of The Round Table

from 1910 tol916, leaving the post to become secretary to Lloyd

George (1916-1922), manager of the Daily Chronicle (1921), and

secretary to the Rhodes Trust (1925-1939). He obtained several govern-

mental offices after the death of his cousin, the tenth Marquess of

Lothian, in 1930, gave him a title, 28,000 acres of land, and a seat in

the House of Lords. He was Chancellor to the Duchy of Lancaster

(1931), Parliamentary Under Secretary to the India Office

(1931-1932), a member of the first and second Round Table Con-

ferences on India, and chairman of the Indian Franchise Committee,

before he finished his life as Ambassador to the United States

(1939-1940). In 1923 he and Lionel Curtis published a book called The

Prevention of War , consisting of lectures which they had previously

given at Williams College. After his death, Curtis edited a collection of

American Speeches of Lord Lothian , with an introduction by Lord

Halifax and a biographical sketch by Edward Grigg (reprinted from

The Round Table). This was published, as might be expected, by

Chatham House.

On his death. Lord Lothian left his ancestral estate, Newbattle Ab-

bey in Midlothian, as a residential college for adult education in

Scotland, and left his Tudor country house, Blickling (frequent

assembly place of the Milner Group), as a national monument. He

never married and gave up his Roman Catholic faith for Christian

Science in the course of an almost fatal illness in 1914.

Geoffrey Dawson (1874-1944), who changed his name from Robin-

son in 1917, was also one of the innermost members of the Milner

Group. A member of the Colonial Office under Chamberlain

(1898-1901), he became for five years private secretary to Milner in

South Africa (1901-1905) and then was made South African correspon-

dent of The Times and editor of the Johannesburg Star in the critical

period of the formation of the Union (1905-1910). Always a member of

the Round Table Group and the Milner Group, Dawson added to these

the offices of editor of The Times (1912-1919, 1922-1941) and secretary

to the Rhodes Trustees (1921-1922). During the period in which

Dawson was not editor of The Times , he was well provided for by the

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Milner Group, being made estates bursar of All Souls, a director of

Consolidated Gold Fields, Ltd., and of Trust Houses, Ltd. (both

Rhodes concerns), as well as being secretary to the Rhodes Trust. He

married in 1919 the daughter of Sir Arthur Lawley (later sixth Baron

Wenlock), Kerr’s old chief in the Transvaal. Sir Arthur, who had

started his career as private secretary to his uncle, the Duke of

Westminster, in 1892, ended it as Governor of Madras (1906-1911).

Dawson was probably as close to Milner personally as any member

of the Kindergarten, although Amery must be regarded as Milner’s

political heir. The Times ’ obituary of Dawson says: “To none was

Milner’s heart more wholly given than to Dawson; the sympathy be-

tween the older and the younger man was almost that of father and

son, and it lasted unchanged until Milner’s death.” As editor of The

Tunes , Dawson was one of the most influential figures in England. He

used that influence in the directions decided by the Group. This was to

be seen, in later years, in the tremendous role which he played in the

affairs of India and, above all, in the appeasement policy. In 1929 he

visited his “long-standing friend” Lord Halifax, then Viceroy of India,

and subsequently wrote most of The Times editorials on India in the

fight which preceded the Government of India Act of 1935. In 1937 he

wrote The Times articles which inaugurated the last stage of appease-

ment, and personally guided The Times support of that policy. After

his retirement from the chair of editor of The Times in 1941, he served

for the last three years of his life as editor of The Round Table.

William Flavelle Monypenny was assistant editor of The Times

(1894-1899) before he went to South Africa to become editor of the

Johannesburg Star . He left this position at the outbreak of the Boer

War, since the publication of a pro-British paper was not

possible during the hostilities. After a short period as a lieutenant in the

Imperial Light Horse (1899-1900), Monypenny was made Director of

Civil Supplies under Milner (1900-1902) and then resumed his post as

editor of the Star . In 1903 he resigned in protest against Milner’s policy

of importing Chinese laborers and walked across Africa from the Cape

to Egypt. Resuming his position on The Times (1903-1908), he became

a director of the firm for the last four years of his life (1908-1912).

About this time Lord Rowton, who had been Disraeli’s private

secretary, left his papers to The Times to be used for a Life of Disraeli.

The task was begun by Monypenny, but he finished only the first two

volumes of the six-volume work. The last four volumes were written by

George E. Buckle, editor of The Times (1884-1912), Fellow of All Souls

(1877-1885), and a contemporary of Milner’s at Oxford (1872-1876).

It is perhaps worth noting that when Monypenny resigned from the

Johannesburg Star he was replaced as editor by William Basil

Worsfold, who held the post for two years, being replaced, as we have

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said, by Geoffrey Dawson. In the years 1906-1913 Worsfold published

a three-volume study of Milner’s accomplishments in South Africa.

This contains the most valuable account in existence of the work of the

Kindergarten. 4

Fabian Ware (Sir Fabian since 1922), who had been a reporter on

The Morning Post (1899-1901), was Assistant Director and Director of

Education in the Transvaal (1901-1905) and Director of Education in

the Orange River Colony (1903), as well as a member of the Transvaal

Legislative Council (1903-1905). He was editor of The Morning Post in

1905-1911 and then became special commissioner to the board of the

Rio Tinto Company, on which Milner was director. During the First

World War he rose to the rank of major general. Since then he has been

permanent vice-chairman of the Imperial War Graves Commission. A

book which he wrote in 1937, The Immortal Heritage , The Work of

the Imperial War Graves Commission , was made the occasion of an

article on this subject in The Round Table. Sir Fabian was a member of

the Imperial Committee on Economic Consultation and Cooperation

in 1933 and was a director-general in the War Office in 1939-1944.

Main Swete Osmond Walrond was in the Ministry of Finance in

Egypt (1894-1897) before he became Milner’s private secretary for the

whole period of his High Commissionership (1897-1905). He was then

appointed District Commissioner in Cyprus but did not take the post.

In 1917-1919 he was in the Arab Bureau in Cairo under the High Com-

missioner and acted as an unofficial, but important, adviser to Milner’s

mission to Egypt in 1919-1921. This mission led to Egyptian in-

dependence from Britain.

Lionel Curtis is one of the most important members of the Milner

Group, or, as a member of the Group expressed it to me, he is th efons

et origo. It may sound extravagant as a statement, but a powerful

defense could be made of the claim that what Curtis thinks should be

done to the British Empire is what happens a generation later. I shall

give here only two recent examples of this. In 1911 Curtis decided that

the name of His Majesty’s Dominions must be changed from “British

Empire” to “Commonwealth of Nations.” This was done officially in

1948. Again, about 1911 Curtis decided that India must be given com-

plete self-government as rapidly as conditions permitted. This was car-

ried out in 1947. As we shall see, these are not merely coincidental

events, for Curtis, working behind the scenes, has been one of the chief

architects of the present Commonwealth. It is not easy to discern the

places where he has passed, and no adequate biographical sketch can

be put on paper here. Indeed, much of the rest of this volume will be a

contribution to the biography of Lionel Curtis. Burning with an un-

quenchable ardor, which some might call fanatical, he has devoted his

life to his dominant idea, that the finer things of life — liberty,

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democracy, toleration, etc. —could be preserved only within an in-

tegrated world political system, and that this political system could be

constructed about Great Britain, but only if Britain adopted toward

her Dominions, her colonies, and the rest of the world a policy of

generosity, of trust, and of developing freedom. Curtis was both a

fanatic and an idealist. But he was not merely “a man in a hurry/’ He

had a fairly clear picture of what he wanted. He did not believe that

complete and immediate freedom and democracy could be given to the

various parts of the imperial system, but felt that they could only be ex-

tended to these parts in accordance with their ability to develop to a

level where they were capable of exercising such privileges. When that

level was achieved and those privileges were extended, he felt that they

would not be used to disrupt the integrated world system of which he

dreamed, but to integrate it more fully and in a sounder fashion — a

fashion based on common outlook and common patterns of thought

rather than on the dangerous unity of political subjection, censorship,

or any kind of duress. To Curtis, as to H. G. Wells, man’s fate de-

pended on a race between education and disaster. This was similar to

the feeling which animated Rhodes when he established the Rhodes

Scholarships, although Curtis has a much broader and less nationalistic

point of view than Rhodes. Moreover, Curtis believed that people

could be educated for freedom and responsibility by giving them

always a little more freedom, a little more democracy, and a little more

responsibility than they were quite ready to handle. This is a basically

Christian attitude — the belief that if men are trusted they will prove

trustworthy — but it was an attitude on which Curtis was prepared to

risk the existence of the British Empire. It is not yet clear whether Cur-

tis is the creator of the Commonwealth of Nations or merely the

destroyer of the British Empire. The answer will be found in the

behavior of India in the next few years. The Milner Group knew this.

That is why India, since 1913, has been the chief object of their atten-

tions.

These ideas of Curtis are clearly stated in his numerous published

works. The following quotations are taken from The Problem of the

Commonwealth drawn up by the Round Table Group and published

under Curtis’s name in 1916:

Responsible government can only be realized for any body of citizens in so

far as they are fit for the exercise of political power. In the Dependencies

the great majority of the citizens are not as yet capable of governing them-

selves and for them the path to freedom is primarily a problem of educa-

tion. . . . The Commonwealth is a typical section of human society in-

cluding every race and level of civilization organized in one state. In this

world commonwealth the function of government is reserved to the

European minority, for the unanswerable reason that for the present this

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portion of its citizens is alone capable of the task — civilized states are

obliged to assume control of backward communities to protect them from

exploitation by private adventurers from Europe. . . . The Common-

wealth cannot, like despotisms, rest content with establishing order

within and between the communities it includes. It must by its nature

prepare these communities first to maintain order within themselves. The

rule of law must be rooted in the habits and wills of the peoples them-

selves. . . . The peoples of India and Egypt, no less than those of the

British Isles and Dominions, must be gradually schooled to the manage-

ment of their national affairs. ... It is not enough that free

communities should submit their relations to the rule of law. Until all

those people control that law the principle by which the commonwealth

exists is unfulfilled. The task of preparing for freedom the races which

cannot as yet govern themselves is the supreme duty of those races who

can. It is the spiritual end for which the Commonwealth exists, and

material order is nothing except a means to it. . . . In India the rule of law

is firmly established. Its maintenance is a trust which rests on the govern-

ment of the Commonwealth until such time as there are Indians enough

able to discharge it. India may contain leaders qualified not only to make

but also to administer laws, but she will not be ripe for self-government

until she contains an electorate qualified to recognize those leaders and

place them in office. . . . For England the change is indeed a great one.

Can she face it? Can she bear to lose her life, as she knows it, to find it in a

Commonwealth, wide as the world itself, a life greater and nobler than

before? Will she fail at this second and last crisis of her fate, as she failed

at the first, like Athens and Prussia, forsaking freedom for power, think-

ing the shadow more real than the light, and esteeming the muckrake

more than the crown?

Four years later, in 1920, Curtis wrote: “The whole effect of the war

has been to bring movements long gathering to a sudden head . . . com-

panionship in arms has fanned . . . long smouldering resentment

against the prescription that Europeans are destined to dominate the

rest of the world. In every part of Asia and Africa it is bursting into

flames. . . . Personally, I regard this challenge to the long unquestioned

claim of the white man to dominate the world as inevitable and

wholesome especially to ourselves.” 5

Unfortunately for the world, Curtis, and the Milner Group gener-

ally, had one grave weakness that may prove fatal. Skilled as they were

in political and personal relations, endowed with fortune, education,

and family connections, they were all fantastically ignorant of

economics — even those, like Brand or Hichens, who were regarded

within the Group as its experts on this subject. Brand was a financier,

while Hichens was a businessman — in both cases occupations that

guarantee nothing in the way of economic knowledge or under-

standing.

Curtis was registered as an undergraduate at New College for four-

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teen years (1891-1905) because he was too busy to take time to get his

degree. This is undoubtedly also the reason he was admitted to All

Souls so belatedly, since an ordinary fellowship requires as a qualifica-

tion the possession either of a university prize or of a first-class honours

degree. By the time Curtis took his degree he had fought in the Boer

War, been Town Clerk of Johannesburg, and been assistant secretary

for local government in the Transvaal. In 1906 he resigned his official

positions to organize “Closer Union Groups” agitating for a federation

of South Africa. When this work was well started, he became a

member of the Transvaal Legislative Council and wrote the Transvaal

draft of a projected constitution for such a federation. In 1910-1912,

and at various times subsequently, he traveled about the world,

organizing Round Table Groups in the Dominions and India. In 1912

he was chosen Beit Lecturer in Colonial History at Oxford, but gave it

up in 1913 to turn his attention for almost six years to the preparatory

work for the Government of India Act of 1919. He was secretary to the

Irish Conference of 1921 (arranged by General Smuts) and was adviser

on Irish affairs to the Colonial Office for the next three years. In 1919

he was one of the chief — if not the chief, — founders of the Royal In-

stitute of International Affairs, and during the 1920s divided his atten-

tion between this and the League of Nations — in neither case,

however, in a fashion to attract public attention. Undoubtedly his in-

fluence within the Milner Group declined after 1922, the per-

ponderance falling into the hands of Lothian, Brand, and Dawson.

The failure to achieve federation within the Empire was undoubtedly a

blow to his personal feeling and possibly to his prestige within the

Group. Nonetheless, his influence remained great, and still is. In the

1920s he moved to Kidlington, near Oxford, and thus was available for

the Group conferences held at All Souls. His chief published works in-

clude The Problem of the Commonwealth (1915), The Commonwealth

of Nations (1916), Dyarchy (1920), The Prevention of War (1924), the

Capital Question of China (1932), The Commonwealth of God

(1932-1938), and The Protectorates of South Africa (1935).

John Dove (1872-1934) was sent to Milner in 1903 by Sir William

Anson, Warden of All Souls. He was assistant Town Clerk and later

Clerk of Johannesburg (1903-1907) and then chairman of the

Transvaal Land Settlement Board (1907-1909). After a trip to Australia

and India with Lionel Curtis, for the purpose of organizing Round

Table Groups, he returned to London in 1911 and lived with Brand

and Kerr in Cumberland Mansions. He went to South Africa with Earl

Grey in 1912 to unveil the Rhodes Memorial, and served in the First

World War with military intelligence in France. In 1918 he became a

kind of traveling representative of financial houses, probably as a result

of his relationship with Brand. He began this with an extended trip to

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India for the Commonwealth Trust Company in 1918 and in the next

fifteen years made almost annual trips to Europe. Editor of The Round

Table from 1921 to his death in 1934, he displayed an idealistic streak

similar to that found in Curtis but without the same driving spirit

behind it. After his death, Brand published a volume of his letters

(1938). These are chiefly descriptive of foreign scenes, the majority

written to Brand himself.

Leopold Amery was not a member of the Kindergarten but knew all

the members well and was in South Africa, during their period of ser-

vice, as chief correspondent of The Times for the Boer War and the

editor of The Times History of the South African War (which appeared

in seven volumes in the decade 1900-1909). Amery, who was a Fellow

of All Souls for fourteen years early in the century and has been one

again since 1938, is one of the inner core of the Milner Group. He

started his career as private secretary to Leonard H. Courtney, Union-

ist Member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker in Lord Salisbury’s se-

cond government. Through this connection, Amery was added to The

Times editorial staff (1899-1909) and would have become editor but

for his decision to go into politics. In this he was not, at first, successful,

losing three contests as a Unionist and tariff reformer in the high tide of

Liberal supremacy (1906-1910). When victory came in 1911, it was a

good one, for Amery held the same seat (for Birmingham) for thirty-

four years. During that time he held more important government posts

than can be mentioned here. These included the following; assistant

secretary of the War Cabinet and Imperial War Council (1917);

secretary to the Secretary of State for War (Milner, 1917-1918);

Parliamentary Under Secretary for Colonies (1919-1921); Parliamen-

tary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty (1921-1922); First Lord

of the Admiralty (1922-1924); Secretary of State for Colonies

(1924-1929) and for Dominion Affairs (1925-1929); Secretary of State

for India and Burma (1940-1945). Amery wrote dozens of volumes,

chiefly on the Empire and imperial trade relations. In 1910 he married

the sister of a fellow Member of Parliament, Florence Greenwood. The

colleague, Hamar Greenwood (Baron Greenwood since 1929 and Vis-

count Greenwood since 1937), was a Liberal M.P. for sixteen years

(1906-1922) and a Conservative M.P. for five (1924-1929), a change in

which Amery undoubtedly played an important role. Lord Greenwood

was secretary of the Overseas Trade Department (1919-1920) and

Chief Secretary for Ireland (1920-1922). In recent years he has been

chairman of the board of directors of one of England’s greatest steel

firms (Dorman, Long, and Company), treasurer of the Conservative

Party, and president of the British Iron and Steel Federation

(1938-1939).

Amery can be regarded as Milner’s political heir. From the begin-

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ning of his own political career in 1906 to the death of Milner in 1925,

he was more closely associated with Milner’s active political life than

any other person. In 1906, when Amery made his first effort to be

elected to Parliament, Milner worked actively in support of his

candidacy. It is probable that this, in spite of Milner’s personal

prestige, lost more votes than it gained, for Milner made no effort to

conceal his own highly unorthodox ideas. On 17 December 1906, for

example, he spoke at Wolverhampton as follows: “Not only am I an

Imperialist of the deepest dye — and Imperialism, you know, is out of

fashion — but I actually believe in universal military training. ... I am

a Tariff Reformer and one of a somewhat pronounced type. ... I am

unable to join in the hue and cry against Socialism. That there is an

odious form of Socialism I admit, a Socialism which attacks wealth

simply because it is wealth, and lives on the cultivation of class hatred.

But that is not the whole story; most assuredly not. There is a nobler

Socialism, which so far from springing from envy, hatred, and un-

charitableness, is born of genuine sympathy and a lofty and wise con-

ception of what is meant by national life.” These sentiments may not

have won Amery many votes, but they were largely shared by him, and

his associations with Milner became steadily more intimate. In his last

years of public office, Milner was generally assisted by Amery

(1917-1921), and when he died it was Amery who arranged the public

memorial service and controlled the distribution of tickets.

Edward William Mackay Grigg (Sir Edward after 1920, Lord

Altrincham since 1945) is one of the most important members of the

Milner Group. On graduating from New College, he joined the staff of

The Times and remained with it for ten years (1903-1913), except for

an interval during which he went to South Africa. In 1913 he became

joint editor of The Round Table , but eventually left to fight the war in

the Grenadier Guards. In 1919, he went with the Prince of Wales on a

tour of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. After replacing Kerr for

a year or so as secretary to Lloyd George (1921-1922), he was a

Member of Parliament in 1922-1925 and again in 1933-1945. He has

also been Governor of Kenya Colony (1925-1931), parliamentary

secretary to the Ministry of Information (1939-1940), Joint Parliamen-

tary Under Secretary of State for War (1940-1942), and Minister Resi-

dent in the Middle East (1944-1945). He also found time to write many

books, such as The Greatest Experiment in History (1924); Three Par-

ties or Two? (1931), The Faith of an Englishman (1931), Britain Looks

at Germany (1938), The British Commonwealth (1943), and British

Foreign Policy (1944).

Another visitor to South Africa during the period of the

Kindergarten was H. A. L. Fisher. Fisher, a famous historian in his

own right, can be regarded as one of the founders of the Kindergarten

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and was a member of the Milner Group from at least 1899. The chief

recruiting for the Kindergarten, beyond that done by Milner himself,

was done by Fisher and his close friend Sir William Anson. The rela-

tionships between these two, Goschen, and Milner were quite close (ex-

cept that Milner and Anson were by no means close), and this quartet

had a great deal to do with the formation of the Milner Group and with

giving it a powerful hold on New College and All Souls. Fisher

graduated from New College in 1888 and at once became fellow and

tutor in the same college. These positions were held, with interrup-

tions, until 1912, when Fisher left Oxford to become Vice-Chancellor

of Sheffield University. He returned to New College as Warden for the

last fifteen years of his life (1925-1940). Fisher originally expected to

tutor in philosophy, but his appointment required him to teach history.

His knowledge in this field was scanty, so it was amplified by vacation

reading with A. L. Smith (the future Master of Balliol, an older con-

temporary of Milners at Balliol, and a member of the Milner Group).

Smith, in addition to teaching Fisher history, also taught him how to

skate and to ride a bicycle and worked with him on the literary remains

of Fisher’s brother-in-law, Frederic W. Maitland, the great historian of

the English law. As a result of this last activity, Fisher produced in

1911 a three-volume set of Maitland’s Collected Works , and a

biographical sketch of Maitland (1910), while Smith in 1908 published

two lectures and a bibliography on Maitland. Smith’s own

biographical sketch in the Dictionary of National Biography was writ-

ten by another member of the Milner Group, Kenneth Norman Bell

(Fellow of All Souls, 1907-1914; Beit Lecturer in Colonial History,

1924-1927; and member of the family that controlled the publishing

house of G. Bell and Sons). His son, Arthur Lionel Foster Smith, was a

Fellow of All Souls under Anson (1904-1908) and later organized and

supervised the educational system of Mesopotamia (1920-1931).

H. A. L. Fisher held many important posts in his career, partly

because of membership in the Milner Group. In 1908, while the

Kindergarten, which he had helped to assemble, was still in South

Africa, he went there on an extended lecture tour; in 1911-1912 he was

Chichele Lecturer in Foreign History; in 1912-1915 he was an impor-

tant member of the Royal Commission on Public Services in India; in

1916-1926 he was a member of the House of Commons, the first half of

the period as a Cabinet member (President of the Board of Education,

1916-1922). He was a delegate to the Assembly of the League of

Nations for three years (1920-1922), governor of the British Broad-

casting Corporation for four (1935-1939), and a Rhodes Trustee for

about fifteen (1925- 1940). 6

Fisher’s bibliography forms an extensive list of published works.

Besides his Unfinished Biography (1940) and his famous three-volume

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History of Europe (1935-1936), it contains many writings on subjects

close to the Milner Group. His Creighton Lecture in 1911 on Political

Unions examines the nature of federalism and other unions and fits in

well with the discussions going on at the time within Round Table

Groups on this subject — discussions in which Fisher played an impor-

tant part. In the section of this lecture dealing with the Union of South

Africa, Fisher was almost as deliberately evasive as Brand had been in

his book on the Union, which appeared two years earlier. He mentions

the preliminary work of the Kindergarten toward union (work in

which he had taken a part himself during his visit to South Africa in

1908) as the work of anonymous persons, but does state that the

resulting constitution for a united South Africa was largely the work of

the Transvaal delegation (which, as we shall see, was one controlled by

the Kindergarten).

Other writings of Fisher’s resulting from his work with the Milner

Group are his “Imperial Administration” in Studies in History and

Politics (1920); his An International Experiment , dealing with the

League of Nations (1921); The Common Weal , dealing with the duties

of citizenship (1924); and Our New Religion (1929), dealing with

Christian Science. In connection with this last book, it might be men-

tioned that Christian Science became the religion of the Milner Group

after Milner’s death. Among others, Nancy Astor and Lord Lothian

were ardent supporters of the new belief. Christian Science was part of

the atmosphere of Cliveden.

Fishers relationship with Milner was quite close and appeared

chiefly in their possession of fellowships in New College, obtained by

the older man in 1878 and by the younger ten years later. In 1901,

when the Kindergarten was formed, the two had been Fellows together

for thirteen years, and in 1925, when Milner died and Fisher became

Warden, they had been Fellows together for thirty-seven years.

There was also a more personal relationship, created in 1899, when

Fisher married Lettice Ilbert. Her father, Sir Courtenay Ilbert

(1841-1924), was a lifelong friend of Anson and an old friend of Milner.

Sir Courtenay, as law member of the Viceroy of India’s Council in

1883, had tried in vain to remove from the Indian code “every judicial

disqualification based merely upon race distinctions.” Under Lord

Dufferin (Lord Basil Blackwood’s father), he set up the general system

of law and procedure for Burma (1885), and in 1898 he issued what

became the basic codification of Indian law. He was clerk of the House

of Commons from 1902 to 1921. Mrs. H. A. L. Fisher, one of Sir

Courtenay’s five daughters, recalls in The Milner Papers how Alfred

Milner use to romp with the girls when they were children.

Fisher was a very valuable member of the Milner Group because he,

along with Lord Goschen, became the chief means by which the Group

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secured access to the College of All Souls. This access was secured by

the friendship of these two men with Sir William Anson. Anson himself

was a member of the Cecil Bloc rather than the Milner Group. His per-

sonal relations with Milner were not very close, and, indeed, there is

some doubt as to his actual feeling toward Milner. The only comment

about Milner in the published portions of Anson’s journal is a rather

acid remark regarding the lack of eloquence in a Milner speech in the

House of Lords against the Parliament Act of 1911. 7 Nor did Anson see

eye to eye with Milner, or indeed with most members of the Milner

Group, since he was much too conservative. He was, to be sure, a

Liberal Unionist, as most important members of the Group were. He

was also an imperialist and interested in social welfare, but he did not

have the high disregard for systems of economics that is so

characteristic of all members of the Group before 1917. Anson had an

ingrained respect for the economic status quo, and the old Liberal’s

suspicion of the intervention by public authority in the economic field.

These tendencies had been strengthened by years of tender attention to

the extensive landed wealth possessed by All Souls. Nonetheless, Anson

became one of the chief architects of the Milner Group and is un-

doubtedly the chief factor in the Group’s domination of All Souls since

Anson’s death. During his wardenship (1881-1914), Anson was the

most influential figure in All Souls, not merely in its social and intellec-

tual life but also in the management of its fortune and the selection of

its members. In the ordinary expectation of affairs, the former task was

generally left in the hands of the estates bursar, and the latter was

shared with the other Fellows. Anson, however, took the dominant

role in both matters, to such a degree in fact that Bishop Henson

(himself a member of All Souls since 1884), in his Memoir of Anson,

says that the Warden was always able to have his candidate emerge

with the prized fellowship.

In seeking to bestow fellowships at All Souls on those individuals

whom we now regard as the chief members of the Milner Group, An-

son was not conscious that he was dealing with a group at all. The can-

didates who were offering themselves from New College in the period

1897-1907 were of such high ability that they were able to obtain the

election on their own merits. The fact that they came strongly recom-

mended by Fisher served to clinch the matter. They thus did not enter

All Souls as members of the Milner Group — at least not in Anson’s

lifetime. After 1914 this was probably done (as in the case of Lionel

Curtis in 1921, Basil Williams in 1924, or Reginald Coupland in 1920),

but not before. Rather, likely young men who went to New College in

the period on either side of the Boer War were marked out by Fisher

and Anson, elected to All Souls, and sent into Milner’s Kindergarten on

the basis of merit rather than connections.

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Another young man who came to visit in South Africa in 1904 and

1905 was Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, already a Fellow of All

Souls and a future member of the Milner Group. Better known to the

world today as the first Earl of Halifax, he was the son of the second

Viscount Halifax and in every way well qualified to become a member

of the Milner Group. Lord Halifax is a great-grandson of Lord Grey of

the great Reform Bill of 1832, and a grandson of Lord Grey’s secretary

and son-in-law, Charles Wood (1800-1885), who helped put the Re-

form Bill through. The same grandfather became, in 1859-1866, the

first Secretary of State for the new India, putting through reforms for

that great empire which were the basis for the later reforms of the

Milner Group in the twentieth century. Lord Halifax is also a grand-

nephew of Lord Durham, whose famous report became the basis for

the federation of Canada in 1867.

As Edward Wood, the future Lord Halifax undoubtedly found his

path into the select company of All Souls smoothed by his own father’s

close friendship with Phillimore and with the future Archbishop Lang,

who had been a Fellow for fifteen years when Wood was elected in

1903.

As a newly elected Fellow, Wood went on a world tour, which took

him to South Africa twice (in 1904 and 1905). Each time, he was ac-

companied by his father. Viscount Halifax, who dined with Milner and

was deeply impressed. The Viscount subsequently became Milner’s

chief defender in the House of Lords. In 1906, for example, when

Milner was under severe criticism in the Commons for importing

Chinese laborers into South Africa, Lord Halifax introduced and car-

ried in the Upper House a resolution of appreciation for Milner’s work.

Edward Wood’s subsequent career is one of the most illustrious of

contemporary Englishmen. A Member of Parliament for fifteen years

(1910-1925), he held posts as Parliamentary Under Secretary for the

Colonies (1921-1922), President of the Board of Education (in succes-

sion to H. A. L. Fisher, 1922-1924), and Minister of Agriculture, before

he went to India (as Baron Irwin) to be Viceroy. In this post, as we

shall see, he furthered the plans of the Milner Group for the great sub-

continent (1926-1931), before returning to more brilliant achievements

as president of the Board of Education (1932-1935), Secretary of State

for War (1935), Lord Privy Seal (1935-1937), Lord President of the

Council (1937-1938), Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

(1938-1940), and, finally. Ambassador to Washington (as successor to

Lord Lothian, 1941-1946) . In Washington, as we shall see, he filled the

embassy with members of All Souls College.

There can be little doubt that Lord Halifax owed much of his rise in

public affairs to his membership in the Milner Group. His authorized

biographer, Alan Campbell Johnson, writes in connection with one ap-

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pointment of Halifax’s: “It is widely believed that the influence of

Geoffrey Dawson and other members of The Times editorial staff

discovered him as an ideal Viceroy and whispered his name at the

proper time both to the proper authorities in George V’s entourage and

at 10 Downing Street.” In connection with his appointment as Foreign

Secretary, Johnson says:

Lothian, Geoffrey Dawson, and Brand, who used to congregate at

Cliveden House as the Astors’ guests and earned the title of a “set,’\* to

which, in spite of imaginative left-wing propaganda, they never aspired,

urged Chamberlain at the decisive moment to have the courage of his con-

victions and place Halifax, even though he was a Peer, in the office to

which his experience and record so richly entitled him. They argued

forcibly that to have a Foreign Secretary safely removed from the heat of

the House of Commons battle was just what was required to meet the

delicate international situation.

Another member of this South African group who was not tech-

nically a member of the Kindergarten (because not a member of the

civil service) was Basil Kellett Long. He went from Brasenose to Cape

Town to study law in 1902 and was called to the bar three years later.

In 1908 he was elected to the Cape Parliament, and a year later suc-

ceeded Kerr as editor of the Kindergarten’s propagandist journal, The

State (1909-1912). He was a member of the first Parliament of a united

South Africa for three years (1910-1913) and then succeeded Amery as

head of the Dominions Department of The Times . In 1921 he left this

post and the position of foreign editor (held jointly with it in

1920-1921) to return to South Africa as editor of the Cape Times

(1921-1935). He was one of the most important figures in the South

African Institute of International Affairs after its belated foundation.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, he was put in charge of liaison work

between the South African branch and the parent institute in London.

The work of the Kindergarten in South Africa is not so well known as

might be expected. Indeed, until very recently the role played by this

group, because of its own deliberate policy of secrecy, has been largely

concealed. The only good narration of their work is to be found in

Worsfold’s The Reconstruction of the New Colonies under Lord

Milner , but Worsfold, writing so early, could not foresee the continued

existence of the Kindergarten as a greater and more influential group.

Lionel Curtis’s own account of what the Group did, in his Letter to the

People of India (1917), is very brief and virtually unknown in the

United States or even in England. The more recent standard accounts,

such as that in Volume VIII of the Cambridge History of the British

Empire (1936), give even less than Worsfold. This will not appear sur-

prising when we point out that the chapter in this tome dealing with

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“The Formation of the Union, 1901-1910” is written by Hugh A.

Wyndham, a member of the Kindergarten. It is one of the marvels of

modern British scholarship how the Milner Group has been able to

keep control of the writing of history concerned with those fields in

which it has been most active.

Only in very recent years has the role played by the Kindergarten as

part of a larger group been appreciated, and now only by a very few

writers, such as the biographer of Lord Halifax, already mentioned,

and M. S. Green. The latter, a high school teacher in Pretoria, South

Africa, in his brief work on The Making of the Union of South Africa

(1946) gives an account of the Kindergarten which clearly shows his

realization that this was only the early stages of a greater group that

exercised its influence through The Round Table , The Tunes, the

Royal Institute of International Affairs, and the College of All Souls.

The work of union in South Africa was only part of the much greater

task of imperial union. This was always the ultimate goal of Cecil

Rhodes, of Milner, and of the Kindergarten. Milner wrote in his diary

on 25 January 1904: “My work has been constantly directed to a great

and distant end — the establishment in South Africa of a great and

civilized and progressive community, one from Cape Town to the

Zambesi — independent in the management of its own affairs, but still

remaining, from its own firm desire, a member of the great community

of free nations gathered together under the British flag. That has been

the object of all my efforts. It is my object still.” 8 In his great farewell

speech of March 1905, Milner called upon his hearers, and especially

the Kindergarten, to remain loyal to this ultimate goal. He said:

What I pray for hardest is, that those with whom I have worked in a great

struggle and who may attach some weight to my words should remain

faithful, faithful above all in the period of reaction, to the great idea of

Imperial Unity. Shall we ever live to see its fulfillment? Whether we do or

not, whether we succeed or fail, I shall always be steadfast in that faith,

though I should prefer to work quietly and in the background, in the for-

mation of opinion rather than in the exercise of power. . . . When we who

call ourselves Imperialists talk of the British Empire, we think of a group

of states, all independent in their local concerns, but all united for the de-

fense of their own common interests and the development of a common

civilization; united, not in an alliance — for alliances can be made and un-

made, and are never more than nominally lasting— but in a permanent

organic union. Of such a union the dominions as they exist today, are, we

fully admit, only the raw material. Our ideal is still distant but we deny

that it is either visionary or unattainable. . . .The road is long, the ob-

stacles are many, the goal may not be reached in my lifetime — perhaps

not in that of any man in this room. You cannot hasten the slow growth of

a great idea like that by any forcing process. But what you can do is to

keep it steadily in view, to lose no opportunity to work for it, to resist like

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grim death any policy which leads away from it. I know that the service

of that idea requires the rarest combination of qualities, a combination of

ceaseless effort with infinite patience. But then think on the other hand of

the greatness of the reward; the immense privilege of being allowed to

contribute in any way to the fulfillment of one of the noblest conceptions

which has ever dawned on the political imagination of mankind.

For the first couple of years in South Africa the Kindergarten worked

to build up the administrative, judicial, educational, and economic

systems of South Africa. By 1905 they were already working for the

Union. The first steps were the Intercolonial Council, which linked the

Transvaal and Orange River Colony; the Central South African Rail-

way amalgamation; and the customs union. As we have seen, the

Kindergarten controlled the first two of these completely; in addition,

they controlled the administration of Transvaal completely. This was

important, because the gold and diamond mines made this colony the

decisive economic power in South Africa, and control of this power

gave the Kindergarten the leverage with which to compel the other

states to join a union.

In 1906, Curtis, Dawson, Hichens, Brand, and Kerr, with the sup-

port of Feetham and Malcolm, went to Lord Selborne and asked his

permission to work for the Union. They prevailed upon Dr. Starr

Jameson, at that time Premier of Cape Colony, to write to Selborne in

support of the project. When permission was obtained, Curtis resigned

from his post in Johannesburg and, with Kerr's assistance, formed

“Closer Union Societies” as propaganda bodies throughout South

Africa. Dawson, as editor, controlled the Johannesburg Star. The

Times of London was controlled completely, as far as news from South

Africa was concerned, with Monypenny, Amery, Basil Williams, and

Grigg in strategic spots — the last as head of the imperial department of

the paper. Fabian Ware published articles by various members of the

Milner Group in his Morning Post. In South Africa, £5000 was ob-

tained from Abe Bailey to found a monthly paper to further the cause

of union. This paper, The State , was edited by Philip Kerr and B. K.

Long and became the predecessor of The Round Table , also edited by

Kerr and financed by Bailey. Bailey was not only the chief financial

support of the Kindergarten's activities for closer union in South

Africa, but also the first financial contributor to The Round Table in

1910, and to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1919. He

contributed to both during his life, and at his death in 1940 gave The

Round Table £1000 a year for an indefinite period. He had given the

Royal Institute £5000 a year in perpetuity in 1928. Like his close

associates Rhodes and Beit, he left part of his immense fortune in the

form of a trust fund to further imperial interests. In Bailey’s case, the

fund amounted to £250,000.

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As part of the project toward a Union of South Africa, Curtis in 1906

drew up a memorandum on the need for closer union of the South

African territories, basing his arguments chiefly on the need for greater

railway and customs unity. This, with the addition of a section written

by Kerr on railway rates, and a few paragraphs by Selborne, was

issued with the famous Selborne Federation Dispatch of 7 January 1907

and published as an Imperial Blue Book (Cmd. 3564 of 1907). It was

republished, with an introduction by Basil Williams of the

Kindergarten, by Oxford University Press in 1925. The Central Com-

mittee of the Closer Union Societies (which was nothing but the

Kindergarten) wrote a complete and detailed account of the political

institutions of the various areas concerned. This was called The

Government of South Africa and was issued anonymously in five parts,

and revised later in two quarto volumes. A copy was sent to every

delegate to the National Convention in Durban in 1908, along with

another anonymous work (edited by B. K. Long), called The

Framework of Union. This latter work contained copies of the five

chief federal constitutions of the world (United States, Canada, Ger-

many, Switzerland, and Australia). Curtis was also the chief author of

the draft of projected constitution presented by the Transvaal delega-

tion to the National Convention. This draft, with modifications,

became the Constitution of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The

Transvaal delegation, alone of the various delegations, lived together

in one house and had a body of expert advisers; both of these cir-

cumstances were due to the Kindergarten.

After the convention accepted the Union Constitution, it was

necessary to have it accepted by the Imperial Parliament and the

various states of South Africa. In both of these tasks the Kindergarten

played an important role, in England through their control of The

Times and The Morning Post as well as other sources of propaganda,

and in South Africa by the economic pressure of the Transvaal. In

Natal, the only state which submitted the question to a referendum,

the Kindergarten put on an intensive propaganda drive, financed with

money from the Transvaal. Of this struggle in Natal, Brand, with his

usual secrecy on all matters dealing with the Kindergarten, merely

says: “A referendum was therefore taken — contrary to general expecta-

tion, it revealed an overwhelming majority for union, a good testimony

to the sound sense of the people of the colony.’\* 9 Brand, as secretary to

the Transvaal delegation to the Convention, knew more than this!

The same secrecy was maintained in regard to the whole convention.

No record of its proceedings was kept, but, according to Worsfold, its

resolutions were drafted by Brand and Duncan.

Throughout these activities, the Kindergarten received powerful

support from a man who by this time was a member of the Milner

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Group and later gained international fame, chiefly because of this

membership. This was Jan C. Smuts.

Smuts had studied in England, at Cambridge University and the

Middle Temple. By 1895 he was a lawyer in Cape Town. His lack of

success in this profession doubtless had some influence in turning him

into the devious opportunist he soon became, but throughout his op-

portunism he clung to that ideal which he shared with Rhodes and

Milner — the ideal of a united South Africa. All his actions from this

date onward — no matter how much they may seem, viewed super-

ficially, to lead in another direction — were directed toward the end

ultimately achieved: a United South Africa within the British Em-

pire— and, to him almost equally important, a United South Africa in

which he would be the dominant figure. Smuts and Milner differed

chiefly on this last point, for if Milner was “selfless,” this was almost the

last word which could be applied to Smuts. Otherwise the two seemed

very similar — similar in their desires for a united South Africa and later

a united British Empire, and extraordinarily similar in their cold

austerity, impersonal intellectualism, and driving discipline (applied

to self even more than to others). In spite of their similar goals for the

Empire, Smuts and Milner were not close friends. Perhaps such similar

personalities could not be expected to find mutual agreement, but the

divergence probably rests, rather, on the one characteristic in their

personalities where they most obviously differed.

Smuts and Rhodes, on the other hand, got on together very well. As

early as 1895, the unsuccessful Cape Town lawyer was sent by the

great imperialist to Kimberley to speak in his defense. But after the

Jameson Raid, Smuts became one of the most vociferous critics of

Rhodes and the British. These attacks gave Smuts a reputation as an

Anglophobe, which yielded considerable profits immediately. Going to

the Transvaal (where he added to his fame by uncompromising support

of President Kruger), he was raised, at the age of twenty-eight, to the

post of State Attorney (1898). In this position, and later as Colonial

Secretary, he adopted tactics which led steadily to war (forcing the

Uitlanders to pay taxes while denying them the franchise, arresting

Uitlander newspaper editors like Monypenny, etc.). At the Bloemfon-

tein Conference of 1899 between Kruger and Milner, all of Smuts 's ad-

vice to the former was in the direction of concessions to Milner, yet it

was Smuts who drafted the ultimatum of 9 October, which led to the

outbreak of war. During the war he was one of the most famous of Boer

generals, yet, when negotiations for peace began, it was he who drew

up the proposal to accept the British terms without delay. With the

achievement of peace, Smuts refused Milner's invitation to serve in the

Legislative Council of the Transvaal, devoting himself instead to

violent and frequently unfair attacks on Milner and the Kindergarten,

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yet as soon as self-government was granted (in 1906) he became Co-

lonial Secretary and Minister of Education and worked in the closest

cooperation with the Kindergarten to obtain Milner’s ideal of a united

South Africa.

There is really nothing puzzling or paradoxical in these actions.

From the beginning, Smuts wanted a brilliant career in a united South

Africa within a united British Empire, within, if possible, a united

world. No stage would be too big for this young actor’s ambitions, and

these ambitions were not, except for his own personal role, much dif-

ferent from those of Milner or Rhodes. But, as a very intelligent man,

Smuts knew that he could play no role whatever in the world, or in the

British Empire, unless he could first play a role in South Africa. And

that required, in a democratic regime (which he disliked), that he ap-

pear pro-Boer rather than pro-British. Thus Smuts was pro-Boer on all

prominent and nonessential matters but pro-British on all unobtrusive

and essential matters (such as language, secession, defense, etc.).

At the National Convention of 1908-1909, it was Smuts who

dominated the Transvaal delegation and succeeded in pushing through

the projects prepared by the Kindergarten. From this emerged a per-

sonal connection that still exists, and from time onward, as a member

of the Milner Group, Smuts, with undeniable ability, was able to play

the role he had planned in the Empire and the world. He became the

finest example of the Milner Group’s contention that within a united

Empire rested the best opportunities for freedom and self-development

for all men. 10

In the new government formed after the creation of the Union of

South Africa, Smuts held three out of nine portfolios (Mines, Defense,

and Interior). In 1912 he gave up two of these (Mines and Interior) in

exchange for the portfolio of Finance, which he held until the outbreak

of war. As Minister of Defense (1910-1920) and Prime Minister

(1919-1924), he commanded the British forces in East Africa

(1916-1917) and was the South African representative and one of the

chief members of the Imperial War Cabinet (1917-1918). At the Peace

Conference at Paris he was a plenipotentiary and played a very impor-

tant role behind the scenes in cooperation with other members of the

Milner Group. In 1921 he went on a secret mission to Ireland and ar-

ranged for an armistice and opened negotiations between Lloyd

George and the Irish leaders. In the period following the war, his in-

fluence in South African politics declined, but he continued to play an

important role within the Milner Group and in those matters (such as

the Empire) in which the Group was most concerned. With the ap-

proach of the Second World War, he again came to prominence in

political affairs. He was Minister of Justice until the war began

(1933-1939) and then became Prime Minister, holding the Portfolios of

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External Affairs and Defense (1939-1948). Throughout his political

life, his chief lieutenant was Patrick Duncan, whom he inherited

directly from Milner.

Smuts was not the only addition made to the Milner Group by the

Kindergarten during its stay in South Africa. Among the others were

two men who were imported by Milner from the Indian Civil Service

to guide the efforts of the Kindergarten in forming the Transvaal Civil

Service. These two were James S. Meston (later Lord Meston,

1865-1943) and William S. Marris (later Sir William, 1873-1945). Both

had studied briefly at Oxford in preparation for the Indian Civil Ser-

vice. Meston studied at Balliol (after graduating from Aberdeen

University) at the time when Milner was still very close to the college

(c. 1884), and when Toynbee, tutor to Indian Civil Service candidates

at Balliol, had just died. It may have been in this fashion that Milner

became acquainted with Meston and thus called him to South Africa in

1903. Until that time, Meston’s career in the Indian Civil Service had

been fairly routine, and after eighteen years of service he had reached

the position of Financial Secretary to the United Provinces.

Marris, a younger colleague of Meston’s in the Indian Civil Service,

was a native of New Zealand and, after studying at Canterbury Col-

lege in his own country, went to Christ Church, Oxford, to prepare for

the Indian Civil Service. He passed the necessary examinations and was

made an assistant magistrate in the United Provinces. From this post he

went to South Africa to join the Kindergarten two years after Meston

had.

Meston’s position in South Africa was adviser to the Cape Col-

ony and the Transvaal on civil service reform (1904-1906). He re-

mained ever after a member of the Milner Group, being used especially

for advice on Indian affairs. On his return from South Africa, he was

made secretary to the Finance Department of the Government of India

(1906-1912). Two years later he was made Finance Member of the

Governor-General’s Council, and, the following year, became a

member of the Imperial Legislative Council. In 1912 he became for

five years Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces. During this

period he worked very closely with Lionel Curtis on the projected

reforms which ultimately became the Government of India Act of

1919. In 1917 Meston went to London as Indian representative to the

Imperial War Cabinet and to the Imperial Conference of that year. On

his return to India, he again was Finance Member of the Governor-

General’s Council until his retirement in 1919. He then returned to

England and, as the newly created Baron Meston of Agra and Dunot-

tar, continued to act as chief adviser on Indian affairs to the Milner

Group. He was placed on the boards of directors of a score of corpora-

tions in which the Group had influence. On several of these he sat with

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other members of the Group. Among these we might mention the

English Electric Company (with Hichens), the Galloway Water Power

Company (with Brand), and the British Portland Cement Manufac-

turers Association (with the third Lord Selborne). From its foundation

he was an important member of the Royal Institute of International

Affairs, was chairman of its executive committee in 1919-1926, and

was a member of the council for most of the period 1926-1943.

Marris, who replaced Meston in the Transvaal in 1906, was eight

years his junior (born 1873) and, perhaps for this reason, was much

closer to the member of the Kindergarten and became, if possible, an

even more intimate member of the Milner Group. He became Civil

Service Commissioner of the Transvaal and deputy chairman of the

Committee on the Central South African Railways. He did not return

to India for several years, going with Curtis instead on a world tour

through Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, organizing the Round

Table Groups (1911). It was he who persuaded Curtis, and through

him the Milner Group, that India should be allowed to proceed more

rapidly than had been intended on the path toward self-government.

Back in India in 1912, Marris became a member of the Durbar Ex-

ecutive Committee and, later, secretary to the Home Department of

the Government of India. In 1916 he became Inspector General of

Police for the United Provinces, and the following year Joint Secretary

to the Government of India. During this period he helped Curtis with

the projected reforms plans, and he was made responsible for carrying

them out when the act was passed in 1919, being made Commissioner

of Reforms and Home Secretary to the Government of India

(1919-1921). At the same time he was knighted. After a brief period as

Governor of Assam (1921-1922), he was Governor of the United Pro-

vinces (1922-1928) and a member of the Council of India (1928-1929).

After his retirement from active participation in the affairs of India, he

embarked upon a career in academic administration, which brought

him additional honors. He was Principal of Armstrong College in

1929-1937, Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Durham

University in 1929-1937, a Governor of the Royal Agricultural College

at Cirencester in 1937-1945.

Marris’s son, Adam D. Marris, born in the year his father went to the

Transvaal, is today still a member of the Milner Group. After

graduating from Winchester School and Trinity College, Oxford, he

went to work with Lazard Brothers. There is no doubt that this posi-

tion was obtained through his father’s relationship with Brand, at that

time manager of Lazard. Young Marris remained with the banking

firm for ten years, but at the outbreak of war he joined the Ministry of

Economic Warfare for a year. Then he joined the All Souls Group that

was monopolizing the British Embassy in Washington, originally as

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First Secretary and later as Counsellor to the Embassy (1940-1945).

After the war he was British Foreign Office representative on the

Emergency Economic Committee for Europe as secretary-general. In

1946 he returned to Lazard Brothers.

The older Marris brought into the Milner Group from the Indian

Civil Service another member who has assumed increasing importance

in recent years. This was Malcolm Hailey (since 1936 Lord Hailey).

Hailey, a year older than Marris, took the Indian Civil Service ex-

aminations with Marris in 1895 and followed in his footsteps there-

after. Secretary to the Punjab government in 1907 and Deputy

Secretary to the Government of India the following year, he was a

member of the Delhi Durbar Committee in 1912 and Chief Commis-

sioner in that city for the next eight years. In this post he was one of the

advisers used by Curtis on Indian reforms (1916). After the war Hailey

was a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy in the Financial

and Home Departments (1919-1924), Governor of Punjab (1924-1928),

and Governor of the United Provinces (1928-1930, 1931-1934). During

this last period he was one of the closest advisers to Baron Irwin (Lord

Halifax) during his term as Viceroy (1926-1936). After Hailey left the

Indian Service in 1934, he was used in many important capacities by

the Milner Group, especially in matters concerned with Africa and the

mandates. Since this use illustrates to perfection the skillful way in

which the Milner Group has functioned in recent years, it might be

presented here as a typical case.

We have seen that the Milner Group controlled the Rhodes money

after Rhodes’s death in 1902. In 1929 the Group invited General Smuts

to give the Rhodes Lectures at Oxford. In these lectures, Smuts sug-

gested that a detailed survey of Africa and its resources was badly

needed. The Royal Institute of International Affairs took up this sug-

gestion and appointed a committee, with Lord Lothian as chairman, to

study the project. This committee secured the services of the retiring

Governor of the United Provinces to head the survey. Thus Sir Malcolm

Hailey became the director of the project and general editor of the

famous African Survey, published in 1938 by the Royal Institute of In-

ternational Affairs, with funds obtained from the Carnegie Corpora-

tion of New York. Thus the hand of the Milner Group appears in this

work from its first conception to its final fruition, although the general

public, ignorant of the existence of such a group, would never realize

it.

Hailey was also made a member of the Council of the Royal Institute

of International Affairs, a member of the Permanent Mandate Com-

mission of the League of Nations (1935-1939), chairman of the School

of Oriental and African Studies (1941-1945), chairman of Interna-

tional African Institute, president of the Royal Central Asian Society,

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chairman of the Colonial Research Committee, member of the Senate

of the University of London, Visiting Fellow of Nuffield College at Ox-

ford (1939-1947), head of an economic mission to the Belgian Congo

(1941), Romanes Lecturer at Oxford (1941), etc., etc.

Along with all these important posts, Lord Hailey found time to

write in those fields with which the Milner Group was most concerned.

Among these works we might mention: Britain and Her Dependencies,

The Future of Colonial Peoples , and Great Britain , India, and the

Colonial Dependencies in the Post-War World (all three published in

1943).

The achievement of the Union of South Africa in 1910 did not mean

the end of the Kindergarten. Instead, it set out to repeat on the im-

perial scene what it had just accomplished in South Africa. In this new

project the inspiration was the same (Milner), the personnel was the

same (the Kindergarten), the methods were the same (with the Round

Table Groups replacing the “Closer Union Societies” and The Round

Table replacing The State . But, as befitted a larger problem, addi-

tional personnel and additional funds were required. The additional

personnel came largely from New College and All Souls; the additional

funds came from Cecil Rhodes and his associates and All Souls. The

older sources of funds (like Abe Bailey) and influence (like The Times)

remained loyal to the Group and continued to assist in this second great

battle of the Milner Group. As John Buchan wrote in his auto-

biography, “Loyalty to Milner and his creed was a strong cement

which endured long after our South African service ended, since the

Round Table coterie in England continued the Kindergarten.” Or, if

we may call another competent witness. Lord Oxford and Asquith,

writing of Milner after his death, stated: “His personality was so im-

pressive that he founded a school of able young men who during his

lifetime and since have acknowledged him as their principal political

leader. . . . He was an Expansionist, up to a point a Protectionist, with

a strain in social and industrial matters of semi-Socialist sentiment.” 11

More convincing, perhaps, than either Buchan or Asquith is the

word of the Group itself. The Round Table , in its issue of September

1935, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary by printing a brief history

of the Group. This sketch, while by no means complete and without

mentioning any names of members, provides irrefutable proof of the

existence and importance of the Milner Group. It said, in part;

By the end of 1913 The Round Table had two aspects. On the one hand, it

published a quarterly review. ... On the other hand, it represented a

body of men united in support of the principle of freedom and enquiring

jointly, through the method of group study, how it could be preserved and

expanded in the conditions of the then existing world. In calling for prep-

aration against the German danger (as it did from the very beginning)

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The Round Table was not merely, or even chiefly, concerned with saving

British skins. It was concerned with upholding against the despotic state

what it began to call “the principle of the commonwealth.” . . . The root

principle of The Round Table remained freedom — “the government of

men by themselves” and it demanded that within the Empire this prin-

ciple should be persistently pursued and expressed in institutions. For that

reason it denounced the post-war attempt to repress the Irish demand for

national self-government by ruthless violence after a century of union had

failed to win Irish consent, as a policy in conflict with British wealth; and

it played its part in achieving the Irish Treaty, and the Dominion setde-

ment. Within the limits of the practiceable it fought for the Common-

wealth ideal in India. It was closely associated with the device of dyarchy,

which seemed for the time being the most practical method of preventing

the perpetuation of an irremovable executive confronting an irresponsible

legislature and of giving Indians practical training in responsibility for

government — the device embodied in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report

and the Government of India Act. . . . The Round Table, while support-

ting the legal formulation of national freedom in the shape of Dominion

autonomy, has never lost sight of its ultimate ideal of an organic and ar-

ticulate Commonwealth. The purpose of devolution is not to drive liberty

to the point of license but to prepare for the ultimate basis on which alone

freedom can be preserved the reign of law over all. . . . Federal Union is

the only security for the freedom both of the individual and of the nation.

. . . The principle of anonymity has never been broken and it remains not

only as a means of obtaining material from sources that would otherwise

be closed, but also as a guarantee that both the opinions and the facts pre-

sented in the articles are scrutinized by more than one individual judg-

ment. . . . Imperceptibly, the form of the review has changed to suit

altered circumstances. . . . But the fundamentals remain unchanged.

Groups in the four overseas Dominions still assemble their material and

hammer out their views, metaphorically, “round the table/’ Some of their

members have shared continuously in this work for a quarter of a century;

and in England, too, the group of friends who came together in South

Africa still help to guide the destinies and contribute to the pages of the

review they founded, though the chances of life and death have taken

some of their number, and others have beeb brought in to contribute new

points of view and younger blood.

I

The Milner Group, Rhodes,

and Oxford, 1901-1925

It is generally believed, and stated as a fact by many writers, that

Milner hoped for some new political appointment after his return from

Africa and was deprived of this by the election of 1906, which swept

the Conservatives from office and brought in the Liberals. It is per-

fectly true that Milner was out of political life for ten years, but there

is, so far as I know, no evidence that this was contrary to his own wish.

In his farewell speech of March 1905, delivered long before the Liberal

victory at the polls, Milner stated in reference “to the great idea of Im-

perial Unity”: “I shall always be steadfast in that faith, though I should

prefer to work quietly and in the background, in the formation of

opinion rather than in the exercise of power.” This is exactly what

Milner did. Even after he returned to positions of power in 1915-1921,

he worked as quietly as possible and attracted public attention at an

absolute minimum. 1

Milner had nothing to gain from public office after 1905, until the

great crisis of 1915-1918 made it imperative for all able men to take a

hand in active affairs. If he wanted to speak his own mind, he always

had his seat in the House of Lords, and speaking engagements else-

where were easy — indeed, too easy — to get. In South Africa his union

program after 1905 was going forward at a rate that exceeded his most

optimistic hopes. And nowhere else did it seem, in 1905, that he could,

in actual administration, accomplish more than he could in quietly

building up a combination propaganda and patronage machine at

home. This machine was constructed about Rhodes and his as-

sociates, New College, and All Souls.

Milner was not of any political party himself and regarded party

politics with disgust long before 1905. As his friend Edmund Garrett

wrote in 1905: “Rhodes and Milner both number themselves of that

great unformed party which is neither the ins nor the outs, which

touches here the foreign politics of the one, here the home politics of

the other; a party to which Imperialism and Carlyle’s Condition of the

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People Question are one and the same business of fitly rearing,

housing, distributing, coordinating, and training for war and peace

the people of this commonwealth; a party which seems to have no

name, no official leader, no paper even, but which I believe, when it

comes by a soul and a voice, will prove to include a majority of the

British in Britain and a still greater majority of the British overseas.” 2

There can be no doubt that these were Milner’s sentiments. He hoped

to give that unformed party “a soul and a voice,” and he intended to do

this apart from party politics. When he was offered the position of

president of the imperial federalist organization he refused it, but

wrote to the secretary, Mr. F. H. Congdon, as follows:

Personally I have no political interest worth mentioning, except the main-

tenance of the Imperial connection, and I look upon the future with

alarm. The party system at home and in the Colonies seems to me to work

for the severance of ties, and that contrary to the desire of our people on

both sides. It is a melancholy instance of the manner in which bad

political arrangements, lauded to the skies from year’s end to year’s end as

the best in the world, may not only injure the interests, but actually

frustrate the desires of the people. I can see no remedy or protection,

under the present circumstances, except a powerful body of men — and it

would have to be very powerful — determined at all times and under all

circumstances to vote and work, regardless of every other circumstance,

against the man or party who played fast and loose with the cause of

National Unity. You can be sure that for my own part I shall always do

that. . . . 3

Milner, in his distaste for party politics and for the parliamentary

system, and in his emphasis on administration for social welfare,

national unity, and imperial federation, was an early example of what

James Burnham has called the “managerial revolution” — that is, the

growth of a group of managers, behind the scenes and beyond the con-

trol of public opinion, who seek efficiently to obtain what they regard

as good for the people. To a considerable extent this point of view

became part of the ideology of the Milner Group, although not of its

most articulate members, like Lionel Curtis, who continued to regard

democracy as a good in itself.

Milner’s own antipathy to democracy as practiced in the existing

party and parliamentary system is obvious. Writing to his old friend

Sir Clinton Dawkins, who had been, with Milner, a member of the

Toynbee group in 1879-1884, he said in 1902: “Two things constantly

strike me. One is the soundness of the British nation as a whole, con-

trasted with the rottenness of party politics.” About the same time he

wrote to another old Balliol associate, George Parkin: “I am strongly

impressed by two things: one that the heart of the nation is

sound, — and secondly that our constitution and methods are anti-

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quated and bad, and the real sound feeling of the nation does not get a

chance of making itself effective.” Two years later he wrote to a friend

of Rhodes, Sir Lewis Michell: “Representative government has its

merits, no doubt, but the influence of representative assemblies,

organized on the party system, upon administration — ‘government' in

the true sense of the word — is almost uniformly bad.” 4

With sentiments such as these, Milner laid down the duties of public

office with relief and devoted himself, not to private affairs, but to the

secret public matters associated with his “Association of Helpers.” To

support himself during this period, Milner acted as confidential adviser

to certain international financiers in London's financial district. His

entree to this lucrative occupation may have been obtained through

Lord Esher, who had just retired from a similar well-remunerated col-

laboration with Sir Ernest Cassel.

Milner’s most important work in this period was concerned with the

administration of the Rhodes Trust and the contacts with Oxford

University which arose out of this and from his own position as a

Fellow of New College.

The Rhodes Trust was already in operation when Milner returned

from Africa in 1905, with the actual management of the scholarships in

the hands of George Parkin, who had been brought from his position as

Principal of Upper Canada College by Milner. He held the post for

eighteen years (1902-1920). The year following his appointment, an

Oxford secretary to the trustees was appointed to handle the local work

during Parkin’s extended absences. This appointment went to Francis

Wylie (Sir Francis since 1929), Fellow and tutor of Brasenose, who was

named by the influence of Lord Rosebery, whose sons he had tutored. 5

The real control of the trust has rested with the Milner Group from

1902 to the present. Milner was the only really active trustee and he

controlled the bureaucracy which handled the trust. As secretary to the

trustees before 1929, we find, for example, George Parkin (1902-1920),

Geoffrey Dawson (1921-1922), Edward Grigg (1922-1925), and Lord

Lothian (1925-1940) — all of them clearly Milner’s nominees. On the

Board of Trustees itself, in the same period, we find Lord Rosebery,

Lord Milner, Lord Grey, Dr. Jameson, Alfred Beit, Lewis Michell, B.

F. Hawksley, Otto Beit, Rudyard Kipling, Leopold Amery, Stanley

Baldwin, Geoffrey Dawson, H. A. L. Fisher, Sothern Holland, and Sir

Edward Peacock. Peacock had been teacher of English and house-

master at Upper Canada College during the seven years in which

Parkin was principal of that institution (1895-1902) and became an in-

ternational financier as soon as Parkin became secretary of the Rhodes

Trust. Apparently he did not represent the Rhodes Trust but rather the

interests of that powerful and enigmatic figure Edward Rogers Wood

of Toronto. Wood and Peacock were very close to the Canadian branch

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of the Milner Group, that is to say, to A. J. Glazebrook, Parkin, and

the Massey family, but it is not clear that either represented the in-

terests of the Milner Group. Peacock was associated at first with the

Dominion Securities Corporation of London (1902-1915) and later

with Baring Brothers as a specialist in utility enterprises in Mexico,

Spain, and Brazil (1915-1924). He was made Receiver-General of the

Duchy of Cornwall in 1929 and was knighted in 1934. He was a direc-

tor of the Bank of England from 1921-1946, managing director of

Baring Brothers from 1926, a director of Vickers- Armstrong from 1929,

and in addition a director of many world-famous corporations, such as

the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Hudson Bay Company, and the Sun

Life Assurance Society. He was an expert at the Genoa Conference in

1922 and acted as the British Treasury’s representative in Washington

during the Second World War.

If we look at the list of Rhodes Trustees, we see that the Milner

Group always had complete control. Omitting the five original

trustees, we see that five of the new additions were from the Milner

Group, three were from the Rhodes clique, and three represented the

outside world. In the 1930s the Board was stabilized for a long period

as Amery, Baldwin, Dawson, Fisher, Holland, and Peacock, with

Lothian as secretary. Six of these seven were of the Milner Group, four

from the inner core.

A somewhat similar situation existed in respect to the Beit Railway

Fund. Although of German birth, Alfred Beit became a British subject

and embraced completely the ideas on the future role of the British

Empire shared by Rhodes and Milner. An intimate friend of these and

of Lord Rosebery, he was especially concerned with the necessity to

link the British possessions in Africa together by improved transporta-

tion (including the Cape to Cairo Railway). Accordingly, he left

£1,200,000 as the Beit Railway Trust, to be used for transportation and

other improvements in Africa. The year before his death (1906), he was

persuaded by the Milner Group to establish a Beit Professorship and a

Beit Lecturership in Colonial History at Oxford. The money provided

yielded an income far in excess of the needs of these two chairs, and the

surplus has been used for other “imperialist” purposes. In addition,

Beit gave money to the Bodleian Library at Oxford for books on

colonial history. In 1929, when Rhodes House was opened, these and

other books on the subject were moved from the Bodleian to Rhodes

House, and the Beit Professor was given an office and lecture hall in

Rhodes House. There have been only two incumbents of the Beit Pro-

fessorship since 1905: Hugh Edward Egerton in 1905-1920, and

Reginald (Sir Reginald since 1944) Coupland since 1920. Egerton, a

member of the Cecil Bloc and the Round Table Group, was a contem-

porary of Milner’s at Oxford whose father was a member of the House

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of Commons and Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He was orig-

inally private secretary to his cousin Edward Stanhope, Colonial

Secretary and Secretary of War in Lord Salisbury’s first government.

In 1886, Egerton became a member of the managing committee of the

newly created Emigrants Information Office. He held this job for

twenty years, during which time he came into the sphere of the Milner

Group, partly because of the efforts of South Africa, and especially the

British South Africa Company, to encourage emigration to their ter-

ritories, but also because of his Short History of British Colonial Policy ,

published in 1897. On the basis of this contact and this book, he was

given the new Beit Chair in 1905 and with it a fellowship at All Souls.

In his professional work he constantly supported the aims of the Milner

Group, including the publication of Federations and Unions within the

British Empire (1911) and British Colonial Policy in the Twentieth

Century (1922). His book Canadian Constitutional Development ,

along with Sir Charles Lucas’s edition of Lord Durham’s reports, was

the chief source of information for the process by which Canada was

federated used by the Milner Group. He wrote the biography of Joseph

Chamberlain in the Dictionary of National Biography , while his own

biography in the same collection was written by Reginald Coupland.

He remained a Fellow of All Souls and a member of the Milner Group

until his death in 1927, although he yielded his academic post to

Reginald Coupland in 1920. Coupland, who was a member of the

Milner Group from his undergraduate days at New College

(1903-1907), and who became one of the inner circle of the Milner

Group as early as 1914, will be discussed later. He has been, since 1917,

one of the most important persons in Britain in the formation of British

imperial policy.

The Beit Railway Trust and the Beit chairs at Oxford have been con-

trolled by the Milner Group from the beginning, through the board of

trustees of the former and through the board of electors of the latter.

Both of these have interlocking membership with the Rhodes Trust and

the College of All Souls. For example, the board of electors of the Beit

chair in 1910 consisted of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, the Regius

Professor of Modern History, the Chichele Professor of Modern

History, the Secretary of State for Colonies, Viscount Milner, H. A. L.

Fisher, and Leopold Amery. By controlling All Souls and the two pro-

fessorships (both ex-officio fellowships of All Souls), the Milner Group

could control five out of seven electors to the Beit professorship. In re-

cent years the board of electors has consistently had a majority of

members of All Souls and/or the Milner Group. In 1940, for example,

the board had, besides three ex-officio members, two members of All

Souls, a Rhodes Trustee, and H. A. L. Fisher.

The Beit Lectureship in Colonial History was similarly controlled. In

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1910 its board of electors had seven members, four ex-officio (The

Vice-Chancellor, the Regius Professor of History, the Chichele Pro-

fessor of History, the Beit Professor) and three others (A. L. Smith,

H. A. L. Fisher, and Leopold Amery). In 1930 the board consisted of

the Vice-Chancellor, the Beit Professor, H. A. L. Fisher, F. M. Po-

wicke, and three fellows of All Souls. As a result, the lectureship has

generally been held by persons close to the Milner Group, as can be

seen from the following list of incumbents:

W. L. Grant, 1906-1910

J. Munro, 1910-1912

L. Curtis, 1912-1913

R. Coupland, 1913-1918

E. M. Wrong, 1919-1924

K. N. Bell, 1924-1927

W. P. Morrell, 1927-1930

V. T. Harlow, 1930-1935

K. C. Wheare, 1935-1940

Without attempting to identify all of these completely, it should be

pointed out that four were Fellows of All Souls, while, of the others,

one was the son-in-law of George Parkin, another was the son-in-law

of A. L. Smith, and a third was librarian of Rhodes House and later

acting editor of The Round Table .

During this period after 1905, the Milner Group was steadily

strengthening its relationships with New College, All Souls, and to

some extent with Balliol. Through Fisher and Milner there came into

the Group two tutors and a scholar of New College. These were Alfred

Zimmern, Robert S. Rait (1874-1936), and Reginald Coupland.

Alfred Zimmern (Sir Alfred since 1936) was an undergraduate at

New College with Kerr, Grigg, Brand, Curtis, Malcolm, and Waldorf

Astor (later Lord Astor) in 1898-1902. As lecturer, fellow, and tutor

there in the period 1903-1909, he taught a number of future members

of the Milner Group, of whom the chief was Reginald Coupland. His

teaching and his book The Greek Commonwealth (1911) had a pro-

found effect on the thinking of the inner circle of the Milner Group, as

can be seen, for example, in the writings of Lionel Curtis. In the period

up to 1921 he was close to this inner core and in fact can be considered

as a member of it. After 1921 he disagreed with the policy of the inner

core toward the League of Nations and Germany, since the core

wanted to weaken the one and strengthen the other, an opinion exactly

opposite to that of Zimmern. He remained, however, a member of the

Group and was, indeed, its most able member and one of its most

courageous members. Since his activities will be mentioned frequently

in the course of this study, we need do no more than point out his

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various positions here. He was a staff inspector of the Board of Educa-

tion in 1912-1915; the chief assistant to Lord Robert Cecil in the

Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office in 1918-1919;

Wilson Professor of International Politics at University College of

Wales, Abersytwyth, in 1919-1921; Professor of Political Science at

Cornell in 1922-1923; deputy director and chief administrator of the

League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in 1926-1930;

Montague Burton Professor of International Relations at Oxford in

1930-1944; deputy director of the Research Department of the Foreign

Office in 1943-1945; adviser to the Ministry of Education in 1945;

director of the Geneva School of International Studies in 1925-1939;

adviser and chief organizer of the United Nations Educational, Scien-

tific, and Cultural Organization in 1946; and Visiting Professor at

Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, from 1947.

Another Fellow of New College who joined the Milner Group was R.

S. Rait (1874-1936). Of much less significance than Zimmern, he

worked with the Group in the Trade Intelligence Department of the

War Office in 1915-1918. He is the chief reason why the Milner Group,

especially in the writings of Lionel Curtis, emphasized the union with

Scotland as a model for the treatment of Ireland. A close friend of A. V.

Dicey, Fellow of All Souls, he wrote with him Thoughts on the Union

between England and Scotland (1920), and, with C. H. Firth, another

Fellow of All Souls, he wrote Acts and Ordonnances of the Inter -

regnum , 1642-1660 (1911). He left New College in 1913 to become Pro-

fessor of Scottish History at the University of Glasgow (1913-1929) and

five years later was made Royal Historiographer of Scotland

(1919-1929). Originally intimate with the inner circle of the Milner

Group, he drifted away after 1913.

Reginald Coupland (Sir Reginald since 1944) came into the Milner

Group’s inner circle shortly before Rait moved out, and has been there

ever since. A student of Zimmern’s at New College in 1903-1907, he

became a Fellow and lecturer in ancient history at Trinity College, Ox-

ford, immediately upon graduation and stayed there for seven years.

Since then his academic career has carried him to the following posi-

tions: Beit Lecturer in Colonial History (1913-1918), Beit Professor of

Colonial History (since 1920), Fellow of All Souls (since 1920), and

Fellow of Nuffield College (since 1939). He was also editor of The

Round Table after Lord Lothian left (1917-1919) and again at the

beginning of the Second World War (1939-1941). His most important

activities, however, have been behind the scenes: as member of the

Royal Commission on Superior Civil Services in India (1923), as ad-

viser to the Burma Round Table Conference of 1931, as a member of

the Peel Commission to Palestine (1936-1937), and as a member of Sir

Stafford Cripps’s Mission to India (1942). He is reputed to have been

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the chief author of the Peel Report of 1937, which recommended parti-

tion of Palestine and restriction of Jewish immigration into the

area — two principles which remained at the basis of British policy until

1949. In fact, the pattern of partition contained in the Peel Report,

which would have given Transjordan an outlet to the Mediterranean

Sea across the southern portion of Palestine, was a subject of violent

controversy in 1948.

Coupland has been a prolific writer. Besides his many historical

works, he has written many books that reflect the chief subjects of

discussion in the inmost circle of the Milner Group. Among these, we

might mention Freedom and Unity , his lecture at Patna College, India,

in 1924; The American Revolution and the British Empire (1930); The

Empire in These Days (1935); The Cripps Mission (1942); and Report

on the Constitutional Problem in India (3 parts, 1942-1943).

The Milner Group’s relationships with All Souls were also

strengthened after Milner returned to England in 1905, and especially

after the Kindergarten returned to England in 1909-1911. The Milner

Group’s strength in All Souls, however, was apparently not sufficiently

strong for them to elect a member of the Milner Group as Warden

when Anson died in 1914, for his successor, Francis W. Pember, one-

time assistant legal adviser to the Foreign Office, and a Fellow of All

Souls since 1884, was of the Cecil Bloc rather than of the Milner

Group. Pember did not, however, resist the penetration of the Milner

Group into All Souls, and as a result both of his successors as Warden,

W. G. S. Adams (1933-1945) and B. H. Sumner (1945- ), were mem-

bers of the Milner Group.

In general, the movement of persons was not from the Milner Group

to All Souls but in the reverse direction. All Souls, in fact, became the

chief recruiting agency for the Milner Group, as it had been before

1903 for the Cecil Bloc. The inner circle of this Group, because of its

close contact with Oxford and with All Souls, was in a position to

notice able young undergraduates at Oxford. These were admitted to

All Souls and at once given opportunities in public life and in writing

or teaching, to test their abilities and loyalty to the ideals of the Milner

Group. If they passed both of these tests, they were gradually admitted

to the Milner Group’s great fiefs such as the Royal Institute of Interna-

tional Affairs, The Times , The Round Table , or, on the larger scene, to

the ranks of the Foreign or Colonial Offices. So far as I know, none of

these persons recruited through All Souls ever reached the inner circle

of the Milner Group, at least before 1939. This inner circle continued

to be largely monopolized by the group that had been in South Africa

in the period before 1909. The only persons who were not in South

Africa, yet reached the inner circle of the Milner Group, would appear

to be Coupland, Lord Astor, Lady Astor, Arnold Toynbee, and H. V.

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Hodson. There may be others, for it is difficult for an outsider to be

sure in regard to such a secret matter.

Of the members of All Souls who got into at least the second circle of

the Milner Group, we should mention the names of the following:

Name

Birth

College

All Souls

Date

Fellow

W. G. S. Adams

1874

Balliol 1896-1900

1910- (Warden

1933-1945)

K. N. Bell

1884

Balliol 1903-1906

1907-1914

I. Berlin

1909

Corpus Christi

1928-1932

1932-1939

H. B. Butler

1883

Balliol 1902-1905

1905-1912

R. D’O. Butler

Balliol 1935-1938

1938-

F. Clarke

Balliol 1905-1908

1908-1915

P. E. Corbett

C, R. M. F.

1892

Balliol 1919-1920

1920-1928

Cruttwell

Queen’s 1906-1910

1911-1918

H. W. C. Davis

1874

Balliol 1891-1895

1895-1902

G. C. Faber

1889

Christ Church

1908-1913

1919-

J. G. Foster

New College

1922-1925

1924-

M. L. Gwyer

1878

Christ Church

1897-1901

1902-1916

W. K. Hancock

1898

Balliol 1922-1923

1924-1930,

1944-

C. R. S. Harris

1896

Corpus Christi

1918-1923

1921-1936

H. V. Hodson

1906

Balliol 1925-1928

1928-1935

C. A. Macartney

1896

Trinity College,

Cambridge

1936-

R. M. Makins

1904

Christ Church

1922-1925

1925-1932

J. Morley

1838

Lincoln 1856-1859

1904-1911

C. J. Radcliffe

1899

New College

1919-1922

1922-1937

J. A. Salter

1881

Brasenose 1899-1904

1932-

D. B. Somervell

A. H. D. R. Steel-

1889

Magdalen 1907-1911

1912-

Maitland

1876

Balliol 1896-1900

1900-1907

B. H. Sumner

1893

Balliol 1912-1916

1919-1926,

Warden 1945-

L. F. R. Williams

1890

University 1909-1912

1914-1921

E. L. Woodward

1890

Corpus Christi

1908-1911

1911-1944

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Of these twenty-five names, four were Fellows of Balliol during the

periods in which they were not Fellows of All Souls (Bell, David,

Sumner, and Woodward).

It is not necessary to say much about these various men at this time,

but certain of them should be identified. The others will be mentioned

later.

William George Stewart Adams was lecturer in Economics at Chi-

cago and Manchester universities and Superintendent of Statistics and

Intelligence in the Department of Agriculture before he was elected to

All Souls in 1910. Then he was Gladstone Professor of Political Theory

and Institutions (1912-1933), a member of the committee to advise the

Irish Cabinet (1911), in the Ministry of Munitions (1915), Secretary to

Lloyd George (1916-1919), editor of the War Cabinet Reports

(1917-1918), and a member of the Committee on Civil Service Ex-

aminations (1918).

The Reverend Kenneth Norman Bell was lecturer in history at

Toronto University during his fellowship in All Souls (1907-1914); a

director of G. Bell and Sons, Publishers; a tutor and Fellow of Balliol

(1919-1941); Beit Lecturer in Colonial History (1924-1927); and a

member of the committee for supervision of the selection of candidates

for the Colonial Administrative Service. He edited, with W. P.

Morrell, Select Documents in British Colonial History , 1830-1860

(1928).

Harold Beresford Butler (Sir Harold since 1946) was a civil servant,

chiefly in the Home Office, and secretary to the British delegation to

the International Conference on Aerial Navigation in Paris during his

Fellowship at All Souls. He was subsequently in the Foreign Trade

Department of the Foreign Office (1914-1917) and in the Ministry of

Labour (1917-1919). On the Labour Commission of the Paris Peace

Conference and at the International Labor Conference in Washington

(1919), he later became deputy director (1920-1932) and director

(1932-1938) of the International Labour Office of the League of Na-

tions. Since 1939, he has been Warden of Nuffield College (1939-1943)

and minister in charge of publicity in the British Embassy in Wash-

ington (1942-1946). He has written a number of books, including a

history of the interwar period called The Lost Peace (1941).

H. W. C. Davis, the famous medieval historian, became a Fellow of

All Souls immediately after graduating from Balliol in 1895, and was a

Fellow of Balliol for nineteen years after that, resigning from the latter

to become Professor of History at Manchester University (1921-1925).

During this period he was a lecturer at New College (1897-1899),

Chichele Lecturer in Foreign History (1913), editor of the Oxford

Pamphlets on the war (1914-1915), one of the organizers of the War

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Trade Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Blockade in the

Foreign Office (1915), acting director of the Department of Overseas

Trade under Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland (1917-1919), an expert at the

Paris Peace Conference (1918-1919), and editor of the Dictionary of

National Biography (1920-1928). In 1925 he returned from Manchester

to Oxford as Regius Professor of Modern History in succession to Sir

Charles Firth, became a Fellow of Oriel College, Curator of the

Bodleian, and was named by the International Labour Office (that is,

by Harold Butler) as the British representative on the Blanesburgh

Committee on Factory Legislation in Europe. He edited the report of

this committee. In addition to his very valuable studies in medieval

history, Davis also wrote The History of the Blockade (1920) and sec-

tions of the famous History of the Peace Conference , edited by Harold

Temperley (also a member of the Group).

Sir Maurice Linford Gwyer was a Fellow of All Souls for fourteen

years after graduating from Christ Church (1902-1916). During this

time he was admitted to the bar, practiced law, was lecturer in Private

International Law at Oxford (1912-1915) and solicitor to the Insurance

Commissioners (1902-1916). He was then legal adviser to the Ministry

of Shipping (1917-1919) and to the Ministry of Health (1919-1926),

then Procurator-General and Solicitor to the Treasury (1926-1933),

First Parliamentary Counsel to the Treasury (1934-1937), and Chief

Justice of India (1937-1943) . He was first British delegate to The Hague

Conference on Codification of International Law (1930) and a member

of the Indian States Inquiry Committee (1932). He edited the later edi-

tions of Anson’s Law of Contract and Law and Custom of the Constitu-

tion.

William Keith Hancock, of Australia and Balliol, was a member of

All Souls from 1924. He was Professor of History at Adelaide in

1924-1933, Professor of Modern History at Birmingham in 1934-1944,

and is now Chichele Professor of Economic History at Oxford. He

wrote the three- volume work Survey of British Commonwealth Af-

fairs , published by Chatham House in 1937-1942.

John Morley (Lord Morley of Blackburn) was a member of the Cecil

Bloc rather than of the Milner Group, but in one respect, his insistence

on the inadvisability of using force and coercion within the Empire, a

difference which appeared most sharply in regard to Ireland, he was

more akin to the Group than to the Bloc. He was a close friend of Lord

Salisbury, Lord Esher, and Joseph Chamberlain and was also a friend

of Milner’s, since they worked together on the Pall Mall Gazette in

1882-1883. He had close personal and family connections with H. A. L.

Fisher, the former going back to a vacation together in 1892 and the

latter based on Morley ’s lifelong friendship with Fisher’s uncle, Leslie

Stephen. It was probably through Fisher’s influence that Morley was

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elected a Fellow of All Souls in 1904. He had shown that his heart was

in the right place, so far as the Milner Group was concerned, in 1894,

when Gladstone retired from the leadership of the Liberal Party and

Morley used his influence to give the vacant position to Lord Rosebery.

Morley was Secretary of State for India in the period 1905-1910, put-

ting through the famous Morley-Minto reforms in this period. In this

he made use of a number of members of the Milner and All Souls

groups. The bill itself was put through the House of Commons by a

member of All Souls, Thomas R. Buchanan (1846-1911), who was

shifted from Financial Secretary in the War Office under Haldane to

Under Secretary in the India Office for the purpose (1908-1909). 6

James Arthur Salter (Sir Arthur since 1922) was born in Oxford and

lived there until he graduated from Brasenose in 1904. He went to

work for the Shipping Department of the Admiralty in the same year

and worked in this field for most of the next fourteen years. In 1917 he

was Director of Ship Requisitioning and later secretary and chairman

of the Allied Maritime Transport Executive. He was on the Supreme

Economic Council in 1919 and became general secretary to the Rep-

arations Commission for almost three years (1920-1922). He was Direc-

tor of the Economic and Finance Section of the League of Nations in

1919-1922 and again in 1922-1931. In the early 1930s he went on

several missions to India and China and served on various committees

concerned with railroad matters. He was Gladstone Professor of

Political Theory and Institutions in 1934-1944, Member of Parliament

from Oxford University after 1937, Parliamentary Secretary to the

Ministry of Shipping in 1939-1941, head of the British Merchant

Shipping Mission in America in 1941-1943, Senior Deputy Director

General of UNRRA in 1944, and Chancellor to the Duchy of Lancaster

in 1945.

Donald B. Somervell (Sir Donald since 1933) has been a Fellow of

All Souls since he graduated from Magdalen in 1911, although he took

his degree in natural science. He entered Parliament as a Unionist in

1931 and almost at once began a governmental career. He was Solicitor

General (1933-1936), Attorney General (1936-1945), and Home Sec-

retary (1945), before becoming a Lord Justice of Appeal in 1946. His

brother, D. C. Somervell, edited the one- volume edition of Toynbee’s

A Study of History for Chatham House.

Sir Arthur Ramsay Steel-Maitland was a Fellow of All Souls for the

seven years following his graduation from Balliol in 1900. He was un-

successful as a candidate for Parliament in 1906, but was elected as a

Conservative from Birmingham four years later. He was Parliamentary

Under Secretary for Colonies (1915-1917), Joint Parliamentary Under

Secretary in the Foreign Office and Parliamentary Secretary to the

Board of Trade in the capacity of head of the Department of Overseas

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Trade (1917-1919), and Minister of Labour (1924-1929).

Benedict H. Sumner was a Fellow of All Souls for six years

(1919-1928) and a Fellow of Balliol for twenty (1925-1944), before he

became Warden of All Souls (1945). During the First World War, he

was with Military Intelligence and afterwards with the British delega-

tion at the Peace Conference. During the Second World War, he was

attached to the Foreign Office (1939-1942). He is an authority on Rus-

sian affairs, and this probably played an important part in his selection

as Warden of All Souls in 1945.

Laurence F. R. Williams went to Canada as lecturer in medieval

history at Queen’s University after leaving Balliol (1913-1914). Im-

mediately on becoming a Fellow of All Souls in 1914, he went to India

as Professor of Indian History at the University of Allahabad. In 1918

and in 1919 he was busy on constitutional reforms associated with the

Government of India Act of 1919, working closely with Sir William

Marris. He then became director of the Central Bureau of Information

for six years (1920-1926) and secretary to the Chancellor of the

Chamber of Princes for four (1926-1930). He was, in this period, also

secretary to the Indian Delegation at the Imperial Conference of 1923,

political secretary to the Maharaja of Patiala, substitute delegate to the

Assembly of the League of Nations (1925), member of the Legislative

Assembly (1924-1925), joint director of the Indian Princes’ Special

Organization (1929-1931), adviser to the Indian States delegation at

the Round Table Conference of 1930-1931, and delegate to the Round

Table Conference of 1932. In the 1930s he was Eastern Service director

of the BBC (under H. A. L. Fisher), and in the early days of the Second

World War was adviser on Middle East Affairs to the Ministry of Infor-

mation. Since 1944 he has been in the editorial department of The

Times. His written output is considerable, much of it having been

published as official documents or parliamentary papers. Among these

are the Moral and Material Progress Reports of India for 1917-1925,

the official Report on Lord Chelmsford s Administration , and the of-

ficial History of the Tour of the Prince of Wales. He also wrote Lec-

tures on the Handling of Historical Material (1917), a History of the

Abbey of St. Alban (1917), and a half dozen books and pamphlets on

India.

Ernest Llewellyn Woodward, the last Fellow of All Souls whom we

shall mention here, is of great significance. After studying at Oxford

for seven years (1908-1915) he went into the British Expeditionary

Force for three, and then was elected a Fellow of All Souls, an appoint-

ment he held until he became a Fellow of Balliol in the middle of the

1940s. He was also a tutor and lecturer at New College, a Rhodes

Travelling Fellow (1931), and in 1944 succeeded Sir Alfred Zimmern as

Montague Burton Professor of International Relations. When the deci-

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sion was made after the Second World War to publish an extensive

selection of Documents on British Foreign Policy , 1919-1939 , Wood-

ward was made general editor of the series and at once associated with

himself Rohan D’Olier Butler, who has been a Fellow of All Souls since

leaving Balliol in 1938.

Woodward was a member of the council of the Royal Institute of In-

ternational Affairs in the middle 1930s, and domestic bursar of All

Souls a little later. He has written a number of historical works, of

which the best known are Volume XIII of the Oxford History of

England ("‘The Age of Reform,” 1938), Three Studies in European

Conservatism (1929), and Great Britain and the German Navy (1935).

These twenty-five names give the chief members of All Souls, in the

period before 1939, who became links with the Milner Group and who

have not previously been discussed. In the same period the links with

New College and Balliol were also strengthened. The process by which

this was done for the former, through men like H. A. L. Fisher, has

already been indicated. Somewhat similar but less intimate relation-

ships were established with Balliol, especially after A. L. Smith became

Master of that college in 1916. Smith, as we have indicated, was a con-

temporary and old friend of Milner at Balliol and shared his (and

Toynbee’s) ideas regarding the necessity of uplifting the working classes

and preserving the Empire. His connections with Fisher and with All

Souls were intimate. He was a close friend of Lord Brassey, whose

marital relationships with the Rosebery and Brand families and with

the Cecil Bloc have been mentioned already. Through A. L. Smith,

Brassey reorganized the financial structure of the Balliol foundation in

1904. He was, as we have shown, a close collaborator of Milner in his

secret plans, by intimate personal relationships before 1897 and by fre-

quent correspondence after that date. There can be no doubt that A. L.

Smith shared in this confidence. He was a collaborator with the Round

Table Group after 1910, being especially useful, by his Oxford posi-

tion, in providing an Oxford background for Milner Group propa-

ganda among the working classes. This will be mentioned later. A. L.

Smith’s daughter Mary married a Fellow of All Souls, F. T. Bar-

rington-Ward, whose older brother, R. M. Barrington- Ward, was

assistant editor of The Times in 1927-1941 and succeeded Dawson as

editor in 1941. Smith’s son, A. L. F. Smith, was elected to All Souls in

1904, was director, and later adviser, of education to the Government

of Iraq in 1920-1931, and was Rector of Edinburgh Academy from

1931 to 1945.

A. L. Smith remained as Master of Balliol from 1916 to his death in

1924. His biographical sketch in The Dictionary of National Biography

was written by K. N. Bell of All Souls.

The influence of the Milner Group and the Cecil Bloc on Balliol in

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the twentieth century can be seen from the following list of persons

who were Fellows or Honorary Fellows of Balliol:

Archbishop Lang

Lord Asquith

Lord Brassey

Lord Curzon

Lord Ernie

Lord Grey of Fallodon

Lord Lansdowne

Lord Milner

Leopold Amery

K. N. Bell

H. W. C. Davis

J. H. Hofmeyr

Vincent Massey

F. W. Pember

A. L. Smith

B. H. Sumner

A. J. Toynbee

E. L. Woodward

Of these eighteen names, nine were Fellows of All Souls, and seven

were clearly of the Milner Group.

There was also a close relationship between the Milner Group and

New College. The following list gives the names of eight members of

the Milner Group who were also Fellows or Honorary Fellows of New

College in the years 1900-1947:

Lord Lothian

Lord Milner

Isaiah Berlin

H. A. L. Fisher

Sir Samuel Hoare (Lord Templewood)

Gilbert Murray

W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore (Lord Harlech)

Sir Alfred Zimmern

If we wished to add names to the Cecil Bloc, we would add those of

Lord David Cecil, Lord Quickswood (Lord Hugh Cecil), and Bishop

A. C. Headlam.

It is clear from these lists that almost every important member of the

Milner Group was a fellow of one of the three colleges — Balliol, New

College, or All Souls. Indeed, these three formed a close relationship,

the first two on the undergraduate level and the last in its own unique

position. The three were largely dominated by the Milner Group, and

they, in turn, largely dominated the intellectual life of Oxford in the

fields of law, history, and public affairs. They came close to dom-

inating the university itself in administrative matters. The relation-

ships among the three can be demonstrated by the proportions of All

Souls Fellows who came from these two colleges, in relation to the

numbers which came from the other eighteen colleges at Oxford or

from the outside world. Of the one hundred forty-nine Fellows at All

Souls in the twentieth century, forty-eight came from Balliol and thirty

from New College, in spite of the fact that Christ Church was larger

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than these and Trinity, Magdalen, Brasenose, St. John’s, and Univer-

sity colleges were almost as large. Only thirty-two came from these

other five large colleges, while at least fifteen were educated outside

Oxford.

The power of the Cecil Bloc and the Milner Group in Oxford in the

twentieth century can be seen by glancing at the list of Chancellors of

the University during the century: 7

Lord Salisbury, 1869-1903

Lord Goschen, 1903-1907

Lord Curzon, 1907-1925

Lord Milner, 1925-

Lord George Cave, 1925-1928

Lord Grey of Fallodon, 1928-1933

Lord Halifax, 1933-

The influence of the Milner Group at Oxford was sufficient to enable

it to get control of the Dictionary of National Biography after this work

was given to the university in 1917. This control was exercised by H.

W. C. Davis and his protege J. R. H. Weaver during the period before

1938. The former had been brought into the gifted circle because he

was a Fellow of All Souls and later a Fellow of Balliol (1895-1921). In

this connection he was naturally acquainted with Weaver (who was a

Fellow of Trinity from 1913 to 1938) and brought him into the War

Trade Intelligence Department when Davis organized this under

Cecil-Milner auspices in 1915. Davis became editor of the Dictionary

of National Biography under the same auspices in 1921 and soon asked

Weaver to join him. They jointly produced the Dictionary supplement

for 1912-1921. After Davis’s death in 1928, Weaver became editor and

brought out the supplement for 1922- 1930. 8 He continued as editor un-

til shortly before he was made President of Trinity College in 1938.

Weaver wrote the sketch of Davis in the Dictionary and also a larger

work called Henry William Carless Davis , a Memoir and a Selection of

His Historical Papers , published in 1933.

This control of the Dictionary of National Biography will explain

how the Milner Group controlled the writing of the biographies of its

own members so completely in that valuable work. This fact will

already have been observed in the present work. The only instance, ap-

parently, where a member of the Milner Group or the Cecil Bloc did

not have his biographical sketch written by another member of these

groups is to be found in the case of Lord Phillimore, whose sketch was

written by Lord Sankey, who was not a member of the groups in ques-

tion. Phillimore is also the only member of these groups whose sketch is

not wholeheartedly adulatory.

The influence of the Milner Group in academic circles is by no means

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exhausted by the brief examination just made of Oxford. At Oxford

itself, the Group has been increasingly influential in Nuffield College,

while outside of Oxford it apparently controls (or greatly influences)

the Stevenson Professorship of International Relations at London; the

Rhodes Professorship of Imperial History at London; Birkbeck College

at London; the George V Professorship of History in Cape Town

University; and the Wilson Professorship of International Politics at

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Some of these are con-

trolled completely, while others are influenced in varying degrees. In

Canada the influence of the Group is substantial, if not decisive, at the

University of Toronto and at Upper Canada College. At Toronto the

Glazebrook-Massey influence is very considerable, while at present the

Principal of Upper Canada College is W. L. Grant, son-in-law of

George Parkin and former Beit Lecturer at Oxford. Vincent Massey is a

governor of the institution.

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Beyond the academic field, the Milner Group engaged in journalistic

activities that sought to influence public opinion in directions which

the Group desired. One of the earliest examples of this, and one of the

few occasions on which the Group appeared as a group in the public

eye, was in 1905, the year in which Milner returned from Africa. At

that time the Group published a volume, The Empire and the Century ,

consisting of fifty articles on various aspects of the imperial problem.

The majority of these articles were written by members of the Milner

Group, in spite of the fact that so many of the most important members

were still in Africa with Lord Selborne. The volume was issued under

the general editorship of Charles S. Goldman, a friend of John Buchan

and author of With General French and the Cavalry in South Africa .

Among those who wrote articles were W. F. Monypenny, Bernard

Holland, John Buchan, Henry Birchenough, R. B. Haldane, Bishop

Lang, L. S. Amery, Evelyn Cecil, George Parkin, Edmund Garrett,

Geoffrey Dawson, E. B. Sargant (one of the Kindergarten), Lionel

Phillips, Valentine Chirol, and Sir Frederick and Lady Lugard.

This volume has many significant articles, several of which have

already been mentioned. It was followed by a sequel volume, called

The Empire and the Future , in 1916. The latter consisted of a series of

lectures delivered at King’s College, University of London, in 1915,

under the sponsorship of the Royal Colonial Institute. The lectures

were by members of the Milner Group who included A. L. Smith,

H. A. L. Fisher, Philip Kerr, and George R. Parkin. 1 A somewhat sim-

ilar series of lectures was given on the British Dominions at the Univer-

sity of Birmingham in 1910-1911 by such men as Alfred Lyttelton,

Henry Birchenough, and William Hely-Hutchinson. These were

published by Sir William Ashley in a volume called The British Domin-

ions.

These efforts, however, were too weak, too public, and did not reach

the proper persons. Accordingly, the real efforts of the Milner Group

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were directed into more fruitful and anonymous activities such as The

Times and The Round Table.

The Milner Group did not own The Times before 1922, but clearly

controlled it at least as far back as 1912. Even before this last date,

members of the innermost circle of the Milner Group were swarming

about the great newspaper. In fact, it would appear that The Times

had been controlled by the Cecil Bloc since 1884 and was taken over by

the Milner Group in the same way in which All Souls was taken over,

quietly and without a struggle. The midwife of this process apparently

was George E. Buckle (1854-1935), graduate of New College in 1876,

member of All Souls since 1877, and editor of The Times from 1884 to

1912. 2 The chief members of the Milner Group who were associated

with The Times have already been mentioned. Amery was connected

with the paper from 1899 to 1909. During this period he edited and

largely wrote the Times History of the South African War. Lord Esher

was offered a directorship in 1908. Grigg was a staff writer in

1903-1905, and head of the Imperial Department in 1908-1913. B. K.

Long was head of the Dominion Department in 1913-1921 and of the

Foreign Department in 1920-1921. Monypenny was assistant editor

both before and after the Boer War (1894-1899, 1903-1908) and on the

board of directors after the paper was incorporated (1908-1912).

Dawson was the paper s chief correspondent in South Africa in the

Selborne period (1905-1910), while Basil Williams was the reporter

covering the National Convention there (1908-1909). When it became

clear in 1911 that Buckle must soon retire, Dawson was brought into

the office in a rather vague capacity and, a year later, was made

editor. The appointment was suggested and urged by Buckle. 3 Dawson

held the position from 1912 to 1941, except for the three years

1919-1922. This interval is of some significance, for it revealed to the

Milner Group that they could not continue to control The Times

without ownership. The Cecil Bloc had controlled The Times from

1884 to 1912 without ownership, and the Milner Group had done the

same in the period 1912-1919, but, in this last year, Dawson quarreled

with Lord Northcliffe (who was chief proprietor from 1908-1922) and

left the editor s chair. As soon as the Milner Group, through the Astors,

acquired the chief proprietorship of the paper in 1922, Dawson was

restored to his post and held it for the next twenty years. Undoubtedly

the skillful stroke which acquired the ownership of The Times from the

Harmsworth estate in 1922 was engineered by Brand. During the inter-

val of three years during which Dawson was not editor, Northcliffe en-

trusted the position to one of The Times famous foreign cor-

respondents, H. W. Steed.

Dawson was succeeded as editor in 1944 by R. M. Barrington- Ward,

whose brother was a Fellow of All Souls and son-in-law of A. L. Smith.

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Laurence Rushbrook Williams, who functions in many capacities in

Indian affairs after his fellowship in All Souls (1914-1921), also joined

the editorial staff in 1944. Douglas Jay, who graduated from New Col-

lege in 1930 and was a Fellow of All Souls in 1930-1937, was on the

staff of The Times in 1929-1933 and of the Economist in 1933-1937. He

became a Labour M.P. in 1946, after having performed the unheard-of

feat of going directly from All Souls to the city desk of the Labour

Party's Daily Herald (1937-1941). Another interesting figure on The

Times staff in the more recent period was Charles R. S. Harris, who

was a Fellow of All Souls for fifteen years (1921-1936), after graduating

from Corpus Christi. He was leader-writer of The Times for ten years

(1925-1935) and, during part of the same period, was on the staff of the

Economist (1932-1935) and editor of The Nineteenth Century and

After (1930-1935). He left all three positions in 1935 to go for four years

to the Argentine to be general manager of the Buenos Aires Great

Southern and Western Railways. During the Second World War he

joined the Ministry of Economic Warfare for a year, the Foreign Office

for two years, and the Finance Department of the War Office for a

year (1942-1943). Then he was commissioned a lieutenant colonel with

the military government in occupied Sicily, and ended up the war as a

member of the Allied Control Commission in Italy. Harris’s written

works cover a range of subjects that would be regarded as extreme

anywhere outside the Milner Group. A recognized authority on Duns

Scotus, he wrote two volumes on this philosopher as well as the chapter

on “Philosophy” in The Legacy of the Middle Ages , but in 1935 he

wrote Germany’s Foreign Indebtedness for the Royal Institute of Inter-

national Affairs.

Harris’s literary versatility, as well as the large number of members

of All Souls who drifted over to the staff on The Times , unquestionably

can be explained by the activities of Lord Brand. Brand not only

brought these persons from All Souls to The Times , but also brought

the Astors to The Times. Brand and Lord Astor were together at New

College at the outbreak of the Boer War. They married sisters,

daughters of Chiswell Dabney Langhorne of Virginia. Brand was ap-

parently the one who brought Astor into the Milner Group in 1917,

although there had been a movement in this direction considerably

earlier. Astor was a Conservative M.P. from 1910 to 1919, leaving the

Lower House to take his father’s seat in the House of Lords. His place in

Commons has been held since 1919 by his wife, Nancy Astor

(1919-1945), and by his son Michael Langhorne Astor (1945- ). In

1918 Astor became parliamentary secretary to Lloyd George; later he

held the same position with the Ministry of Food (1918-1919) and the

Ministry of Health (1919-1921). He was British delegate to the

Assembly of the League of Nations in 1931, chairman of the League

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Committee on Nutrition (1936-1937), and chairman of the council of

the Royal Institute of International Affairs (since 1935). With help

from various people, he wrote three books on agricultural problems:

Land and Life (1932), The Planning of Agriculture (1933), and British

Agriculture (1938). Both of his sons graduated from New College, and

both have been Members of Parliament, the older in the period

1935-1945, and the younger since 1945. The older was secretary to

Lord Lytton on the League of Nations Commission of Enquiry into the

Manchurian Episode (1932) and was parliamentary private secretary

to Sir Samuel Hoare when he was First Lord of the Admiralty and

Home Secretary (1936-1939).

Lord Astor s chief importance in regard to The Times is that he and

his brother became chief proprietors in 1922 by buying out the

Harmsworth interest. As a result, the brother, Colonel John Jacob

Astor, has been chairman of the board of The Times Publishing Com-

pany since 1922, and Brand was a director on the board for many years

before 1944. Colonel Astor, who matriculated at New College in 1937,

at the age of fifty-one, was military aide to the Viceroy of India (Lord

Hardinge) in 1911-1914, was a Member of Parliament from 1922 to

1945, and is a director of both Hambros’ and Barclay's Banks.

This connection between the Milner Group and The Times was of

the greatest importance in the period up to 1945, especially in the

period just before the Munich crisis. However, the chief center of

gravity of the Milner Group was never in The Times. It is true that

Lord Astor became one of the more important figures in the Milner

Group after Milner’s death in 1925, but the center of gravity of the

Group as a whole was elsewhere: before 1920, in the Round Table

Group; and after 1920, in All Souls. Lord Astor was of great impor-

tance in the later period, especially after 1930, but was of no sig-

nificance in the earlier period — an indication of his relatively recent

arrival in the Group.

The Times has recently published the first three volumes of a four-

volume history of itself. Although no indication is given as to the

authorship of these volumes, the acknowledgments show that the

authors worked closely with All Souls and the Milner Group. For exam-

ple, Harold Temperley and Keith Feiling read the proofs of the first

two volumes, while E. L. Woodward read those of the third volume.

While members of the Milner Group thus went into The Times to

control it, relatively few persons ever came into the Milner Group from

The Times. The only two who readily come to mind are Sir Arthur

Willert and Lady Lugard. 4

Arthur Willert (Sir Arthur since 1919) entered Balliol in 1901 but did

not take a degree until 1928. From 1906 to 1910 he was on the staff of

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The Times in Paris, Berlin, and Washington, and was then chief Times

correspondent in Washington for ten years (1910-1920). During this

period he was also secretary to the British War Mission in Washington

(1917-1918) and Washington representative of the Ministry of Infor-

mation. This brought him to the attention of the Milner Group, prob-

ably through Brand, and in 1921 he joined the Foreign Office as head

of the News Department. During the next fifteen years he was a

member of the British delegations to the Washington Conference of

1922, to the London Economic Conference of 1924, to the London

Naval Conference of 1930, to the World Disarmament Conference of

1932-1934, and to the League of Nations in 1929-1934. He retired from

the Foreign Office in 1935, but returned to an active life for the dura-

tion of the Second World War as head of the southern region for the

Ministry of Information (1939-1945). In 1937, in cooperation with H.

V. Hodson (then editor of The Round Table) and B. K. Long (of the

Kindergarten), he wrote a book called The Empire in the World. He

had previously written Aspects of British Foreign Policy (1928) and The

Frontiers of England (1935).

The second person to come into the Milner Group from The Times

was Lady Lugard (the former Flora Shaw), who was probably a

member of the Rhodes secret society on The Times and appears to have

been passing from The Times to the Milner Group, when she was really

passing from the society to the Milner Group. She and her husband are

of great significance in the latter organization, although neither was a

member of the innermost circle.

Frederick Lugard (Sir Frederick after 1901 and Lord Lugard after

1928) was a regular British army officer who served in Afghanistan, the

Sudan, and Burma in 1879-1887. In 1888 he led a successful expedition

against slave-traders on Lake Nyasa, and was subsequently employed

by the British East African Company, the Royal Niger Company, and

British West Charterland in leading expeditions into the interior of

Africa (1889-1897). In 1897 he was appointed by the Salisbury govern-

ment to be Her Majesty’s Commissioner in the hinterland of Nigeria

and Lagos and commandant of the West African Frontier Force, which

he organized. Subsequently he was High Commissioner of Northern

Nigeria (1900-1906) and Governor of Hong Kong (1907-1912), as well

as Governor, and later Governor- General, of Nigeria (1912-1919). He

wrote Our East African Empire (1893) and The Dual Mandate in

British Tropical Africa (1922), and also numerous articles (including

one on West Africa in The Empire and the Century). He was one of the

chief assistants of Lord Lothian and Lord Hailey in planning the Af-

rican Survey in 1934-1937, was British member of the Permanent Man-

dates Commission of the League of Nations from 1922 to 1936, was one

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of the more influential figures in the Royal Institute of International

Affairs, and is generally regarded as the inventor of the British system

of “indirect rule” in colonial areas.

Flora Shaw, who married Sir Frederick Lugard in 1902, when he

was forty-four and she was fifty, was made head of the Colonial

Department of The Times in 1890, at the suggestion of Sir Robert

George Wyndham Herbert, the Permanent Under Secretary of the Co-

lonial Office. Sir Robert, whose grandmother was a Wyndham and

whose grandfather was Earl of Carnarvon, was a Fellow of All Souls

from 1854 to 1905. He was thus elected the year following Lord

Salisbury’s election. He began his political career as private secretary to

Gladstone and was Permanent Under Secretary for twenty-one years

(1871-1892, 1900). He was subsequently Agent General for Tasmania

(1893-1896), High Sheriff of London, chairman of the Tariff Commis-

sion, and adviser to the Sultan of Johore, all under the Salisbury-

Balfour governments.

When Miss Shaw was recommended to The Times as head of the

Colonial Department, she was already a close friend of Moberly Bell,

manager of The Times , and was an agent and close friend of Stead and

Cecil Rhodes. The story of how she came to work for The Times , as

told in that paper’s official history, is simplicity itself: Bell wanted

someone to head the Colonial Department, so he wrote to Sir Robert

Herbert and was given the name of Flora Shaw. Accordingly, Bell

wrote, “as a complete stranger,’’ to Miss Shaw and asked her “as an in-

experienced writer for a specimen column.’’ She wrote a sample article

on Egyptian finance, which pleased Bell so greatly that she was given

the position of head of the Colonial Department. That is the story as it

appears in volume III of The History of The Times , published in 1947.

Shortly afterward appeared the biography of Flora Shaw, written by

the daughter of Moberly Bell and based on his private papers. The

story that emerges from this volume is quite different. It goes

somewhat as follows:

Flora Shaw, like most members of that part of the Cecil Bloc which

shifted over to the Milner Group, was a disciple of John Ruskin and an

ardent worker among the depressed masses of London’s slums.

Through Ruskin, she came to write for W. T. Stead of the Pall Mall

Gazette in 1886, and three years later, through Stead, she met Cecil

Rhodes. In the meantime, in 1888, she went to Egypt as correspondent

of the Pall Mall Gazette and there became a close friend of Moberly

Bell, The Times correspondent in that country. Bell had been

employed in this capacity in Egypt since 1865 and had become a close

friend of Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer), the British agent in Egypt. He

had also become an expert on Egyptian finance and published a pam-

phlet on that subject in 1887. Miss Shaw’s friendship with the Bell

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family was so close that she was practically a member of it, and Bell’s

children knew her, then and later, as “Aunt Flora.”

In 1890, when Bell was transferred to Printing House Square as

manager of The Times , Baring tried to persuade The Times to name

Miss Shaw as Egyptian correspondent in Bell’s place. This was not

done. Instead, Miss Shaw returned to London and was introduced by

Bell to Buckle. When Buckle told Miss Shaw that he wanted a head for

the Colonial Department of the paper, she suggested that he consult

with Sir Robert Herbert. From that point on, the account in The

History of The Times is accurate. But it is clear, to anyone who has the

information just mentioned, that the recommendation by Sir Robert

Herbert, the test article on Egyptian finance, and probably the article

itself, had been arranged previously between Moberly Bell and “Aunt

Flora.”

None of these early relationships of Miss Shaw with Bell, Buckle, and

Herbert are mentioned in The History of The Times , and apparently

they are not to be found in the records at Printing House Square. They

are, however, a significant indication of the methods of the Milner

Group. It is not clear what was the purpose of this elaborate scheme.

Miss Moberly Bell apparently believes that it was to deceive Buckle. It

is much more likely that it was to deceive the chief owners of The

Times, John Walter III and his son, Arthur F. Walter.

Miss Shaw, when she came to The Times, was an open champion of

Lord Salisbury and an active supporter of a vigorous imperial policy,

especially in South Africa. She was in the confidence of the Colonial

Office and of Rhodes to a degree that cannot be exaggerated. She met

Rhodes, on Stead’s recommendation, in 1889, at a time when Stead

was one of Rhodes’s closest confidants. In 1892, Miss Shaw was sent to

South Africa by Moberly Bell, with instructions to set up two lines of

communication from that area to herself. One of these was to be

known to The Times and would handle routine matters; the second

was to be known only to herself and was to bring confidential material

to her private address. The expenses of both of these avenues would be

paid for by The Times, but the expenses of the secret avenue would not

appear on the records at Printing House Square. 5

From this date onward, Miss Shaw was in secret communication

with Cecil Rhodes. This communication was so close that she was in-

formed by Rhodes of the plot which led up to the Jameson Raid,

months before the raid took place. She was notified by Rhodes of the

approximate date on which the raid would occur, two weeks before it

did occur. She even suggested on several occasions that the plans be ex-

ecuted more rapidly, and on one occasion suggested a specific date for

the event.

In her news articles. Miss Shaw embraced the cause of the British in

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the Transvaal even to the extent of exaggerating and falsifying their

hardships under Boer rule. 6 It was The Times that published as an ex-

clusive feature the famous (and fraudulent) “women and children” let-

ter, dated 20 December 1895, which pretended to be an appeal for help

from the persecuted British in the Transvaal to Dr. Jameson’s waiting

forces, but which had really been concocted by Dr. Jameson himself on

20 November and sent to Miss Shaw a month later. This letter was

published by The Times as soon as news of the Jameson’ Raid was

known, as a justification of the act. The Times continued to defend and

justify the raid and Jameson. After this became a rather delicate

policy — that is, after the raid failed and had to be disavowed — The

Times was saved from the necessity of reversing itself by the “Kruger

telegram” sent by the German Kaiser to congratulate the Boers on their

successful suppression of the raiders. This “Kruger telegram” was

played up by The Times with such vigor that Jameson was largely

eclipsed and the incident assumed the dimensions of an international

crisis. As the official History of The Times puts it, “ The Times was car-

ried so far by indignation against the outrageous interference of the

Kaiser in the affairs of the British Empire that it was able to overlook

the criminality of Jameson s act.” A little later, the same account says,

“On January 7, Rhodes’ resignation from the Premiership was an-

nounced, while the Editor found it more convenient to devote his

leading article to the familiar topic of German interference rather than

to the consequences of the Raid.” 7

All of this was being done on direct instructions from Rhodes, and

with the knowledge and approval of the management of The Times. In

fact. Miss Shaw was the intermediary between Rhodes, The Times ,

and the Colonial Office (Joseph Chamberlain). Until the end of

November 1895, her instructions from Rhodes came to her through his

agent in London, Dr. Rutherfoord Harris, but, when the good Dr.

Harris and Alfred Beit returned to South Africa in order to be on hand

for the anticipated excitement, the former gave Miss Shaw the secret

code of the British South Africa Company and the cable address Tele-

mones London, so that communications from Rhodes to Miss Shaw

could be sent directly. Dr. Harris had already informed Rhodes by a

cable of 4 November 1895: if you can telegraph course you wish

TIMES TO ADOPT NOW WITH REGARD TO TRANSVAAL FLORA WILL ACT.

On 10 December 1895, Miss Shaw cabled Rhodes: can you advise

WHEN WILL YOU COMMENCE THE PLANS, WE WISH TO SEND AT EARLIEST

OPPORTUNITY SEALED INSTRUCTIONS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LOND^TIMES

EUROPEAN CAPITALS; IT IS MOST IMPORTANT USING THEIR INFLUENCE IN

your favor. The use of the word “we” in this message disposes once and

for all of Miss Shaw’s later defense that all her acts were done on her

own private responsibility and not in her capacity as a department

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head of The Times. In answer to this request, Rhodes replied the next

day: we do think about new year. This answer made The Times's

manager “very depressed,” so the next day (12 December) Miss Shaw

sent the following cable to Rhodes: delay dangerous sympathy now

COMPLETE BUT WILL DEPEND VERY MUCH UPON ACTION BEFORE EUROPEAN

POWERS GIVEN TIME ENTER A PROTEST WHICH AS EUROPEAN SITUATION CON-

SIDERED serious might paralyse government. Five days after this came

another cable, which said in part: chamberlain sound in case of in-

terference EUROPEAN POWERS BUT HAVE SPECIAL REASON TO BELIEVE

wishes you must do it immediately. To these very incriminating

messages might be added two of several wires from Rhodes to Miss

Shaw. One of 30 December 1895, after Rhodes knew that the Jameson

Raid had begun and after Miss Shaw had been so informed by secret

code, stated: inform chamberlain that i shall get through all

right if he supports me, but he must not send cable like he sent

HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SOUTH AFRICA. TODAY THE CRUX IS, I WILL WIN

AND SOUTH AFRICA WILL BELONG TO ENGLAND. And the following day,

when the outcome of the raid was doubtful because of the failure of the

English in the Transvaal to rise against the Boers— a failure resulting

from the fact that they were not as ill-treated as Miss Shaw, through

The Times , had been telling the world for months — Rhodes cabled:

UNLESS YOU CAN MAKE CHAMBERLAIN INSTRUCT THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

TO PROCEED AT ONCE TO JOHANNESBURG THE WHOLE POSITION IS LOST.

HIGH COMMISSIONER WOULD RECEIVE SPLENDID RECEPTION AND STILL TURN

POSITION TO ENGLAND ADVANTAGE BUT MUST BE INSTRUCTED BY CABLE IM-

MEDIATELY. THE INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE SPECIFIC AS HE IS WEAK AND WILL

take no responsibility . 8 When we realize that the anticipated upris-

ing of the English in the Transvaal had been financed and armed with

munitions from the funds of the British South Africa Company, it is

clear that we must wait until Hitlers coup in Austria in March 1938 to

find a parallel to Rhodes’s and Jameson’s attempted coup in South

Africa forty-two years earlier.

The Jameson Raid, if the full story could ever be told, would give the

finest possible example of the machinations of Rhodes’s secret society.

Another example, almost as good, would be the completely untold

story of how the society covered up these activities in the face of the in-

vestigation of the Parliamentary Select Committee. The dangers from

this investigation were so great that even Lord Rothschild was pressed

into service as a messenger. It was obvious from the beginning that the

star witness before the committee would be Cecil Rhodes and that the

chief danger would be the incrimination of Joseph Chamberlain, who

clearly knew of the plot. Milner, Garrett, Stead, and Esher discussed

possible defenses and reached no conclusion, since Stead wanted to ad-

mit that Chamberlain was implicated in plans for a raid but not plans

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for the raid. By this. Stead meant that Chamberlain and Rhodes had

seen the possibility of an uprising in the Transvaal and, solely as a

precautionary measure, had made the preparations for Jameson’s force

so that it would be available to go to Johannesburg to restore order.

The others refused to accept this strategy and insisted on the advan-

tages of a general and blanket denial. This difference of opinion

probably arose from the fact that Stead did not know that the prospec-

tive rebels in Johannesburg were armed and financed by Rhodes, were

led by Rhodes’s brother and Abe Bailey, and had written the “women

and children” message, in collaboration with Jameson, weeks before.

These facts, if revealed to the committee, would make it impossible to

distinguish between “the raid” and “a raid.” The event of 31 December

1895, which the committee was investigating, was the former and not

the latter merely because the plotters in Johannesburg failed to revolt

on schedule. This is clear from Edward Cook’s statement, in his

biography of Garrett, that Garrett expected to receive news of a

revolution in Johannesburg at any moment on 30 December 1895. 9

The difficulty which the initiates in London had in preparing a

defense for the Select Committee was complicated by the fact that they

were not able to reach Rhodes, who was en route from South Africa

with Garrett. As soon as the boat docked, Brett (Lord Esher) sent “Nat-

ty” Rothschild from London with a message from Chamberlain to

Rhodes. When Rothschild returned, Brett called in Stead, and they

discussed the projected defense. Stead had already seen Rhodes and

given his advice. 10 The following day (5 February 1896), Brett saw

Rhodes and found that he was prepared to confess everything. Brett

tried to dissuade him. As he wrote in his Journal , “I pointed out to him

that there was one consideration which appeared to have escaped him,

that was the position of Mr. Chamberlain, the Secretary of State.

Chamberlain was obviously anxious to help and it would not do to em-

barrass him or to tie his hands. It appeared to me to be prudent to

endeavour to ascertain how Chamberlain would receive a confidence

of this kind. I said I would try to find out. On leaving me he said, ‘Wish

we could get our secret society.’ ” Brett went to Chamberlain, who

refused to receive Rhodes’s confession, lest he have to order the law of-

ficers to take proceedings against Rhodes as against Jameson. Ac-

cordingly, the view of the majority, a general denial, was adopted and

proved successful, thanks to the leniency of the members of the Select

Committee. Brett recognized this leniency. He wrote to Stead on 19

February 1897: “I came up with Milner from Windsor this morning.

He has a heavy job; and has to start de novo. The committee will leave

few of the old gang on their legs. Alas. Rhodes was a pitiful object.

Harcourt very sorry for him; too sorry to press his question home. Why

did Rhodes try to shuffle after all we had told him?” 11

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It is clear that the Select Committee made no real effort to uncover

the real relationships between the conspirators, The Times , and the

Salisbury government. When witnesses refused to produce documents

or to answer questions, the committee did not insist, and whole fields

of inquiry were excluded from examination by the committee.

One of these fields, and probably the most important one, was the

internal policies and administration of The Times itself. As a result,

when Campbell-Bannerman, an opposition leader, asked if it were

usual practice for The Times correspondents to be used to propagate

certain policies in foreign countries as well as to obtain information.

Miss Shaw answered that she had been excused from answering ques-

tions about the internal administration of The Times . We now know,

as a result of the publication of the official History of The Times, that

all Miss Shaw’s acts were done in consultation with the manager,

Moberly Bell. 12 The vital telegrams to Rhodes, signed by Miss Shaw,

were really drafted by Bell. As The History of The Times puts it, ‘‘Bell

had taken the risk of allowing Miss Shaw to commit The Times to the

support of Rhodes in a conspiracy that was bound to lead to contro-

versy at home, if it succeeded, and likely to lead to prosecution if it

failed. The conspiracy had failed; the prosecution had resulted. Bell’s

only salvation lay in Miss Shaw’s willingness to take personal respon-

sibility for the telegrams and in her ability to convince the Committee

accordingly.” And, as the evidence of the same source shows, in order

to convince the committee it was necessary for Miss Shaw to commit

perjury, even though the representatives of both parties on the Com-

mittee of Enquiry (except Labouchere) were making every effort to

conceal the real facts while still providing the public with a good show.

Before leaving the discussion of Miss Shaw and the Jameson Raid, it

might be fitting to introduce testimony from a somewhat unreliable

witness, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, a member by breeding and education

of this social group and a relative of the Wyndhams, but a

psychopathic anti-imperialist who spent his life praising and imitating

the Arabs and criticizing Britain’s conduct in India, Egypt, and

Ireland. In his diaries, under the date 25 April 1896, he says: “[George

Wyndham] has been seeing much of Jameson, whom he likes, and of

the gang that have been running the Transvaal business, about a dozen

of them, with Buckle, The Times editor, and Miss Flora Shaw, who, he

told me confidentially, is really the prime mover in the whole thing,

and who takes the lead in all their private meetings, a very clever

middle-aged woman.” 13 A somewhat similar conclusion was reached

by W. T. Stead in a pamphlet called Joseph Chamberlain: Conspirator

or Statesman , which he published from the office of The Review of

Reviews in 1900. Stead was convinced that Miss Shaw was the in-

termediary among Rhodes, The Times , and the Colonial Office. And

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Stead was Rhodes’s closest confidant in England.

As a result of this publicity. Miss Shaw’s value to The Times was un-

doubtedly reduced, and she gave up her position after her marriage in

1902. In the meantime, however, she had been in correspondence with

Milner as early as 1899, and in December 1901 made a trip to South

Africa for The Tunes , during which she had long interviews with

Milner, Monypenny, and the members of the Kindergarten. After her

resignation, she continued to review books for The Times Literary Sup-

plement, wrote an article on tropical dependencies for The Empire and

the Century , wrote two chapters for Amery’s History oj the South

African War , and wrote a biographical sketch of Cecil Rhodes for the

eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

A third member of this same type was Valentine Chirol (Sir Valen-

tine after 1912). Educated at the Sorbonne, he was a clerk in the

Foreign Office for four years (1872-1876) and then traveled about the

world, but chiefly in the Near East, for sixteen years (1876-1892). In

1892 he was made The Times correspondent in Berlin, and for the next

four years filled the role of a second British ambassador, with free

access to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin and functioning as a channel of

unofficial communication between the government in London and

that in Berlin. After 1895 he became increasingly anti-German, like all

members of the Cecil Bloc and the Milner Group, and was chiefly

responsible for the great storm whipped up over the “Kruger tel-

egram.” In this last connection he even went so far as to announce in

The Times that the Germans were really using the Jameson episode as

part of a long-range project to drive Britain out of South Africa and

that the next step in that process was to be the dispatch in the

immediate future of a German expeditionary force to Delagoa Bay in

Portuguese Angola. As a result of this attitude, Chirol found the doors

of the Foreign Ministry closed to him and, after another unfruitful year

in Berlin, was brought to London to take charge of the Foreign Depart-

ment of The Times . He held this post for fifteen years (1897-1912),

during which he was one of the most influential figures in the forma-

tion of British foreign and imperial policy. The policy he supported

was the policy that was carried out, and included support for the Boer

War, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Entente Cordiale, the agree-

ment of 1907 with Russia, the Morley-Minto Reforms in India, and the

increasing resistance to Germany. When he retired in 1912, he was

knighted by Asquith for his important contributions to the Morley-

Minto Reforms of 1909 and was made a member of the Royal Commis-

sion on Public Services in India (1912-1914). He remained in India

during most of the First World War, and, indeed, made seventeen

visits to that country in his life. In 1916 he was one of the five chief

advisers to Lionel Curtis in the preparatory work for the Government

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of India Act of 1919 (the other four being Lord Chelmsford, Meston,

Marris, and Hailey). Later Chirol wrote articles for The Round Table

and was a member of the British delegation at the Paris Peace

Conference.

Chirol was replaced as head of the Foreign Department during his

long absences from London by Leopold Amery. It was expected that

Amery would be Chirols successor in the post, but Amery entered upon

a political career in 1910, so the position was given briefly to Dudley

Disraeli Braham. Braham, a former classmate of many of the Kinder-

garten at New College, was a foreign correspondent of The Times for

ten years (1897-1907) and Chirol’s assistant for five (1907-1912), before

he became ChiroFs successor in the Foreign Department and Grigg’s

successor in the Imperial Department, thus combining the two. He

resigned from The Times in 1914 to become editor of the Daily Tel-

egraph in Sydney, Australia, and was subsequently a very important

figure in Australian newspaper life.

This account, by no means complete, shows clearly that the Milner

Group controlled The Tunes , indirectly from 1912 if not earlier, and

directly from 1922. The importance of this control should be obvious.

The Times , although of a very limited circulation (only about 35,000 at

the beginning of the century, 50,000 at the outbreak of the First World

War, and 187,000 in 1936), was the most influential paper in England.

The reason for this influence is not generally recognized, although the

existence of the condition itself is widely known. The influence de-

pended upon the close relationship between the paper and the Foreign

Office. This relationship, as we are trying to show, was the result of the

Milner Group’s influence in both.

This influence was not exercised by acting directly on public opin-

ion, since the Milner Group never intended to influence events by

acting through any instruments of mass propaganda, but rather hoped

to work on the opinions of the small group of “important people,” who

in turn could influence wider and wider circles of persons. This was

the basis on which the Milner Group itself was constructed; it was the

theory behind the Rhodes Scholarships; it was the theory behind (( The

Round Table and the Royal Institute of International Affairs; it was

the theory behind the efforts to control All Souls, New College, and

Balliol and, through these three, to control Oxford University; and it

was the theory behind The Times . No effort was made to win a large

circulation for The Times , for, in order to obtain such a circulation, it

would have been necessary to make changes in the tone of the paper

that would have reduced its influence with the elite, to which it had

been so long directed. The theory of “the elite” was accepted by the

Milner Group and by The Tunes , as it was by Rhodes. The historian of

The Times recognizes this and, after describing the departure from

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Printing House Square of Bell, Chirol, and Buckle, says, “It is a valid

criticism of the ‘Old Gang' that they had not realized that they were in

the habit of valuing news according to the demands and interests of a

governing class too narrowly defined for the twentieth century. ” It was

on this issue that the “Old Gang” disputed with Northcliffe in the

period 1908-1912 and that Dawson disputed with Northcliffe in 1919.

Although the new owner protested to all who would listen, in 1908 and

later, that he would not try to make The Times into a popular paper,

he was, as The History of The Times shows, incapable of judging the

merits of a newspaper by any other standard than the size of its circula-

tion. After he was replaced as chief proprietor by Astor, and Dawson

reoccupied the editor s chair, the old point of view was reestablished.

The Times was to be a paper for the people who are influential, and

not for the masses. The Tunes was influential, but the degree of its in-

fluence would never be realized by anyone who examined only the

paper itself. The greater part of its influence arose from its position as

one of several branches of a single group, the Milner Group. By the in-

teraction of these various branches on one another, under the pretense

that each branch was an autonomous power, the influence of each

branch was increased through a process of mutual reinforcement. The

unanimity among the various branches was believed by the outside

world to be the result of the influence of a single Truth, while really it

was the result of the existence of a single group. Thus, a statesman (a

member of the Group) announces a policy. About the same time, the

Royal Institute of International Affairs publishes a study on the sub-

ject, and an Oxford don, a Fellow of All Souls (and a member of the

Group) also publishes a volume on the subject (probably through a

publishing house, like G. Bell and Sons or Faber and Faber, allied to

the Group). The statesman’s policy is subjected to critical analysis and

final approval in a “leader” in The Times , while the two books are

reviewed (in a single review) in The Times Literary Supplement. Both

the “leader” and the review are anonymous but are written by

members of the Group. And finally, at about the same time, an

anonymous article in The Round Table strongly advocates the same

policy. The cumulative effect of such tactics as this, even if each tac-

tical move influences only a small number of important people, is

bound to be great. If necessary, the strategy can be carried further, by

arranging for the secretary to the Rhodes Trustees to go to America for

a series of “informal discussions” with former Rhodes Scholars, while a

prominent retired statesman (possibly a former Viceroy of India) is per-

suaded to say a few words at the unveiling of a plaque in All Souls or

New College in honor of some deceased Warden. By a curious coin-

cidence, both the “informal discussions” in America and the unveiling

speech at Oxford touch on the same topical subject.

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An analogous procedure in reverse could be used for policies or books

which the Group did not approve. A cutting editorial or an unfriendly

book review, followed by a suffocating blanket of silence and neglect,

was the best that such an offering could expect from the instruments of

the Milner Group. This is not easy to demonstrate because of the policy

of anonymity followed by writers and reviewers in The Times, The

Round Table , and The Times Literary Supplement , but enough cases

have been found to justify this statement. When J. A. Farrer’s book

England under Edward VII was published in 1922 and maintained

that the British press, especially The Times , was responsible for bad

Anglo-German feeling before 1909, The Times Literary Supplement

gave it to J. W. Headlam-Morley to review. And when Baron von

Eckardstein, who was in the German Embassy in London at the time

of the Boer War, published his memoirs in 1920, the same journal gave

the book to Chirol to review, even though Chirol was an interested

party and was dealt with in a critical fashion in several passages in the

book itself. Both of these reviews were anonymous.

There is no effort here to contend that the Milner Group ever falsi-

fied or even concealed evidence (although this charge could be made

against The Times). Rather it propagated its point of view by inter-

pretation and selection of evidence. In this fashion it directed policy in

ways that were sometimes disastrous. The Group as a whole was made

up of intelligent men who believed sincerely, and usually in-

tensely, in what they advocated, and who knew that their writings

were intended for a small minority as intelligent as themselves. In such

conditions there could be no value in distorting or concealing evidence.

To do so would discredit the instruments they controlled. By giving the

facts as they stood, and as completely as could be done in consistency

with the interpretation desired, a picture could be construed that

would remain convincing for a long time.

This is what was done by The Times . Even today, the official

historian of The Times is unable to see that the policy of that paper was

anti-German from 1895 to 1914 and as such contributed to the worsen-

ing of Anglo-German relations and thus to the First World War. This

charge has been made by German and American students, some of

them of the greatest diligence and integrity, such as Professors Sidney

B. Fay, William L. Langer, Oron J. Hale, and others. The recent

History of The Times devotes considerable space and obviously spent

long hours of research in refuting these charges, and fails to see that it

has not succeeded. With the usual honesty and industry of the Milner

Group, the historian gives the evidence that will convict him, without

seeing that his interpretation will not hold water. He confesses that the

various correspondents of The Times in Berlin played up all anti-

English actions and statements and played down all pro-English ones;

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that they quoted obscure and locally discredited papers in order to do

this; that all The Times foreign correspondents in Berlin, Paris,

Vienna, and elsewhere were anti- Germ an, and that these were the

ones who were kept on the staff and promoted to better positions; that

the one member of the staff who was recognized as being fair to Ger-

many (and who was unquestionably the most able man in the whole

Times organization), Donald Mackenzie Wallace, was removed as

head of the Foreign Department and shunted off to be editor of the

supplementary volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica (which was

controlled by The Times); and that The Times frequently printed un-

true or distorted information on Germany. All of this is admitted and

excused as the work of honest, if hasty, journalists, and the crowning

proof that The Times was not guilty as charged is implied to be the fact

that the Germans did ultimately get into a war with Britain, thus prov-

ing at one stroke that they were a bad lot and that the attitude of The

Times staff toward them was justified by the event.

It did not occur to the historian of The Times that there exists

another explanation of Anglo-German relations, namely that in 1895

there were two Germanies — the one admiring Britain and the other

hating Britain — and that Britain, by her cold-blooded and calculated

assault on the Boers in 1895 and 1899, gave the second (and worse)

Germany the opportunity to criticize and attack Britain and gave it the

arguments with which to justify a German effort to build up naval

defenses. The Times , by quoting these attacks and actions represen-

tative of the real attitude and actual intentions of all Germans, misled

the British people and abandoned the good Germans to a hopeless

minority position, where to be progressive, peaceful, or Anglophile was

to be a traitor to Germany itself. Chirols alienation of Baron von

Eckardstein (one of the “good” Germans, married to an English lady),

in a conversation in February 1900, 14 shows exactly how The Times at-

titude was contributing to consolidate and alienate the Germans by the

mere fact of insisting that they were consolidated and alienated — and

doing this to a man who loved England and hated the reactionary

elements in Germany more than Chirol ever did.

I

“The Round Table”

The second important propaganda effort of the Milner Group in the

period after 1909 was The Round Table . This was part of an effort by

the circle of the Milner Group to accomplish for the whole Empire

what they had just done for South Africa. The leaders were Philip Kerr

in London, as secretary of the London group, and Lionel Curtis

throughout the world, as organizing secretary for the whole move-

ment, but most of the members of the Kindergarten cooperated in the

project. The plan of procedure was the same as that which had worked

so successfully in South Africa — that is, to form local groups of influen-

tial men to agitate for imperial federation and to keep in touch with

these groups by correspondence and by the circulation of a periodical.

As in South Africa, the original cost of the periodical was paid by Abe

Bailey. This journal, issued quarterly, was called The Round Table ,

and the same name was applied to the local groups.

Of these local groups, the most important by far was the one in Lon-

don. In this, Kerr and Brand were the chief figures. The other local

groups, also called Round Tables, were set up by Lionel Curtis and

others in South Africa, in Canada, in New Zealand, in Australia, and,

in a rather rudimentary fashion and somewhat later, in India.

The reasons for doing this were described by Curtis himself in 1917

in A Letter to the People of India , as follows: “We feared that South

Africa might abstain from a future war with Germany, on the grounds

that they had not participated in the decision to make war. . . . Con-

fronted by this dilemma at the very moment of attaining Dominion

self-government, we thought it would be wise to ask people in the

oldest and most experienced of all Dominions what they thought of the

matter. So in 1909, Mr. Kerr and I went to Canada and persuaded Mr.

Marris, who was then on leave, to accompany us.” 1

On this trip the three young men covered a good portion of the

Dominion. One day, during a walk through the forests on the Pacific

slopes of the Canadian Rockies, Marris convinced Curtis that “self-

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government, . . . however far distant, was the only intelligble goal of

British policy in India. . . . The existence of political unrest in India,

far from being a reason for pessimism, was the surest sign that the

British, with all their manifest failings, had not shirked their primary

duty of extending Western education to India and so preparing Indians

to govern themselves.” “I have since looked back on this walk,” wrote

Curtis, “as one of the milestones of my own education. So far I had

thought of self-government as a Western institution, which was and

would always remain peculiar to the peoples of Europe. ... It was

from that moment that I first began to think of ‘the Government of

each by each and of all by all’ not merely as a principle of Western life,

but rather of all human life, as the goal to which all human societies

must tend. It was from that moment that I began to think of the British

Commonwealth as the greatest instrument ever devised for enabling

that principle to be realized, not merely for the children of Europe, but

for all races and kindreds and peoples and tongues. And it is for that

reason that I have ceased to speak of the British Empire and called the

book in which I published my views The Commonwealth of Nations .”

Because of Curtis’s position and future influence, this walk in

Canada was important not only in his personal life but also in the

future history of the British Empire. It needs only to be pointed out

that India received complete self-government in 1947 and the British

Commonwealth changed its name officially to Commonwealth of Na-

tions in 1948. There can be no doubt that both of these events resulted

in no small degree from the influence of Lionel Curtis and the Milner

Group, in which he was a major figure.

Curtis and his friends staved in Canada for four months. Then Cur-

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tis returned to South Africa for the closing session of the Transvaal

Legislative Council, of which he was a member. He there drafted a

memorandum on the whole question of imperial relations, and, on the

day that the Union of South Africa came into existence, he sailed to

New Zealand to set up study groups to examine the question. These

groups became the Round Table Groups of New Zealand. 2

The memorandum was printed with blank sheets for written com-

ments opposite the text. Each student was to note his criticisms on these

blank pages. Then they were to meet in their study groups to discuss

these comments, in the hope of being able to draw up joint reports, or

at least majority and minority reports, on their conclusions. These

reports were to be sent to Curtis, who was to compile a comprehensive

report on the whole imperial problem. This comprehensive report

would then be submitted to the groups in the same fashion and the

resulting comments used as a basis for a final report.

Five study groups of this type were set up in New Zealand, and then

five more in Australia. 3 The decision was made to do the same thing in

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Canada and in England, and this was done by Curtis, Kerr, and ap-

parently Dove during 1910. On the trip to Canada, the missionaries

carried with them a letter from Milner to his old friend Arthur J.

Glazebrook, with whom he had remained in close contact throughout

the years since Glazebrook went to Canada for an English bank in

1893. The Round Table in 1941, writing of Glazebrook, said, “His

great political hero was his friend Lord Milner, with whom he kept up

a regular correspondence/\* As a result of this letter from Milner,

Glazebrook undertook the task of founding Round Table Groups in

Canada and did this so well that he was for twenty years or more the

real head of the network of Milner Group units in the Dominion. He

regularly wrote the Canadian articles in The Round Table magazine.

When he died, in 1940, The Round Table obituary spoke of him as

“one of the most devoted and loyal friends that The Round Table has

ever known. Indeed he could fairly claim to be one of its founding

fathers.” In the 1930s he relinquished his central position in the Cana-

dian branch of the Milner Group to Vincent Massey, son-in-law of

George Parkin. Glazebrook’s admiration for Parkin was so great that

he named his son George Parkin de Twenebrokes Glazebrook. 4 At the

present time Vincent Massey and G. P. de T. Glazebrook are ap-

parently the heads of the Milner Group organization in Canada,

having inherited the position from the latter’s father. Both are

graduates of Balliol, Massey in 1913 and Glazebrook in 1924. Massey, a

member of a very wealthy Canadian family, was lecturer in modern

history at Toronto University in 1913-1915, and then served, during

the war effort, as a staff officer in Canada, as associate secretary of the

Canadian Cabinet’s War Committee, and as secretary and director of

the Government Repatriation Committee. Later he was Minister

without Portfolio in the Canadian Cabinet (1924), a member of the

Canadian delegation to the Imperial Conference of 1926, and first

Canadian Minister to the United States (1926-1930). He was president

of the National Liberal Federation of Canada in 1932-1935, Canadian

High Commissioner in London in 1935-1946, and Canadian delegate

to the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1936, He has been for a

long time governor of the University of Toronto and of Upper Canada

College (Parkin’s old school). He remains to this day one of the

strongest supporters of Oxford University and of a policy of close Cana-

dian cooperation with the United Kingdom.

G. P. de T. Glazebrook, son of Milner’s old friend Arthur J.

Glazebrook and namesake of Milner’s closest collaborator in the

Rhodes Trust, was born in 1900 and studied at Upper Canada College,

the University of Toronto, and Balliol. Since 1924 he has been teaching

history at Toronto University, but since 1942 has been on leave to the

Dominion government, engaged in strategic intelligence work with the

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Department of External Affairs. Since 1948 he has been on loan from

the Department of External Affairs to the Department of Defense,

where he is acting as head of the new Joint Services Intelligence. This

highly secret agency appears to be the Canadian equivalent to the

American Central Intelligence Agency. Glazebrook has written a

number of historical works, including a History of Transportation in

Canada (1938), Canadian External Affairs, a Historical Study to 1914

(1942), and Canada at the Peace Conference (1942).

It was, as we have said, George Parkin Glazebrook’s father who,

acting in cooperation with Curtis, Kerr, and Marris and on instructions

from Milner, set up the Round Table organization in Canada in 1911.

About a dozen units were established in various cities.

It was during the effort to extend the Round Table organization to

Australia that Curtis first met Lord Chelmsford. He was later Viceroy

of India (in 1916-1921), and there can be little doubt that the Milner

Group was influential in this appointment, for Curtis discussed the

plans which eventually became the Government of India Act of 1919

with him before he went to India and consulted with him in India on

the same subject in 1916. 5

From 1911 to 1913, Curtis remained in England, devoting himself to

the reports coming in from the Round Table Groups on imperial

organization, while Kerr devoted himself to the publication of The

Round Table itself. This was an extraordinary magazine. The first issue

appeared with the date 15 November 1910. It had no names in the

whole issue, either of the officers or of the contributors of the five ar-

ticles. The opening statement of policy was unsigned, and the only ad-

dress to which communications could be sent was “The Secretary, 175

Piccadilly, London, W.” This anonymity has been maintained ever

since, and has been defended by the journal itself in advertisements, on

the grounds that anonymity gives the contributors greater in-

dependence and freedom. The real reasons, however, were much more

practical than this and included the fact that the writers were virtually

unknown and were so few in numbers, at first at least, as to make the

project appear ridiculous had the articles been signed. For example,

Philip Kerr, during his editorship, always wrote the leading article in

every issue. In later years the anonymity was necessary because of the

political prominence of some of the contributors. In general, the policy

of the journal has been such that it has continued to conceal the iden-

tity of its writers until their deaths. Even then, they have never been

connected with any specific article, except in the case of one article (the

first one in the first issue) by Lord Lothian. This article was reprinted

in The Round Table after the author’s death in 1940.

The Round Table was essentially the propaganda vehicle of a hand-

ful of people and could not have carried signed articles either origi-

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nally, when they were too few, or later, when they were too famous. It

was never intended to be either a popular magazine or self-supporting,

but rather was aimed at influencing those in a position to influence

public opinion. As Curtis wrote in 1920, “A large quarterly like The

Round Table is not intended so much for the average reader, as for

those who write for the average reader. It is meant to be a storehouse of

information of all kinds upon which publicists can draw. Its articles

must be taken on their merits and as representing nothing beyond the

minds and information of the individual writer of each.” 6

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the first article of the first issue,

called “Anglo-German Rivalry,” was very anti-German and forms an

interesting bit of evidence when taken in connection with Curtis's

statement that the problem of the Empire was raised in 1909 by the

problem of what role South Africa would play in a future war with

Germany. The Group, in the period before 1914, were clearly anti-

German. This must be emphasized because of the mistaken idea which

circulated after 1930 that the Cliveden group, especially men like Lord

Lothian, were pro-German. They were neither anti-German in 1910

nor pro-German in 1938, but pro-Empire all the time, changing there

their attitudes on other problems as these problems affected the Em-

pire. And it should be realized that their love for the Empire was not

mere jingoism or flag-waving (things at which Kerr mocked within the

Group) 7 but was based on the sincere belief that freedom, civilization,

and human decency could best be advanced through the instrumen-

tality of the British Empire.

In view of the specific and practical purpose of The Round

Table — to federate the Empire in order to ensure that the Dominions

would join with the United Kingdom in a future war with Ger-

many— the paper could not help being a propagandist organ, propa-

gandist on a high level, it is true, but nonetheless a journal of

opinion rather than a journal of information. Every general article in

the paper (excluding the reports from representatives in the Do-

minions) was really an editorial — an unsigned editorial speaking for

the group as a whole. By the 1920s these articles were declaring, in true

editorial style, that “T/ie Round Table does not approve of” something

or other, or, “It seems to The Round Table that” something else.

Later the members of the Group denied that the Group were con-

cerned with the propagation of any single point of view. Instead, they

insisted that the purpose of the Group was to bring together persons of

various points of view for purposes of self-education. This is not quite

accurate. The Group did not contain persons of various points of view

but rather persons of unusual unaminity of opinion, especially in

regard to goals. There was a somewhat greater divergence in regard to

methods, and the circulating of memoranda within the Group to evoke

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various comments was for the purpose of reaching some agreement on

methods only — the goals being already given. In this, meetings of the

Group were rather like the meetings of the British Cabinet, although

any normal Cabinet would contain a greater variety of opinion than

did the usual meetings of the Group. In general, an expression of

opinion by any one member of the Group sounded like an echo of any

of the others. Their systems of values were identical; the position of the

British Commonwealth at the apex of that system was almost ax-

iomatic; the important role played by moral and ideological influences

in the Commonwealth and in the value system was accepted by all; the

necessity of strengthening the bonds of the Commonwealth in view of

the approaching crisis of the civilization of the West was accepted by

all; so also was the need for closer union with the United States. There

was considerable divergence of opinion regarding the practicality of

imperial federation in the immediate future; there was some

divergence of ideas regarding the rate at which self-government should

be extended to the various parts of the Empire (especially India). There

was a slight difference of emphasis on the importance of relations be-

tween the Commonwealth and the United States. But none of these dif-

ferences of opinion was fundamental or important. The most basic

divergence within the Group during the first twenty years or so was to

be found in the field of economic ideas — a field in which the Group as

a whole was extremely weak, and also extremely conservative. This

divergence existed, however, solely because of the extremely unor-

thodox character of Lord Milner’s ideas. Milner’s ideas (as expressed,

for example, in his book Questions of the Hour , published in 1923)

would have been progressive, even unorthodox, in 1935. They were

naturally ahead of the times in 1923, and they were certainly far ahead

of the ideas of the Group as a whole, for its economic ideas would have

been old-fashioned in 1905. These ideas of the Group (until 1931, at

least) were those of late-nineteenth-century international banking and

financial capitalism. The key to all economics and prosperity was con-

sidered to rest in banking and finance. With “sound money,” a bal-

anced budget, and the international gold standard, it was expected

that prosperity and rising standards of living would follow automati-

cally. These ideas were propagated through The Round Table , in the

period after 1912, in a series of articles written by Brand and subse-

quently republished under his name, with the title War and National

Finance (1921). They are directly antithetical to the ideas of Milner as

revealed in his book published two years later. Milner insisted that

financial questions must be subordinated to economic questions and

economic questions to political questions. As a result, if a deflationary

policy, initiated for financial reasons, has deleterious economic or

political effects, it must be abandoned. Milner regarded the financial

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policy advocated by Brand in 1919 and followed by the British govern-

ment for the next twelve years as a disaster, since it led to unemploy-

ment, depression, and ruination of the export trade. Instead, Milner

wanted to isolate the British economy from the world economy by

tariffs and other barriers and encourage the economic development of

the United Kingdom by a system of government spending, self-

regulated capital and labor, social welfare, etc. This program, which

was based on “monopoly capitalism\*’ or even “national socialism”

rather than “financial capitalism,” as Brand’s was, was embraced by

most of the Milner Group after September 1931, when the ending of

the gold standard in Britain proved once and for all that Brand’s finan-

cial program of 1919 was a complete disaster and quite unworkable. As

a result, in the years after 1931 the businessmen of the Milner Group

embarked on a policy of government encouragement of self-regulated

monopoly capitalism. This was relatively easy for many members of

the Group because of the distrust of economic individualism which

they had inherited from Toynbee and Milner. In April 1932, when P.

Horsfall, manager of Lazard Brothers Bank (a colleague of Brand),

asked John Dove to write a defense of individualism in The Round

Table , Dove suggested that he write it himself, but, in reporting the in-

cident to Brand, he clearly indicated that the Group regarded in-

dividualism as obsolete. 8

This difference of opinion between Milner and Brand on economic

questions is not of great importance. The important matter is that

Brand’s opinion prevailed within the Group from 1919 to 1931, while

Milner’s has grown in importance from 1931 to the present. The impor-

tance of this can be seen in the fact that the financial and economic

policy followed by the British government from 1919 to 1945 runs

exactly parallel to the policy of the Milner Group. This is no accident

but is the result, as we shall see, of the dominant position held by the

Milner Group in the councils of the Conservative- Unionist party since

the First World War.

During the first decade or so of its existence. The Round Table con-

tinued to be edited and written by the inner circle of the Milner Group,

chiefly by Lothian, Brand, Hichens, Grigg, Dawson, Fisher, and

Dove. Curtis was too busy with the other activities of the Group to

devote much time to the magazine and had little to do with it until

after the war. By that time a number of others had been added to the

Group, chiefly as writers of occasional articles. Most of these were

members or future members of All Souls; they include Coupland,

Zimmern, Arnold Toynbee, Arthur Salter, Sir Maurice Hankey, and

others. The same Group that originally started the project in 1910 still

controls it today, with the normal changes caused by death or old age.

The vacancies resulting from these causes have been filled by new

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recruits from All Souls. It would appear that Coupland and Brand are

the most influential figures today. The following list gives the editors of

The Round Table from 1910 to the recent past:

Philip Kerr, 1910-1917

(assisted by E. Grigg, 1913-1915)

Reginald Coupland, 1917-1919

Lionel Curtis, 1919-1921

John Dove, 1921-1934

Henry V. Hodson, 1934-1939

Vincent Todd Harlow, (acting editor) 1938

Reginald Coupland, 1939-1941

Geoffrey Dawson, 1941-1944

Of these names, all but two are already familiar. H. V. Hodson, a

recent recruit to the Milner Group, was taken from All Souls. Born in

1906, he was at Balliol for three years (1925-1928) and on graduation

obtained a fellowship to All Souls, which he held for the regular term

(1928-1935). This fellowship opened to him the opportunities which he

had the ability to exploit. On the staff of the Economic Advisory Coun-

cil from 1930 to 1931 and an important member of the Royal Institute

of International Affairs, he was assistant editor of The Round Table for

three years (1931-1934) and became editor when Dove died in 1934. At

the same time he wrote for Toynbee the economic sections of the

Survey of International Affairs from 1929 on, publishing these in a

modified form as a separate volume, with the title Slwnp and

Recovery , 1929-1937 , in 1938. With the outbreak of the Second World

War in 1939, he left The Round Table editorship and went to the

Ministry of Information (which was controlled completely by the

Milner Group) as director of the Empire Division. After two years in

this post he was given the more critical position of Reforms Commis-

sioner in the Government of India for two years (1941-1942) and then

was made assistant secretary and later head of the non-munitions divi-

sion of the Ministry of Production. This position was held until the war

ended, three years later. He then returned to private life as assistant

editor of The Sunday Times. In addition to the writings already

mentioned, he published The Economics of a Changing World (1933)

and The Empire in the World (1937), and edited The British

Commonwealth and the Future (1939).

Vincent T. Harlow, born in 1898, was in the Royal Field Artillery in

1917-1919 and then went to Brasenose, where he took his degree in

1923. He was lecturer in Modern History at University College,

Southampton, in 1923-1927, and then came into the magic circle of the

Milner Group. He was keeper of Rhodes House Library in 1928-1938,

Beit Lecturer in Imperial History in 1930-1935, and has been Rhodes

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Professor of Imperial History at the University of London since 1938.

He was a member of the Imperial Committee of the Royal Institute of

International Affairs and, during the war, was head of the Empire

Information Service at the Ministry of Information. He lives near

Oxford, apparently in order to keep in contact with the Group.

In the decade 1910-1920, the inner circle of the Milner Group was

busy with two other important activities in addition to The Round

Table magazine. These were studies of the problem of imperial federa-

tion and of the problem of extending self-government to India. Both of

these were in charge of Lionel Curtis and continued with little inter-

ruption from the war itself. The Round Table, which was in charge of

Kerr, never interrupted its publication, but from 1915 onward it

became a secondary issue to winning the war and making the peace.

The problem of imperial federation will be discussed here and in

Chapter 8, the war and the peace in Chapter 7, and the problem of

India in Chapter 10.

During the period 1911-1913, as we have said, Curtis was busy in

England with the reports from the Round Table Groups in the Domin-

ions in reply to his printed memorandum. At the end of 1911 and again

in 1913, he printed these reports in two substantial volumes, without

the names of the contributors. These volumes were never published,

but a thousand copies of each were distributed to the various groups.

On the basis of these reports, Curtis drafted a joint report, which was

printed and circulated as each section was completed. It soon became

clear that there was no real agreement within the groups and that im-

perial federation was not popular in the Dominions. This was a bitter

pill to the Group, especially to Curtis, but he continued to work for

several years more. In 1912, Milner and Kerr went to Canada and

made speeches to Round Table Groups and their associates. The

following year Curtis went to Canada to discuss the status of the in-

quiry on imperial organization with the various Round Table Groups

there and summed up the results in a speech in Toronto in October

19 13. 9 He decided to draw up four reports as follows: (a) the existing

situation; (b) a system involving complete independence for the

Dominions; (c) a plan to secure unity of foreign relations by each

Dominion’s following a policy independent from but parallel to that of

Britain itself; (d) a plan to reduce the United Kingdom to a Dominion

and create a new imperial government over all the Dominions. Since

the last was what Curtis wanted, he decided to write that report

himself and allow supporters of each of the other three to write theirs.

A thousand copies of this speech were circulated among the groups

throughout the world.

When the war broke out in 1914, the reports were not finished, so it

was decided to print the four sections already sent out, with a

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concluding chapter. A thousand copies of this, with the title Project of

a Commonwealth, were distributed among the groups. Then a popular

volume on the subject, with the title The Problem of the Common -

wealth and Curtis’s name as editor, was published (May 1916). Two

months later, the earlier work ( Project ) was published under the title

The Commonwealth of Nations , again with Curtis named as editor.

Thus appeared for the first time in public the name which the British

Empire was to assume thirty-two years later. In the September 1916

issue of The Round Table , Kerr published a statement on the relation-

ship of the two published volumes to the Round Table Groups. Because

of the paper shortage in England, Curtis in 1916 went to Canada and

Australia to arrange for the separate publication of The Problem of the

Commonwealth in those countries. At the same time he set up new

Round Table Groups in Australia and New Zealand. Then he went to

India to begin serious work on Indian reform. From this emerged the

Government of India Act of 1919, as we shall see later.

By this time Curtis and the others had come to realize that any

formal federation of the Empire was impossible. As Curtis wrote in

1917 (in his Letter to the People of India): “The people of the Domin-

ions rightly aspire to control their own foreign affairs and yet retain

their status as British citizens. On the other hand, they detest the idea

of paying taxes to any Imperial Parliament, even to one upon which

their own representatives sit. The inquiry convinced me that, unless

they sent members and paid taxes to an Imperial Parliament, they

could not control their foreign affairs and also remain British subjects.

But I do not think that doctrine is more distasteful to them than the

idea of having anything to do with the Government of India.”

Reluctantly Curtis and the others postponed the idea of a federated

Empire and fell back on the idea of trying to hold the Empire together

by the intangible bonds of common culture and common outlook. This

had originally (in Rhodes and Milner) been a supplement to the project

of a federation. It now became the chief issue, and the idea of federa-

tion fell into a secondary place. At the same time, the idea of federation

was swallowed up in a larger scheme for organizing the whole world

within a League of Nations. This idea had also been held by Rhodes

and Milner, but in quite a different form. To the older men, the world

was to be united around the British Empire as a nucleus. To Curtis, the

Empire was to be absorbed into a world organization. This second idea

was fundamentally mystical. Curtis believed: “Die and ye shall be born

again.” He sincerely felt that if the British Empire died in the proper

way (by spreading liberty, brotherhood, and justice), it would be born

again in a higher level of existence — as a world community, or, as he

called it, a “Commonwealth of Nations.” It is not yet clear whether the

resurrection envisaged by Curtis and his associates will occur, or

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whether they merely assisted at the crucifixion of the British Empire.

The conduct of the new India in the next few decades will decide this

question.

The idea for federation of the Empire was not original with the

Round Table Group, although their writings would indicate that they

sometimes thought so. The federation which they envisaged had been

worked out in detail by persons close to the Cecil Bloc and was

accepted by Milner and Rhodes as their own chief goal in life.

The original impetus for imperial federation arose within the

Liberal Party as a reaction against the Little England doctrines that

were triumphant in England before 1868. The original movement

came from men like John Stuart Mill (whose arguments in support of

the Empire are just like Curtis’s) and Earl Grey (who was Colonial

Secretary under Russell in 1846-1852). 10

This movement resulted in the founding of the Royal Colonial Soci-

ety (now Royal Empire Society) in 1868 and, as a kind of subsidiary of

this, the Imperial Federation League in 1884. Many Unionist members

of the Cecil Bloc, such as Brassey and Goschen, were in these organiza-

tions. In 1875 F. P. Labilliere, a moving power in both organizations,

read a paper before the older one on “The Permanent Unity of the Em-

pire” and suggested a solution of the imperial problem by creating a

superimposed imperial legislative body and a central executive over the

whole Empire, including the United Kingdom. Seven years later, in

“The Political Organization of the Empire,” he divided authority be-

tween this new federal authority and the Dominions by dividing the

business of government into imperial questions, local questions, and

questions concerning both levels. He then enumerated the matters that

would be allotted to each division, on a basis very similar to that later

advocated by Curtis. Another speaker, George Bourinot, in 1880, dealt

with “The Natural Development of Canada” in a fashion that sounds

exactly like Curtis. 11

These ideas and projects were embraced by Milner as his chief

purpose in life until, like Curtis, he came to realize their impracti-

cality. 12 Milner’s ideas can be found in his speeches and letters,

especially in two letters of 1901 to Brassey and Parkin. Brassey had

started a campaign for imperial federation accompanied by devolution

(that is, granting local issues to local bodies even within the United

Kingdom) and the creation of an imperial parliament to include

representatives of the colonies. This imperial parliament would deal

with imperial questions, while local parliaments would deal with local

questions. In pursuit of this project, Brassey published a pamphlet, in

December 1900, called A Policy on Which All Liberals May Unite and

sent to Milner an invitation to join him. Milner accepted in February

1901, saying:

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There are probably no two men who are more fully agreed in their

general view of Imperial policy [than we]. ... It is clear to me that we

require separate organs to deal with local home business and with

Imperial business. The attempt to conduct both through one so-called

Imperial Parliament is breaking down. . . . Granted that we must have

separate Parliaments for Imperial and Local business, I have been coming

by a different road, and for somewhat different reasons, to the conclusion

which you also are heading for, viz: that it would be better not to create

a new body over the so-called Imperial Parliament, but ... to create new

bodies, or a new bodv under it for the local business of Great Britain and

Ireland, leaving it to deal with the wider questions of Foreign Policy, the

Defence of the Empire, and the relations of the several parts. In that

case, of course, the colonies would have to be represented in the Imperial

Parliament, which would thus become really Imperial. One great diffi-

culty', no doubt, is that, if this body were to be really effective as an

instrument of Imperial Policy, it would require to be reduced in

numbers. . . . The reduction in numbers of British members might no

doubt be facilitated by the creation of local legislatures. . . . The time is

ripe to make a beginning. ... I wish Rosebery, who could carry through

such a policy if any man could, was less pessimistic.

The idea of devolving the local business of the imperial parliament

upon local legislative bodies for Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland

was advocated in a book by Lord Esher called After the War and in a

book called The Great Opportunity by Edward Wood (the future Lord

Halifax). These books, in their main theme, were nothing more than a

restatement of this aspect of the imperial federation project. They were

accompanied, on 4 June 1919, by a motion introduced in the House of

Commons by Wood, and carried by a vote of 187 to 34, that “the time

has come for the creation of subordinate legislatures within the United

Kingdom.” Nothing came of this motion, just as nothing came of the

federation plans.

Milner’s ideas on the latter subject were restated in a letter to Parkin

on 18 September 1901:

The existing Parliaments, whether British or Colonial, are too small, and

so are the statesmen they produce (except in accidental cases like

Chamberlain), for such big issues. Until we get a real Imperial Council,

not merely a Consultative, but first a Constitutional, and then an

Executive Council with control of all our world business , we shall get

nothing. Look at the way in which the splendid opportunities for federal

defence w'hich this war afforded, have been thrown away. I believe it will

come about, but at present I do not see the man to do it. Both you and I

could help him enormously, almost decisively indeed, for I have, and

doubtless you have, an amount of illustration and argument to bring to

bear on the subject, drawn from practical experience , which would logi-

cally smash the opposition. Our difficulty in the old days was that we

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were advocating a grand, but, as it seemed, an impractical idea. I should

advocate the same thing today as an urgent practical necessity . 13

The failure of imperial federation in the period 1910-1917 forced

Parkin and Milner to fall back on ideological unity as achieved through

the Rhodes Scholarships, just as the same event forced Curtis and

others to fall back on the same goal as achieved through the Royal In-

stitute of International Affairs. All parties did this with reluctance. As

Dove wrote to Brand in 1923, “This later thing [the RIIA] is all

right — it may help us to reach that unity of direction in foreign policy

we are looking for, if it becomes a haunt of visitors from the Domin-

ions; but Lionel’s first love has still to be won, and if, as often happens,

accomplishment lessens appetite, and he turns again to his earlier and

greater work, we shall all be the gainers.” 14

This shift from institutional to ideological bonds for uniting the

Empire makes it necessary that we should have a clear idea of the

outlook of The Round Table and the whole Milner Group. This outlook

was well stated in an article in Volume III of that journal, from the pen

of an unidentified writer. This article, entitled ‘The Ethics of Empire,”

is deserving of close attention. It emphasized that the arguments for the

Empire and the bonds which bind it together must be moral and not

based on considerations of material advantage or even of defense. This

emphasis on moral considerations, rather than economic or strategic, is

typical of the Group as a whole and is found in Milner and even in

Rhodes. Professional politicians, bureaucrats, utilitarians, and materi-

alist social reformers are criticized for their failure to “appeal convinc-

ingly as an ideal of moral welfare to the ardour and imagination of a

democratic people.” They are also criticized for failure to see that this

is the basis on which the Empire was reared.

The development of the British Empire teaches how moral conviction and

devotion to duty have inspired the building of the structure. Opponents

of Imperialism are wont to suggest that the story will not bear inspection,

that it is largely a record of self-aggrandizement and greed. Such a charge

betrays ignorance of its history. . . . The men who have laboured most

enduringly at the fabric of Empire were not getters of wealth and plun-

derers of spoil. It was due to their strength of character and moral purpose

that British rule in India and Egypt has become the embodiment of order

and justice. . . . Duty is an abstract term, but the facts it signifies are the

most concrete and real in our experience. The essential thing is to grasp its

meaning as a motive power in men’s lives. [This was probably from Kerr,

but could have been Toynbee or Milner speaking. The writer continued:]

The end of the State is to make men, and its strength is measured not in

terms of defensive armaments or economic prosperity but by the moral

personality of its citizens. . . . The function of the State is positive and

ethical, to secure for its individual members that they shall not merely live

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but live well. Social reformers are prone to insist too strongly on an ideal

of material comfort for the people. ... A life of satisfaction depends not

on higher wages or lower prices or on leisure for recreation, but on work

that calls into play the higher capacities of man’s nature. . . . The cry of

the masses should be not for wages or comforts or even liberty, but for

opportunities for enterprise and responsibility. A policy for closer union

in the Empire is full of significance in relation to this demand. . . . There

is but one way of promise. It is that the peoples of the Empire shall realize

their national unity and draw from that ideal an inspiration to common

endeavour in the fulfillment of the moral obligations which their

membership of the Empire entails. The recognition of common Imperial

interests is bound to broaden both their basis of public action and their

whole view of life. Public life is ennobled by great causes and by these

alone. . . . Political corruption, place-hunting, and party intrigue have

their natural home in small communities where attention is concentrated

upon local interests. Great public causes call into being the intellectual

and moral potentialities of people. . . . The phrases “national character,”

“national will,” and “national personality” are no empty catchwords.

Everyone knows that esprit de corps is not a fiction but a reality; that the

spirit animating a college or a regiment is something that cannot be mea-

sured in terms of the private contributions of the individual members. . . .

The people of the Empire are face to face with a unique and an historic

opportunity! It is their mission to base the policy of a Great Empire on the

foundations of freedom and law. ... It remains for them to crown the

structure by the institution of a political union that shall give solidarity to

the Empire as a whole. Duty and the logic of facts alike point this goal of

their endeavour.

In this article can be found, at least implicitly, all the basic ideas of

the Milner Group: their suspicion of party politics; their emphasis on

moral qualities and the cement of common outlook for linking people

together; their conviction that the British Empire is the supreme moral

achievement of man, but an achievement yet incomplete and still

unfolding; their idea that the highest moral goals are the development

of personality through devotion to duty and service under freedom and

law; their neglect, even scorn, for economic considerations; and their

feeling for the urgent need to pursuade others to accept their point of

view in order to allow the Empire to achieve the destiny for which they

yearn.

The Milner Group is a standing refutation of the Marxist or Leninist

interpretations of history or of imperialism. Its members were moti-

vated only slightly by materialistic incentives, and their imperialism

was motivated not at all by the desire to preserve or extend capitalism.

On the contrary their economic ideology, in the early stages at least,

was more. socialistic than Manchester in its orientation. To be sure, it

was an undemocratic kind of socialism, which was willing to make

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many sacrifices to the well-being of the masses of the people but reluc-

tant to share with these masses political power that might allow them

to seek their own well-being. This socialistic leaning was more evident

in the earlier (or Balliol) period than in the later (or New College)

period, and disappeared almost completely when Lothian and Brand

replaced Esher, Grey, and Milner at the center of the Group. Esher

regarded the destruction of the middle class as inevitable and felt that

the future belonged to the workers and an administrative state. He

dedicated his book After the War (1919) to Robert Smillie, President of

the Miners’ Federation, and wrote him a long letter on 5 May 1919. On

12 September of the same year, he wrote to his son, the present Vis-

count Esher: “There are things that cannot be confiscated by the

Smillies and Sidney Webbs. These seem to me the real objectives.”

Even earlier, Arnold Toynbee was a socialist of sorts and highly critical

of the current ideology of liberal capitalism as proclaimed by the high

priests of the Manchester School. Milner gave six lectures on socialism

in Whitechapel in 1882 (published in 1931 in The National Review).

Both Toynbee and Milner worked intermittently at social service of a

mildly socialistic kind, an effort that resulted in the founding of

Toynbee Hall as a settlement house in 1884. As chairman of the board

of Internal Revenue in 1892-1897, Milner drew up Sir William Har-

court’s budget, which inaugurated the inheritance tax. In South Africa

he was never moved by capitalistic motives, placing a heavy profits tax

on the output of the Rand mines to finance social improvements, and

considering with objective calm the question of nationalizing the

railroads or even the mines. Both Toynbee and Milner were early

suspicious of the virtues of free trade — not, however, because tariffs

could provide high profits for industrial concerns but because tariffs

and imperial preference could link the Empire more closely into

economic unity. In his later years, Milner became increasingly radical,

a development that did not fit any too well with the conservative finan-

cial outlook of Brand, or even Hichens. As revealed in his book Ques-

tions of the Hour (1923), Milner was a combination of technocrat and

guild socialist and objected vigorously to the orthodox financial policy

of deflation, balanced budget, gold standard, and free international

exchange advocated by the Group after 1918. This orthodox policy, in-

spired by Brand and accepted by The Round Table after 1918, was

regarded by Milner as an invitation to depression, unemployment, and

the dissipation of Britain’s material and moral resources. On this point

there can be no doubt that Milner was correct. Not himself a trained

economist, Milner, nevertheless, saw that the real problems were of a

technical and material nature and that Britain’s ability to produce

goods should be limited only by the real supply of knowledge, labor,

energy, and materials and not by the artificial limitations of a de-

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liberately restricted supply of money and credit. This point of view of

Milners was not accepted by the Group until after 1931, and not as

completely as by Milner even then. The point of view of the Group, at

least in the period 1918-1931, was the point of view of the international

bankers with whom Brand, Hichens, and others were so closely con-

nected. This point of view, which believed that Britain’s prewar finan-

cial supremacy could be restored merely by reestablishing the prewar

financial system, with the pound sterling at its prewar parity, failed

completely to see the changed conditions that made all efforts to restore

the prewar system impossible. The Group’s point of view is clearly

revealed in The Round Table articles of the period. In the issue of

December 1918, Brand advocated the financial policy which the

British government followed, with such disastrous results, for the next

thirteen years. He wrote:

That nation will recover quickest after the war which corrects soonest any

depreciation in currency, reduces by production and saving its inflated

credit, brings down its level of prices, and restores the free import and

export of gold. . . . With all our wealth of financial knowledge and exper-

ience behind us it should be easy for us to steer the right path — though it

will not be always a pleasant one — amongst the dangers of the future.

Every consideration leads to the view that the restoration of the gold stan-

dard— whether or not it can be achieved quickly — should be our aim.

Only by that means can we be secure that our level of prices shall be as

low as or lower than prices in other countries, and on that condition

depends the recovery of our export trade and the prevention of excessive

imports. Only by that means can we provide against and abolish the

depreciation of our currency which, though the [existing] prohibition

against dealings in gold prevents our measuring it, almost certainly exists,

and safeguard ourself against excessive grants of credit.

He then outlined a detailed program to contract credit, curtail

government spending, raise taxes, curtail imports, increase exports,

etc. 15 Hichens, who, as an industrialist rather than a banker, was not

nearly so conservative in financial matters as Brand, suggested that the

huge public debt of 1919 be met by a capital levy, but, when Brand’s

policies were adopted by the government, Hichens went along with

them and sought a way out for his own business by reducing costs by

“rationalization of production.’’

These differences of opinion on economic matters within the Group

did not disrupt the Group, because it was founded on political rather

than economic ideas and its roots were to be found in ancient Athens

rather than in modern Manchester. The Balliol generation, from

Jowett and Nettleship, and the New College generation, from

Zimmern, obtained an idealistic picture of classical Greece which left

them nostalgic for the fifth century of Hellenism and drove them to

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seek to reestablish that ancient fellowship of intellect and patriotism in

modern Britain. The funeral oration of Pericles became their political

covenant with destiny. Duty to the state and loyalty to one’s fellow

citizens became the chief values of life. But, realizing that the jewel of

Hellenism was destroyed by its inability to organize any political unit

larger than a single city, the Milner Group saw the necessity of political

organization in order to insure the continued existence of freedom and

higher ethical values and hoped to be able to preserve the values of

their day by organizing the whole world around the British Empire.

Curtis puts this quite clearly in The Commonwealth of Nations

(1916), where he says;

States, whether autocracies or commonwealths, ultimately rest on duty,

not on self-interest or force. . . . The quickening principle of a state is a

sense of devotion, an adequate recognition somewhere in the minds of its

subjects that their own interests are subordinate to those of the state. The

bond which unites them and constitutes them collectively as a state is, to

use the words of Lincoln, in the nature of dedication. Its validity, like

that of the marriage tie, is at root not contractual but sacramental. Its

foundation is not self-interest, but rather some sense of obligation, how-

ever conceived, which is strong enough to over-master self-interest.

History for this Group, and especially for Curtis, presented itself as

an age-long struggle between the principles of autocracy and the prin-

ciples of commonwealth, between the forces of darkness and the forces

of light, between Asiatic theocracy and European freedom. This view

of history, founded on the work of Zimmern, E. A. Freeman, Lord

Bryce, and A. V. Dicey, felt that the distinguishing mark between the

two hosts could be found in their views of law — the forces of light

regarding law as manmade and mutable, but yet above all men, while

the forces of darkness regarded law as divine and eternal, yet subor-

dinate to the king. The one permitted diversity, growth, and freedom,

while the other engendered monotony, stultification, and slavery. The

struggle between the two had gone on for thousands of years, spawning

such offspring as the Persian Wars, the Punic Wars, and the struggles

of Britain with the forces of Philip II, of Louis XIV, of Napoleon, and

of Wilhelm II. Thus, to this Group, Britain stood as the defender of all

that was fine or civilized in the modern world, just as Athens had stood

for the same values in the ancient world. 17 Britain’s mission, under this

interpretation, was to carry freedom and light (that is, the principles of

commonwealth) against the forces of theocracy and darkness (that is,

autocracy) in Asia — and even in Central Europe. For this Group re-

garded the failure of France or Germany to utilize the English idea of

“supremacy of law” (as described by Dicey in his The Law of the Con-

stitution , 1885) as proof that these countries were still immersed, at

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least partially, in the darkness of theocratic law. The slow spread of

English political institutions to Europe as well as Asia in the period

before the First World War was regarded by the Group as proof both

of their superiority and of the possibility of progress. In Asia and

Africa, at least, England's civilizing mission was to be carried out by

force, if necessary, for “the function of force is to give moral ideas time

to take root.” Asia thus could be compelled to accept civilization, a

procedure justifiable to the Group on the grounds that Asians are ob-

viously better off under European rule than under the rule of fellow

Asians and, if consulted, would clearly prefer British rule to that of any

other European power. To be sure, the blessings to be extended to the

less fortunate peoples of the world did not include democracy. To

Milner, to Curtis, and apparently to most members of the Group,

democracy was not an unmixed good, or even a good, and far inferior

to rule by the best, or, as Curtis says, by those who “have some intellec-

tual capacity for judging the public interest, and, what is no less im-

portant, some moral capacity for treating it as paramount to their

own.”

This disdain for unrestricted democracy was quite in accordance

with the ideas revealed by Milner’s activities in South Africa and with

the Greek ideals absorbed at Balliol or New College. However, the

restrictions on democracy accepted by the Milner Group were of a tem-

porary character, based on the lack of education and background of

those who were excluded from political participation. It was not a

question of blood or birth, for these men were not racists.

This last point is important because of the widespread misconception

that these people were racially intolerant. They never were; certainly

those of the inner circle never were. On the contrary, they were ardent

advocates of a policy of education and uplift of all groups, so that

ultimately all groups could share in political life and in the rich

benefits of the British way of life. To be sure, the members of the

Group did not advocate the immediate extension of democracy and

self-government to all peoples within the Empire, but these restrictions

were based not on color of skin or birth but upon cultural outlook and

educational background. Even Rhodes, who is widely regarded as a

racist because his scholarships were restricted to candidates from the

Nordic countries, was not a racist. He restricted his scholarships to

these countries because he felt that they had a background sufficiently

homogeneous to allow the hope that educational interchange could

link them together to form the core of the worldwide system which he

hoped would ultimately come into existence. Beyond this, Rhodes in-

sisted that there must be no restrictions placed on the scholarships on a

basis of race, religion, skin color, or national origin . 18 In his own life,

Rhodes cared nothing about these things. Some of his closest friends

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were Jews (like Beit), and in three of his wills he left Lord Rothschild as

his trustee, in one as his sole trustee. Milner and the other members felt

similarly. Lionel Curtis, in his writings, makes perfectly clear both his

conviction that character is acquired by training rather than innate

ability and his insistence on tolerance in personal contact between

members of different races. In his The Commonwealth of Nations

(1916) he says: “English success in planting North America and the

comparative failure of their rivals must, in fact, be traced to the respec-

tive merits not of breed but of institutions”; and again: “The energy

and intelligence which had saved Hellas [in the Persian Wars] was the

product of her free institutions.” In another work he protests against

English mistreatment of natives in India and states emphatically that it

must be ended. He says: “The conduct on the part of Europeans ... is

more than anything else the root cause of Indian unrest ... I am

strongly of opinion that governors should be vested with powers to in-

vestigate judicially cases where Europeans are alleged to have outraged

Indian feelings. Wherever a case of wanton and unprovoked insult

such as those I have cited is proved, government should have the power

to order the culprit to leave the country. ... A few deportations would

soon effect a definite change for the better.” 19 That Dove felt similarly

is clear from his letters to Brand.

Without a belief in racism, it was perfectly possible for this Group to

believe, as they did, in the ultimate extension of freedom and self-

government to all parts of the Empire. To be sure, they believed that

this was a path to be followed slowly, but their reluctance was

measured by the inability of “backward” peoples to understand the

principles of a commonwealth, not by reluctance to extend to them

either democracy or self-government.

Curtis defined the distinction between a commonwealth and a des-

potism in the following terms: “The rule of law as contrasted with the

rule of an individual is the distinguishing mark of a commonwealth. In

despotism government rests on the authority of the ruler or of the in-

visible and uncontrollable power behind him. In a commonwealth

rulers derive their authority from the law and the law from a public

opinion which is competent to change it.” Accordingly, “the institu-

tions of a commonwealth cannot be successfully worked by peoples

whose ideas are still those of a theocratic or patriarchal society. The

premature extension of representative institutions throughout the Em-

pire would be the shortest road to anarchy.” 20 The people must first be

trained to understand and practice the chief principles of com-

monwealth, namely the supremacy of law and the subjection of the

motives of self-interest and material gain to the sense of duty to the in-

terests of the community as a whole. Curtis felt that such an educa-

tional process was not only morally necessary on the part of Britain but

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was a practical necessity, since the British could not expect to keep 430

million persons in subjection forever but must rather hope to educate

them up to a level where they could appreciate and cherish British

ideals. In one book he says: “The idea that the principle of the com-

monwealth implies universal suffrage betrays an ignorance of its real

nature. That principle simply means that government rests on the duty

of the citizens to each other, and is to be vested in those who are

capable of setting public interest before their own.” 21 In another work

he says: “As sure as day follows the night, the time will come when they

[the Dominions] will have to assume the burden of the whole of their

affairs. For men who are fit for it, self-government is a question not of

privilege but rather of obligation. It is duty, not interest, which impels

men to freedom, and duty, not interest, is the factor which turns the

scale in human affairs.” India is included in this evolutionary process,

for Curtis wrote: “ A despotic government might long have closed India

to Western ideas. But a commonwealth is a living thing. It cannot suf-

fer any part of itself to remain inert. To live it must move, and move in

every limb. . . . Under British rule Western ideas will continue to

penetrate and disturb Oriental society, and whether the new spirit

ends in anarchy or leads to the establishment of a higher order depends

upon how far the millions of India can be raised to a fuller and more

rational conception of the ultimate foundations upon which the duty of

obedience to government rests.”

These ideas were not Curtis’s own, although he was perhaps the most

prolific, most eloquent, and most intense in his feelings. They were

apparently shared by the whole inner circle of the Group. Dove,

writing to Brand from India in 1919, is favorable to reform and says:

“Lionel is right. You can’t dam a world current. There is, I am con-

vinced, ‘purpose’ under such things. All that we can do is to try to turn

the flood into the best channel.” In the same letter he said: “Unity will,

in the end, have to be got in some other way. . . . Love — call it, if you

like, by a longer name — is the only thing that can make our post-war

world go round, and it has, I believe, something to say here too. The

future of the Empire seems to me to depend on how far we are able to

recognize this. Our trouble is that we start some way behind scratch.

Indians must always find it hard to understand us.” And the future

Lord Lothian, ordering an article on India for The Round Table from

a representative in India, wrote: “We want an article in The Round

Table and I suggest to you that the main conclusion which the reader

should draw from it should be that the responsibility rests upon him of

seeing that the Indian demands are sympathetically handled without

delay after the war.” 22

What this Group feared was that the British Empire would fail to

profit from the lessons they had discerned in the Athenian empire or in

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the American Revolution. Zimmern had pointed out to them the sharp

contrast between the high idealism of Pericles’s funeral oration and the

crass tyranny of the Athenian empire. They feared that the British Em-

pire might fall into the same difficulty and destroy British idealism and

British liberties by the tyranny necessary to hold on to a reluctant Em-

pire. And any effort to hold an empire by tyranny they regarded as

doomed to failure. Britain would be destroyed, as Athens was

destroyed, by powers more tyrannical than herself. And, still drawing

parallels with ancient Greece, the Group feared that all culture and

civilization would go down to destruction because of our inability to

construct some kind of political unit larger than the national state, just

as Greek culture and civilization in the fourth century b.c. went down

to destruction because of the Greeks’ inability to construct some kind of

political unit larger than the city-state. This was the fear that had

animated Rhodes, and it was the same fear that was driving the Milner

Group to transform the British Empire into a Commonwealth of Na-

tions and then place that system within a League of Nations. In 1917,

Curtis wrote in his Letter to the People of India : “The world is in throes

which precede creation or death. Our whole race has outgrown the

merely national state, and as surely as day follows night or night the

day, will pass either to a Commonwealth of Nations or else an empire

of slaves. And the issue of these agonies rests with us.”

At the same time the example of the American Revolution showed

the Group the dangers of trying to rule the Empire from London: to tax

without representation could only lead to disruption. Yet it was no

longer possible that 45 million in the United Kingdom could tax them-

selves for the defense of 435 million in the British Empire. What, then,

was the solution? The Milner Group’s efforts to answer this question

led eventually, as we shall see in Chapter 8, to the present Com-

monwealth of Nations, but before we leave The Round Table, a few

words should be said about Lord Milner’s personal connection with the

Round Table Group and the Group’s other connections in the field of

journalism and publicity.

Milner was the creator of the Round Table Group (since this is but

another name for the Kindergarten) and remained in close personal

contact with it for the rest of his life. In the sketch of Milner in the Dic-

tionary of National Biography, written by Basil Williams of the

Kindergarten, we read: “He was always ready to discuss national ques-

tions on a non-party basis, joining with former members of his South

African ‘Kindergarten’ in their ‘moot,’ from which originated the

political review. The Round Table, and in a more heterogeneous soci-

ety, the ‘Coefficients,’ where he discussed social and imperial prob-

lems with such curiously assorted members as L. S. Amery, H. G.

Wells, (Lord) Haldane, Sir Edward Grey, (Sir) Michael Sadler, Ber-

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nard Shaw, J. L. Garvin, William Pember Reeves, and W. A. S.

Hewins.” In the obituary of Hichens, as already indicated, we find in

reference to the Round Table the sentence: “Often at its head sat the

old masters of the Kindergarten, Lord Milner and his successor. Lord

Selborne, close friends and allies of Hichens to the end.” And in the

obituary of Lord Milner in The Round Table for June 1925, we find the

following significant passage:

The founders and the editors of The Round Table mourn in a very special

sense the death of Lord Milner. For with him they have lost not only a

much beloved friend, but one whom they have always regarded as their

leader. Most of them had the great good fortune to serve under him in

South Africa during or after the South African war, and to learn at first-

hand from him something of the great ideals which inspired him. From

those days at the very beginning of this century right up to the present

time, through the days of Crown Colony Government in the Transvaal

and Orange Free State, of the making of the South African constitution,

and through all the varied and momentous history of the British Empire

in the succeeding fifteen years, they have had the advantage of Lord

Milner’s counsel and guidance, and they are grateful to think that, though

at times he disagreed with them, he never ceased to regard himself as the

leader to whom, above everyone else, they looked. It is of melancholy

interest to recall that Lord Milner had undertaken to come on May 13, the

very day of his death, to a meeting specially to discuss with them South

African problems.

The Round Table was published during the Second World War from

Rhodes House, Oxford, which is but one more indication of the way in

which the various instruments of the Milner Group are able to co-

operate with one another.

The Times and The Round Table are not the only publications

which have been controlled by the Milner Group. At various times in

the past, the Group has been very influential on the staffs of the

Quarterly Review , The Nineteenth Century and After , The Economist,

and the Spectator . Anyone familiar with these publications will realize

that most of them, for most of the time, have been quite secretive as to

the names of the members of their staffs or even as to the names of their

editors. The extent of the Milner Group’s influence and the periods

during which it was active cannot be examined here.

The Milner Group was also very influential in an editorial fashion in

regard to a series of excellent and moderately priced volumes known as

The Home University Library. Any glance at the complete list of

volumes in this series will reveal that a large number of the names are

those of persons mentioned in this study. The influence of the Group on

The Home University Library was chiefly exercised through H. A, L.

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Fisher, a member of the inner circle of the Group, but the influence,

apparently, has survived his death in 1940.

The Milner Group also attempted, at the beginning at least, to use

Milner’s old connections with adult education and working-class

schools (a connection derived from Toynbee and Samuel Barnett) to

propagate its imperial doctrines. As A. L. Smith, the Master of Balliol,

put it in 1915, “We must educate our masters.” In this connection,

several members of the Round Table Group played an active role in the

Oxford Summer School for Working Class Students in 1913. This was

so successful (especially a lecture on the Empire by Curtis) that a two-

week conference was held early in the summer of 1914, “addressed by

members of the Round Table Group, and others, on Imperial and

Foreign Problems” (to quote A. L. Smith again). As a result, a plan was

drawn up on 30 July 1914 to present similar programs in the 110

tutorial classes existing in industrial centers. The outbreak of war

prevented most of this program from being carried out. After the war

ended, the propaganda work among the British working classes

became less important, for various reasons, of which the chief were

that working-class ears were increasingly monopolized by Labour

Party speakers and that the Round Table Group were busy with other

problems like the League of Nations, Ireland, and the United States. 23

8

War and Peace,

1915-1920

The Milner Group was out of power for a decade from 1906 to 1915.

We have already indicated our grounds for believing that this condi-

tion was not regarded with distaste, since its members were engaged in

important activities of their own and approved of the conduct of

foreign policy (their chief field of interest) by the Liberal Party under

Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. During this period came the Union of

South Africa, The Morley-Minto reforms, the naval race with Ger-

many, the military conversations with France, the agreement of 1907

with Russia, the British attitude against Germany in the Agadir crisis

(a crisis to whose creation The Times had contributed no little

material) — in fact, a whole series of events in which the point of view

of the Milner Group was carried out just as if they were in office. To be

sure, in domestic matters such as the budget dispute and the ensuing

House of Lords dispute, and in the question of Home Rule for Ireland,

the Milner Group did not regard the Liberal achievements with com-

plete satisfaction, but in none of these were the members of the Milner

Group diehards (as members of the Cecil Bloc sometimes were). 1 But

with the outbreak of war, the Milner Group and the Cecil Bloc wanted

to come to power and wanted it badly, chiefly because control of the

government in wartime would make it possible to direct events toward

the postwar settlement which the Group envisaged. The Group also

believed that the war could be used by them to fasten on Britain the

illiberal economic regulation of which they had been dreaming since

Chamberlain resigned in 1903 (at least).

The Group got to power in 1916 by a method which they repeated

with the Labour Party in 1931. By a secret intrigue with a parvenu

leader of the government, the Group offered to make him head of a

new government if he would split his own party and become Prime

Minister, supported by the Group and whatever members he could

split off from his own party. The chief difference between 1916 and

1931 is that in the former year the minority that was being betrayed

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was the Group’s own social class — in fact, the Liberal Party members

of the Cecil Bloc. Another difference is that in 1916 the plot

worked -\*the Liberal Party was split and permanently destroyed —

while in 1931 the plotters broke off only a fragment of the Labour

Party and damaged it only temporarily (for fourteen years). This last

difference, however, was not caused by any lack of skill in carrying out

the intrigue but by the sociological differences between the Liberal

Party and the Labour Party in the twentieth century. The latter was

riding the wave of the future, while the former was merely one of two

“teams” put on the field by the same school for an intramural game,

and, as such, it was bound to fuse with its temporary antagonist as soon

as the future produced an extramural challenger. This strange (to an

outsider) point of view will explain why Asquith had no real animosity

for Bonar Law or Balfour (who really betrayed him) but devoted the

rest of his life to belittling the actions of Lloyd George. Asquith talked

later about how he was deceived (and even lied to) in December 1915,

but never made any personal attack on Bonar Law, who did the pre-

• varicating (if any). The actions of Bonar Law were acceptable in the

code of British politics, a code largely constructed on the playing fields

of Eton and Harrow, but Lloyd George’s actions, which were con-

siderably less deliberate and cold-blooded, were quite unforgivable,

coming as they did from a parvenu who had been built up to a high

place in the Liberal Party because of his undeniable personal ability,

but who, nonetheless, was an outsider who had never been near the

playing fields of Eton.

In the coalition governments of May 1915 and December 1916,

members of the Cecil Bloc took the more obvious positions (as befitted

their seniority), while members of the Milner Group took the less con-

spicuous places, but by 1918 the latter group had the whole situation

tied up in a neat package and held all the strings.

In the first coalition (May 1915), Lansdowne came into the Cabinet

without portfolio, Curzon as Lord Privy Seal, Bonar Law at the

Colonial Office, Austen Chamberlain at the India Office, Balfour at

the Admiralty, Selborne as President of the Board of Agriculture,

Walter Long as President of the Local Government Board, Sir Edward

Carson as Attorney General, F. E. Smith as Solicitor General, Lord

Robert Cecil as Under Secretary in the Foreign Office, and Arthur

Steel-Maitland as Under Secretary in the Colonial Office. Of these

eleven names, at least nine were members of the Cecil Bloc, and four

were close to the Milner Group (Cecil, Balfour, Steel-Maitland, and

Selborne) .

In the second coalition government (December 1916), Milner was

Minister without Portfolio; Curzon was Lord President of the Council;

Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Robert Finlay, Lord

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Chancellor; the Earl of Crawford, Lord Privy Seal; Sir George Cave,

Home Secretary; Arthur Balfour, Foreign Secretary; The Earl of

Derby, War Secretary; Walter Long, Colonial Secretary; Austen

Chamberlain, at the India Office; Sir Edward Carson, First Lord of

the Admiralty; Henry E. Duke, Chief Secretary for Ireland; H. A. L.

Fisher, President of the Board of Education; R. E. Prothero, President

of the Board of Agriculture; Sir Albert Stanley, President of the Board

of Trade; F. E. Smith, Attorney General; Robert Cecil, Minister of

Blockade; Lord Hardinge, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Steel -

Maitland, Under Secretary for the Colonies; and Lord Wolmer (son of

Lord Selborne), assistant director of the War Trade Department. Of

these twenty names, eleven, at least, were members of the Cecil Bloc,

and four or five were members of the Milner Group.

Milner himself became the second most important figure in the

government (after Lloyd George), especially while he was Minister

without Portfolio. He was chiefly interested in food policy, war trade

regulations, and postwar settlements. He was chairman of a committee

to increase home production of food (1915) and of a committee on post-

war reconstruction (1916). From the former came the food-growing

policy adopted in 1917, and from the latter came the Ministry of

Health set up in 1919. In 1917 he went with Lloyd George to a meeting

of the Allied War Council in Rome and from there on a mission to

Russia. He went to France after the German victories in March 1918,

and was the principal influence in the appointment of Foch as Supreme

Commander in the west. In April he became Secretary of State for

War, and, after the election of December 1918, became Colonial

Secretary. He was one of the signers of the Treaty of Versailles. Of

Milner’s role at this time, John Buchan wrote in his memoirs: “In the

Great War from 1916 to 1918, he was the executant of the War

Cabinet who separated the sense from the nonsense in the deliberations

of that body, and was responsible for its chief practical achievements.

To him were largely due the fruitful things which emerged from the

struggle, the new status of the Dominions, and the notable advances in

British social policy.” In all of these actions Milner remained as unob-

trusive as possible. Throughout this period Milner’s opinion of Lloyd

George was on the highest level. Writing twenty years later in The

Commonwealth of God , Lionel Curtis recorded two occasions in which

Milner praised Lloyd George in the highest terms. On one of these he

called him a greater war leader than Chatham.

At this period it was not always possible to distinguish between the

Cecil Bloc and the Milner Group, but it is notable that the members of

the former who were later clearly members of the latter were generally

in the fields in which Milner was most interested. In general, Milner

and his Group dominated Lloyd George during the period from 1917 to

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1921. As Prime Minister, Lloyd George had three members of the

Group as his secretaries (P. H. Kerr, 1916-1922; W. G. S. Adams,

1916-1919; E. W. M. Grigg, 1921-1922) and Waldorf Astor as his

parliamentary secretary (1917-1918). The chief decisions were made

by the War Cabinet and Imperial War Cabinet, whose membership

merged and fluctuated but in 1917-1918 consisted of Lloyd George,

Milner, Curzon, and Smuts — that is, two members of the Milner

Group, one of the Cecil Bloc, with the Prime Minister himself. The

secretary to these groups was Maurice Hankey (later a member of the

Milner Group), and the editor of the published reports of the War

Cabinet was W. G. S. Adams. Amery was assistant secretary, while

Meston was a member of the Imperial War Cabinet in 1917. Frederick

Liddell (Fellow of All Souls) was made First Parliamentary Counsel in

1917 and held the position for eleven years, following this post with a

fifteen-year period of service as counsel to the Speaker (1928- 1943). 2

Within the various government departments a somewhat similar

situation prevailed. The Foreign Office in its topmost ranks was held

by the Cecil Bloc, with Balfour as Secretary of State (1916-1919),

followed by Curzon (1919-1924). When Balfour went to the United

States on a mission in 1917, he took along Ian Malcolm (brother-in-law

of Dougal Malcolm). Malcolm was later Balfour s private secretary at

the Peace Conference in 1919. In Washington, Balfour had as deputy

chairman to the mission R. H. Brand. In London, as we have seen,

Robert Cecil was Parliamentary Under Secretary and later Assistant

Secretary. In the Political Intelligence Department, Alfred Zimmern

was the chief figure. G. W. Prothero was director of the Historical Sec-

tion and was, like Cecil and Zimmern, chiefly concerned with the

future peace settlement. He was succeeded by J. W. Headlam-Morley,

who held the post of historical adviser from 1920 to his death in 1928.

All of these persons were members of the Cecil Bloc or Milner Group.

In the India Office we need mention only a few names, as this sub-

ject will receive a closer scrutiny later. Austen Chamberlain was Sec-

retary of State in 1915-1917 and gave the original impetus toward the

famous act of 1919. Sir Frederick Duke (a member of the Round Table

Group, whom we shall mention later) was chief adviser to

Chamberlains successor, E. S. Montagu, and became Permanent

Under Secretary in 1920. Sir Malcolm Seton (also a member of the

Round Table Group from 1913 onward) was Assistant Under Secretary

(1919-1924) and later Deputy Under Secretary.

In blockade and shipping, Robert Cecil was Minister of Blockade

(1916-1918), while Reginald Sothern Holland organized the attack on

German trade in the earlier period (1914). M. L. Gwyer was legal ad-

viser to the Ministry of Shipping during the war and to the Ministry of

Health after the war (1917-1926), while J. Arthur Salter (later a con-

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tributor to The Round Table and a Fellow of All Souls for almost

twenty years) was director of ship requisitioning in 1917 and later

secretary to the Allied Maritime Transport Council and chairman of

the Allied Maritime Transport Executive (1918). After the war he was

a member of the Supreme Economic Council and general secretary to

the Reparations Commission (1919-1922).

A. H. D. R. Steel-Maitland was head of the War Trade Department

in 1917-1919, while Lord Wolmer (son of Lord Selborne and grandson

of Lord Salisbury) was assistant director in 1916-1918. Henry

Birchenough was a member or chairman of several committees dealing

with related matters. R. S. Rait was a member of the department from

its creation in 1915 to the end of the war; H. W. C. Davis was a

member in 1915 and a member of the newly created War Trade Ad-

visory Committee thereafter. Harold Butler was secretary to the

Foreign Trade Department of the Foreign Office (1916-1917). H. D.

Henderson (who has been a Fellow of All Souls since 1934) was

secretary of the Cotton Control Board (1917-1919).

The Board of Agriculture was dominated by members of the Cecil

Bloc and Milner Group. Lord Selborne was President of the board in

1915-1916, and Prothero (Lord Ernie) in 1916-1919. Milner and

Selborne were chairmen of the two important committees of the board

in 1915 and 1916. These sought to establish as a war measure (and

ultimately as a postwar measure also) government-guaranteed prices

for agricultural products at so high a level that domestic production of

adequate supplies would be insured. This had been advocated by

Milner for many years but was not obtained on a permanent basis until

after 1930, although used on a temporary basis in 1917-1919. The

membership of these committees was largely made up of members of

the Cecil Bloc. The second Viscount Goschen (son of Milner's old friend

and grandfather-in-law of Milner’s step-grandson) was Parliamentary

Secretary to the Board; Lord Astor was chairman of a dependent com-

mittee on milk supplies; Sothern Holland was controller of the Cultiva-

tion Department within the Food Production Department of the board

(1918); Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton was deputy director of the Women’s

Branch; Lady Alicia Cecil was assistant director of horticulture in the

Food Production Department; and Edward Strutt (brother-in-law of

Balfour), who had been a member of both the Milner and Selborne

Committees, was technical adviser to Prothero during his term as Presi-

dent and was the draftsman of the Corn Production Act of 1917. He

later acted as one of Milner’s assistants in the effort to establish a tariff

in 1923. His sketch in the Dictionary of National Biography was writ-

ten by his nephew (and Balfour’s nephew) Lord Rayleigh.

In the Colonial Office, Milner was Secretary of State in 1918-1921;

George Fiddes (of the Milner Kindergarten) was Permanent Under

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Secretary in 1916-1921; Steel-Maitland was Parliamentary Under

Secretary in 1915-1917; while Amery was in the same position in

1919-1921.

In intelligence and public information, we find John Buchan as head

of the Information Department of the War Office, with John Dove and

B. H. Sumner (the present Warden of All Souls) in military in-

telligence. H. W. C. Davis was general editor of the Oxford Pamphlets

justifying Britain’s role in the war, while Algernon Cecil (nephew of

Lord Salisbury) was in the intelligence division of the Admiralty and

later in the historical section of the Foreign Office. J. W. Headlam-

Morley was adviser on all historical matters at Wellington House (the

propaganda department) in 1915-1918 and assistant director of

political intelligence in the Department of Information in 1917-1918,

ultimately being shifted to similar work in the Foreign Office in 1918.

In the War Office, Milner was Secretary of State in 1918, while

Amery was assistant to the Secretary from 1917 until Milner took him

to the Colonial Office a year or so later.

This enumeration, by no means complete, indicates the all-pervasive

influence of this small clique in the later years of the war. This in-

fluence was not devoted exclusively to winning the war, and, as time

went on, it was directed increasingly toward the postwar settlement.

As a result, both groups tended more and more to concentrate in the

Foreign Office. There G. W. Prothero, an old member of the Cecil

Bloc, was put in charge of the preparations for the future peace con-

ference. Depending chiefly on his own branch of the Foreign Office

(the Historical Section), but also using men and materials from the

War Trade Intelligence Department and the Intelligence Section of the

Admiralty, he prepared a large number of reports on questions that

might arise at the Peace Conference (1917-1919). In 1920, 155 volumes

of these reports were published under the title Peace Handbooks. A

glance at any complete list of these will show that a very large number

of the “experts” who wrote them were from the Cecil Bloc and Milner

Group. About the same time, Phillimore and Zimmern prepared drafts

for the organization of the future League of Nations. Most of the group

went en masse to the Peace Conference at Paris as expert advisers, and

anyone familar with the history of the Peace Conference cannot fail to

recognize names which we have mentioned frequently. At about this

time, Lloyd George began to get out of hand as far as the Milner Group

was concerned, and doubtless also as far as the Cecil Bloc was con-

cerned. Some of this was caused by the weakness of Balfour, titular

head of the latter group, but much more was caused by the fact that

the Group could not control Lloyd George either in his electoral cam-

paign in December 1918 or in his negotiations in the Council of Four

from March to June 1919. Lloyd George was perfectly willing to use

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the abilities of the Milner Group in administration, but, when it came

to an appeal to the electorate, as in the “khaki election,” he had no

respect for the Group’s judgment or advice. Lloyd George realized that

the electorate was hysterical with hatred of Germany, and was willing

to appeal to that feeling if he could ride into office again on its impetus.

The Milner Group, on the other hand, was eager to get rid of the

Kaiser, the Prussian officers’ corps, and even the Junker landlords, but,

once Germany was defeated, their feeling of animosity against her

(which had waxed strong since before 1896) vanished. By 1919 they

began to think in terms of balance of power and of the need to

reconstruct Germany against the dangers of “bolshevism” on one hand

and of “French militarism” on the other, and they felt that if Germany

were made democratic and treated in a friendly fashion she could be

incorporated into the British world system as well as the Cape Boers

had been. The intellectual climate of the Milner Group early in 1919

has been described by a man who was, at this time, close to the Group,

Harold Nicoison, in his volume Peacemaking , 1919.

This point of view was never thoroughly thought out by the Group.

It was apparently based on the belief that if Germany were treated in a

conciliatory fashion she could be won from her aggressive attitudes and

become a civilized member of the British world system. This may have

been possible, but, if so, the plan was very badly executed, because the

aggressive elements in Germany were not eliminated and the con-

ciliatory elements were not encouraged in a concrete fashion. This

failure, however, was partly caused by the pressure of public opinion,

by the refusal of the French to accept this concept as an adequate goal

of foreign policy, and by the failure to analyze the methods of the

policy in a sound and adequate fashion. The first step toward this

policy was made by Milner himself as early as October 1918, when he

issued a warning not to denounce “the whole German nation as

monsters of iniquity” or to carry out a policy of punishment and

reprisal against them.” The outburst of public indignation at this senti-

ment was so great that “the whole band of men who had learned under

him in South Africa to appreciate his patriotism united to testify to him

their affectionate respect.” This quotation from one of the band, Basil

Williams, refers to a testimonial given by the Group to their leader in

1918.

Another evidence of this feeling will be found in a volume of Alfred

Zimmern’s, published in 1922 under the title Europe in Convalescence

and devoted to regretting Britain’s postwar policies and especially the

election of 1918. Strangely enough, Zimmern, although most articulate

in this volume, was basically more anti-German than the other

members of the Group and did not share their rather naive belief that

the Germans could be redeemed merely by the victors tossing away the

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advantages of victory. Zimin ern had a greater degree of sympathy for

the French idea that the Germans should give more concrete examples

of a reformed spirit before they were allowed to run freely in civilized

society. 3 Halifax, on the other hand, was considerably more influenced

by popular feeling in 1918 and years later. He shared the public

hysteria against Germany in 1918 to a degree which he later wished to

forget, just as in 1937 he shared the appeasement policy toward Ger-

many to a degree he would now doubtless want to forget. Both of these

men, however were not of the inner circle of the Milner Group. The

sentiments of that inner circle, men like Kerr, Brand, and Dawson, can

be found in the speeches of the first, The Times editorials of the last,

and the articles of The Round Table. They can also be seen in the let-

ters of John Dove. The latter, writing to Brand, 4 October 1923,

stated: “It seems to me that the most disastrous affect of Poincare’s

policy would be the final collapse of democracy in Germany, the risk of

which has been pointed out in The Round Table. The irony of the

whole situation is that if the Junkers should capture the Reich again,

the same old antagonisms will revive and we shall find ourselves, willy-

nilly, lined up again with France to avert a danger which French

action has again called into being. . . . Even if Smuts follows up his

fine speech, the situation may have changed so much before the Im-

perial Conference is over that people who think like him and us may

find themselves baffled. ... I doubt if we shall again have as good a

chance of getting a peaceful democracy set up in Germany.”

The Creation of

the Commonwealth

The evolution of the British Empire into the Commonwealth of

Nations is to a very great extent a result of the activities of the Milner

Group. To be sure, the ultimate goal of the Group was quite different

from the present system, since they wanted a federation of the Empire,

but this was a long-run goal, and en route they accepted the present

system as a temporary way station. However, the strength of colonial

and Dominion feeling, which made the ideal of federation admittedly

remote at all times, has succeeded in making this way-station a perma-

nent terminal and thus had eliminated, apparently forever, the hope

for federation. With the exception of a few diehards (of whom Milner

and Curtis were the leaders), the Group has accepted the solution of

imperial cooperation and “parallelism” as an alternative to federation.

This was definitely stated in The Round Table of December 1920. In

that issue the Group adopted the path of cooperation as its future

policy and added: “Its [ The Round Table's] promoters in this country

feel bound to state that all the experience of the war and of the peace

has not shaken in the least the fundamental conviction with which they

commenced the publication of this Review. . . . The Round Table has

never expressed an opinion as to the form which this constitutional

organization would take, nor as to the time when it should be under-

taken. But it has never disguised its conviction that a cooperate system

would eventually break down.” In September 1935, in a review of its

first twenty-five years, the journal stated: “Since the war, therefore,

though it has never abandoned its view that the only final basis for

freedom and enduring peace is the organic union of nations in a

commonwealth embracing the whole world or, in the first instance, a

lesser part of it, The Round Table has been a consistent supporter . . .

of the principles upon which the British Empire now rests, as set forth

in the Balfour Memorandum of 1926. ... It has felt that only by trying

the cooperation method to the utmost and realizing its limitations in

practice would nations within or without the British Empire be

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brought to face the necessity for organic union.”

There apparently exists within the Milner Group a myth to the effect

that they invented the expression “Commonwealth of Nations,” that it

was derived from Zimmern’s book The Greek Commonwealth

(published in 1911) and first appeared in public in the title of Curtis’s

book in 1916. This is not quite accurate, for the older imperialists of the

Cecil Bloc had used the term “commonwealth” in reference to the

British Empire on various occasions as early as 1884. In that year, in a

speech at Adelaide, Australia, Lord Rosebery referred to the possibility

of New Zealand seceding from the Empire and added: “God forbid.

There is no need for any nation, however great, leaving the Empire,

because the Empire is a Commonwealth of Nations.”

If the Milner Group did not invent the term, they gave it a very

definite and special meaning, based on Zimmern’s book, and they

popularized the use of the expression. According to Zimmern, the

expression “commonwealth” referred to a community based on free-

dom and the rule of law, in distinction to a government based on au-

thority or even arbitrary tyranny. The distinction was worked out in

Zimmern’s book in the contrast between Athens, as described in

Pericles’s funeral oration, and Sparta (or the actual conduct of the

Athenian empire). As applied to the modern world, the contrast was

between the British government, as described by Dicey, and the

despotisms of Philip II, Wilhelm II, and Nicholas II. In this sense of the

word, commonwealth was not originally an alternative to federation,

as it later became, since it referred to the moral qualities of govern-

ment, and these could exist within either a federated or a nonfederated

Empire.

The expression “British Commonwealth of Nations” was, then, not

invented by the Group but was given a very special meaning and was

propagated in this sense until it finally became common usage. The

first step in this direction was taken on 15 May 1917, when General

Smuts, at a banquet in his honor in the Houses of Parliament, used the

expression. This banquet was apparently arranged by the Milner

Group, and Lord Milner sat at Smuts’s right hand during the speech.

The speech itself was printed and given the widest publicity, being

disseminated throughout Great Britain, the Commonwealth, the

United States, and the rest of the world. In retrospect, some persons

have believed that Smuts was rejecting the meaning of the expression as

used by the Milner Group, because he did reject the project for

imperial federation in this speech. This, however, is a mistake, for, as

we have said, the expression “commonwealth” at that time had a

meaning which could include either federation or cooperation among

the members of the British imperial system. The antithesis in meaning

between federation and commonwealth is a later development which

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took place outside the Group. To this day, men like Curtis, Amery, and

Grigg still use the term “commonwealth” as applied to a federated

Empire, and they always define the word “commonwealth” as “a

government of liberty under the law” and not as an arrangement of in-

dependent but cooperating states.

The development of the British Empire into the Commonwealth of

Nations and the role which the Milner Group played in this develop-

ment cannot be understood by anyone who feels that federation and

commonwealth were mutually exclusive ideas.

In fact, there were not two ideas, but three, and they were not

regarded by the Group as substitutes for each other but as supplements

to each other. These three ideas were: (1) the creation of a common

ideology and world outlook among the peoples of the United Kingdom,

the Empire, and the United States; (2) the creation of instruments and

practices of cooperation among these various communities in order

that they might pursue parallel policies; and (3) the creation of a

federation on an imperial, Anglo-American, or world basis. The

Milner Group regarded these as supplementary to one another and

worked vigorously for all of them, without believing that they were

mutually exclusive alternatives. They always realized, even the most

fanatical of them, that federation, even of the Empire only, was very

remote. They always, in this connection, used such expressions as “not

in our lifetime” or “not in the present century.” They always insisted

that the basic unity of any system must rest on common ideology, and

they worked in this direction through the Rhodes Scholarships, the

Round Table Groups, and the Institutes of International Affairs, even

when they were most ardently seeking to create organized constitu-

tional relationships. And in these constitutional relationships they

worked equally energetically and simultaneously for imperial federa-

tion and for such instruments of cooperation as conferences of Prime

Ministers of Dominions. The idea, which seems to have gained cur-

rency, that the Round Table Group was solely committed to federation

and that the failure of this project marked the defeat and eclipse of the

Group is erroneous. On the contrary, by the 1930s, the Round Table

Group was working so strongly for a common ideology and for institu-

tions of cooperation that many believers in federation regarded them as

defeatist. For this reason, some believers in federation organized a new

movement called the “World Commonwealth Movement.” Evidence of

this movement is an article by Lord Davies in The Nineteenth Century

and After for January 1935, called “ Round Table or World Com-

monwealth?” This new movement was critical of the foreign policy

rather than the imperial policy of the Round Table Group, especially

its policy of appeasement toward Germany and of weakening the

League of Nations, and its belief that Britain could find security in

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isolation from the Continent and a balance-of-power policy supported

by the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and the United States.

The effort of the Round Table Group to create a common ideology to

unite the supporters of the British way of life appears in every aspect of

their work. It was derived from Rhodes and Milner and found its most

perfect manifestation in the Rhodes Scholarships. As a result of these

and of the Milner Group’s control of so much of Oxford, Oxford tended

to become an international university. Here the Milner Group had to

tread a narrow path between the necessity of training non-English

(including Americans and Indians) in the English way of life and the

possibility of submerging that way of life completely (at Oxford, at

least) by admitting too many non-English to its cloistered halls. On the

whole, this path was followed with considerable success, as will be

realized by anyone who has had any experience with Rhodes Scholars.

To be sure, the visitors from across the seas picked up the social customs

of the English somewhat more readily than they did the English ideas

of playing the game or the English ideas of politics, but, on the whole,

the experiment of Rhodes, Milner, and Lothian cannot be called a

failure. It was surely a greater success in the United States than it was

in the Dominions or in India, for in the last, at least, the English idea of

liberty was assimilated much more completely than the idea of loyalty

to England.

The efforts of the Milner Group to encourage federation of the

Empire have already been indicated. They failed and, indeed, were

bound to fail, as most members of the Group soon realized. As early as

1903, John Buchan and Joseph Chamberlain had given up the attempt.

By 1917, even Curtis had accepted the idea that federation was a very

remote possibility, although in his case, at least, it remained as the

beckoning will-o-the-wisp by which all lesser goals were measured and

found vaguely dissatisfying . 1

The third string to the bow — imperial cooperation — remained. It

became in time the chief concern of the Group. The story of these

efforts is a familiar one, and no attempt will be made here to repeat it.

We are concerned only with the role played by the Milner Group in

these efforts. In general this role was very large, if not decisive.

The proposals for imperial cooperation had as their basic principle

the assumption that communities which had a common ideology

could pursue parallel courses toward the same goal merely by consulta-

tion among their leaders. For a long time, the Milner Group did not see

that the greater the degree of success obtained by this method, the

more remote was the possibility that federation could ever be attained.

It is very likely that the Group was misled in this by the fact that they

were for many years extremely fortunate in keeping members of the

Group in positions of power and influence in the Dominions. As long as

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men like Smuts, Botha (who did what Smuts wanted), Duncan,

Feetham, or Long were in influential positions in South Africa; as long

as men like Eggleston, Bavin, or Dudley Braham were influential in

Australia; as long as men like Glazebrook, Massey, Joseph Flavelle, or

Percy Corbett were influential in Canada — in a nutshell, as long as

members of the Milner Group were influential throughout the Domin-

ions, the technique of the parallel policy of cooperation would be the

easiest way to reach a common goal. Unfortunately, this was not a

method that could be expected to continue forever, and when the

Milner Group grew older and weaker, it could not be expected that

their newer recruits in England (like Hodson, Coupland, Astor, Wood-

ward, Elton, and others) could continue to work on a parallel policy

with the newer arrivals to power in the Dominions. When that un-

happy day arrived, the Milner Group should have had institutionalized

modes of procedure firmly established. They did not, not because they

did not want them, but because their members in the Dominions could

not have remained in influential positions if they had insisted on

creating institutionalized links with Britain when the people of the

Dominions obviously did not want such links.

The use of Colonial or Imperial Conferences as a method for

establishing closer contact with the various parts of the Empire was

originally established by the Cecil Bloc and taken over by the Milner

Group. The first four such Conferences (in 1887, 1897, 1902, and 1907)

were largely dominated by the former group, although they were not

technically in power during the last one. The decisive changes made in

the Colonial Conference system at the Conference of 1907 were worked

out by a secret group, which consulted on the plans for eighteen

months and presented them to the Royal Colonial Institute in April

1905. These plans were embodied in a dispatch from the Colonial

Secretary, Alfred Lyttelton, and carried out at the Conference of 1907.

As a result, it was established that the name of the meeting was to be

changed to Imperial Conference; it was to be called into session every

four years; it was to consist of Prime Ministers of the self-governing

parts of the Empire; the Colonial Secretary was to be eliminated from

the picture; and a new Dominion Department, under Sir Charles

Lucas, was to be set up in the Colonial Office. As the future Lord

Lothian wrote in The Round Table in 1911, the final result was to

destroy the hopes for federation by recognizing the separate existence

of the Dominions. 2

At the Conference of 1907, at the suggestion of Haldane, there was

created a Committee of Imperial Defence, and a plan was adopted to

organize Dominion defense forces on similar patterns, so that they

could be integrated in an emergency. The second of these proposals,

which led to a complete reorganization of the armies of New Zealand,

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Australia, and South Africa in 1909-1912, with very beneficial results

in the crisis of 1914-1918, is not of immediate concern to us. The Com-

mittee of Imperial Defence and its secretarial staff were creations of

Lord Esher, who had been chairman of a special committee to reform

the War Office in 1903 and was permanent member of the Committee

of Imperial Defence from 1905 to his death. As a result of his influence,

the secretariat of this committee became a branch of the Milner Group

and later became the secretariat of the Cabinet itself, when that body

first obtained a secretariat in 1917.

From this secretarial staff the Milner Group obtained three recruits

in the period after 1918. These were Maurice Hankey, Ernest Swinton,

and W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore (now Lord Harlech). Hankey was assistant

secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence from 1908 to 1912 and

was secretary from 1912 to 1938. Swinton was assistant secretary from

1917 to 1925. Both became members of the Milner Group, Hankey

close to the inner circle, Swinton in one of the less central rings.

Ormsby-Gore was an assistant secretary in 1917-1918 at the same time

that he was private secretary to Lord Milner. All three of these men are

of sufficient importance to justify a closer examination of their careers.

Maurice Pascal Alers Hankey (Sir Maurice after 1916, Baron Hankey

since 1939), whose family was related by marriage to the Wyndhams,

was born in 1877 and joined the Royal Marines when he graduated

from Rugby in 1895. He retired from that service in 1918 as a lieu-

tenant colonel and was raised to colonel on the retired list in 1929. He

was attached for duty with the Naval Intelligence Department in 1902

and by this route reached the staff of the Committee of Imperial

Defence six years later. In 1917, when it was decided to give the

Cabinet a secretariat for the first time, and to create the Imperial War

Cabinet by adding overseas representatives to the British War Cabinet

(a change in which Milner played the chief role), the secretariat of the

Committee of Imperial Defence became also the secretariat of the

other two bodies. At the same time, as we have seen, the Prime

Minister was given a secretariat consisting of two members of the

Milner Group (Kerr and Adams). In this way Hankey became secretary

and Swinton assistant secretary to the Cabinet, the former holding that

post, along with the parallel post in the Committee of Imperial

Defence, until 1938. It was undoubtedly through Hankey and the

Milner Group that Swinton became Chichele Professor of Military

History and a Fellow of All Souls in 1925. As for Hankey himself, he

became one of the more significant figures in the Milner Group, close

to the inner circle and one of the most important (although relatively

little-known) figures in British history of recent times. He was clerk of

the Privy Council in 1923-1938; he was secretary to the British delega-

tion at the Peace Conference of 1919, at the Washington Conference of

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1921, at the Genoa Conference of 1922, and at the London Reparations

Conference of 1924. He was secretary general of the Hague Conference

of 1929-1930, of the London Naval Conference of 1930, and of the

Lausanne Conference of 1932. He was secretary general of the British

Imperial Conferences of 1921, 1923, 1926, 1930, and 1937. He retired

in 1938, but became a member of the Permanent Mandates Commis-

sion (succeeding Lord Hailey) in 1939. He was British government

director of the Suez Canal Company in 1938-1939, Minister without

Portfolio in 1939-1940, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in

1940-1941, Paymaster General in 1941-1942, chairman of the Scien-

tific Advisory Committee and of the Engineering Advisory Committee

in 1942-1943. At the present time he is a director of the Suez Canal

Company (since 1945), chairman of the Technical Personnel Commit-

tee (since 1941), chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee on

Further Education and Training and of the Committee on Higher Ap-

pointments in the Civil Service (since 1944), and chairman of the Co-

lonial Products Research Committee (since 1942). Hankey, in 1903,

married Adeline de Smidt, daughter of a well-known South African

political figure. His oldest son, Robert, is now a First Secretary in the

diplomatic service, while his daughter, Ursula, has been married since

1929 to John A. Benn, chairman of the board of Benn Brothers,

publishers.

Hankey was Lord Esher’s chief protege in the Milner Group and in

British public life. They were in constant communication with one

another, and Esher gave Hankey a constant stream of advice about his

conduct in his various official positions. The following scattered

examples can be gleaned from the published Journals and Letters of

Reginald , Viscount Esher . On 18 February 1919, Esher wrote Hankey,

advising him not to accept the position as Secretary General of the

League of Nations. On 7 December 1919, he gave him detailed advice

on how to conduct himself as secretary to the Conference of Dominion

Prime Ministers, telling him to work for “a League of Empire” based on

cooperation and not on any “rigid constitutional plan,” to try to get an

Imperial General Staff, and to use the Defence Committee as such a

staff in the meantime. In 1929, when Ramsay MacDonald tried to

exclude Hankey from a secret Cabinet meeting, Esher went so far in

support of his protege as to write a letter of admonition to the Prime

Minister. This letter, dated 21 July 1929, said: “What is this I see

quoted from a London paper that you are excluding your Secretary

from Cabinet meetings? It probably is untrue, for you are the last

person in the world to take a retrograde step toward ‘secrecy’ whether

in diplomacy or government. The evolution of our Cabinet system

from ‘Cabal’ has been slow but sure. When the Secretary to the

Cabinet became an established factor in conducting business, almost

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the last traces of Mumbo Jumbo, cherished from the days when

Bolingbroke was a danger to public peace, disappeared.”

Hankey was succeeded as secretary of the Cabinet in 1938 by

Edward E. Bridges, who has been close to the Milner Group since he

became a Fellow of All Souls in 1920. Bridges, son of the late Poet

Laureate Robert Bridges, had the advantages of a good education at

Eton and Magdalen. He was a Treasury civil servant from 1919, was

knighted in 1939, and since 1945 has combined with his Cabinet posi-

tion the exalted post of Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and head

of His Majesty’s Civil Service.

The Imperial Conference of 1911 has little concern with our story,

although Asquith’s opening speech could have been written in the

office of The Round Table. Indeed, it is quoted with approval by

Lionel Curtis in his The Problem of the Commonwealth , published five

years later. Asquith pointed out that the Empire rested on three foun-

dations: (a) the reign of law, in Diceys sense, (b) local autonomy, and

(c) trusteeship of the interests and fortunes of fellow subjects who have

not yet attained “to the full stature of self-government.” He then

pointed out the two principles of centralization and disintegration

which had applied to the Empire in the early Victorian period, and

declared: “Neither of these theories commands the faintest support

today, either at home or in any part of our self-governing Empire. . . .

Whether in this United Kingdom or in any one of the great com-

munities which you represent, we each of us are, and we each of us

intend to remain, master in our own household. This is, here at home

and throughout the Dominions, the lifeblood of our polity.” Thus

spoke Asquith, and even the ultra-federalist Curtis approved. He also

approved when Asquith squelched Sir John Ward’s suggestion for the

creation of an Imperial Council, although doubtless from quite a

different motivation.

At the Conference of 1911, as is well known, the overseas members

were for the first time initiated into the mysteries of high policy,

because of the menace of Germany. Except for this, which paid high

dividends in 1914, the Conference was largely wasted motion.

The Conference of 1915 was not held, because of the war, but as

soon as Milner came into the government in December 1915, The

Round Table's argument that the war should be used as a means for

consolidating the Empire, rather than as an excuse for postponing con-

solidation, began to take effect. The Round Table during 1915 was

agitating for an immediate Imperial Conference with Indian partici-

pation for the first time. As soon as Milner joined the Cabinet in

December 1915, he sent out cables to the Dominions and to India,

inviting them to come. It was Milner also who created the Imperial

War Cabinet by adding Dominion members to the British War

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Cabinet. These developments were foretold and approved by The

Round Table. In its June 1917 issue it said, in the course of a long arti-

cle on “New Developments in the Constitution of the Empire”:

At a date which cannot be far distant an Imperial Conference will

assemble, the purpose of which will be to consider what further steps

can be taken to transform the Empire of a State in which the main respon-

sibilities and burdens of its common affairs are sustained and controlled

by the United Kingdom into a commonwealth of equal nations conduct-

ing its foreign policy and common affairs by some method of continuous

consultation and concerted action. . . . The decision today is against any

federated reconstruction after the war. . . . It is evident, however, that

the institution through which the improved Imperial system will chiefly

work will be the newly constituted Imperial Cabinet. The Imperial

Cabinet will be different in some important respects from the Imperial

Conference. It will meet annually instead of once in four years. It will be

concerned more particularly with foreign policy, which the Imperial

Conference has never yet discussed. ... Its proceedings will consequently

be secret. ... It will also consist of the most important British Ministers

sitting in conclave with the Overseas Ministers instead of the Secretary of

State for the Colonies alone as has been usually the case hitherto.

As is well known, the Imperial War Cabinet met fourteen times in

1917, met again in 1918, and assembled at Paris in 1918-1919 as the

British Empire delegation to the Peace Conference. Parallel with it, the

Imperial War Conference met in London in 1917, under the Colonial

Secretary, to discuss non war problems. At the meetings of the former

body it was decided to hold annual meetings in the future and to invite

the Dominions to establish resident ministers in London to insure

constant consultation. At a meeting in 1917 was drawn up the famous

Imperial Resolution, which excluded federation as a solution of the

imperial problem and recognized the complete equality of the Domin-

ions and the United Kingdom under one King. These developments

were not only acceptable to Milner but apparently were largely engi-

neered by him. On 9 July 1919, he issued a formal statement contain-

ing the sentences, “The only possibility of a continuance of the British

Empire is on a basis of absolute-out-and-out-equal partnership be-

tween the United Kingdom and the Dominions. I say that without any

kind of reservation whatever.”

When Milner died, in May 1925, The Times obituary had this to say

about this portion of his life:

With the special meeting of the War Cabinet attended by the Dominion

Prime Ministers which, beginning on March 20, came to be distinguished

as the Imperial War Cabinet . . . Milner was more closely concerned than

any other British statesman. The conception of the Imperial War

Cabinet and the actual proposal to bring the Dominion Premiers into the

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United Kingdom Cabinet were his. And when, thanks to Mr. Lloyd

Georges ready acceptance of the proposal, Milner’s conception was real-

ized, it proved to be not only a solution of the problem of Imperial

Administrative unity in its then transient but most urgent phase, but a

permanent and far-reaching advance in the constitutional evolution of

the Empire. It met again in 1918, and was continued as the British

Empire Delegation in the peace negotiations at Versailles in 1919. Thus,

at the moment of its greatest need, the Empire was furnished by Milner

with a common Executive. For the Imperial War Cabinet could and did,

take executive action, and its decisions bound the Empire at large. 3

It was also Milner who insisted on and made the arrangements for

the Imperial Conference of 1921, acting in his capacity as Colonial

Secretary, although he was forced, by reason of poor health, to resign

before the conference assembled. It was in this period as Colonial

Secretary that Milner, assisted by Amery, set up the plans for the new

“dyarchic” constitution for Malta, gave Egypt its full freedom, set

Curtis to work on the Irish problem, and gave Canada permission to

establish its own legation in the United States — the latter post filled

only in 1926, and then by the son-in-law of Milner’s closest col-

laborator in the Rhodes Trust.

The Imperial Conferences of 1921 and 1923 were largely in the

control of the Cecil Bloc, at least so far as the United Kingdom delega-

tion was concerned. Three of the five members of this delegation in

1921 were from this Bloc (Balfour, Curzon, and Austen Chamberlain),

the other two being Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. Of the

members of the other five delegations, only Smuts, from South Africa,

is of significance to us. On the secretarial staff for the United Kingdom

delegation, we might point out the presence of Hankey and Grigg.

In the Imperial Conference of 1923 we find a similar situation.

Three of the four delegates from the United Kingdom were of the Cecil

Bloc (Lord Salisbury, Curzon, and the Duke of Devonshire), the other

being Prime Minister Baldwin. Smuts again led the South African

delegation. The secretarial staff was headed by Hankey, while the

separate Indian secretarial group was led by L. F. Rushbrook Wil-

liams. The latter, whom we have already mentioned, had been asso-

ciated with the Milner Group since he was elected a Fellow of All Souls

in 1914, had done special work in preparation of the Government of

India Act of 1919, and worked under Marris in applying that act after

it became law. His later career carried him to various parts of the

Milner Group’s extensive system, as can be seen from the fact that he

was a delegate to the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1925,

Foreign Minister of Patiala State in 1925-1931, a member of the Indian

Round Table Conference in 1920-1932, a significant figure in the

British Broadcasting Corporation and the Ministry of Information in

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delegation. There is nothing to indicate that Mr. Latham (later Sir

John) was a member of the Milner Group, but in later years his son,

Richard, clearly was. Sir John had apparently made his first contact

with the Milner Group in 1919, when he, a Professor of Law at the

University of Melbourne, was a member of the staff of the Australian

delegation to the Paris Peace Conference and, while there, became an

assistant secretary to the British delegation. In 1922, at the age of forty-

five, he began a twelve-year term as an Australian M. P, During that

brief period he was Attorney General in 1925-1929, Minister of

Industry in 1928-1929, Leader of the Opposition in 1929-1931, Deputy

Leader of the Majority in 1931-1932, and Deputy Prime Minister,

Attorney General, and Minister for Industry in 1932-1934. In addition,

he was British secretary to the Allied Commission on Czechoslovak

Affairs in 1919, first president of the League of Nations Union,

Australian delegate to the League of Nations in 1926 and 1932,

Australian representative to the World Disarmament Conference in

1932, Chancellor of the University of Melbourne in 1939-1941;

Australian Minister of Japan in 1940-1941, and vice-president of the

the period 1932-1944, and is now a member of the editorial staff of The

Times.

At these two conferences, various members of the Cecil Bloc and

Milner Group were called in for consultation on matters within their

competence. Of these persons, we might mention the names of H. A. L.

Fisher, Sir Eyre Crowe, Sir Cecil Hurst, Robert Cecil, Leopold Amery,

Samuel Hoare, and Sir Fabian Ware (of the Kindergarten).

The Imperial Conference of 1926 is generally recognized as one of

the most important of the postwar period. The Cecil Bloc and Milner

Group again had three out of five members of the United Kingdom

delegation (Balfour, Austen Chamberlain, and Leopold Amery), with

Baldwin and Churchill the other two. Hankey was, as usual, secretary

of the conference. Of the other seven delegations, nothing is germane

to our investigation except that Vincent Massey was an adviser to the

Canadian, and John Greig Latham was a member of the Australian,

Australian Red Cross in 1944. Since 1934, he has been Chief Justice of

Australia. In this brilliant, if belated, career, Sir John came into con-

tact with the Milner Group, and this undoubtedly assisted his son,

Richard, in his more precocious career. Richard Latham was a Rhodes

Scholar at Oxford until 1933 and a Fellow of All Souls from 1935. He

wrote the supplementary legal chapter in W. K. Hancock’s Survey of

British Commonwealth Affairs and was one of the chief advisers of

K. C. Wheare in his famous book. The Statute of Westminister and

Dominion Status (1938). Unfortunately, Richard Latham died a few

years later while still in his middle thirties. It is clear from Professor

Wheares book that Sir John Latham, although a member of the

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opposition at the time, was one of the chief figures in Australia’s accep-

tance of the Statute of Westminster.

The new status of the Dominions, as enunciated in the Report of the

conference and later known as the “Balfour Declaration,” was

accepted by the Milner Group both in The Round Table and in The

Times. In the latter, on 22 November 1926, readers were informed that

the “Declaration” merely described the Empire as it was, with nothing

really new except the removal of a few anachronisms. It concluded: “In

all its various clauses there is hardly a statement or a definition which

does not coincide with familiar practice.”

The Imperial Conference of 1930 was conducted by a Labour

government and had no members of the Cecil Bloc or Milner Group

among its chief delegates. Sir Maurice Hankey, however, was secretary

of the conference, and among its chief advisers were Maurice Gwyer

and H. D. Henderson. Both of these were members of All Souls and

probably close to the Milner Group.

The Imperial Conference of 1937 was held during the period in

which the Milner Group was at the peak of its power. Of the eight

members of the United Kingdom delegation, five were from the Milner

Group (Lord Halifax, Sir John Simon, Malcolm MacDonald, W. G. A.

Ormsby-Gore, and Sir Samuel Hoare). The others were Baldwin,

Neville Chamberlain, and J. Ramsay MacDonald. In addition, the

chief of the Indian delegation was the Marquess of Zetland of the Cecil

Bloc. Sir Maurice Hankey was secretary of the conference, and among

the advisers were Sir Donald Somervell (of All Souls and the Milner

Group), Vincent Massey, Sir Fabian Ware, and the Marquess of

Hartington.

In addition to the Imperial Conferences, where the influence of

the Milner Group was probably more extensive than appears from the

membership of the delegations, the Group was influential in the ad-

ministration of the Commonwealth, especially in the two periods of

its greatest power, from 1924 to 1929 and from 1935 to 1939. An

indication of this can be seen in the fact that the office of Colonial

Secretary was held by the Group for seven out of ten years from 1919 to

1929 and for five out of nine years from 1931 to 1940, while the office

of Dominion Secretary was held by a member of the Group for eight

out of the fourteen years from its creation in 1925 to the outbreak of the

war in 1939 (although the Labour Party was in power for two of those

years) . The Colonial Secretaries to whom we have reference were:

Lord Milner, 1919-1921

Leopold Amery, 1924-1929

Malcolm MacDonald, 1935

W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, 1936-1938

Malcolm MacDonald, 1938-1940

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The Dominion Secretaries to whom we have reference were:

Leopold Amery, 1925-1929

Malcolm MacDonald, 1935-1938, 1938-1939

The lesser positions within the Colonial Office were not remote from

the Milner Group. The Permanent Under Secretary was Sir George

Fiddes of the Kindergarten in 1916-1921. In addition, James

Masterton-Smith, who had been Balfour’s private secretary previously,

was Permanent Under Secretary in succession to Fiddes in 1921-1925,

and John Maffey, who had been Lord Chelmsford’s secretary while the

latter was Viceroy in 1916-1921, was Permanent Under Secretary from

1933 to 1937. The position of Parliamentary Under Secretary, which

had been held by Lord Selborne in 1895-1900 and by Sir Arthur Steel-

Maitland in 1915-1917, was held by Amery in 1919-1921, by Edward

Wood (Lord Halifax) in 1921-1922, by Ormsby-Gore in 1922-1924,

1924-1929, and by Lord Dufferin (brother of Lord Blackwood of the

Kindergarten) from 1937 to 1940.

Most of these persons (probably all except Masterton-Smith, Maffey,

and Lord Dufferin) were members of the Milner Group. The most

important, of course, was Leopold Amery, whom we have already

shown as Milner’s chief political protege. We have not yet indicated

that Malcolm MacDonald was a member of the Milner Group, and

must be satisfied at this point with saying that he was a member, or at

least an instrument, of the Group, from 1931 or 1932 onward, without

ever becoming a member of the inner circle. The evidence indicating

this relationship will be discussed later.

At this point we should say a few words about W. G. A. Ormsby-

Gore (Lord Harlech since 1938), who was a member of the Cecil Bloc

by marriage and of the Milner Group by adoption. A graduate of Eton

in 1930, he went to New College as a contemporary of Philip Kerr and

Reginald Coupland. He took his degree in 1908 and was made a Fellow

of New College in 1936. A Conservative member of Parliament from

1910 until he went to the Upper House in 1938, he spent the early years

of the First World War in military intelligence, chiefly in Egypt. In

1913 he married Lady Beatrice Cecil, daughter of the fourth Marquess

of Salisbury, and four years later became Parliamentary Private

Secretary to Lord Milner as well as assistant secretary to the War

Cabinet (associated in the latter post with Hankey, Kerr, W. G. S.

Adams, and Amery of the Milner Group). Ormsby-Gore went on a mis-

sion to Palestine in 1918 and was with the British delegation at the

Paris Peace Conference as an expert on the Middle East. He was Under

Secretary for the Colonies with the Duke of Devonshire in 1922-1924

and with Leopold Amery in 1924-1929, becoming Colonial Secretary

in his own right in 1936-1938. In the interval he was Postmaster

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General in 1931 and First Commissioner of Works in 1931-1936. He

was a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission (1921-1923)

and of the Colonial Office Mission to the British West Indies

(1921-1922), and was Chairman of the East African Parliamentary

Commission in 1924. He was High Commissioner of South Africa and

the three native protectorates in 1941-1944. He has been a director of

the Midland Bank and of the Standard Bank of South Africa. He was

also one of the founders of the Royal Institute of International Affairs,

a member of Lord Lothian’s committee on the African Survey, and a

member of the council of the Institute.

The Milner Group also influenced Commonwealth affairs by

publicity work of great quantity and good quality. This was done

through the various periodicals controlled by the Group, such as The

Round Table, The Times, International Affairs and others; by books

published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs and individual

members of the Group; by academic and university activities by men

like Professor Coupland, Professor Zimmern, Professor Harlow, and

others; by public and private discussion meetings sponsored by the

Round Table Groups throughout the Commonwealth, by the Institute

of International Affairs everywhere, by the Institute of Pacific Rela-

tions (IPR), by the Council on Foreign Relations, by the Williamstown

Institute of Politics, by the Rhodes Scholarship group; and through the

three unofficial conferences on British Commonwealth relations held

by the Group since 1933. Some of these organizations and activities

have already been mentioned. The last will be discussed here. The rest

are to be described in Chapter 10.

The three unofficial conferences on British Commonwealth relations

were held at Toronto in 1933, at Sydney in 1938, and at London in

1945. They were initiated and controlled by the Milner Group, acting

through the various Institutes of International Affairs, in the hope that

they would contribute to the closer union of the Commonwealth by

inclining the opinion of prominent persons in the Dominions in that

direction. The plan was originated by the British Empire members of

the Institute of Pacific Relations at the Kyoto meeting in 1929. The

members from Great Britain consisted of Lord Robert Cecil, Sir

Herbert Samuel, Sir Donald Somervell, Sir John Power, P. J. Noel-

Baker, G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, H. V. Hodson, H. W. Kerr, A. J.

Toynbee, J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, and A. E. Zimmern. Of these, two

were from the Cecil Bloc and five from the Milner Group. Discussion

was continued at the Shanghai meeting of the Institute of Pacific Rela-

tions in 1931, and a committee under Robert Cecil drew up an agenda

for the unofficial conference. This committee made the final

arrangements at a meeting in Chatham House in July 1932 and

published as a preliminary work a volume called Consultation and

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Cooperation in the British Commonwealth.

The conference was held at the University of Toronto, 11-21

September 1933, with forty-three delegates and thirty-three secre-

taries, the traveling expenses being covered by a grant from the

Carnegie Corporation. The United Kingdom delegation consisted of

the eleven names mentioned above plus R. C. M. Arnold as private

secretary to Lord Cecil and J. P. Maclay (the famous shipbuilder) as

private secretary to Sir Herbert Samuel. The Australian delegation of

six included Professor A. H. Charteris, Professor Ernest Scott, A.

Smithies (a Rhodes Scholar of 1929), Alfred Stirling (an Oxford B.A.),

W. J. V. Windeyer, and Richard Latham (a Rhodes Scholar of 1933).

The Canadian delegation consisted of N. W. Rowell, Sir Robert

Borden, Louis Cote, John W. Dafoe, Sir Robert Falconer, Sir Joseph

Flavelle, W. Sanford Evans, Vincent Massey, Rene L. Morin, J. S.

Woodsworth, W. M. Birks, Charles J. Burchell, Brooke Claxton, Percy

E. Corbett, W. P. M. Kennedy, J. J. MacDonnell (Rhodes Trustee for

Canada), and E. J. Tarr. The secretary to the delegation was George

Parkin Glazebrook (Balliol 1924). Most of these names are significant,

but we need only point out that at least four of them, including the

secretary, were members of the Milner Group (Massey, Corbett,

Flavelle, Glazebrook). The New Zealand delegation had three

members, one of which was W. Downie Stewart, and the South

African delegation had five members, including F. S. Malan and

Professor Eric A. Walker. The secretariat to the whole conference was

headed by I. S. Macadam of the Royal Institute of International

Affairs. The secretary to the United Kingdom delegation was H. V.

Hodson. Thus it would appear that the Milner Group had eight out of

forty-three delegates, as well as the secretaries to the Canadian and

United Kingdom delegations.

The conference was divided into four commissions, each of which

had a chairman and a rapporteur. In addition, the first commission (on

foreign policy) was subdivided into two subcommittees. The chairmen

of the four commissions were Robert Cecil, Vincent Massey, F. S.

Malan, and W. Downie Stewart. Thus the Milner Group had two out

of four. The rapporteurs (including the two subcommittees) were A. L.

Zimmern, H. V. Hodson, P. E. Corbett, E. A. Walker, P, J. Noel-

Baker, D. B. Somervell, and A. H. Charteris. Thus the Milner Group

had four out of seven and possibly more (as Walker may be a member

of the Group).

The discussions at the conference were secret, the press was ex-

cluded, and in the published Proceedings , edited by A. J. Toynbee, all

remarks were presented in indirect discourse and considerably cur-

tailed, without identification of the speakers. The conference made a

number of recommendations, including the following: (1) Dominion

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High Commissioners in London should be given diplomatic status with

direct access to the Foreign Office; (2) junior members of Dominion

Foreign Offices should receive a period of training in the Foreign

Office in London; (3) diplomatic representatives should be exchanged

between Dominions; (4) Commonwealth tribunals should be set up to

settle legal disputes between Dominions; (5) collective security and the

League of Nations should be supported; (6) cooperation with the

United States was advocated.

The second unofficial conference on British Commonwealth rela-

tions was held near Sydney, Australia, 3-17 September 1938. The ex-

penses were met by grants from the Carnegie Corporation and the

Rhodes Trustees. The decision to hold the second conference was made

by the British members at the Yosemite meeting of the Institute of

Pacific Relations in 1936. A committee under Viscount Samuel met at

Chatham House in June 1937 and drew up the arrangements and the

agenda. The selection of delegates was left to the various Institutes of

International Affairs. From the United Kingdom went Lord Lothian

(chairman), Lionel Curtis, W. K. Hancock, Hugh A. Wyndham, A. L.

Zimmern, Norman Bentwich, Ernest Bevin, V. A. Cazalet, A. M.

Fraser, Sir John Burnett-Stuart, Miss Grace Hadow, Sir Howard Kelly,

Sir Frederick Minter, Sir John Pratt, and James Walker. At least five

out of fifteen, including the chairman, were of the Milner Group.

From Australia came thirty-one members, including T. R. Bavin

(chairman of the delegation), K. H. Bailey (a Rhodes Scholar), and A.

H. Charteris. From Canada came fifteen, including E. J. Tarr (chair-

man of the delegation) and P. E. Corbett. From India came four In-

dians. From Ireland came five persons. From New Zealand came four-

teen, with W. Downie Stewart as chairman. From South Africa came

six, including P. Van der Byl (chairman) and G. R. Hofmeyr (an old

associate of the Milner Kindergarten in the Transvaal).

Of ninety delegates, nine were members of the Milner Group and

three others may have been. This is a small proportion, but the conduct

of the conference was well controlled. The chairmen of the three most

important delegations were of the Milner Group (Eggleston, Downie

Stewart, and Lothian); the chairman of the conference itself (Bavin)

was. The secretary of the conference was Macadam, the recorder was

Hodson, and the secretary to the press committee was Lionel Vincent

Massey (grandson of George Parkin). The Proceedings of the con-

ference were edited by Hodson, with an Introduction by Bavin, and

published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Again, no in-

dication was given of who said what.

The third unofficial conference on British Commonwealth relations

was similar to the others, although the war emergency restricted its

membership to persons who were already in London. As background

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material it prepared sixty-two books and papers, of which many are

now published. Among these was World War; Its Cause and Cure by

Lionel Curtis. The committee on arrangements and agenda, with Lord

Astor as chairman, met in New York in January 1944. The delegations

outside the United Kingdom were made up of persons doing war duty

in London, with a liberal mixture of Dominion Rhodes Scholars. The

chairmen of the various delegations included Professor K. H. Bailey

from Australia, E. J. Tarr from Canada, Sir Sardar E. Singh from

India, W. P. Morrell (whom we have already seen as a Beit Lecturer, a

Rhodes Scholar, and a co-editor with the Reverend K. N. Bell of All

Souls), Professor S. H. Frankel from South Africa, and Lord Hailey

from the United Kingdom. There were also observers from Burma and

Southern Rhodesia. Of the fifty- three delegates, sixteen were from the

United Kingdom. Among these were Lord Hailey, Lionel Curtis, V. T.

Harlow, Sir Frederick Whyte, A. G. B. Fisher, John Coatman, Miss

Kathleen Courtney, Viscount Hinchingbrooke, A. Creech Jones, Sir

Walter Layton, Sir Henry Price, Miss Heather Harvey, and others. Of

the total of fifty-three members, no more than five or six were of the

Milner Group. The opening speech to the conference was made by

Lord Robert Cecil, and the Proceedings were published in the usual

form under the editorship of Robert Frost, research secretary of the

Royal Institute of International Affairs and author of the imperial sec-

tions of The History of the Times .

In all the various activities of the Milner Group in respect to Com-

monwealth affairs, it is possible to discern a dualistic attitude. This at-

titude reveals a wholehearted public acceptance of the existing con-

stitutional and political relationships of Great Britain and the

Dominions, combined with an intense secret yearning for some form of

closer union. The realization that closer union was not politically

feasible in a democratic age in which the majority of persons, espe-

cially in the Dominions, rejected any effort to bind the various parts of

the Empire together explains this dualism. The members of the Group,

as The Round Table pointed out in 1919, were not convinced of the ef-

fectiveness or workability of any program of Dominion relations based

solely on cooperation without any institutional basis, but publicly, and

in the next breath, the Group wholeheartedly embraced all the

developments that destroyed one by one the legal and institutional

links which bound the Dominions to the mother country. In one special

field after another — in defense, economic cooperation, raw materials

conservation, war graves, intellectual cooperation, health measures,

etc., etc. — the Group eagerly welcomed efforts to create new institu-

tional links between the self-governing portions of the Commonwealth.

But all the time the Group recognized that these innovations were

unable to satisfy the yearning that burned in the Group’s collective

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heart. Only as the Second World War began to enter its second, and

more hopeful, half, did the Group begin once again to raise its voice

with suggestions for some more permanent organization of the con-

stitutional side of Commonwealth relations. All of these suggestions

were offered in a timid and tentative fashion, more or less publicly

labeled as trial balloons and usually prefaced by an engaging statement

that the suggestion was the result of the personal and highly imperfect

ideas of the speaker himself. “Thinking aloud,” as Smuts called it,

became epidemic among the members of the Group. These idle

thoughts could be, thus, easily repudiated if they fell on infertile or in-

hospitable ground, and even the individual whence these suggestions

emanated could hardly be held responsible for “thinking aloud.” All of

these suggestions followed a similar pattern: (1) a reflection on the

great crisis which the Commonwealth survived in 1940-1942; (2) an in-

dication that this crisis required some reorganization of the Com-

monwealth in order to avoid its repetition; (3) a passage of high praise

for the existing structure of the Commonwealth and an emphatic state-

ment that the independence and autonomy of its various members is

close to the speaker s heart and that nothing he suggests must be taken

as implying any desire to infringe in the slightest degree on that in-

dependence; and (4) the suggestion itself emerges. The logical incom-

patibility of the four sections of the pattern is never mentioned and if

pointed out by some critic would undoubtedly be excused on the

grounds that the English are practical rather than logical — an excuse

behind which many English, even outside the Milner Group, frequent-

ly find refuge.

We shall give three examples of the Milner Group’s suggestions for

Commonwealth reform in the second half of the recent war. They

emanated from General Smuts, Lord Halifax, and Sir Edward Grigg.

All of them were convinced that the British Commonwealth would be

drastically weaker in the postwar world and would require internal

reorganization in order to take its place as a balancing force between

the two great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Smuts,

in an article in the American weekly magazine Life for 28 December

1942, and in a speech before the United Kingdom branch of the Empire

Parliamentary Association in London on 25 November 1943, was delib-

erately vague but hoped to use the close link between the United King-

dom and the dependent colonies as a means of bringing the self-govern-

ing Dominions closer to the United Kingdom by combining the Domin-

ions with the colonies in regional blocs. This plan had definite advan-

tages, although it had been rejected as impractical by Lionel Curtis in

1916. If regional blocs could be formed by dividing the British Com-

monwealth into four or five geographic groupings, with a Dominion in

each region closely associated with the colonies in the same region, and

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if this could be done without weakening the link between the United

Kingdom and the colonies, it would serve to strengthen the link be-

tween the United Kingdom and the Dominions. This latter goal was

frankly admitted by Smuts. He also suggested that a federated Western

Europe be included in the United Kingdom regional bloc.

Sir Edward Grigg’s suggestion, made in his book The British Com -

monwealth , appeared also in 1943. It was very similar to Smuts ’s, even

to the use of the same verbal expressions. For example, both spoke of

the necessity for ending the “dual Empire/’ of which one part was

following a centralizing course and the other a decentralizing course.

This expression was derived from Lord Milner (and was attributed to

this source by Sir Edward) and referred to the difference between the

dependent and the self-governing portions of the Commonwealth. Sir

Edward advocated creation of five regional blocs, with Western

Europe, associated by means of a military alliance with the United

Kingdom, in one. Without any sacrifice of sovereignty by anyone, he

visualized the creation of a regional council (“like a miniature Imperial

Conference”) and a joint parliamentary assembly in three of these

regions. The members of the council would be representatives of

legislatures and not of governments; the assembly would consist of

select members from the existing national parliaments in proper ratio;

and each region would have a permanent secretariat to carry out

agreed decisions. How this elaborate organization could be reconciled

with the continuance of unrestricted national sovereignty was not in-

dicated.

Lord Halifax’s suggestion, made in a speech before the Toronto

Board of Trade on 24 January 1944, was somewhat different, although

he clearly had the same goal in view and the same mental picture of

existing world conditions. He suggested that Britain could not maintain

her position as a great power, in the sense in which the United States

and Russia were great powers, on the basis of the strength of the United

Kingdom alone. Accordingly, he advocated the creation of some

method of coordination of foreign policy and measures of defense by

which the Dominions could participate in both and a united front

could be offered to other powers.

That these trial balloons of Smuts, Grigg, and Halifax were not their

isolated personal reactions but were the results of a turmoil of thought

within the Milner Group was evident from the simultaneous sugges-

tions which appeared in The Times editorials during the first week in

December 1943 and the issue of The Round Table for the same month.

The Winnipeg Free Press , a paper which has frequently shown

knowledge of the existence of the Milner Group, in editorials of 26 and

29 January 1944, pointed out this effusion of suggestions for a

reconstruction of the Empire and said:

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Added to the record of earlier statements, the Halifax speech affords con-

clusive evidence that there is a powerful movement on foot in the United

Kingdom for a Commonwealth which will speak with a single voice. And

it will be noted that Lord Halifax believes that this change in the structure

of the Commonwealth will be the first consideration of the next Imperial

Conference. . . . Running through all these speeches and articles is the

clear note of fear. The spokesmen are obsessed by the thought of power as

being the only force that counts. The world is to be governed by

Leviathans. ... It is tragic that the sincere and powerful group of public

men in England, represented by Lord Halifax and Field Marshal Smuts,

should react to the problem of maintaining peace in this way.

These suggestions were met by an uproar of protests that reached un-

necessary heights of denunciation, especially in Canada. They were re-

jected in South Africa, repulsed by Mackenzie King and others in

Canada, called “isolationist” by the CCF party, censured unanimously

by the Quebec Assembly, and repudiated by Prime Minister Churchill.

Except in New Zealand and Australia, where fear of Japan was having

a profound effect on public opinion, and in the United Kingdom,

where the Milner Group's influence was so extensive, the suggestions

received a cold reception. In South Africa only The Cape Times was

favorable, and in Canada The Vancouver Province led a small band of

supporters. As a result, the Milner Group once again rejected any

movement toward closer union. It continued to toy with Griggs idea of

regional blocs within the Commonwealth, but here it found an almost

insoluble problem. If a regional bloc were to be created in Africa, the

natives of the African colonial areas would be exposed to the untender

mercies of the South African Boers, and it would be necessary to

repudiate the promises of native welfare which the Group had sup-

ported in the Kenya White Paper of 1923, its resistance to Boer in-

fluence in the three native protectorates in South Africa, the implica-

tions in favor of native welfare in The African Survey of 1938, and the

frequent pronouncements of The Round Table on the paramount im-

portance of protecting native rights. Such a repudiation was highly

unlikely, and indeed was specifically rejected by Grigg himself in his

book. 4

The Milner Group itself had been one of the chief, if not the chief,

forces in Britain intensifying the decentralizing influences in the self-

governing portions of the Empire. This influence was most significant

in regard to India, Palestine, Ireland, and Egypt, each of which was

separated from Great Britain by a process in which the Milner Group

was a principal agent. The first of these is so significant that it will be

discussed in a separate chapter, but a few words should be said about

the other three here.

The Milner Group had relatively little to do with the affairs of

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Palestine except in the early period (1915-1919), in the later period (the

Peel Report of 1937), and in the fact that the British influence on the

Permanent Mandates Commission was always exercised through a

member of the Group.

The idea of establishing a mandate system for the territories taken

from enemy powers as a result of the war undoubtedly arose from the

Milner Group’s inner circle. It was first suggested by George Louis Beer

in a report submitted to the United States Government on 1 January

1918, and by Lionel Curtis in an article called “Windows of Freedom”

in The Round Table for December 1918. Beer was a member of the

Round Table Group from about 1912 and was, in fact, the first

member who was not a British subject. That Beer was a member of the

Group was revealed in the obituary published in The Round Table for

September 1920. The Group’s attention was first attracted to Beer by a

series of Anglophile studies on the British Empire in the eighteenth cen-

tury which he published in the period after 1893. A Germanophobe as

well as an Anglophile, he intended by writing, if we are to believe The

Round Table , “to counteract the falsehoods about British Colonial

policy to be found in the manuals used in American primary schools.”

When the Round Table Group, about 1911, began to study the causes

of the American Revolution, they wrote to Beer, and thus began a close

and sympathetic relationship. He wrote the reports on the United

States in The Round Table for many years, and his influence is clearly

evident in Curtis’s The Commonwealth of Nations. He gave a hint of

the existence of the Milner Group in an article which he wrote for the

Political Science Quarterly of June 1915 on Milner. He said: “He stands

forth as the intellectual leader of the most progressive school of im-

perial thought throughout the Empire.” Beer was one of the chief sup-

porters of American intervention in the war against Germany in the

period 1914-1917; he was the chief expert on colonial questions on

Colonel House’s “Inquiry,” which was studying plans for the peace set-

tlements; and he was the American expert on colonial questions at the

Peace Conference in Paris. The Milner Group was able to have him

named head of the Mandate Department of the League of Nations as

soon as it was established. He was one of the originators of the Royal

Institute of International Affairs in London and its American branch,

The Council on Foreign Relations. With Lord Eustace Percy, he drew

up the plan for the History of the Peace Conference which was carried

out by Harold Temperley.

Curtis’s suggestion for a mandates system was published in The

Round Table after discussions with Kerr and other members of the

inner circle. It was read by Smuts before it was printed and was used

by the latter as the basis for his memorandum published in December

1918 with the title The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion. This

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embodied a constitution for the League of Nations in twenty-one

articles. The first nine of these dealt with the question of mandates.

The mandates article of the final Covenant of the League (Article 22)

was drafted by Smuts and Kerr (according to Temperley) and was in-

troduced by Smuts to the League Commission of the Peace Conference.

The mandates themselves were granted under conditions drawn up by

Lord Milner. Since it was felt that this should be done on an interna-

tional basis, the Milner drafts were not accepted at once but were sub-

mitted to an international committee of five members meeting in Lon-

don. On this committee Milner was chairman and sole British member

and succeeded in having his drafts accepted. 5

The execution of the terms of the mandates were under the supervi-

sion of a Permanent Mandates Commission of nine members (later

ten). The British member of this commission was always of the Milner

Group, as can be seen from the following list:

W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, February 1921-July 1923

Lord Lugard, July 1923-July 1936

Lord Hailey, September 1936-March 1939

Lord Hankey, May 1939-September 1939

Lord Hailey, September 1939-

The origins and the supervision power of the mandates system were

thus largely a result of the activities of the Milner Group. This applied

to Palestine as well as the other mandates. Palestine, however, had a

peculiar position among mandates because of the Balfour Declaration

of 1917, which states that Britain would regard with favor the

establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine. This

declaration, which is always known as the Balfour Declaration, should

rather be called “the Milner Declaration,” since Milner was the actual

draftsman and was, apparently, its chief supporter in the War

Cabinet. This fact was not made public until 21 July 1937. At that time

Ormsby-Gore, speaking for the government in Commons, said, “The

draft as originally put up by Lord Balfour was not the final draft ap-

proved by the War Cabinet. The particular draft assented to by the

War Cabinet and afterwards by the Allied Governments and by the

United States . . . and finally embodied in the Mandate, happens to

have been drafted by Lord Milner. The actual final draft had to be

issued in the name of the Foreign Secretary, but the actual draftsman

was Lord Milner.” Milner had referred to this fact in a typically in-

direct and modest fashion in the House of Lords on 27 June 1923, when

he said, “I was a party to the Balfour Declaration.” In the War

Cabinet, at the time, he received strong support from General Smuts.

Once the mandate was set up, also in terms drafted by Milner, the

Milner Group took little actual part in the administration of Palestine.

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None of the various high commissioners was a member of the Group,

and none of the various commissions concerned with this problem

possessed a member from the Group until the Peel Commission of 1936.

Reginald Coupland was one of the six members of the Peel Commis-

sion and, according to unofficial information, was the chief author of

its report. In spite of this lack of direct contact with the subject, the

Milner Group exercised a certain amount of influence in regard to

Palestine because of its general power in the councils of the Conser-

vative Party and because Palestine was administered through the

Colonial Office, where the Milner Group’s influence was considerable.

The general attitude of the Milner Group was neither pro-Arab nor

pro-Zionist, although tending, if at all, toward the latter rather than

the former. The Group were never anti-Semitic, and not a shred of

evidence in this direction has been found. In fact, they were very sym-

pathetic to the Jews and to their legitimate aspirations to overcome

their fate, but this feeling, it must be confessed, was rather general and

remote, and they did not, in their personal lives, have much real con-

tact with Jews or any real appreciation of the finer qualities of those

people. Their feeling against anti-Semitism was, on the whole, remote

and academic. On the other hand, as with most upper-class English,

their feeling for the Arabs was somewhat more personal. Many

members of the Group had been in Arab countries, found their per-

sonal relationships with the Arabs enjoyable, and were attracted to

them. However, this attraction of the Arabs never inclined the Milner

Group toward that pro-Arab romanticism that was to be found in peo-

ple like W. S. Blunt or T. E. Lawrence. The reluctance of the Milner

Group to push the Zionist cause in Palestine was based on more aca-

demic considerations, chiefly two in number: (1) the feeling that it

would not be fair to allow the bustling minority of Zionists to come into

Palestine and drive the Arabs either out or into an inferior economic

and social position; and (2) the feeling that to do this would have the

effect of alienating the Arabs from Western, and especially British,

culture, and that this would be especially likely to occur if the Jews ob-

tained control of the Mediterranean coast from Egypt to Syria.

Strangely enough, there is little evidence that the Milner Group was

activated by strategic or economic considerations at all. Thus the

widely disseminated charges that Britain failed to support Zionism in

Palestine because of anti-Semitism or strategic and economic con-

siderations is not supported by any evidence found within the Milner

Group. This may be true of other sections of British public opinion,

and certainly is true of the British Labour Party, where the existence of

anti-Semitism as an influence seems clearly established.

In Palestine, as in India and probably in Ireland, the policy of the

Milner Group seems to have been motivated by good intentions which

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alienated the contending parties, encouraged extremism, and weak-

ened British influence with both. In the long run, this policy was pro-

Arab, just as in India it was pro-Moslem, and in both cases it served to

encourage an uncompromising obstructionism which could have been

avoided if Britain had merely applied the principles to which she stood

committed.

The attitude of the Milner Group toward the Arabs and Jews can be

seen from some quotations from members of the Group. At the Peace

Conference of 1919, discussing the relative merits of the Jews and

Arabs, Smuts said: “They haven't the Arabs’ attractive manners. They

do not warm the heart by graceful subjection. They make demands.

They are a bitter, recalcitrant little people, and, like the Boers, impa-

tient of leadership and ruinously quarrelsome among themselves. They

see God in the shape of an Oriental potentate.” A few years later, John

Dove, in a letter to Brand, asked himself why there was so much pro-

Arab feeling among the British, especially “the public school caste,”

and attributed it to the Arabs’ good manners, derived from desert life,

and their love for sports, especially riding and shooting, both close to

the heart of the public-school boy. A little later, in another letter, also

written from Palestine, Dove declared that the whole Arab world

should be in one state and it must have Syria and Palestine for its front

door, not be like South Africa, with Delagoa Bay in other hands. The

Arab world, he explained, needs this western door because we are

trying to westernize the Arabs, and without it they would be driven to

the east and to India, which they hate. He concluded:

If the Arab belongs to the Mediterranean, as T. E. Lawrence insists, we

should do nothing to stop him getting back to it. Why our own nostrum

for the ills of mankind everywhere is Western Civilization, and, if it is a

sound one, what would be the good of forcing a people who want direct

contact with us to slink in and out of their country by a back door which,

like the Persian Gulf, opens only on the East? It would certainly check

development, if it did not actually warp it. I suggest then that partition

should not be permanent, but this does not mean that a stage of friendly

tutelage is necessarily a bad thing for the Arabs. On the contrary, ad-

vanced peoples can give so much to stimulate backward ones if they do it

with judgment and sympathy. Above all, it must not be the kind of help

which kills individuality. . . . Personally, I don’t see the slightest harm in

Jews coming to Palestine under reasonable conditions. They are the

Arabs’ cousins as much as the Phoenicians, and if Zionism brings capital

and labour which will enable industries to start, it will add to the strength

of the larger unit which some day is going to include Palestine. But they

must be content to be part of such a potential unit. They need have no fear

of absorption, for they have everything to gain from an Arab Federation.

It would mean a far larger field for their activities.

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The attitude of the Milner Group toward the specific problem of

Zionism was expressed in explicit terms by Lord Milner himself in a

speech in the House of Lords on 27 June 1923. After expressing his

wholehearted agreement with the policy of the British government as

revealed in its actions and in its statements, like the Balfour Declara-

tion and the White Paper of 1922 (Cmd. 1700), he added:

I am not speaking of the policy which is advocated by the extreme

Zionists, which is a totally different thing. ... I believe that we have only

to go on steadily with the policy of the Balfour Declaration as we have

ourselves interpeted it in order to see great material progress in Palestine

and a gradual subsistence of the present [Arab] agitation, the force of

which it would be foolish to deny, but which I believe to be largely due to

artificial stimulus and, to a very great extent, to be excited from without.

The symptoms of any real and general dissatisfaction among the mass of

the Arab population with the conditions under which they live, I think it

would be very difficult to discover. . . . There is plenty of room in that

country for a considerable immigrant population without injuring in any

way the resident Arab population, and, indeed, in many ways it would

tend to their extreme benefit. . . . There are about 700,000 people in

Palestine, and there is room for several millions. ... I am and always

have been a strong supporter of the pro- Arab policy which was first advo-

cated in this country in the course of the war. I believe in the indepen-

dence of the Arab countries, which they owe to us and which they can

only maintain with our help. I look forward to an Arab Federation. ... I

am convinced that the Arab will make a great mistake ... in claiming

Palestine as a part of the Arab Federation in the same sense as are the

other countries of the Near East which are mainly inhabited by Arabs.

He then went on to say that he felt that Palestine would require a

permanent mandate and under that condition could become a National

Home for the Jew r s, could take as many Jewish immigrants as the coun-

try could economically support, but “must never become a Jewish

state.”

This was the point of view of the Milner Group, and it remained the

point of view of the British government until 1939. Like the Milner

Group’s point of view on other issues, it was essentially fair, com-

promising, and well-intentioned. It broke down in Palestine because of

the obstructionism of the Arabs; the intention of the Zionists to have

political control of their National Home, if they got one; the pressure

on both Jews and Arabs from the world depression after 1929; and the

need for a refuge from Hitler for European Jews after 1933. The Milner

Group did not approve of the efforts of the Labour government in

1929-1931 to curtail Zionist rights in Palestine. They protested

vigorously against the famous White Paper of 1930 (Cmd. 3692),

which was regarded as anti-Zionist. Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain,

and Leopold Amery protested against the document in a letter to The

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Times on 30 October 1930, Smuts sent a telegram of protest to the

Prime Minister, and Sir John Simon declared it a violation of the man-

date in a letter to The Times . Seven years later, the report of the Peel

Commission said that the White Paper “betrayed a marked insen-

sitiveness to Jewish feelings.” As a result of this pressure, Ramsay Mac-

Donald wrote a letter to Dr. Weizmann, interpreting the document in

a more moderate fashion.

As might be expected, in view of the position of Reginald Coupland

on the Peel Commission, the report of that Commission met with a

most enthusiastic reception from the Milner Group. This report was a

scholarly study of conditions in Palestine, of a type usually found in

any document with which the Milner Group had direct contact. For

the first time in any government document, the aspirations of Jews and

Arabs in Palestine were declared to be irreconcilable and the existing

mandate unworkable. Accordingly, the report recommended the parti-

tion of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and a neutral

enclave containing the Holy Places. This suggestion was accepted by

the British government in a White Paper (Cmd. 5513) issued through

Ormsby-Gore. He also defended it before the Permanent Mandates

Commission of the League of Nations. In the House of Lords it was

defended by Lord Lugard, but recently retired as the British member

of the Permanent Mandates Commission. It was also supported by

Lord Dufferin and Archbishop Lang. In the House of Commons the

motion to approve the governments policy as outlined in the White

Paper Cmd. 5513 was introduced by Ormsby-Gore. The first speech in

support of the motion, which was passed without a division, was from

Leopold Amery.

Amery s speech in support of this motion is extremely interesting and

is actually an evolution, under the pressure of hard facts, from the

point of view described by Lord Milner in 1923. Amery said: “However

much we may regret it, we have lost the situation in Palestine, as we

lost it in Ireland, through a lack of wholehearted faith in ourselves and

through the constitutional inability of the individual Briton, and in-

deed of the country as a whole, not to see the other fellow’s point of

view and to be influenced by it, even to the detriment of any consistent

policy.” According to Amery, the idea of partition occurred to the Peel

Commission only after it had left Palestine and the report was already

written. Thus the commission was unable to hear any direct evidence

on this question or make any examination of how partition should be

carried out in detail. He said:

Of the 396 pages of the Report almost the whole of the first 368 pages, in-

cluding the whole of chapters 7 to 19, represent an earlier Report of an

entirely different character. That earlier Report envisaged the continua-

tion of the Mandate in its present form. . . . Throughout all these chapters

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to which I have referred, the whole text of the chapters deals with the

assumption that the Mandate is continued, but here and there, at the end

of some chapter, there is tacked on in a quite obviously added last para-

graph, something to this effect: “All the rest of the chapter before is some-

thing that might have been considered if, as a matter of fact, we were not

going to pursue an entirely different policy.” These last paragraphs were

obviously added by the Secretary, or whoever helped draft the Report,

after the main great conclusion was reached at a very late stage.

Since the Milner Group supported partition in Palestine, as they had

earlier in Ireland and as they did later in India, it is not too much to

believe that Coupland added the additional paragraphs after the com-

mission had returned to England and he had had an opportunity to

discuss the matter with other members of the inner circle. In fact,

Amery’s remarks were probably based on knowledge rather than inter-

nal textual evidence and were aimed to get the motion accepted, with

the understanding that it approved no more than the principle of parti-

tion, with the details to be examined by another commission later.

This, in fact, is what was done.

Amery’s speech is also interesting for its friendly reference to the

Jews. He said that in the past the Arabs had obtained 100 percent of

what they were promised, while the Jews had received “a raw deal/’ in

spite of the fact that the Jews had a much greater need of the country

and would make the best use of the land.

To carry out the policy of partition, the government appointed a

new royal commission of four members in March 1938. Known as the

Woodhead Commission, this body had no members of either the

Milner Group or the Cecil Bloc on it, and its report (Cmd. 5854) re-

jected partition as impractical on the grounds that any acceptable

method of partition into two states would give a Jewish state with an

annual financial surplus and an Arab state with an annual financial

deficit. This conclusion was accepted by the government in another

White Paper (Cmd. 5893 of 1938). As an alternative, the government

called a Round Table Conference of Jews and Arabs from Palestine

along with representatives of the Arab states outside of Palestine.

During all this, the Arabs had been growing increasingly violent; they

refused to accept the Peel Report; they boycotted the Woodhead Com-

mission; and they finally broke into open civil war. In such conditions,

nothing was accomplished at the Round Table meetings at London in

February-March 1939. The Arab delegation included leaders who had

to be released from prison in order to come and who refused to sit in the

same conference with the Jews. Compromise proposals presented by

the government were rejected by both sides.

After the conference broke up, the government issued a new state-

ment of policy (Cmd. 6019 of May 1939). It was a drastic reversal of

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previous statements and was obviously a turn in favor of the Arabs. It

fixed Jewish immigration into Palestine at 75,000 for the whole of the

next five years (including illegal immigration) and gave the Arabs a

veto on any Jewish immigration after the five-year period was finished.

As a matter of principle, it shifted the basis for Jewish immigration

from the older criterion of the economic absorptive capacity of

Palestine to the political absorptive capacity. This was really an invita-

tion to the Arabs to intensify their agitation and constituted a vital

blow at the Jews, since it was generally conceded that Jewish immigra-

tion increased the economic absorptive capacity for both Jews and

Arabs.

The Milner Group were divided on this concrete policy. In general,

they continued to believe that the proper solution to the Zionist prob-

lem could be found in a partitioned Palestine within a federation of

Arab states. The Round Table offered this as its program in March

1939 and repeated it in June of the same year. But on the issue of an im-

mediate and concrete policy, the Group was split. It is highly unlikely

that this split originated with the issue of Zionism. It was, rather, a

reflection of the more fundamental split within the Group, between

those, like Amery and Salter, who abandoned the appeasement policy

in March 1939 and those, like the Astors and Lothian, who continued

to pursue it in a modified form.

The change in the policy of the government resulted in a full debate

in the House of Commons. This debate, and the resulting division,

revealed the split within the Milner Group. The policy of the White

Paper was denounced by Amery as a betrayal of the Jews and of the

mandate, as the final step in a scaling down of Jewish hopes that began

in 1922, as a yielding of principle to Arab terrorists, as invalid without

the approval of the League of Nations, and as unworkable because the

Jews would and could resist it. The speeches for the government from

Malcolm MacDonald and R. A. Butler were weak and vague. In the

division, the government won approval of the White Paper by 268 to

179, with Major Astor, Nancy Astor, Hoare, Simon, Malcolm Mac-

Donald, and Sir Donald Somervell in the majority and Amery, Noel-

Baker, and Arthur Salter in the minority. On the same day, a similar

motion in the House of Lords was approved without a division.

The government at once began to put the White Paper policy into

effect, without waiting for the approval of the Permanent Mandates

Commission. In July 1939 rumors began to circulate that this body had

disapproved of the policy, and questions were asked in the House of

Commons, but MacDonald evaded the issue, refused to give informa-

tion which he possessed, and announced that the government would

take the issue to the Council of the League. As the Council meeting was

canceled by the outbreak of war, this could not be done, but within a

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week of the announcement the minutes of the Permanent Mandates

Commission were released. They showed that the commission had, by

unanimous vote, decided that the policy of the White Paper was con-

trary to the accepted interpretations of the mandate, and, by a vote of

4-3, that the White Paper was inconsistent with the mandate under any

possible interpretation. In this last vote Hankey, at his first session of

the commission, voted in the minority.

As a result of the release of this information, a considerable section of

the House was disturbed by the government’s high-handed actions and

by the Colonial Secretary’s evasive answers in July 1939. In March

1940, Noel-Baker introduced a motion of censure on this issue. The mo-

tion did not go to a division, but Amery once again objected to the new

policy and to inviting representatives of the Arab states to the abortive

Round Table Conference of 1939. He called the presence of agents of

the Mufti at the Round Table ‘‘surrender.”

By this time the Milner Group was badly shattered on other issues

than Palestine. Within two months of this debate, it was reunited on

the issue of all-out war against Germany, and Amery had resumed a

seat in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for India. The Palestine issue

declined in importance and did not revive to any extent until the

Labour government of 1945 had taken office. From that time on the

members of the Milner Group were united again on the issue, objecting

to the Labour government’s anti-Jewish policy and generally following

the line Amery had laid down in 1939. In fact, it was Amery who did

much of the talking in 1946-1949, but this is not strictly part of our

story.

In Irish affairs, the Milner Group played a much more decisive role

than in Palestine affairs, although only for the brief period from 1917

to 1925. Previous to 1917 and going back to 1887, Irish affairs had been

one of the most immediate concerns of the Cecil Bloc. A nephew of

Lord Salisbury was Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1887-1891, another

nephew held the post in 1895-1900, and the private secretary and pro-

tege of the former held the post in 1900-1905. The Cecil Bloc had

always been opposed to Home Rule for Ireland, and when, in

1912-1914, the Liberal government took steps to grant Home Rule, Sir

Edward Carson took the lead in opposing these steps. Carson was a

creation of the Cecil Bloc, a fact admitted by Balfour in 1929, when he

told his niece, “I made Carson.” Balfour found Carson a simple Dublin

barrister in 1887, when he went to Ireland as Chief Secretary. He made

Carson one of his chief prosecuting attorneys in 1887, an M.P. for

Dublin University in 1892, and Solicitor General in his own govern-

ment in 1900-1906. When the Home Rule Bill of 1914 was about to

pass, Carson organized a private army, known as the Ulster

Volunteers, armed them with guns smuggled in from Germany, and

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formed a plot to seize control of Belfast at a given signal from him. This

signal, in the form of a code telegram, was written in 1914 and on its

way to be dispatched by Carson when he received word from Asquith

that war with Germany was inevitable. Accordingly, the revolt was

canceled and the date on which the Home Rule Bill was to go into

effect was postponed by special act of Parliament until six months after

peace should be signed.

The information about the telegram of 1914 was revealed to Lionel

Curtis by Carson in a personal conversation after war began. Curtis’s

attitude was quite different, and he thoroughly disapproved of

Carson’s plot. This difference is an indication of the difference in point

of view in regard to Ireland between the Milner Group and the Cecil

Bloc. The latter was willing to oppose Home Rule even to the point

where it would condone illegal actions; the former, on the contrary,

was in favor of Home Rule because it believed that Ireland would aid

Britain’s enemies in every crisis and leave the Commonwealth at the

first opportunity unless it were given freedom to govern itself.

The Milner Group’s attitude toward the Irish question was expressed

by The Round Table in a retrospective article in the September 1935

issue in the following words:

The root principle of The Round Table remained freedom — “the govern-

ment of men by themselves” — and it demanded that within the Empire

this principle should be persistently pursued and expressed in institutions.

For that reason it denounced the post-war attempt to repress the Irish

demand for national self-government by ruthless violence after a century

of union had failed to win Irish consent, as a policy in conflict with

British institutions and inconsistent with the principle of the British

Commonwealth; and it played its part in achieving the Irish Treaty and

the Dominion settlement.

The part which the Group played in the Irish settlement was con-

siderably more than this brief passage might indicate, but it could not

take effect until the group in Britain advocating repression and the

group in Ireland advocating separation from the crown had brought

each other to some realization of the advantages of compromise.

These advantages were pointed out by the Group, especially by

Lionel Curtis, who began a two-year term as editor of The Round

Table immediately after his great triumph in the Government of India

Act of 1919. In the March 1920 issue, for example, he discussed and ap-

proved a project, first announced by Lloyd George in December 1919,

to separate northern and southern Ireland and give self-government to

both as autonomous parts of Great Britain. This was really nothing but

an application of the principle of devolution, whose attractiveness to

the Milner Group has already been mentioned.

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The Irish Settlement in the period 1920-1923 is very largely a Milner

Group achievement. For most of this period Amery’s brother-in-law,

Hamar Greenwood (Viscount Greenwood since 1937), was Chief

Secretary for Ireland. He was, indeed, the last person to hold this office

before it was abolished at the end of 1922. Curtis was adviser on Irish

affairs to the Colonial Office in 1921-1924, and Smuts and Feetham in-

tervened in the affair at certain points.

A settlement of the Irish problem along lines similar to those ad-

vocated by The Round Table was enacted in the Government of

Ireland Act of December 1920. Drafted by H. A. L. Fisher and piloted

through Commons by him, it passed the critical second reading by a

vote of 348-94. In the majority were Amery, Nancy Astor, Austen

Chamberlain, H. A. L. Fisher, Hamar Greenwood, Samuel Hoare, G.

R. Lane-Fox (brother-in-law of Lord Halifax), and E. F. L. Wood

(Lord Halifax). In the minority were Lord Robert Cecil and Lord

Wolmer (son of Lord Selborne). In the House of Lords the bill passed

by 164-75. In the majority were Lords Curzon, Lytton, Onslow

(brother-in-law of Lord Halifax), Goschen, Hampden (brother of

Robert Brand), Hardinge, Milner, Desborough, Ernie, Meston, Mon-

son, Phillimore, Riddell, and Wemyss. In the minority were Lords

Linlithgow, Beauchamp (father-in-law of Samuel Hoare), Midleton,

Bryce, Ampthill (brother-in-law of Samuel Hoare), and Leconfield

(brother of Hugh Wyndham).

The act of 1920 never went into effect because the extremists on both

sides were not yet satiated with blood. By June 1921 they were. The

first movement in this direction, according to W. K. Hancock, “may be

said to open as early as October 1920 when The Times published sug-

gestions for a truce and negotiations between plenipotentiaries of both

sides.” The same authority lists ten voices as being raised in protest at

British methods of repression. Three of these were of the Milner Group

(The Times , The Round Table , and Sir John Simon). He quotes The

Round Table as saying: “If the British Commonwealth can only be

preserved by such means, it would become a negation of the principle

for which it has stood.” 6 Similar arguments were brought to bear on

the Irish leaders by Jan Smuts.

Smuts left South Africa for England at the end of May 1921, to at-

tend the Imperial Conference of that year, which was to open on a

Monday. He arrived in England the preceding Saturday and went to

Oxford to stay with friends of the Milner Group. In the evening he at-

tended a Rhodes dinner, which means he saw more of the Group. The

following day, he was called by the King to Windsor Castle and went

immediately. The King told Smuts that he was going to make a speech

at the opening of the new Ulster Parliament. He asked Smuts to write

down suggestions for this speech. Smuts stayed the night at Windsor

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Castle, drafted a speech, and gave it to the King’s private secretary.

The sequel can best be told in Smuts’s own words as recorded in the

second volume of S. G. Millin’s biography: “The next day Lloyd

George invited me to attend a committee meeting of the Cabinet, to

give my opinion of the King’s speech. And what should this King’s

speech turn out to be but a typewritten copy of the draft I had myself

written the night before. I found them working on it. Nothing was said

about my being the author. They innocently consulted me and I in-

nocently answered them. But imagine the interesting position. Well,

they toned the thing down a bit, they made a few minor alterations,

but in substance the speech the King delivered next week in Belfast was

the one I prepared.” 7 Needless to say, this speech was conciliatory.

Shortly afterward, Tom Casement, brother of Sir Roger Casement,

who had been executed by the British in 1916, opened negotiations be-

tween Smuts and the Irish leaders in Dublin. Tom Casement was an

old friend of Smuts, for he had been British Consul at Delagoa Bay in

1914 and served with Smuts in East Africa in 1916-1917. As a result,

Smuts went to Ireland in June 1921 under an alias and was taken to the

hiding place of the rebels. He tried to persuade them that they would

be much better off with Dominion status within the British Com-

monwealth than as a republic, offering as an example the insecure posi-

tion of the Transvaal before 1895 in contrast with its happy condition

after 1909. He said in conclusion, “Make no mistake about it, you have

more privilege, more power, more peace, more security in such a

sisterhood of equal nations than in a small, nervous republic having all

the time to rely on goodwill, and perhaps the assistance, of foreigners.

What sort of independence do you call that? By comparison with real

independence it is a shadow. You sell the fact for the name.” Smuts felt

that his argument was having an effect on Arthur Griffith and some

others, but de Valera remained suspicious, and Erskine Childers was

“positively hostile.” Nevertheless, the Irish decided to open negotia-

tions with London, and Smuts promised to arrange an armistice. The

armistice went into effect on 11 July 1921, and three days later the con-

ference began.

The Irish Conference of 1921 was held in two sessions: a week in July

and a series of meetings from 11 October to 6 December 1921. The

secretary to the conference was Lionel Curtis, who resigned his editor-

ship of The Round Table for the purpose and remained as chief adviser

on Irish affairs to the Colonial Office for the next three years. As a

result of the conference, the Irish moderates negotiated the Articles of

Agreement of 6 December 1921. De Valera had refused to form part of

the Irish delegation at the second session of the conference, and refused

to accept Dominion status, although Smuts begged him to do so in a

letter published in The Times on 15 August.

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As a result of the Articles of Agreement of December 1921 and the

Irish Free State Act of March 1922, Southern Ireland became an in-

dependent Dominion within the British Commonwealth. Its boundary

with Northern Ireland was to be settled by a Boundary Commission of

three members representing the three interested parties. On this com-

mission, Richard Feetham of the Milner Group was the British member

and also chairman.

The subsequent revolt of de Valera and the Irish Republicans against

the Free State government, and the ultimate victory of their ideas, is

not part of our story. It was a development which the Milner Group

were powerless to prevent. They continued to believe that the Irish,

like others, could be bound to Britain by invisible ties if all visible ones

were destroyed. This extraordinary belief, admirable as it was, had its

basis in a profoundly Christian outlook and, like appeasement of

Hitler, self-government for India, or the Statute of Westminister, had

its ultimate roots in the Sermon on the Mount. Unfortunately, such

Christian tactics were acutely dangerous in a non-Christian world, and

in this respect the Irish were only moderately different from Hitler.

The Milner Group’s reward for their concessions to Ireland was not

to be obtained in this world. This became clear during the Second

World War, when the inability of the British to use Irish naval bases

against German submarines had fatal consequences for many gallant

British seamen. These bases had been retained for Britain as a result of

the agreement of 1922 but were surrendered to the Irish on 25 April

1938, just when Hitler’s threat to Britain was becoming acute. The

Round Table of June 1938 welcomed this surrender, saying: “The

defence of the Irish coast, as John Redmond vainly urged in 1914,

should be primarily a matter for Irishmen.”

As the official links between Eire and Britain were slowly severed,

the Group made every effort to continue unofficial relationships such

as those through the Irish Institute of International Affairs and the

unofficial British Commonwealth relations conference, which had

Irish members in 1938.

The relationships of Britain with Egypt were also affected by the ac-

tivity of the Milner Group. The details need not detain us long. It is

sufficient to state that the Egyptian Declaration of 1922 was the result

of the personal negotiations of Lord Milner in Egypt in his capacity as

Colonial Secretary. In this post his Permanent Under Secretary was Sir

George Fiddes of the Kindergarten, his Parliamentary Under Secretary

was Amery, and his chief adviser in Egypt was M. S. O. Walrond, also

of the Kindergarten.

Without going into the very extensive influence which members of

the Milner Group have had on other parts of the Commonwealth

(especially tropical Africa), it must be clear that, however unsatis-

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factory Commonwealth relations may be to the Group now, they

nevertheless were among the chief creators of the existing system. This

will appear even more clearly when we examine their influence in the

history of India.

The Royal Institute of

International Affairs

The Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) is nothing but

the Milner Group “writ large.” It was founded by the Group, has been

consistently controlled by the Group, and to this day is the Milner

Group in its widest aspect. It is the legitimate child of the Round Table

organization, just as the latter was the legitimate child of the “Closer

Union” movement organized in South Africa in 1907. All three of these

organizations were formed by the same small group of persons, all

three received their initial financial backing from Sir Abe Bailey, and

all three used the same methods for working out and propagating their

ideas (the so-called Round Table method of discussion groups plus a

journal). This similarity is not an accident. The new organization was

intended to be a wider aspect of the Milner Group, the plan being to

influence the leaders of thought through The Round Table and to

influence a wider group through the RIIA.

The real founder of the Institute was Lionel Curtis, although this

fact was concealed for many years and he was presented to the public

as merely one among a number of founders. In more recent years,

however, the fact that Curtis was the real founder of the Institute has

been publicly stated by members of the Institute and by the Institute

itself on many occasions, and never denied. One example will suffice.

In the Annual Report of the Institute for 1942-1943 we read the follow-

ing sentence: “When the Institute was founded through the inspiration

of Mr. Lionel Curtis during the Peace Conference of Paris in 1919,

those associated with him in laying the foundations were a group of

comparatively young men and women.”

The Institute was organized at a joint conference of British and

American experts at the Hotel Majestic on 30 May 1919. At the sugges-

tion of Lord Robert Cecil, the chair was given to General Tasker Bliss

of the American delegation. We have already indicated that the experts

of the British delegation at the Peace Conference were almost

exclusively from the Milner Group and Cecil Bloc. The American

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group of experts, “the Inquiry/' was manned almost as completely by

persons from institutions (including universities) dominated by J. P.

Morgan and Company. This was not an accident. Moreover, the Mil-

ner Group has always had very close relationships with the associ-

ates of J. P. Morgan and with the various branches of the Carnegie

Trust. These relationships, which are merely examples of the closely

knit ramifications of international financial capitalism, were probably

based on the financial holdings controlled by the Milner Group

through the Rhodes Trust. The term “international financier” can be

applied with full justice to several members of the Milner Group inner

circle, such as Brand, Hichens, and above all, Milner himself.

At the meeting at the Hotel Majestic, the British group included

Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr, Lord Robert Cecil, Lord Eustace Percy, Sir

Eyre Crowe, Sir Cecil Hurst, J. W. Headlam-Morley, Geoffrey

Dawson, Harold Temperley, and G. M. Gathorne-Hardy. It was

decided to found a permanent organization for the study of interna-

tional affairs and to begin by writing a history of the Peace

Conference. A committee was set up to supervise the writing of this

work. It had Lord Meston as chairman, Lionel Curtis as secretary, and

was financed by a gift of £2000 from Thomas W. Lamont of J. P.

Morgan and Company. This group picked Harold Temperley as editor

of the work. It appeared in six large volumes in the years 1920-1924,

under the auspices of the RIIA.

The British organization was set up by a committee of which Lord

Robert Cecil was chairman, Lionel Curtis was honorary secretary and

the following were members: Lord Eustace Percy, J. A. C. (later Sir

John) Tilley, Philip Noel-Baker, Clement Jones, Harold Temperley,

A. L. Smith (classmate of Milner and Master of Balliol), George W.

Prothero, and Geoffrey Dawson. This group drew up a constitution

and made a list of prospective members. Lionel Curtis and Gathorne-

Hardy drew up the by-laws.

The above description is based on the official history of the RIIA

published by the Institute itself in 1937 and written by Stephen King-

Hall. It does not agree in its details (committees and names) with infor-

mation from other sources, equally authoritative, such as the journal of

the Institute or the preface to Temperley 's History of the Peace

Conference. The latter, for example, says that the members were

chosen by a committee consisting of Lord Robert Cecil, Sir Valentine

Chirol, and Sir Cecil Hurst. As a matter of fact, all of these differing

accounts are correct, for the Institute was formed in such an informal

fashion, as among friends, that membership on committees and lines of

authority between committees were not very important. As an exam-

ple, Mr. King-Hall says that he was invited to join the Institute in 1919

by Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian), although this name is not to be found

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on any membership committee. At any rate, one thing is clear: The

Institute was formed by the Cecil Bloc and the Milner Group, acting

together, and the real decisions were being made by members of the

latter.

As organized, the Institute consisted of a council with a chairman

and two honorary secretaries, and a small group of paid employees.

Among these latter, A. J. Toynbee, nephew of Milner’s old friend at

Balliol, was the most important. There were about 300 members in

1920, 714 in 1922, 1707 in 1929, and 2414 in 1936. There have been

three chairmen of the council: Lord Meston in 1920-1926, Major-

General Sir Neill Malcolm in 1926-1935, and Lord Astor from 1935 to

the present. All of these are members of the Milner Group, although

General Malcolm is not yet familiar to us.

General Malcolm, from Eton and Sandhurst, married the sister of

Dougal Malcolm of Milner’s Kindergarten in 1907, when he was a cap-

tain in the British Army. By 1916 he was a lieutenant colonel and two

years later a major general. He was with the British Military Mission in

Berlin in 1919-1921 and General Officer Commanding in Malaya in

1921-1924, retiring in 1924. He was High Commissioner for German

Refugees (a project in which the Milner Group was deeply involved) in

1936-1938 and has been associated with a number of industrial and

commercial firms, including the British North Borneo Company, of

which he is president and Dougal Malcolm is vice-president. It must

not be assumed that General Malcolm won advancement in the world

because of his connections with the Milner Group, for his older

brother, Sir Ian Malcolm was an important member of the Cecil Bloc

long before Sir Neill joined the Milner Group. Sir Ian, who went to

Eton and New College, was assistant private secretary to Lord

Salisbury in 1895-1900, was parliamentary private secretary to the

Chief Secretary for Ireland (George Wyndham) in 1901-1903, and was

private secretary to Balfour in the United States in 1917 and at the

Peace Conference in 1919. He wrote the sketch of Walter Long of the

Cecil Bloc (Lord Long of Wraxall) in the Dictionary of National

Biography.

From the beginning, the two honorary secretaries of the Institute

were Lionel Curtis and G. M. Gathorne-Hardy. These two, especially

the latter, did much of the active work of running the organization. In

1926 the Report of the Council of the RIIA said: “It is not too much to

say that the very existence of the Institute is due to those who have

served as Honorary Officers.” The burden of work was so great on

Curtis and Gathorne-Hardy by 1926 that Sir Otto Beit, of the Rhodes

Trust, Milner Group, and British South Africa Company, gave £1000

for 1926 and 1927 for secretarial assistance. F. B. Bourdillon assumed

the task of providing this assistance in March 1926. He had been

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secretary to Feetham on the Irish Boundary Commission in 1924-1925

and a member of the British delegation to the Peace Conference in

1919. He has been in the Research Department of the Foreign Office

since 1943.

The active governing body of the Institute is the council, originally

called the executive committee. Under the more recent name, it

generally had twenty-five to thirty members, of whom slightly less

than half were usually of the Milner Group. In 1923, five members

were elected, including Lord Meston, Headlam-Morley, and Mrs.

Alfred Lyttelton. The following year, seven were elected, including

Wilson Harris, Philip Kerr, and Sir Neill Malcolm. And so it went. In

1936, at least eleven out of twenty-six members of the council were of

the Milner Group. These included Lord Astor (chairman), L. Curtis,

G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, Lord Hailey, H. D. Henderson, Stephen

King-Hall, Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, Sir Neill Malcolm, Lord Meston, Sir

Arthur Salter, J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, E. L. Woodward, and Sir

Alfred Zimmern. Among the others were A. V. Alexander, Sir John

Power, Sir Norman Angell, Clement Jones, Lord Lytton, Harold

Nicolson, Lord Snell, and C. K. Webster. Others who were on the

council at various times were E. H. Carr, Harold Butler, G. N. Clark,

Geoffrey Crowther, H. V. Hodson, Hugh Wyndham, G. W. A. Orms-

ley-Gore, Walter Layton, Austen Chamberlain, Malcolm MacDonald

(elected 1933), and many other members of the Group.

The chief activities of the RIIA were the holding of discussion

meetings, the organization of study groups, the sponsoring of research,

and the publication of information and materials based on these. At the

first meeting, Sir Maurice Hankey read a paper on “Diplomacy by

Conference,” showing how the League of Nations grew out of the

Imperial Conferences. This was published in The Round Table. No

complete record exists of the meetings before the fall of 1921, but,

beginning then, the principal speech at each meeting and resumes of

the comments from the floor were published in the Journal. At the first

of these recorded meetings, D. G. Hogarth spoke on “The Arab States/’

with Lord Chelmsford in the chair. Stanley Reed, Chirol, and Meston

spoke from the floor. Two weeks later, H. A. L. Fisher spoke on “The

Second Assembly of the League of Nations,” with Lord Robert Cecil in

the chair. Temperley and Wilson Harris also spoke. In November,

Philip Kerr was the chief figure for two evenings on “Pacific Problems

as They Would Be submitted to the Washington Conference.” At the

end of the same month, A. J. Toynbee spoke on “The Greco-Turkish

Question,” with Sir Arthur Evans in the chair, and early in December

his father-in-law, Gilbert Murray, spoke on “Self-Determination,”

with Lord Sumner in the chair. In January 1922, Chaim Weizmann

spoke on “Zionism”; in February, Chirol spoke on “Egypt”; in April,

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Walter T. Layton spoke on “The Financial Achievement of the League

of Nations,” with Lord Robert Cecil in the chair. In June, Wilson

Harris spoke on “The Genoa Conference,” with Robert H. Brand in the

chair. In October, Ormsby-Gore spoke on “Mandates,” with Lord

Lugard in the chair. Two weeks later, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland spoke

on “The League of Nations,” with H. A. L. Fisher in the chair. In

March 1923, Harold Butler spoke on the “International Labour

Office,” with G. N. Barnes in the chair. Two weeks later, Philip Kerr

spoke on “The Political Situation in the United States,” with Arthur

Balfour in the chair. In October 1923, Edward F. L. Wood (Lord

Halifax) spoke on “The League of Nations,” with H. A. L. Fisher in the

chair. In November 1924, E. R. Peacock (Parkin’s protege) spoke on

“Mexico,” with Lord Eustace Percy in the chair. In October 1925,

Leopold Amery spoke on “The League of Nations,” with Robert Cecil

as chairman, while in May 1926, H. A. L. Fisher spoke on the same

subject, with Neill Malcolm as chairman. In November 1925, Paul

Mantoux spoke on “The Procedure of the League,” with Brand as

chairman. In June 1923, Edward Grigg spoke on “Egypt,” with D. G.

Hogarth in the chair. In the season of 1933-1934 the speakers included

Ormsby-Gore, Oliver Lyttelton, Edward Grigg, Donald Somervell,

Toynbee, Zimmern, R. W. Seton-Watson, and Lord Lothian. In the

season of 1938-1939 the list contains the names of Wilson Harris, C. A.

Macartney, Toynbee, Lord Hailey, A. G. B. Fisher, Harold Butler,

Curtis, Lord Lothian, Zimmern, Lionel Hichens, and Lord Halifax.

These rather scattered observations will show how the meetings were

peppered by members of the Milner Group. This does not mean that

the Group monopolized the meetings, or even spoke at a majority of

them. The meetings generally took place once a week from October to

June of each year, and probably members of the Group spoke or pre-

sided at no more than a quarter of them. This, however, represents far

more than their due proportion, for when the Institute had 2500,

members the Milner Group amounted to no more than 100.

The proceedings of the meetings were generally printed in

abbreviated form in the Journal of the Institute. Until January 1927,

this periodical was available only to members, but since that date it has

been open to public subscription. The first issue was as anonymous as

the first issue of The Round Table: no list of editors, no address, and no

signature to the opening editorial introducing the new journal. The

articles, however, had the names of the speakers indicated. When it

went on public sale in January 1927, the name of the Institute was

added to the cover. In time it took the name International Affairs. The

first editor, we learn from a later issue, was Gathorne-Hardy. In

January 1932 an editorial board was placed in charge of the publica-

tion. It consisted of Meston, Gathorne-Hardy, and Zimmern. This

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same board remained in control until war forced suspension of publica-

tion at the end of 1939. When publication was resumed in 1944 in

Canada, the editorial board consisted of Hugh Wyndham, Geoffrey

Crowther, and H. A. R. Gibb. Wyndham is still chairman of the

board, but since the war the membership of the board has changed

somewhat. In 1948 it had six members, of whom three are employees of

the Institute, one is the son-in-law of an employee, the fifth is Professor

of Arabic at Oxford, and the last is the chairman, Hugh Wyndham. In

1949 Adam Marris was added.

In addition to the History of the Peace Conference and the journal

International Affairs, the Institute publishes the annual Survey of

International Affairs . This is written either by members of the Group

or by employees of the Institute. The chief writers have been Toynbee;

his second wife, V. M. Boulter; Robert J. Stopford, who appears to be

one of R. H. Brand’s men and who wrote the reparations section each

year; 1 H. V. Hodson, who did the economic sections from 1930-1938;

and A. G. B. Fisher, who has done the economic sections since Hodson.

Until 1928 the Survey had an appendix of documents, but since that

year these have been published in a separate volume, usually edited by

J. W. Wheeler-Bennett. Mr. Wheeler-Bennett became a member of the

Milner Group and the Institute by a process of amalgamation. In 1924

he had founded a document service, which he called Information Ser-

vice on International Affairs, and in the years following 1924 he

published a number of valuable digests of documents and other infor-

mation on disarmament, security, the World Court, reparations, etc.,

as well as a periodical called the Bulletin of International News. In

1927 he became Honorary Information Secretary of the RIIA, and in

1930 the Institute bought out all his information services for £3500 and

made them into the Information Department of the Institute, still in

charge of Mr. Wheeler-Bennett. Since the annual Documents on Inter-

national Affairs resumed publication in 1944, it has been in charge of

Monica Curtis (who may be related to Lionel Curtis), while Mr.

Wheeler-Bennett has been busy elsewhere. In 1938-1939 he was

Visiting Professor of International Relations at the University of Vir-

ginia: in 1939-1944 he was in the United States in various propaganda

positions with the British Library of Information and for two years as

Head of the British Political Warfare Mission in New York. Since 1946,

he has been engaged in editing, from the British side, an edition of

about twenty volumes of the captured documents of the German For-

eign Ministry. He has also lectured on international affairs at New Col-

lege, a connection obviously made through the Milner Group.

The Survey of International Affairs has been financed since 1925 by

an endowment of £20,000 given by Sir Daniel Stevenson for this pur-

pose and also to provide a Research Chair of International History at

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the University of London. Arnold J. Toynbee has held both the

professorship and the editorship since their establishment. He has also

been remunerated by other grants from the Institute. When the first

major volume of the Survey , covering the years 1920-1923, was

published, a round-table discussion was held at Chatham House, 17

November 1925, to criticize it. Headlam-Morley was chairman, and

the chief speakers were Curtis, Wyndham, Gathorne-Hardy, Gilbert

Murray, and Toynbee himself.

Since the Survey did not cover British Commonwealth affairs, except

in a general fashion, a project was established for a parallel Survey of

British Commonwealth Relations. This was financed by a grant of

money from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The task was

entrusted to W. K. Hancock, a member of All Souls since 1924 and

Chichele Professor of Economic History residing at All Souls since

1944. He produced three substantial volumes of the Survey in

1940-1942, with a supplementary legal chapter in volume I by R. T. E.

Latham of All Souls and the Milner Group.

The establishment of the Stevenson Chair of International History at

London, controlled by the RIIA, gave the Group the idea of

establishing similar endowed chairs in other subjects and in other

places. In 1936, Sir Henry Price gave £20,000 to endow for seven years

a Chair of International Economics at Chatham House. This was filled

by Allan G. B. Fisher of Australia.

In 1947 another chair was established at Chatham House: the Abe

Bailey Professorship of Commonwealth Relations. This was filled by

Nicholas Mansergh, who had previously written a few articles on Irish

affairs and has since published a small volume on Commonwealth

affairs.

By the terms of the foundation, the Institute had a voice in the elec-

tion of professors to the Wilson Chair of International Politics at the

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. As a result, this chair has

been occupied by close associates of the Group from its foundation.

The following list of incumbents is significant:

A. E. Zimmern, 1919-1921

C. K. Webster, 1922-1932

J. D. Greene, 1932-1934

J. F. Vranek, (Acting), 1934-1936

E. H. Carr, 1936 to now

Three of these names are familiar. Of the others, Jiri Vranek was

secretary to the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (to

be discussed in a moment). Jerome Greene was an international banker

close to the Milner Group. Originally Mr. Greene had been a close

associate of J. D. Rockefeller, but in 1917 he shifted to the interna-

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tional banking firm Lee, Higginson, and Company of Boston. In 1918

he was American secretary to the Allied Maritime Transport Council in

London (of which Arthur Salter was general secretary) . He became a

resident of Toynbee Hall and established a relationship with the Milner

Group. In 1919 he was secretary to the Reparations Commission of the

Peace Conference (a post in which his successor was Arthur Salter in

1920-1922). He was chairman of the Pacific Council of the Institute of

Pacific Relations in 1929-1932. This last point will be discussed in a

moment. Mr. Greene was a trustee and secretary of the Rockefeller

Foundation in 1913-1917, and was a trustee of the Rockefeller Institute

and of the Rockefeller General Education Board in 1912-1939.

The study groups of the RIIA are direct descendants of the round-

table meetings of the Round Table Group. They have been defined by

Stephen King-Hall as “unofficial Royal Commissions charged by the

Council of Chatham House with the investigation of specific

problems.” These study groups are generally made up of persons who

are not members of the Milner Group, and their reports are frequently

published by the Institute. In 1932 the Rockefeller Foundation gave

the Institute a grant of £8000 a year for five years to advance the study-

group method of research. This was extended for five years more in

1937.

In 1923, Lionel Curtis got a Canadian, Colonel R. W. Leonard, so

interested in the work of the Institute that he bought Lord Kinnaird’s

house at 10 St. James Square as a home for the Institute. Since William

Pitt had once lived in the building, it was named “Chatham House,” a

designation which is now generally applied to the Institute itself. The

only condition of the grant was that the Institute should raise an

endowment to yield at least £10,000 a year for upkeep. Since the

building had no adequate assembly hall, Sir John Power, the honorary

treasurer, gave £10,000 to build one on the rear. The building itself

was renovated and furnished under the care of Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton,

who, like her late husband but unlike her son, Oliver, was a member of

the Milner Group.

The assumption of the title to Chatham House brought up a major

crisis within the Institute when a group led by Professor A. F. Pollard

(Fellow of All Souls but not a member of the Milner Group) opposed

the acceptance of the gift because of the financial commitment in-

volved. Curtis put on an organized drive to mobilize the Group and

put the opposition to flight. The episode is mentioned in a letter from

John Dove to Brand, dated 9 October 1923.

This episode opens up the whole question of the financial resources

available to the Institute and to the Milner Group in general. Unfor-

tunately, we cannot examine the subject here, but it should be obvious

that a group with such connections as the Milner Group would not find

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it difficult to finance the RIIA. In general, the funds came from the

various endowments, banks, and industrial concerns with which the

Milner Group had relationships. The original money in 1919, only

£200, came from Abe Bailey. In later years he added to this, and in

1928 gave £5000 a year in perpetuity on the condition that the Institute

never accept members who were not British subjects. When Sir Abe

died in 1940, the annual Report oj the Council said: “With the passing

of Sir Bailey the Council and all the members of Chatham House

mourn the loss of their most munificent Founder.” Sir Abe had paid

various other expenses during the years. For example, when the

Institute in November 1935 gave a dinner to General Smuts, Sir Abe

paid the cost. All of this was done as a disciple of Lord Milner, for

whose principles of imperial policy Bailey always had complete devo-

tion.

Among the other benefactors of the Institute, we might mention the

following. In 1926 the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees (Hichens

and Dame Janet Courtney) gave £3000 for books; the Bank of England

gave £600; J. D. Rockefeller gave £3000. In 1929 pledges were ob-

tained from about a score of important banks and corporations,

promising annual grants to the Institute. Most of these had one or more

members of the Milner Group on their boards of directors. Included in

the group were the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company; the Bank of England;

Barclay’s Bank; Baring Brothers; the British American Tobacco

Company; the British South Africa Company; Central Mining and In-

vestment Corporation; Erlangers, Ltd; the Ford Motor Company;

Hambros’ Bank; Imperial Chemical Industries; Lazard Brothers; Lever

Brothers; Lloyd’s; Lloyd’s Bank; the Mercantile and General Insurance

Company; the Midland Bank; Reuters; Rothschild and Sons; Stern

Brothers; Vickers- Armstrong; the Westminster Bank; and Whitehall

Securities Corporation.

Since 1939 the chief benefactors of the Institute have been the Astor

family and Sir Henry Price. In 1942 the latter gave £50,000 to buy the

house next door to Chatham House for an expansion of the library (of

which E. L. Woodward was supervisor). In the same year Lord Astor,

who had been giving £2000 a year since 1937, promised £3000 a year

for seven years to form a Lord Lothian Memorial Fund to promote

good relations between the United States and Britain. At the same

time, each of Lord Astor’s four sons promised £1000 a year for seven

years to the general fund of the Institute.

Chatham House had close institutional relations with a number of

other similar organizations, especially in the Dominions. It also has a

parallel organization, which was regarded as a branch, in New York.

This latter, the Council on Foreign Relations, was not founded by the

American group that attended the meeting at the Hotel Majestic in

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1919, but was taken over almost entirely by that group immediately

after its founding in 1919. This group was made up of the experts on

the American delegation to the Peace Conference who were most

closely associated with J. P. Morgan and Company. The Morgan bank

has never made any real effort to conceal its position in regard to the

Council on Foreign Relations. The list of officers and board of directors

are printed in every issue of Foreign Affairs and have always been

loaded with partners, associates, and employees of J. P. Morgan and

Company. According to Stephen King-Hall, the RIIA agreed to regard

the Council on Foreign Relations as its American branch. The relation-

ship between the two has always been very close. For example, the

publications of one are available at reduced prices to the members of

the other; they frequently sent gifts of books to each other (the Council,

for example, giving the Institute a seventy-five-volume set of the

Foreign Relations of the United States in 1933); and there is con-

siderable personal contact between the officers of the two (Toynbee,

for example, left the manuscript of Volumes 7-9 of A Study of History

in the Councils vault during the recent war).

Chatham House established branch institutes in the various Domin-

ions, but it was a slow process. In each case the Dominion Institute was

formed about a core consisting of the Round Table Group’s members in

that Dominion. The earliest were set up in Canada and Australia in

1927. The problem was discussed in 1933 at the first unofficial British

Commonwealth relations conference (Toronto), and the decision made

to extend the system to New Zealand, South Africa, India, and New-

foundland. The last-named was established by Zimmern on a visit

there the same year. The others were set up in 1934-1936.

As we have said, the members of the Dominion Institutes of Interna-

tional Affairs were the members of the Milner Group and their close

associates. In Canada, for example, Robert L. Borden was the first

president (1927-1931); N. W. Rowell was the second president; Sir

Joseph Flavelle and Vincent Massey were vice-presidents; Glazebrook

was honorary secretary; and Percy Corbett was one of the most impor-

tant members. Of these, the first three were close associates of the

Milner Group (especially of Brand) in the period of the First World

War; the last four were members of the Group itself. When the Indian

Institute was set up in 1936, it was done at the Viceroy’s house at a

meeting convened by Lord Willingdon (Brand’s cousin). Robert Cecil

sent a message, which was read by Stephen King-Hall. Sir Maurice

Gwyer of All Souls became a member of the council. In South Africa,

B. K. Long of the Kindergarten was one of the most important

members. In the Australian Institute, Sir Thomas Bavin was president

in 1934-1941, while F. W. Eggleston was one of its principal founders

and vice-president for many years. In New Zealand, W. Downie Ste-

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wart was president of the Institute of International Affairs from 1935

on. Naturally, the Milner Group did not monopolize the membership

or the official positions in these new institutes any more than they did

in London, for this would have weakened the chief aim of the Group in

setting them up, namely to extend their influence to wider areas.

Closely associated with the various Institutes of International Affairs

were the various branches of the Institute of Pacific Relations. This was

originally founded at Atlantic City in September 1924 as a private

organization to study the problems of the Pacific Basin. It has represen-

tatives from eight countries with interests in the area. The represen-

tatives from the United Kingdom and the three British Dominions were

closely associated with the Milner Group. Originally each country had

its national unit, but by 1939, in the four British areas, the local

Institute of Pacific Relations had merged with the local Institute of In-

ternational Affairs. Even before this, the two Institutes in each country

had practically interchangeable officers, dominated by the Milner

Group. In the United States, the Institute of Pacific Relations never

merged with the Council on Foreign Relations, but the influence of the

associates of J. P, Morgan and other international bankers remained

strong on both. The chief figure in the Institute of Pacific Relations of

the United States was, for many years, Jerome D. Greene, Boston

banker close to both Rockefeller and Morgan and for many years

secretary to Harvard University.

The Institutes of Pacific Relations held joint meetings, similar to

those of the unofficial conferences on British Commonwealth relations

and with a similar group of delegates from the British member

organizations. These meetings met every two years at first, beginning

at Honolulu in 1925 and then assembling at Honolulu again (1927), at

Kyoto (1929), at Shanghai (1931), at Banff (1933), and at Yosemite

Park (1936). F. W. Eggleston, of Australia and the Milner Group,

presided over most of the early meetings. Between meetings, the cen-

tral organization, set up in 1927, was the Pacific Council, a self-

perpetuating body. In 1930, at least five of its seven members were

from the Milner Group, as can be seen from the following list:

The Pacific Council, 1930

Jerome D. Greene of the United States

F. W. Eggleston of Australia

N. W. Rowell of Canada

D. Z. T. Yui of China

Lionel Curtis of the United Kingdom

I. Nitobe of Japan

Sir James Allen of New Zealand

The close relationships among all these organizations can be seen

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from a tour of inspection which Lionel Curtis and Ivison S. Macadam

(secretary of Chatham House, in succession to F. B. Bourdillon, since

1929) made in 1938. They not only visited the Institutes of Interna-

tional Affairs of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada but attended the

Princeton meeting of the Pacific Council of the IPR. Then they

separated, Curtis going to New York to address the dinner of the Coun-

cil on Foreign Relations and visit the Carnegie Foundation, while

Macadam went to Washington to visit the Carnegie Endowment and

the Brookings Institution.

Through the League of Nations, where the influence of the Milner

Group was very great, the RIIA was able to extend its intellectual

influence into countries outside the Commonwealth. This was done,

for example, through the Intellectual Cooperation Organization of the

League of Nations. This Organization consisted of two chief parts: (a)

The International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, an advisory

body; and (b) The International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation,

an executive organ of the Committee, with headquarters in Paris. The

International Committee had about twenty members from various

countries; Gilbert Murray was its chief founder and was chairman

from 1928 to its disbandment in 1945. The International Institute was

established by the French government and handed over to the League

of Nations (1926). Its director was always a Frenchman, but its deputy

director and guiding spirit was Alfred Zimmern from 1926 to 1930. It

also had a board of directors of six persons; Gilbert Murray was one of

these from 1926.

It is interesting to note that from 1931 to 1939 the Indian represen-

tative on the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation was

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. In 1931 he was George V Professor of Phi-

lospohy at Calcutta University. His subsequent career is interesting. He

was knighted in 1931, became Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions

and Ethics at Oxford in 1936, and became a Fellow of All Souls in

1944.

Beginning in 1928 at Berlin, Professor Zimmern organized annual

round-table discussion meetings under the auspices of the International

Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. These were called the Interna-

tional Studies Conferences and devoted themselves to an effort to

obtain different national points of view on international problems. The

members of the Studies Conferences were twenty-five organizations.

Twenty of these were Coordinating Committees created for the pur-

pose in twenty different countries. The other five were the following

international organizations: The Academy of International Law at The

Hague; The European Center of the Carnegie Endowment for Interna-

tional Peace; the Geneva School of International Studies; the Graduate

Institute of International Studies at Geneva; the Institute of Pacific

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Relations. In two of these five, the influence of the Milner Group and

its close allies was preponderant. In addition, the influence of the

Group was decisive in the Coordinating Committees within the British

Commonwealth, especially in the British Coordinating Committee for

International Studies. The members of this committee were named by

four agencies, three of which were controlled by the Milner Group.

They were: (1) the RIIA, (2) the London School of Economics and

Political Science, (3) the Department of International Politics at

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and (4) the Montague

Burton Chair of International Relations at Oxford. We have already

indicated that the Montague Burton Chair was largely controlled by

the Milner Group, since the Group always had a preponderance on the

board of electors to that chair. This was apparently not assured by the

original structure of this board, and it was changed in the middle

1930s. After the change, the board had seven electors: (1) the Vice-

Chancellor of Oxford, ex officio; (2) the Master of Balliol, ex officio; (3)

Viscount Cecil of Chelwood; (4) Gilbert Murray, for life; (5) B. H.

Sumner; (6) Sir Arthur Salter; and (7) Sir. J. Fischer Williams of New

College. Thus, at least four of this board were members of the Group.

In 1947 the electoral board to the Montague Burton Professorship con-

sisted of R. M. Barrington- Ward (editor of The Times); Miss Agnes

Headlam-Morley (daughter of Sir James Headlam-Morley of the

Group); Sir Arthur Salter; R. C. K. Ensor; and one vacancy, to be

filled by Balliol College. It was this board, apparently, that named

Miss Headlam-Morley to the Montague Burton Professorship when

E. L. Woodward resigned in 1947. As can be seen, the Milner Group

influence was predominant, with only one member out of five (Ensor)

clearly not of the Group.

The RIIA had the right to name three persons to the Coordinating

Committee. Two of these were usually of the Milner Group. In 1933,

for example, the three were Lord Meston, Clement Jones, and Toyn-

bee.

The meetings of the International Studies Conferences were organ-

ized in a fashion identical with that used in other meetings controlled

by the Milner Group — for example, in the unofficial conferences on

British Commonwealth relations — and the proceedings were published

by the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in a similar way to those of

the unofficial conferences just mentioned, except that the various

speakers were identified by name. As examples of the work which the

International Studies Conferences handled, we might mention that at

the fourth and fifth sessions (Copenhagen in 1931 and Milan in 1932),

they examined the problem of “The State and Economic Life”; at the

seventh and eighth session (Paris in 1934 and London in 1935), they ex-

amined the problem of “Collective Security”; and at the ninth and

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tenth sessions (Madrid in 1936 and Paris 1937) they examined the prob-

lem of “University Teaching of International Relations.”

In all of these conferences the Milner Group played a certain part.

They could have monopolized the British delegations at these meetings

if they had wished, but, with typical Milner Group modesty they made

no effort to do so. Their influence appeared most clearly at the London

meeting of 1935. Thirty- nine delegates from fourteen countries

assembled at Chatham House to discuss the problem of collective

security. Great Britain had ten delegates. They were Dr. Hugh Dalton,

Professor H. Lauterpacht, Captain Liddell Hart, Lord Lytton, Pro-

fessor A. D. McNair, Professor C. A. W. Manning, Dr. David Mitrany,

Rear Admiral H. G. Thursfield, Arnold J. Toynbee, and Professor C.

K. Webster. In addition, the Geneva School of International Studies

sent two delegates: J. H. Richardson and A. E. Zimmern. The British

delegation presented three memoranda to the conference. The first, a

study of “Sanctions,” was prepared by the RIIA and has been published

since. The second, a study of “British Opinion on Collective Security,”

was prepared by the British Coordinating Committee. The third, a col-

lection of “British Views on Collective Security,” was prepared by the

delegates. It had an introduction by Meston and nine articles, of which

one was by G. M. Gathorne-Hardy and one by H. V. Hodson. Zim-

mern also presented a memorandum on behalf of the Geneva School.

Opening speeches were made by Austen Chamberlain, Allen W. Dulles

(of the Council on Foreign Relations), and Louis Eisenmann of the

University of Paris. Closing speeches were made by Lord Meston, Allen

Dulles, and Gilbert Murray. Meston acted as president of the con-

ference, and Dulles as chairman of the study meetings. The pro-

ceedings were edited and published by a committee of two Frenchmen

and A. J. Toynbee.

At the sessions on “Peaceful Change” in 1936-37, Australia presented

one memorandum (“The Growth of Australian Population”). It was

written by F. W. Eggleston and G. Packer. The United Kingdom

presented fifteen memoranda. Eight of these were prepared by the

RIIA, and seven by individuals. Of the seven individual works, two

were written by members of All Souls who were also members of the

Milner Group (C. A. Macartney and C. R. M. F. Cruttwell). The other

five were written by experts who were not members of the Group (A.

M. Carr-Saunders, A. B. Keith, D. Harwood, H. Lauterpacht, and R.

Kuczynski).

In the middle 1930s the Milner Group began to take an interest in

the problem of refugees and stateless persons, as a result of the persecu-

tions of Hitler and the approaching closing of the Nansen Office of the

League of Nations. Sir Neill Malcolm was made High Commissioner

for German Refugees in 1936. The following year the RIIA began a

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research program in the problem. This resulted in a massive report,

edited by Sir John Hope Simpson who was not a member of the Group

and was notoriously unsympathetic to Zionism (1939). In 1938 Roger

M. Makins was made secretary to the British delegation to the Evian

Conference on Refugees. Mr. Makins’ full career will be examined

later. At this point it is merely necessary to note that he was educated

at Winchester School and at Christ Church, Oxford, and was elected to

a Fellowship at All Souls in 1925, when only twenty-one years old.

After the Evian Conference (where the British, for strategic reasons,

left all the responsible positions to the Americans), Mr. Makins was

made secretary to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. He

was British Minister in Washington from 1945 to 1947 and is now Assis-

tant Under Secretary in the Foreign Office.

Before leaving the subject of refugees, we might mention that the

chief British agent for Czechoslovakian refugees in 1938-1939 was R. J.

Stopford, an associate of the Milner Group already mentioned.

At the time of the Czechoslovak crisis in September 1938, the RIIA

began to act in an unofficial fashion as an adviser to the Foreign

Office. When war began a year later, this was made formal, and Chat-

ham House became, for all practical purposes, the research section of

the Foreign Office. A special organization was established in the In-

stitute, in charge of A. J. Toynbee, with Lionel Curtis as his chief sup-

port acting “as the permanent representative of the chairman of the

Council, Lord Astor.” The organization consisted of the press-clipping

collection, the information department, and much of the library.

These were moved to Oxford and set up in Balliol, All Souls, and

Rhodes House. The project was financed by the Treasury, All Souls,

Balliol, and Chatham House jointly. Within a brief time, the organiza-

tion became known as the Foreign Research and Press Service (FRPS).

It answered all questions on international affairs from government

departments, prepared a weekly summary of the foreign press, and

prepared special research projects. When Anthony Eden was asked a

question in the House of Commons on 23 July 1941, regarding the ex-

pense of this project, he said that the Foreign Office had given it

£53,000 in the fiscal year 1940-1941.

During the winter of 1939-1940 the general meetings of the Institute

were held in Rhodes House, Oxford, with Hugh Wyndham generally

presiding. The periodical International Affairs suspended publication,

but the Bulletin of International News continued, under the care of

Hugh Latimer and A. J. Brown. The latter had been an undergraduate

at Oxford in 1933-1936, was elected a Fellow of All Souls in 1938, and

obtained a D.Phil. in 1939. The former may be Alfred Hugh Latimer,

who was an undergraduate at Merton from 1938 to 1946 and was

elected to the foundation of the same college in 1946.

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As the work of the FRPS grew too heavy for Curtis to supervise

alone, he was given a committee of four assistants. They were G. N.

Clark, H. J. Paton, C. K. Webster, and A. E. Zimmern. About the

same time, the London School of Economics established a quarterly

journal devoted to the subject of postwar reconstruction. It was

called Agenda , and G. N. Clark was editor. Clark had been a member

of All Souls since 1912 and was Chichele Professor of Economic History

from 1931 to 1943. Since 1943 he has been Regius Professor of Modern

History at Cambridge. Not a member of the Milner Group, he is close

to it and was a member of the council of Chatham House during the re-

cent war.

At the end of 1942 the Foreign Secretary (Eden) wrote to Lord Astor

that the government wished to take the FRPS over completely. This

was done in April 1943. The existing Political Intelligence Department

of the Foreign Office was merged with it to make the new Research

Department of the Ministry. Of this new department Toynbee was

director and Zimmern deputy director.

This brief sketch of the Royal Institute of International Affairs does

not by any means indicate the very considerable influence which the

organization exerts in English-speaking countries in the sphere to

which it is devoted. The extent of that influence must be obvious. The

purpose of this chapter has been something else: to show that the

Milner Group controls the Institute. Once that is established, the pic-

ture changes. The influence of Chatham House appears in its true

perspective, not as the influence of an autonomous body but as merely

one of many instruments in the arsenal of another power. When the in-

fluence which the Institute wields is combined with that controlled by

the Milner Group in other fields — in education, in administration, in

newspapers and periodicals — a really terrifying picture begins to

emerge. This picture is called terrifying not because the power of the

Milner Group was used for evil ends. It was not. On the contrary, it

was generally used with the best intentions in the world — even if those

intentions were so idealistic as to be almost academic. The picture is

terrifying because such power, whatever the goals at which it may be

directed, is too much to be entrusted safely to any group. That it was

too much to be safely entrusted to the Milner Group will appear quite

clearly in Chapter 12. No country that values its safety should allow

what the Milner Group accomplished in Britain — that is, that a small

number of men should be able to wield such power in administration

and politics, should be given almost complete control over the publica-

tion of the documents relating to their actions, should be able to exer-

cise such influence over the avenues of information that create public

opinion, and should be able to monopolize so completely the writing

and the teaching of the history of their own period.

11

India, 1911-1945

India was one of the primary concerns of both the Cecil Bloc and

Milner Group. The latter probably devoted more time and attention to

India than to any other subject. This situation reached its peak in 1919,

and the Government of India Act of that year is very largely a Milner

Group measure in conception, formation, and execution. The in-

fluence of the two groups is not readily apparent from the lists of

Governors- general (Viceroys) and Secretaries of State for India in the

twentieth century:

Secretaries of State

Lord George Hamilton, 1895-1903

St. John Brodrick, 1903-1908

John Morley, 1908-1910

Lord Crewe, 1910-1915

Austen Chamberlain, 1915-1917

Edward Montagu, 1917-1922

Lord Peel, 1922-1924

Lord Olivier, 1924

Lord Birkenhead, 1924-1928

Lord Peel, 1928-1929

Wedgwood Benn, 1929-1931

Samuel Hoare, 1931-1935

Lord Zetland, 1935-1940

Leopold Amery, 1940-1945

Of the Viceroys only one (Reading) is clearly of neither the Cecil

Bloc nor the Milner Group; two were members of the Milner Group

(Irwin and Willingdon); another was a member of both groups

(Chelmsford); the rest were of the Cecil Bloc, although in two cases

(Minto and Linlithgow) in a rather peripheral fashion. Three of the

eight were members of All Souls. According to Lord Esher, the ap-

pointment of Lord Hardinge in 1910 was made at his suggestion, by

John Morley. At the time, Esher’s son, the present Viscount Esher, was

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Viceroys

Lord Curzon, 1898-1905

Lord Minto, 1905-1910

Lord Hardinge of Penshurst,

1910-1916

Lord Chelmsford, 1916-1921

Lord Reading, 1921-1926

Lord Irwin, 1926-1931

Lord Willingdon, 1931-1936

Lord Linlithgow, 1936-1943

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acting as unpaid private secretary to Morley, a position he held for five

years (1905-1910). From the same source we learn that the Viceroyship

was offered to Selborne in 1903 and to Esher himself in 1908. The

former failed of appointment because Curzon refused to retire, while

the latter rejected the post as of too limited influence.

Of the thirteen Secretaries of State, two were Labour and two

Liberals. One of these latter (Morley) was close to the Milner Group.

Of the other nine, three were of the Cecil Bloc (St. John Brodrick,

Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Zetland), two were of the Milner

Group (Hoare and Amery), and four were of neither group.

The political and constitutional history of India in the twentieth cen-

tury consists largely of a series of investigations by various committees

and commissions, and a second, and shorter, series of legislative enact-

ments. The influence of the Milner Group can be discerned in both of

these, especially in regard to the former.

Of the important commissions that investigated Indian constitut-

tional questions in the twentieth century, every one has had a member

of the inner circle of the Milner Group. The following list gives the

name of the commission, the dates of its existence, the number of

British members (in distinction from Indian members), the names of

representatives from the Cecil Bloc and Milner Group (with the latter

italicized), and the command number of its report:

1. The Royal Commission on Decentralization in India, 1907-1909, five

members, including W. L. Hichens (Cmd. 4360 of 1908).

2. The Royal Commission on Public Services in India, 1912-1915, nine

members, including Baron Islington, the Earl of Ronaldshay (later

Marquess of Zetland), Sir Valentine Chirol, and H. A. L. Fisher . The

chairman of this commission, Lord Islington, was later father-in-law to

Sir Edward Grigg (Lord Altrincham) (Cmd. 8382 of 1916).

3. The Government of India Constitutional Reform Committee on

Franchise, 1919, four members, including Malcolm Hailey.

4. The Government of India Constitutional Reform Committee on

Functions, 1919, four members, including Richard Feetham as chairman,

5. The Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, 1919,

fourteen members, including Lord Selborne (chairman), Lord Midleton

(St. John Brodrick), Lord Islington, Sir Henry Craik (whose son was

in Milner’s Kindergarten), and W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore (now Lord

Harlech) (Cmd. 97 of 1919).

6. The Committee on Home Administration of Indian Affairs, 1919,

eight members, including W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore (Lord Harlech) (Cmd.

207 of 1919).

7. The Royal Commission on Superior Civil Services in India, 1923-

1924, five members, including Lord Lee of Fareham as chairman and

Reginald Coupland (Cmd. 2128 of 1924).

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8. The Indian Statutory Commission, 1927-1930, seven members, with

Sir John Simon as chairman (Cmd. 3568 and 3569 of 1930).

9. The Indian Franchise Committee, 1931-1932, eight members, includ-

ing Lord Lothian as chairman and Lord Dufferin (whose brother, Lord

Basil Blackwood, had been in Milner’s Kindergarten) (Cmd. 4086 of

1932).

10. The three Indian Round Table Conferences of 1930-1932 contained a

number of members of the Milner Group. The first session (November

1930-January 1931) had eighty-nine delegates, sixteen from Britain, six-

teen from the Indian States, and fifty-seven from British India. Formed

as they were by a Labour government, the first two sessions had eight

Labour members among the sixteen from Britain. The other eight were

Earl Peel, the Marquess of Zetland, Sir Samuel Hoare, Oliver Stanley,

the Marquess of Reading, the Marquess of Lothian, Sir Robert Hamilton,

and Isaac Foot. Of these eight, two were of the Milner Group (Hoare and

Lothian) and two of the Cecil Bloc (Zetland and Stanley) . The chief ad-

viser to the Indian States Delegation was L. F, Rushbrook Williams of the

Milner Group, who was named to his position by the Chamber of Princes

Special Organization. Among the five officials called in for consultation

by the conference, we find the name of Malcolm Hailey (Cmd. 3778).

The membership of delegations at the second session (September-

December 1931) was practically the same, except that thirty-one addi-

tional members were added and Rushbrook Williams became a delegate

as the representative of the Maharaja of Nawanagar (Cmd. 3997).

At the third session (November-December 1932) there were no Labour

Party representatives. The British delegation was reduced to twelve. Four

of these were of the Milner Group (Hoare, Simon , Lothian, and Irwin,

now Halifax). Rushbrook Williams continued as a delegate of the Indian

States (Cmd. 4238).

11. The Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, ap-

pointed in April 1933, had sixteen members from the House of Commons

and an equal number of Lords. Among these were such members of the

Milner Group as Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir John Simon, Lord Lothian, and

Lord Irwin (Halifax) . The Cecil Bloc was also well represented by Arch-

bishop Lang of Canterbury, Austen Chamberlain, Lord Eustace Percy,

Lord Salisbury, Lord Zetland, Lord Lytton, and Lord Hardinge of

Penshurst.

12. The Cripps Mission, 1942, four members, including Reginald

Coupland, who wrote an unofficial but authoritative book on the mission

as soon as it returned to England (Cmd. 6350).

The chief legislative events in this period were five in number: the

two Indian Councils Acts of 1892 and 1909, the two Government of In-

dia Acts of 1919 and 1935, and the achievement of self-government in

1947.

The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was put through the House of

Commons by George Curzon, at that time Under Secretary in the India

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Office as the protege of Lord Salisbury, who had discovered him in All

Souls nine years earlier. This act was important for two reasons: (1) it

introduced a representative principle into the Indian government by

empowering the Governor-General and Provincial Governors to seek

nominations to the “unofficial” seats in their councils from particular

Indian groups and associations; and (2) it accepted a “communal” basis

for this representation by seeking these nominations separately from

Hindus, Moslems, and others. From these two sources flowed ulti-

mately self-government and partition, although it is perfectly evident

that neither of these was anticipated or desired by the persons who

supported the act.

The nominations for “unofficial” members of the councils provided

in the Act of 1892 became elections in practice, because the Governor-

General always accepted the suggested nominations as his nominees.

This practice became law in the Act of 1909.

The Indian Councils Act of 1909 was passed under a Liberal govern-

ment and was only remotely influenced by the Cecil Bloc or Milner

Group. The Prime Minister, Asquith, was practically a member of the

Cecil Bloc, being an intimate friend of Balfour and Rosebery. This

relationship had been tightened when he married Margot Tennant, a

member of “the Souls,” in 1894. Margot Tennant s sister, Laura, had

previously married Alfred Lyttelton, and both sisters had been

intimate friends of Curzon and other members of “the Souls.” Asquith

had also been, as we have stated, a close associate of Milner’s. Asquith,

however, was never a member of the Milner Group. After 1890, and

especially after 1915, he increasingly became a member of the Cecil

Bloc. It was Balfour who persuaded Asquith to write his Memories and

Reflections after he (Balfour) had discussed the matter with Margot

Asquith over a tete-a-tete dinner. These dinners were a not infrequent

occurrence on the evenings when Asquith himself dined at his club,

Asquith usually stopping by later in the evening to get his wife and

escort her home. Another indication of Asquith's feeling toward the

Cecil Bloc can be found in his autobiography under the date 22

December 1919. On that occasion Asquith told Lady Hartington,

daughter of Lord Salisbury, that he “had not expected to live to see the

day when the best safeguard for true liberalism would be found in an

unreformed House of Lords and the Cecil family.”

In 1908-1909, however, the situation was somewhat different, and

Asquith could hardly be called a member of the Cecil Bloc. In a

somewhat similar situation, although much closer to the Milner Group

(through H. A. L. Fisher and All Souls), was John Morley, the Secre-

tary of State for India. Lord Minto, the Governor-General in India,

was also a member of the Cecil Bloc in a peripheral fashion but held his

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appointment through a family claim on the Governor-Generalship

rather than by favor of the Cecils.

The Act of 1909, however, while not a product of the groups with

which we are concerned, was formed in the same social tradition,

drawn up from the same intellectual and social outlook, and put into

effect in the same fashion. It legalized the principle of election (rather

than nomination) to Indian councils, enlarged their membership to

provide majorities of nonofficials in the provincial councils, and gave

them the power to discuss affairs and pass resolutions. The seats were

allotted to communal groups, with the minorities (like Moslems and

Sikhs) receiving more than their proportionate share and the Moslems

having, in addition, a separate electorate for the incumbents of Mos-

lem seats. This served to encourage extremism among the Moslems and,

while a logical development of 1892, was a long step on the road to

Pakistan. This Act of 1909 was, as we have mentioned, put through the

House of Commons by Sir Thomas Buchanan, a Fellow of All Souls and

an associate of the Cecil Bloc.

The Government of India Act of 1919 is outstanding in many ways.

It is the most drastic and most important reform made in Indian

government in the whole period from 1861 to the achievement of self-

government. Its provisions for the central government of India re-

mained in force, with only slight changes, from 1919 to 1946. It is the

only one of these acts whose “secret” legislative background is no longer

a secret. And it is the only one which indicated a desire on the part of

the British government to establish in India a responsible government

patterned on that in Britain.

The legislative history of the Act of 1919 as generally known is simple

enough. It runs as follows. In August 1917 the Secretary of State for

India, Edwin S. Montagu, issued a statement which read; “The policy

of H.M. Government, with which the Government of India are in

complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in

every branch of the administration and the gradual development of

self-government institutions with a view to the progressive realization

of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British

Empire.” The critical word here is responsible government, since the

prospect of eventual self-government had been held out to India for

years. In accordance with this promise, Montagu visited India and, in

cooperation with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, issued the Montagu-

Chelmsford Report, indicating the direction of future policy. This

report became the basis for the bill of 1918, which, after a certain

amount of amendment by Lord Selborne’s Joint Select Committee,

came into force as the Government of India Act of 1919.

The secret history of this Act is somewhat different, and begins in

Canada in 1909, when Lionel Curtis accepted from his friend William

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Marris the idea that responsible government on the British pattern

should be extended to India. Two years later, Curtis formed a study

group of six or eight persons within the London Round Table Group.

We do not know for certain who were the members of the study group,

but apparently it included Curtis, Kerr, Fisher, and probably Brand.

To these were added three officials of the India Office. These included

Malcolm Seton (Sir Malcolm after 1919), who was secretary to the

Judicial Department of the India Office and joined Curtis's group

about 1913; and Sir William Duke, who was Lieutenant Governor of

Bengal in 1911-1912, senior member of the council of the Governor of

Bengal in 1912-1914, and a member of the Council of India in London

after 1914. At this last date he joined the Curtis group. Both of these

men were important figures in the India Office later. Sir William as

Permanent Under Secretary from 1920 to his death in 1924, and Sir

Malcolm as Assistant Under Secretary (1919-1924) and Deputy Under

Secretary (1924-1933). Sir Malcolm wrote the biographical sketch of

Sir William in the Dictionary of National Biography , and also wrote

the volume on The India Office in the Whitehall Series (1926). The

third member from this same source was Sir Lionel Abrahams, Assis-

tant Under Secretary in the India Office.

The Curtis study group was not an official committee, although

some persons (both at the time and since) have believed it was. Among

these persons would appear to be Lord Chelmsford, for in debate in the

House of Lords in November 1927 he said:

I came home from India in January 1916 for six weeks before I went out

again as Viceroy, and, when I got home, I found that there was a Com-

mittee in existence at the India Office, which was considering on what

lines future constitutional development might take place. That Commit-

tee, before my return in the middle of March gave me a pamphlet con-

taining in broad outline the views which were held with regard to future

constitutional development. When I reached India I showed this pam-

phlet to my Council and also to my noble friend, Lord Meston, who was

then Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces. It contained, what is

now known as the diarchic principle. . . . Both the Council and Lord

Meston, who was then Sir James Meston, reported adversely on the pro-

posals for constitutional development contained in that pamphlet.

Lord Chelmsford then goes on to say that Austen Chamberlain

combated their objections with the argument that the Indians must ac-

quire experience in self-government, so, after the announcement to this

effect was made publicly in August 1917, the officials in India accepted

dyarchy.

If Lord Chelmsford believed that the pamphlet was an official docu-

ment from a committee in the India Office, he was in error. The other

side of the story was revealed by Lionel Curtis in 1920 in his book

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Dyarchy . According to Curtis, the study group was originally formed

to help him write the chapter on India in the planned second volume of

The Commonwealth of Nations. It set as its task “to enquire how self-

government could be introduced and peacefully extended to India.”

The group met once a fortnight in London and soon decided on the

dyarchy principle. This principle, as any reader of Curtis’s writings

knows, was basic in Curtis’s political thought and was the foundation

on which he hoped to build a federated Empire. According to Curtis,

the study group asked itself: “Could not provincial electorates through

legislatures and ministers of their own be made clearly responsible for

certain functions of government to begin with, leaving all others in the

hands of executives responsible as at present to the Government of

India and the Secretary of State? Indian electorates, legislatures, and

executives would thus be given a field for the exercise of genuine

responsibility. From time to time fresh powers could be transferred

from the old governments as the new elective authorities developed and

proved their capacity for assuming them.” From this point of view,

Curtis asked Duke to draw up such “a plan of Devolution” for Bengal,

This plan was printed by the group, circulated, and criticized in

typical Milner Group fashion. Then the whole group went to Oxford

for three days and met to discuss it in the old Bursary of Trinity Col-

lege. It was then rewritten. “No one was satisfied.” It was decided to

circulate it for further criticism among the Round Table Groups

throughout the world, but Lord Chelmsford wrote from New South

Wales and asked for a copy. Apparently realizing that he was to be the

next Viceroy of India, the group sent a copy to him and none to the

Round Table Groups, “lest the public get hold of it and embarrass

him.” It is clear that Chelmsford was committed to a program of

reform along these or similar lines before he went out as Viceroy. This

was revealed in debate in the House of Lords by Lord Crewe on 12

December 1919.

After Chelmsford went to India in March 1916, a new, revised ver-

sion of the study group’s plan was drawn up and sent to him in May

1916. Another copy was sent to Canada to catch up with Curtis, who

had already left for India by way of Canada, Australia, and New

Zealand. This itinerary was undoubtedly followed by Curtis in order to

consult with members of the Group in various countries, especially

with Brand in Canada. On his arrival in India, Curtis wrote back to

Kerr in London:

The factor which impressed me most in Canada, New Zealand, and

Australia was the rooted aversion these peoples have to any scheme which

meant their sharing in the Government of India. ... To these young

democratic communities the principle of self-government is the breath of

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their nostrils. It is almost a religion. They feel as if there were something

inherently wrong in one people ruling another. It is the same feeling as

that which makes the Americans dislike governing the Philippines and

decline to restore order in Mexico. My first impressions on this subject

were stongly confirmed on my recent visit to these Dominions. I scarcely

recall one of the numerous meetings I addressed at which I was not asked

why India was not given self-government and what steps were being

taken in that direction.

Apparently this experience strengthened Curtiss idea that India must

be given responsible government. He probably felt that by giving India

what it and the Dominions wanted for India, both would be bound in

loyalty more closely to Britain. In this same letter to Kerr, Curtis said,

in obvious reference to the Round Table Group:

Our task then is to bring home to the public in the United Kingdom and

the Dominions how India differs from a countrv like Great Britain on the

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one hand and from Central Africa on the other, and how that difference

is now reflected in the character of its government. We must outline

clearly the problems which arise from the contact of East and West and

the disaster which awaits a failure to supply their adequate solution by

realizing and expressing the principle of Government for which we stand.

We must then go on to suggest a treatment of India in the general work of

Imperial reconstruction in harmony with the facts adduced in the fore-

going chapters. And all this must be done with the closest attention to its

effects upon educated opinion here. We must do our best to make Indian

Nationalists realize the truth that like South Africa all their hopes and

aspirations are dependent on the maintenance of the British Common-

wealth and their permanent membership therein.

This letter, written on 13 November 1916, was addressed to Philip

Kerr but was intended for all the members of the Group. Sir Valentine

Chirol corrected the draft, and copies were made available for Meston

and Marris. Then Curtis had a thousand copies printed and sent to

Kerr for distribution. In some way, the extremist Indian nationalists

obtained a copy of the letter and published a distorted version of it.

They claimed that a powerful and secret group organized about The

Round Table had sent Curtis to India to spy out the nationalist plans in

order to obstruct them. Certain sentences from the letter were torn

from their context to prove this argument. Among these was the

reference to Central Africa, which was presented to the Indian people

as a statement that they were as uncivilized and as incapable of self-

government as Central Africans. As a result of the fears created by this

rumor, the Indian National Congress and the Moslem League formed

their one and only formal alliance in the shape of the famous Lucknow

Compact of 29 December 1916. The Curtis letter was not the only fac-

tor behind the Lucknow agreement, but it was certainly very influen-

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tial. Curtis was present at the Congress meeting and was horrified at

the version of his letter which was circulating. Accordingly, he

published the correct version with an extensive commentary, under the

title Letters to the People of India (1917). In this he said categorically

that he believed: “(1) That it is the duty of those who govern the whole

British Commonwealth to do anything in their power to enable Indians

to govern themselves as soon as possible. (2) That Indians must also

come to share in the government of the British Commonwealth as a

whole.” There can be no doubt that Curtis was sincere in this and that

his view reflected, perhaps in an extreme form, the views of a large and

influential group in Great Britain. The failure of this group to persuade

the Indian nationalists that they were sincere is one of the great

disasters of the century, although the fault is not entirely theirs and

must be shared by others, including Gandhi.

In the first few months of 1917, Curtis consulted groups of Indians

and individual British (chiefly of the Milner Group) regarding the form

which the new constitution would take. The first public use of the

word “dyarchy” was in an open letter of 6 April 1917, which he wrote

to Bhupendra Nath Basu, one of the authors of the Lucknow Compact,

to demonstrate how dyarchy would function in the United Provinces.

In writing this letter, Curtis consulted with Valentine Chirol and

Malcolm Hailey. He then wrote an outline, “The Structure of Indian

Government,” which was revised by Meston and printed. This was

submitted to many persons for comment. He then organized a meeting

of Indians and British at Lord Sinha’s house in Darjeeling and, after

considerable discussion, drew up a twelve-point program, which was

signed by sixty-four Europeans and ninety Indians. This was sent to

Chelmsford and to Montagu.

In the meantime, in London, preparations were being made to issue

the historic declaration of 20 August 1917, which promised “respon-

sible” government to India. There can be no doubt that the Milner

Group was the chief factor in issuing that declaration. Curtis, in

Dyarchy , says: “For the purpose of the private enquiry above described

the principle of that pronouncement was assumed in 1915.” It is

perfectly clear that Montagu (Secretary of State in succession to Austen

Chamberlain from June 1917) did not draw up the declaration. He

drew up a statement, but the India Office substituted for it one which

had been drawn up much earlier, when Chamberlain was still

Secretary of State. Lord Ronaldshay (Lord Zetland), in the third

volume of his Life of Curzon , prints both drafts and claims that the one

which was finally issued was drawn up by Curzon. Sir Stanley Reed,

who was editor of The Times of India from 1907 to 1923, declared at a

meeting of the Royal Institute of International Affiars in 1926 that the

declaration was drawn up by Milner and Curzon. It is clear that some-

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one other than Curzon had a hand in it, and the strongest probability

would be Milner, who was with Curzon in the War Cabinet at the

time. The fact is that Curzon could not have drawn it up alone unless

he was unbelievably careless, because, after it was published, he was

horrified when the promise of “progressive realization of responsible

government in India" was pointed out to him.

Montagu went to India in November 1917, taking Sir William Duke

with him. Curtis, who had been moving about India as the guest of

Stanley Reed, Chirol, Chelmsford, Meston, Marris, and others, was

invited to participate in the Montagu-Chelmsford conferences on

several occasions. Others who were frequently consulted were Hailey,

Meston, Duke, and Chirol. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was

written by Sir William Marris of Milner’s Kindergarten after Curtis

had returned to England. Curtis wrote in Dyarchy in 1920: “It was

afterwards suggested in the press that I had actually drafted the report.

My prompt denial has not prevented a further complaint from many

quarters that Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu were unduly

influenced by an irresponsible tourist. . . . With the exception of Lord

Chelmsford himself I was possibly the only person in India with first-

hand knowledge of responsible government as applied in the Domin-

ions to the institutions of provinces. Whether my knowledge of India

entitled me to advance my views is more open to question. Of this the

reader can judge for himself. But in any case the interviews were

unsought by me." Thus Curtis does not deny the accusation that he was

chiefly responsible for dyarchy. It was believed at the time by persons

in a position to know that he was, and these persons were both for and

against the plan. On the latter side, we might quote Lord Ampthill,

who, as a former acting Viceroy, as private secretary to Joseph

Chamberlain, as Governor of Madras, and as brother-in-law of Samuel

Hoare, was in a position to know what was going on. Lord Ampthill

declared in the House of Lords in 1919: “The incredible fact is that, but

for the chance visit to India of a globe-trotting doctrinaire, with a

positive mania for constitution-mongering, nobody in the world would

ever have thought of so peculiar a notion as Dyarchy. And yet the Joint

Committee tells us in an airy manner that no better plan can be

conceived."

The Joint Committees favorable report on the Dyarchy Bill was

probably not unconnected with the fact that five out of fourteen

members were from the Cecil Bloc or Milner Group, that the chairman

had in his day presided over meetings of the Round Table Groups and

was regarded by them as their second leader, and that the Joint Com-

mittee spent most of its time hearing witnesses who were close to the

Milner Group. The committee heard Lord Meston longer than any

other witness (almost four days), spent a day with Curtis on the stand,

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and questioned, among others, Feetham, Duke, Thomas Holland

(Fellow of All Souls from 1875 to his death in 1926), Michael Sadler (a

close friend of Milner’s and practically a member of the Group), and

Stanley Reed. In the House of Commons the burden of debate on the

bill was supported by Montagu, Sir Henry Craik, H. A. L. Fisher,

W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, and Thomas J. Bennett (an old journalist col-

league of Lord Salisbury and principal owner of The Tunes of India

from 1892). Montagu and Craik both referred to Lionel Curtis. The

former said: “It is suggested in some quarters that this bill arose spon-

taneously in the minds of the Viceroy and myself without previous in-

quiry or consideration, under the influence of Mr. Lionel Curtis. I

have never yet been able to understand that you approach the merits of

any discussion by vain efforts to approximate to its authorship. I do not

even now understand that India or the Empire owes anything more or

less than a great debt of gratitude to the patriotic and devoted services

Mr. Curtis has given to the consideration of this problem.”

Sir Henry Craik later said: “I am glad to join in the compliment paid

to our mutual friend, Mr. Lionel Curtis, who belongs to a very active,

and a very important body of young men, whom I should be the last to

criticize. I am proud to know him, and to pay that respect to him due

from age to youth. He and others of the company of the Round Table

have been doing good work, and part of that good work has been done

in India.”

Mr. Fisher had nothing to say about Lionel Curtis but had con-

siderable to say about the bill and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. He

said: “There is nothing in this Bill which is not contained in that

Report. That Report is not only a very able and eloquent State Paper,

but it is also one of the greatest State Papers which have been produced

in Anglo-Indian history, and it is an open-minded candid State Paper,

a State Paper which does not ignore or gloss over the points of criticism

which have since been elaborated in the voluminous documents which

have been submitted to us.” He added, a moment later: “This is a great

Bill.” 2 The Round Table , which also approved of the bill, as might be

imagined, referred to Fisher’s speech in its issue of September 1919 and

called him “so high an authority.” The editor of that issue was Lionel

Curtis.

In the House of Lords there was less enthusiasm. Chief criticism

centered on two basic points, both of which originated with Curtis:

(1) the principle of dyarchy — that is, that government could be

separated into two classes of activities under different regimes; and (2)

the effort to give India “responsible” government rather than merely

“self-government” — that is, the effort to extend to India a form of

government patterned on Britain’s. Both of these principles were

criticized vigorously, especially by members of the Cecil Bloc, includ-

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ing Lord Midleton, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Selborne, Lord Salisbury,

and others. Support for the bill came chiefly from Lord Curzon

(Leader in the Upper House) and Lord Islington (Under Secretary in

the India Office).

As a result of this extensive criticism, the bill was revised con-

siderably in the Joint Committee but emerged with its main outlines

unchanged and became law in December 1919. These main outlines,

especially the two principles of “dyarchy” and “responsibility,” were,

as we have said, highly charged with Curtis’s own connotations. These

became fainter as time passed, both because of developments in India

and because Curtis from 1919 on became increasingly remote from

Indian affairs. The refusal of the Indian National Congress under Gan-

dhi’s leadership to cooperate in carrying on the government under the

Act of 1919 persuaded the other members of the Group (and perhaps

Curtis himself) that it was not possible to apply responsible government

on the British model to India. This point of view, which had been

stated so emphatically by members of the Cecil Bloc even before 1900,

and which formed the chief argument against the Act of 1919 in the

debates in the House of Lords, was accepted by the Milner Group as

their own after 1919. Halifax, Grigg, Amery, Coupland, Fisher, and

others stated this most emphatically from the early 1920s to the middle

1940s. In 1943 Grigg stated this as a principle in his book The British

Commonwealth and quoted with approval Amery ’s statement of 30

March 1943 to the House of Commons, rejecting the British parliamen-

tary system as suitable for India. Amery, at that time Secretary of State

for India, had said: “Like wasps buzzing angrily up and down against a

window pane when an adjoining window may be wide open, we are all

held up, frustrated and irritated by the unrealized and unsuperable

barrier of our constitutional prepossessions.” Grigg went even further,

indeed, so far that we might suspect that he was deprecating the use of

parliamentary government in general rather than merely in India. He

said:

It is entirely devoid of flexibility' and quite incapable of engendering the

essential spirit of compromise in countries where racial and communal

divisions present the principal political difficulty. The idea that freedom

to be genuine must be accommodated to this pattern is deeply rooted in

us, and we must not allow our statesmanship to be imprisoned behind the

bars of our own experience. Our insistence in particular on the principle

of a common roll of electors voting as one homogeneous electorate has

caused reaction in South Africa, rebellion or something much too like it in

Kenya, and deadlock in India, because in the different conditions of those

countries it must involve the complete and perpetual dominance of a

single race or creed.

Unfortunately, as Reginald Coupland has pointed out in his book,

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India, a Re-statement (1945), all agreed that the British system of

government was unsuited to India, but none made any effort to find an

indigenous system that would be suitable. The result was that the

Milner Group and their associates relaxed in their efforts to prepare

Indians to live under a parliamentary system and finally cut India loose

without an indigenous system and only partially prepared to manage a

parliamentary system.

This decline in enthusiasm for a parliamentary system in India was

well under way by 1921. In the two year-interval from 1919 to 1921,

the Group continued as the most important British factor in Indian af-

fairs. Curtis was editor of The Round Table in this period and con-

tinued to agitate the cause of the Act of 1919. Lord Chelmsford re-

mained a Viceroy in this period. Meston and Hailey were raised to the

Viceroys Executive Council. Sir William Duke became Permanent

Under Secretary, and Sir Malcolm Seton became Assistant Under

Secretary in the India Office. Sir William Marris was made Home

Secretary of the Government of India and Special Reforms Commis-

sioner in charge of setting up the new system. L. F. Rushbrook

Williams was given special duty at the Home Department, Govern-

ment of India, in connection with the reforms. Thus the Milner Group

was well placed to put the new law into effect. The effort was largely

frustrated by Gandhi’s boycott of the elections under the new system.

By 1921 the Milner Group had left Indian affairs and shifted its chief

interest to other fields. Curtis became one of the chief factors in Irish

affairs in 1921; Lord Chelmsford returned home and was raised to a

Viscounty in the same year; Meston retired in 1919; Marris became

Governor of Assam in 1921; Hailey became Governor of the Punjab in

1924; Duke died in 1924; and Rushbrook Williams became director of

the Central Bureau of Information, Government of India, in 1920.

This does not indicate that the Milner Group abandoned all interest

in India by 1924 or earlier, but the Group never showed such concen-

trated interest in the problem of India again. Indeed, the Group never

displayed such concentrated interest in any problem either earlier or

later, with the single exception of the effort to form the Union of South

Africa in 1908-1909.

The decade 1919-1929 was chiefly occupied with efforts to get Gan-

dhi to permit the Indian National Congress to cooperate in the affairs

of government, so that its members and other Indians could acquire the

necessary experience to allow the progressive realization of self-

government. The Congress Party, as we have said, boycotted the elec-

tions of 1920 and cooperated in those of 1924 only for the purpose of

wrecking them. Nonetheless, the system worked, with the support of

moderate groups, and the British extended one right after another in

steady succession. Fiscal automony was granted to India in 1921, and

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that country at once adopted a protective tariff, to the considerable in-

jury of British textile manufacturing. The superior Civil Services were

opened to Indians in 1924. Indians were admitted to Woolwich and

Sandhurst in the same year, and commissions in the Indian Army were

made available to them.

The appointment of Baron Irwin of the Milner Group to be Viceroy

in 1926 — an appointment in which, according to A. C. Johnson’s

biography Viscount Halifax (1941), “the influence of Geoffrey Dawson

and other members of The Times' editorial staff” may have played a

decisive role— was the chief step in the effort to achieve some real pro-

gress under the Act of 1919 before that Act came under the critical ex-

amination of another Royal Commission, scheduled for 1929. The new

Viceroy’s statement of policy, made in India, 17 July 1926, was, ac-

cording to the same source, embraced by The Times in an editorial

“which showed in no uncertain terms that Irwin s policy was appreci-

ated and underwritten by Printing House Square.”

Unfortunately, in the period 1924-1931 the India Office was not in

control of either the Milner Group or Cecil Bloc. For various reasons,

of which this would seem to be the most important, coordination

between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy and between Britain

and the Indian nationalists broke down at the most crucial moments.

The Milner Group, chiefly through The Times, participated in this

situation in the period 1926-1929 by praising their man. Lord Irwin,

and adversely criticizing the Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead.

Relationships between Birkenhead and the Milner (and Cecil) Group

had not been cordial for a long time, and there are various indications

of feuding from at least 1925. We may recall that in April 1925 a

secret, or at least unofficial, “committee” of Milner Group and Cecil

Bloc members had nominated Lord Milner for the post of Chancellor of

Oxford University. Lord Birkenhead had objected both to the can-

didate and to the procedure. In regard to the candidate, he would have

preferred Asquith. In regard to the procedure, he demanded to know

by what authority this “committee” took upon itself the task of naming

a chancellor to a university of which he (Lord Birkenhead) had been

High Steward since 1922. This protest, as usual when Englishmen of

this social level are deeply moved, took the form of a letter to The

Times . It received a tart answer in a letter, written in the third person,

in which he was informed that this committee had existed before the

World War, and that, when it was reconstituted at the end of the war,

Mr. F. E. Smith had been invited to be a member of it but had not seen

fit even to acknowledge the invitation.

The bad relationship between the Milner Group and Lord

Birkenhead was not the result of such episodes as this but rather, it

would seem, based on a personal antipathy engendered by the

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character of Lord Birkenhead and especially by his indiscreet and

undiplomatic social life and political activity. Nonetheless, Lord

Birkenhead was a man of unquestioned vigor and ability and a man of

considerable political influence from the day in 1906 when he had won

a parliamentary seat for the Conservatives in the face of a great Liberal

tidal wave. As a result, he had obtained the post of Secretary of State

for India in November 1924 at the same time that Leopold Amery went

to the Colonial Office. The episode regarding the Milner candidacy to

the Oxford Chancellorship occurred six months later and was prac-

tically a direct challenge from Birkenhead to Amery, since at that time

the latter was Milner’s active political lieutenant and one of the chief

movers in the effort to make him Chancellor.

Thus, in the period 1926-1929, the Milner Group held the Viceroy’s

post but did not hold the post of Secretary of State. The relationship

between these two posts was such that good government could not be

obtained without close cooperation between them. Such cooperation

did not exist in this period. As far as the constitutional development

was concerned, this lack of cooperation appeared in a tendency on the

part of the Secretary of State to continue to seek a solution of the prob-

lem along the road marked by the use of a unilateral British

investigatory commission, and a tendency on the part of Irwin (and the

Milner Group) to seek a solution along the newer road of cooperative

discussion with the Indians. These tendencies did not appear as

divergent routes until after the Simon Commission had begun its

labors, with the result that accumulating evidence that the latter road

would be used left that unilateral commission in an unenviable

position.

The Government of India Act of 1919 had provided that an

investigation should be made of the functioning of the Act after it had

been in effect for ten years. The growing unrest of the Indians and their

failure to utilize the opportunities of the Act of 1919 persuaded many

Englishmen (including most of the Milner Group) that the promised

Statutory Commission should begin its work earlier than anticipated

and should direct its efforts rather at finding the basis for a new consti-

tutional system than at examining the obvious failure of the system pro-

vided in 1919.

The first official hint that the date of the Statutory Commission

would be moved up was given by Birkenhead on 30 March 1927, in

combination with some rather “arrogant and patronizing” remarks

about Indian politics. The Times, while criticizing Birkenhead for his

additional remarks, took up the suggestion regarding the commission

and suggested in its turn “that the ideal body would consist of judicially

minded men who were able to agree.” This is, of course, exactly what

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was obtained. The authorized biography Viscount Halifax , whence

these quotations have been taken, adds at this point: “It is interesting to

speculate how far Geoffrey Dawson, the Editor, was again expressing

Irwin’s thoughts and whether a deliberate ballon d'essai was being put

up in favor of Sir John Simon.”

The Simon Commission was exactly what The Times had wanted, a

body of “judicially minded men who were able to agree.” Its chairman

was the most expensive lawyer in England, a member of the Cecil Bloc

since he was elected to All Souls in 1897, and in addition a member of

the two extraordinary clubs already mentioned, Grillion’s and The

Club. Although he was technically a Liberal, his associations and

inclinations were rather on the Conservative side, and it was no sur-

prise in 1931 when he became a National Liberal and occupied one of

the most important seats in the Cabinet, the Foreign Office. From this

time on, he was closely associated with the policies of the Milner Group

and, in view of his personal association with the leaders of the Group in

All Souls, may well be regarded as a member of the Group. As chair-

man of the Statutory Commission, he used his legal talents to the full to

draw up a report on which all members of the commission could agree,

and it is no small example of his abilities that he was able to get an

unanimous agreement on a program which in outline, if not in all its

details, was just what the Milner Group wanted.

Of the six other members of the Commission, two were Labourite

(Clement Attlee and Vernon Hartshorn). The others were Unionist or

Conservative. Viscount Burnham of Eton and Balliol (1884) had been a

Unionist supporter of the Cecil Bloc in Commons from 1885 to 1906,

and his father had been made baronet and baron by Lord Salisbury,

His own title of Viscount came from Lloyd George in 1919.

The fifth member of the Commission, Donald Palmer Howard,

Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal, of Eton and Trinity College,

Cambridge, had no special claim to fame except that he had been a

Unionist M.P. in 1922-1926.

The sixth member, Edward Cecil Cadogan of Eton and Balliol

(1904), was the sixth son of Earl Cadogan and thus the older brother of

Sir Alexander Cadogan, British delegate to the United Nations. Their

father, Earl Cadogan, grandnephew of the first Duke of Wellington,

had been Lord Privy Seal in Lord Salisbury’s second government and

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in Salisbury’s third government. Edward,

who was knighted in 1939, had no special claim to fame except that he

was a Unionist M.P. from 1922 to 1935 and was Chairman of the House

of Commons under the National Government of 1931-1935.

The seventh member, George R. Lane-Fox (Baron Bingley since

1933) of Eton and New College, was a Unionist M.P. from 1906 to 1931

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and Secretary of Mines from 1922 to 1928. He is a brother-in-law and

lifelong friend of Lord Halifax, having married the Honourable Mary

Wood in 1903.

The most extraordinary fact about the Simon Commission was the

lack of qualification possessed by its members. Except for the

undoubted advantages of education at Eton and Oxford, the members

had no obvious claims to membership on any committee considering

Indian affairs. Indeed, not one of the eight members had had any

previous contact with this subject. Nevertheless, the commission pro-

duced an enormous two-volume report which stands as a monumental

source book for the study of Indian problems in this period. When, to

the lack of qualifications of its members, we add the fact that the com-

mission was almost completely boycotted by Indians and obtained its

chief contact with the natives by listening to their monotonous chants

of “Simon, go back,” it seems more than a miracle that such a valuable

report could have emerged from their investigations. The explanation

is to be found in the fact that they received full cooperation from the

staff of the Government of India, including members of the Milner

Group.

It is clear that by the end of 1928 the Milner Group, as a result of the

strong Indian opposition to the Simon Commission, the internal strug-

gle within that commission between Simon and Burnham (because of

the latter’s refusal to go as far as the former desired in the direction of

concessions to the Indians), and their inability to obtain cooperation

from the Secretary of State (as revealed in the steady criticism of

Birkenhead in The Times), had decided to abandon the commission

method of procedure in favor of a round-table method of procedure. It

is not surprising that the Round Table Groups should prefer a round-

table method of procedure even in regard to Indian affairs, where

many of the participants would have relatively little experience in the

typical British procedure of agreement through conference. To the

Milner Group, the round-table method was not only preferable in itself

but was made absolutely necessary by the widespread Indian criticism

of the Simon Commission for its exclusively British personnel. This

restriction had been adopted originally on the grounds that only a

purely British and purely parliamentary commission could commit

Parliament in some degree to acceptance of the recommendations of

the commission — at least, this was the defense of the restricted

membership made to the Indians by the Viceroy on 8 November 1927.

In place of this argument, the Milner Group now advanced a

somewhat more typical idea, namely, that only Indian participation

on a direct and equal basis could commit Indians to any plans for the

future of India. By customary Milner Group reasoning, they decided

that the responsibility placed on Indians by making them participate in

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the formulation of plans would moderate the extremism of their

demands and bind them to participate in the execution of these plans

after they were enacted into law. This basic idea — that if you have

faith in people, they will prove worthy of that faith, or, expressed in

somewhat more concrete terms, that if you give dissatisfied people

voluntarily more than they expect and, above all, before they really

expect to get it, they will not abuse the gift but will be sobered

simultaneously by the weight of responsibility and the sweetness of

gratitude — was an underlying assumption of the Milner Group's

activities from 1901 to the present. Its validity was defended (when

proof was demanded) by a historical example — that is, by contrasting

the lack of generosity in Britain's treatment of the American Colonies

in 1774 with the generosity in her treatment of the Canadian Colonies

in 1839. The contrast between the “Intolerable Acts” and the Durham

Report was one of the basic ideas at the back of the minds of all the

important members of the Milner Group. In many of those minds,

however, this assumption was not based on political history at all but

had a more profound and largely unconscious basis in the teachings of

Christ and the Sermon on the Mount. This was especially true of Lionel

Curtis, John Dove, Lord Lothian, and Lord Halifax, Unless this idea is

recognized, it is not possible to see the underlying unity behind the

actions of the Group toward the Boers in 1901-1910, toward India in

1919 and 1935, and toward Hitler in 1934-1939.

These ideas as a justification of concessions to India are to be found

in Milner Group discussions of the Indian problem at all periods,

especially just before the Act of 1919. A decade later they were still

exerting their influence. They will be found, for example, in The

Round Table articles on India in September 1930 and March 1931.

The earlier advocated the use of the round-table method but warned

that it must be based on complete equality for the Indian members. It

continued: “Indians should share equally with Great Britain the

responsibility for reaching or failing to reach an agreement as to what

the next step in Indian constitutional development should be. It is no

longer a question, as we see it, of Great Britain listening to Indian

representatives and then deciding for herself what the next Indian

constitution should be. . . . The core of the round table idea is that

representative Britons and representative Indians should endeavour to

reach an agreement, on the understanding that if they can reach an

agreement, each will loyally carry it through to completion, as was the

case with Ireland in 1922.” As seen by the Milner Group, Britain's

responsibility was

her obligation to help Indians to take maximum responsibility for India's

government on their own shoulders, and to insist on their doing so, not

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only because it is the right thing in itself, but because it is the most certain

antidote to the real danger of anarchy which threatens India unless In-

dians do learn to carry responsibility for government at a very early date.

There is less risk in going too fast in agreement and cooperation with

political India than in going at a more moderate pace without its agree-

ment and cooperation. Indeed, in our view, the most successful founda-

tion for the Round Table Conference would be that Great Britain should

ask the Indian delegates to table agreed proposals and then do her utmost

to accept them and place on Indian shoulders the responsibility for

carrying them into effect.

It is very doubtful if the Milner Group could have substituted the

round-table method for the commission method in quite so abrupt a

fashion as it did, had not a Labour government come to office early in

1929. As a result, the difficult Lord Birkenhead was replaced as

Secretary of State by the much more cooperative Mr. Wedgewood

Benn (Viscount Stansgate since 1941). The greater degree of coopera-

tion which the Milner Group received from Benn than from

Birkenhead may be explained by the fact that their hopes for India

were not far distant from those held in certain circles of the Labour

Party. It may also be explained by the fact that Wedgewood Benn was

considerably closer, in a social sense, to the Milner Group than was

Birkenhead. Benn had been a Liberal M.P. from 1906 to 1927; his

brother Sir Ernest Benn, the publisher, had been close to the Milner

Group in the Ministry of Munitions in 1916-1917 and in the Ministry of

Reconstruction in 1917-1918; and his nephew John, oldest son of Sir

Ernest, married the oldest daughter of Maurice Hankey in 1929.

Whatever the cause, or combination of causes, Lord Irwin’s suggestion

that the round-table method be adopted was accepted by the Labour

government. The suggestion was made when the Viceroy returned to

London in June 1929, months before the Simon Report was drafted and

a year before it was published. With this suggestion Lord Irwin com-

bined another, that the government formally announce that its goal for

India was “Dominion status.” The plan leaked out, probably because

the Labour government had to consult with the Liberal Party, on

which its majority depended. The Liberals (Lord Reading and Lloyd

George) advised against the announcement, but Irwin was instructed

to make it on his return to India in October. Lord Birkenhead heard of

the plan and wrote a vigorous letter of protest to The Times . When

Geoffrey Dawson refused to publish it, it appeared in the Daily Tele-

graph , thus repeating the experience of Lord Lansdownes even more

famous letter of 1917.

Lord Irwin’s announcement of the Round Table Conference and of

the goal of Dominion status, made in India on 31 October 1929,

brought a storm of protest in England. It was rejected by Lord Reading

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and Lloyd George for the Liberals and by Lord Birkenhead and

Stanley Baldwin for the Conservatives. It is highly unlikely that the

Milner Group were much disturbed by this storm. The reason is that

the members of the Group had already decided that “Dominion status”

had two meanings — one meaning for Englishmen, and a second, rather

different, meaning for Indians. As Lord Irwin wrote in a private

memorandum in November 1929:

To the English conception, Dominion Status now connotes, as indeed the

word itself implies, an achieved constitutional position of complete free-

dom and immunity from interference by His Majesty’s Government in

London. . . . The Indian seems generally to mean something different.

. . . The underlying element in much of Indian political thought seems to

have been the desire that, by free conference between Great Britain and

India, a constitution should be fashioned which may contain within itself

the seed of full Dominion Status, growing naturally to its full develop-

ment in accordance with the particular circumstances of India, without

the necessity — the implications of which the Indian mind resents — of

further periodic enquiries by way of Commission. What is to the English-

man an accomplished process is to the Indian rather a declaration of

right , from which future and complete enjoyment of Dominion privilege

will spring . 3

This distinction, without any reference to Lord Irwin (whose

memorandum was not published until 1941), was also made in the

September 1930 issue of The Round Table. On this basis, for the sake of

appeasement of India, the Milner Group was willing to promise India

“Dominion status” in the Indian meaning of the expression and allow

the English who misunderstood to cool off gradually as they saw that

the development was not the one they had feared. Indeed, to the

Milner Group, it probably appeared that the greater the rage in Brit-

ain, the greater the appeasement in India.

Accordingly, the first session of the Round Table Conference was

called for November 1930. It marked an innovation not only because of

the status of equality and responsibility which it placed on the Indians,

but also because, for the first time, it tried to settle the problem of the

Indian States within the same framework as it settled the constitutional

problem of British India. This was a revolutionary effort, and its

degree of success was very largely due to the preparatory work of Lord

Irwin, acting on the advice of Malcolm Hailey.

The Indian States had remained as backward, feudalistic, and ab-

solutist enclaves, within the territorial extent of British India and

bound to the British Raj by individual treaties and agreements. As

might be expected from the Milner Group, the solution which they pro-

posed was federation. They hoped that devolution in British India

would secure a degree of provincial autonomy that would make it

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possible to bind the provinces and the Indian States within the same

federal structure and with similar local autonomy. However, the

Group knew that the Indian States could not easily be federated with

British India until their systems of government were raised to some ap-

proximation of the same level. For this reason, and to win the Princes

over to federation, Lord Irwin had a large number of personal con-

sultations with the Princes in 1927 and 1928. At some of these he lec-

tured the Princes on the principles of good government in a fashion

which came straight from the basic ideology of the Milner Group. The

memorandum which he presented to them, dated 14 June 1927 and

published in Johnson’s biography, Viscount Halifax , could have been

written by the Kindergarten. This can be seen in its definitions of the

function of government, its emphasis on the reign of law, its advocacy

of devolution, its homily on the duty of princes, its separation of

responsibility in government from democracy in government, and its

treatment of democracy as an accidental rather than an essential

characteristic of good government.

The value of this preparatory work appeared at the first Round

Table Conference, where, contrary to all expectations, the Indian

Princes accepted federation. The optimism resulting from this agree-

ment was, to a considerable degree, dissipated, however, by the refusal

of Gandhi’s party to participate in the conference unless India were

granted full and immediate Dominion status. Refusal of these terms

resulted in an outburst of political activity which made it necessary for

Irwin to find jails capable of holding sixty thousand Indian agitators at

one time.

The view that the Round Table Conference represented a complete

repudiation of the Simon Commission’s approach to the Indian prob-

lem was assiduously propagated by the Milner Group in order to pre-

vent Indian animosity against the latter from being carried over

against the former. But the differences were in detail, since in main

outline both reflected the Group’s faith in federation, devolution,

responsibility, and minority rights. The chief recommendations of the

Simon Commission were three in number: (1) to create a federation of

British India and the Indian States by using the provinces of the former

as federative units with the latter; (2) to modify the central government

by making the Legislative Assembly a federal organization but other-

wise leave the center unchanged; (3) to end dyarchy in the provinces by

making Indians responsible for all provincial activities. It also ad-

vocated separation of Burma from India.

These were also the chief conclusions of the various Round Table

Conferences and of the government’s White Papers of December 1931

(Cmd. 3972) and of March 1933 (Cmd. 4268). The former was

presented to Parliament and resulted in a debate and vote of con-

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fidence on the government’s policy in India as stated in it. The attack

was led by Winston Churchill in the Commons and by Lords Lloyd,

Salisbury, Midleton, and Sumner in the House of Lords. None of these

except Churchill openly attacked the government’s policy, the others

contenting themselves with advising delay in its execution. The govern-

ment was defended by Samuel Hoare, John Simon, and Stanley

Baldwin in the Commons and by Lords Lothian, Irwin, Zetland,

Dufferin, and Hailsham, as well as Archbishop Lang, in the Lords.

Lord Lothian, in opening the debate, said that while visiting in India

in 1912 he had written an article for an English review saying that the

Indian Nationalist movement “was essentially healthy, for it was a

movement for political virtue and self-respect,” although the Indian

Civil Servant with whom he was staying said that Indian Nationalism

was sedition. Lord Lothian implied that he had not changed his opin-

ion twenty years later. In the Lower House the question came to a vote,

which the government easily carried by 369 to 43. In the majority were

Leopold Amery, John J. Astor, John Buchan, Austen Chamberlain,

Viscount Cranborne, Samuel Hoare, W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, Lord

Eustace Percy, John Simon, and D. B. Somervell. In the minority were

Churchill, George Balfour, and Viscount Wolmer.

Practically the same persons appeared on the same sides in the

discussion regarding the White Paper of 1933. This document, which

embodied the government’s suggestions for a bill on Indian constitu-

tional reform, was defended by various members of the Milner Group

outside of Parliament, and anonymously in The Round Table. John

Buchan wrote a prefece to John Thompson’s India: The White Paper

(1933), in which he defended the extension of responsible government

to India, saying, “We cannot exclude her from sharing in what we

ourselves regard as the best.” Samuel Hoare defended it in a letter to his

constituents at Chelsea. Malcolm Hailey defended it before the Royal

Empire Society Summer School at Oxford, in a speech afterwards

published in The Asiatic Review. Hailey had resigned as Governor of

the United Provinces in India in order to return to England to help the

government put through its bill. During the long period required to ac-

complish this, Samuel Hoare, who as Secretary of State for India was

the official government spokesman on the subject, had Hailey con-

stantly with him as his chief adviser and support. It was this support

that permitted Hoare, whose knowledge of India was definitely

limited, to conduct his astounding campaign for the Act of 1935.

The White Paper of 1933 was presented to a Joint Select Committee

of both Houses. It was publicly stated as a natural action on the part of

the government that this committee be packed with supporters of the

bill. For this reason Churchill, George Balfour, and Lord Wolmer

refused to serve on it, although Josiah Wedgwood, a Labour Member

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who opposed the bill, asked to be put on the committee because it was

packed.

The Joint Select Committee, as we have seen, had thirty-two

members, of whom at least twelve were from the Cecil Bloc and Milner

Group and supported the bill. Four were from the inner circles of the

Milner Group. The chief witnesses were Sir Samuel Hoare; who gave

testimony for twenty days; Sir Michael O’Dwyer, who gave testimony

for four days; and Winston Churchill, who gave testimony for three

days. The chief witness was thus Hoare, who answered 5594 questions

from the committee. At all times Hoare had Malcolm Hailey at his side

for advice.

The fashion in which the government conducted the Joint Select

Committee aroused a good deal of unfavorable comment. Lord

Rankeillour in the House of Lords criticized this, especially the fashion

in which Hoare used his position to push his point of view and to in-

fluence the evidence which the committee received from other

witnesses. He concluded: "This Committee was not a judicial body,

and its conclusions are vitiated thereby. You may say that on their

merits they have produced a good or a bad Report, but what you can-

not say is that the Report is the judicial finding of unbiased or impartial

minds." As a result of such complaints, the House of Commons Com-

mittee on Privilege investigated the conduct of the Joint Select Com-

mittee. It found that Hoare’s actions toward witnesses and in regard to

documentary evidence could be brought within the scope of the

Standing Orders of the House if a distinction were made between

judicial committees and nonjudicial committees and between witnesses

giving facts and giving opinions. These distinctions made it possible to

acquit Sir Samuel of any violation of privilege, but aroused such

criticism that a Select Committee on Witnesses was formed to examine

the rules for dealing with witnesses. In its report, on 4 June 1935, this

Select Committee rejected the validity of the distinctions between

judicial and nonjudicial and between fact and opinion made by the

Committee on Privilege, and recommended that the Standing Rules be

amended to forbid any tampering with documents that had been

received by a committee. The final result was a formal acquittal, but a

moral condemnation, of Hoare’s actions in regard to the Joint Select

Committee on the Government of India.

The report of the Joint Select Committee was accepted by nineteen

out of its thirty-two members. Nine voted against it (five Conservative

and four Labour Members). A motion to accept the report and ask the

government to proceed to draw up a bill based on it was introduced in

the House of Lords by the President of the Board of Education, Lord

Halifax (Lord Irwin), on 12 December 1934, in a typical Milner Group

speech. He said: “As I read it, the whole of our British and Imperial ex-

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perience shouts at us the warning that representative government

without responsibility, once political consciousness has been aroused, is

apt to be a source of great weakness and, not impossibly, great danger.

We had not learned that lesson, let me remind the House, in the eigh-

teenth century, and we paid very dearly for it. We learned it some sixty

years later and, by having learned it, we transformed the face and

history of Canada.” Lord Salisbury once again advised delay, and at-

tacked the idea that parliamentary government could work in India or

indeed had worked anywhere outside the British Commonwealth.

Lord Snell, speaking for the Labour opposition, objected to the lack of

protection against economic exploitation for the Indian masses, the

omission of any promise of Dominion status for India, the weighing of

the franchise too heavily on the side of the landlords and too lightly on

the side of women or of laborers, the provisions for a second chamber,

and the use of indirect election for the first chamber. Lord Lothian

answered both speakers, supporting only one criticism, that against in-

direct election to the central assembly. He made the significant state-

ment that he did not fear to turn India over to the Congress Party of

Gandhi because (1) “though I disagree with almost everything that

they say in public and most of their political programme, I have a

sneaking sympathy with the emotion which lies underneath them . . .

the aspiration of young impetuous India anxious to take responsibility

on its own shoulders”; and (2) “because I believe that the one political

lesson, which has more often been realized in the British Com-

monwealth of Nations than anywhere else in the world, is that the one

corrective of political extremism is to put responsibility upon the ex-

tremists, and, by these proposals, that is exactly what we are doing.”

These are typical Milner Group reasons.

In the debate, Halifax was supported by Archbishop Lang and Lords

Zetland, Linlithgow, Midleton, Hardinge of Penshurst, Lytton, and

Reading. Lord Salisbury was supported by Lords Phillimore,

Rankeillour, Ampthill, and Lloyd. In the division, Salisbury’s motion

for delay was beaten by 239 to 62. In addition to the lords mentioned,

the majority included Lords Dufferin, Linlithgow, Cranbrook,

Cobham, Cecil of Chelwood, Goschen, Hampden, Elton, Lugard,

Meston, and Wemyss, while the minority included Lords Birkenhead,

Westminster, Carnock, Islington, and Leconfield. It is clear that the

Milner Group voted completely with the majority, while the Cecil Bloc

was split.

The bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 6 February

1935 by Sir Samuel Hoare. As was to be expected, his argument was

based on the lessons to be derived from the error of 1774 and the success

of 1839 in North America. The government’s actions, he declared, were

based on “plain, good intentions.” He was mildly criticized from the

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left by Attlee and Sir Herbert Samuel; supported by Sir Arthur Steel-

Maitland, Sir Edward Grigg, and others; and then subjected to a long-

sustained barrage from Winston Churchill. Churchill had already

revealed his opinion of the bill over the BBC when he said, on 29

January 1935, that it was “a monstrous monument of sham built by the

pygmies.” He continued his attack in a similar vein, with the result that

almost every government speaker felt the need to caution him that his

intemperance was hurting his own cause. From our point of view, his

most interesting statement, and one which was not contradicted, said:

“I have watched this story from its very unfolding, and what has struck

me more than anything else about it has been the amazingly small

number of people who have managed to carry matters to their present

lamentable pitch. You could almost count them on the fingers of one

hand. I have also been struck by the prodigious power which this group

of individuals have been able to exert and relay, to use a mechanical

term, through the vast machinery of party, of Parliament, and of

patronage, both here and in the East. It is tragical that they should

have been able to mislead the loyalties and use the assets of the Empire

to its own undoing. I compliment them on their skill, and I compliment

them also on their disciples. Their chorus is exceedingly well drilled.”

This statement was answered by Lord Eustace Percy, who quoted Lord

Hugh Cecil on “profitable mendacity.” This led to an argument, in

which both sides appealed to the Speaker. Order was restored when

Lord Eustace said of Churchill, “I would never impute to him . . . any

intention of making a charge which he did not believe himself.”

It is quite clear that Churchill believed his charge and was referring

to what we have called the Milner Group, although he would not have

known it under that name, nor would he have realized its extreme

ramifications. He was merely referring to the extensive influence of

that close group of associates which included Hoare, Hailey, Curtis,

Lothian, Dawson, Amery, Grigg, and Halifax.

After four days of debate on the second reading, the opposition

amendment was rejected by 404-133, and the bill passed to the com-

mittee stage. In the majority were Amery, Buchan, Grigg, Hoare,

Ormsby-Gore, Simon, Sir Donald Somervell, and Steel-Maitland. The

minority consisted of three ill-assorted groups: the followers of

Churchill, the leaders of the Labour Party, and a fragment of the Cecil

Bloc with a few others.

The Government of India Act of 1935 was the longest bill ever sub-

mitted to Parliament, and it underwent the longest debate in history

(over forty days in Commons). In general, the government let the op-

position talk itself out and then crushed it on each division. In the third

reading, Churchill made his final speech in a tone of baneful warning

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regarding the future of India. He criticized the methods of pressure

used by Hoare and said that in ten years’ time the Secretary of State

would be haunted by what had been done, and it could be said of him,

“God save thee, ancient Mariner,

From the fiends that plague thee thus.

Why lookst thou so?” With my cross-bow,

I shot the Albatross.

These somber warnings were answered by Leopold Amery, who

opened his rejoinder with the words, “Here endeth the last chapter of

the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.”

In the House of Lords the bill was taken through its various stages by

Lord Zetland (who replaced Hoare as Secretary of State for India in

June 1935), and the final speech for the government was from Halifax

(recently made Secretary of State for War). The Act received the Royal

Assent on 1 August 1935.

The Act never went into effect completely, and by 1939 the Milner

Group was considering abandoning it in favor of complete self-

government for India. The portions of the Act of 1935 dealing with the

central government fell to the ground when the refusal of the Princes of

the Indian States to accept the Act made a federal solution impossible.

The provincial portion began to function in 1937, but with great dif-

ficulty because of the extremist agitation from the Congress Party. This

party obtained almost half of the seats in the eleven provinces and had

a clear majority in six provinces. The provincial governments, started

in 1937, worked fairly well, and the emergency powers of the central

governments, which continued on the 1919 model, were used only

twice in over two years. When the war began, the Congress Party

ordered its ministries to resign. Since the Congress Party members in

the legislatures would not support non-Congress ministries, the decree

powers of the Provincial Governors had to be used in those provinces

with a Congress majority. In 1945 six out of the eleven provinces had

responsible government.

From 1939 on, constitutional progress in India was blocked by a

double stalemate: (1) the refusal of the Congress Party to cooperate in

government unless the British abandoned India completely, something

which could not be done while the Japanese were invading Burma; and

(2) the growing refusal of the Moslem League to cooperate with the

Congress Party on any basis except partition of India and complete

autonomy for the areas with Moslem majorities. The Milner Group,

and the British government generally, by 1940 had given up all hope of

any successful settlement except complete self-government for India,

but it could not give up to untried hands complete control of defense

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policy during the war. At the same time, the Milner Group generally

supported Moslem demands because of its usual emphasis on minority

rights.

During this period the Milner Group remained predominant in

Indian affairs, although the Viceroy (Lord Linlithgow) was not a

member of the Group. The Secretary of State for India, however, was

Leopold Amery for the whole period 1940-1945. A number of efforts

were made to reach agreement with the Congress Party, but the com-

pletely unrealistic attitude of the party's leaders, especially Gandhi,

made this impossible. In 1941, H. V. Hodson, by that time one of the

most important members of the Milner Group, was made Reforms

Commissioner for India. The following year the most important effort

to break the Indian stalemate was made. This was the Cripps Mission,

whose chief adviser was Sir Reginald Coupland, another member of

the inner circle of the Milner Group. As a result of the failure of this

mission and of the refusal of the Indians to believe in the sincerity of

the British (a skepticism that was completely without basis), the situa-

tion dragged on until after the War. The election of 1945, which drove

the Conservative Party from office, also removed the Milner Group

from its positions of influence. The subsequent events, including com-

plete freedom for India and the division of the country into two

Dominions within the British Commonwealth, were controlled by new

hands, but the previous actions of the Milner Group had so committed

the situation that these new hands had no possibility (nor, indeed,

desire) to turn the Indian problem into new paths. There can be little

doubt that with the Milner Group still in control the events of

1945-1948 in respect to India would have differed only in details.

The history of British relations with India in the twentieth century

was disastrous. In this history the Milner Group played a major role.

To be sure, the materials with which they had to work were intractable

and they had inconvenient obstacles at home (like the diehards within

the Conservative Party), but these problems were made worse by the

misconceptions about India and about human beings held by the

Milner Group. The bases on which they built their policy were

fine — indeed, too fine. These bases were idealistic, almost utopian, to a

degree which made it impossible for them to grow and function and

made it highly likely that forces of ignorance and barbarism would be

released, with results exactly contrary to the desires of the Milner

Group. On the basis of love of liberty, human rights, minority

guarantees, and self- responsibility, the Milner Group took actions that

broke down the lines of external authority in Indian society faster than

any lines of internal self-discipline were being created. It is said that

the road to perdition is paved with good intentions. The road to the

Indian tragedy of 1947-1948 was also paved with good intentions, and

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those paving blocks were manufactured and laid down by the Milner

Group. The same good intentions contributed largely to the dissolution

of the British Empire, the race wars of South Africa, and the unleash-

ing of the horrors of 1939-1945 on the world.

To be sure, in India as elsewhere, the Milner Group ran into bad

luck for which they were not responsible. The chief case of this in India

was the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, which was probably the chief

reason for Gandhi's refusal to cooperate in carrying out the constitu-

tional reforms of that same year. But the Milner Group’s policies were

self-inconsistent and were unrealistic. For example, they continually

insisted that the parliamentary system was not fitted to Indian condi-

tions, yet they made no real effort to find a more adaptive political

system, and every time they gave India a further dose of self-

government, it was always another dose of the parliamentary system.

But, clinging to their beliefs, they loaded down this system with special

devices which hampered it from functioning as a parliamentary system

should. The irony of this whole procedure rests in the fact that the

minority of agitators in India who wanted self-government wanted it

on the parliamentary pattern and regarded every special device and

every statement from Britain that it was not adapted to Indian condi-

tions as an indication of the insincerity in the British desire to grant

self-government to India.

A second error arises from the Milner Group’s lack of enthusiasm for

democracy. Democracy, as a form of government, involves two parts:

(1) majority rule and (2) minority rights. Because of the Group’s lack of

faith in democracy, they held no brief for the first of these but devoted

all their efforts toward achieving the second. The result was to make

the minority uncompromising, at the same time that they diminished

the majority’s faith in their own sincerity. In India the result was to

make the Moslem League almost completely obstructionist and make

the Congress Party almost completely suspicious. The whole policy en-

couraged extremists and discouraged moderates. This appears at its

worst in the systems of communal representation and communal elec-

torates established in India by Britain. The Milner Group knew these

were bad, but felt that they were a practical necessity in order to

preserve minority rights. In this they were not only wrong, as proved

by history, but were sacrificing principle to expediency in a way that

can never be permitted by a group whose actions claim to be so largely

dictated by principle. To do this weakens the faith of others in the

group’s principles.

The Group made another error in their constant tendency to accept

the outcry of a small minority of Europeanized agitators as the voice of

India. The masses of the Indian people were probably in favor of

British rule, for very practical reasons. The British gave these masses

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good government through the Indian Civil Service and other services,

but they made little effort to reach them on any human, intellectual, or

ideological level. The “color line” was drawn — not between British and

Indians but between British and the masses, for the educated upper-

class Indians were treated as equals in the majority of cases. The ex-

istence of the color line did not bother the masses of the people, but

when it hit one of the educated minority, he forgot the more numerous

group of cases where it had not been applied to him, became anti-

British and began to flood the uneducated masses with a deluge of anti-

British propaganda. This could have been avoided to a great extent by

training the British Civil Servants to practice racial toleration toward

all classes, by increasing the proportion of financial expenditure on

elementary education while reducing that on higher education, by

using the increased literacy of the masses of the people to impress on

them the good they derived from British rule and to remove those

grosser superstitions and social customs which justified the color line to

so many English. All of these except the last were in accordance with

Milner Group ideas. The members of the Group objected to the per-

sonal intolerance of the British in India, and regretted the dispropor-

tionate share of educational expenditure which went to higher educa-

tion (see the speech in Parliament of Ormsby-Gore, 11 December

1934), but they continued to educate a small minority, most of whom

became anti-British agitators, and left the masses of the people exposed

to the agitations of that minority. On principle, the Group would not

interfere with the superstitions and grosser social customs of the masses

of the people, on the grounds that to do so would be to interfere with

religious freedom. Yet Britain had abolished suttee, child marriage,

and thuggery, which were also religious in foundation. If the British

could have reduced cow-worship, and especially the number of cows,

to moderate proportions, they would have conferred on India a bless-

ing greater than the abolition of suttee, child marriage, and thuggery

together, would have removed the chief source of animosity between

Hindu and Moslem, and would have raised the standard of living of the

Indian people to a degree that would have more than paid for a system

of elementary education.

If all of these things had been done, the agitation for independence

could have been delayed long enough to build up an electorate capable

of working a parliamentary system. Then the parliamentary system,

which educated Indians wanted, could have been extended to them

without the undemocratic devices and animadversions against it which

usually accompanied any effort to introduce it on the part of the

British.

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Any effort to write an account of the influence exercised by the Milner

Group in foreign affairs in the period between the two World Wars

would require a complete rewriting of the history of that period. This

cannot be done within the limits of a single chapter, and it will not be

attempted. Instead, an effort will be made to point out the chief ideas

of the Milner Group in this field, the chief methods by which they were

able to make those ideas prevail, and a few significant examples of how

these methods worked in practice.

The political power of the Milner Group in the period 1919-1939

grew quite steadily. It can be measured by the number of ministerial

portfolios held by members of the Group. In the first period,

1919-1924, they generally held about one-fifth of the Cabinet posts.

For example, the Cabinet that resigned in January 1924 had nineteen

members; four were of the Milner Group, only one from the inner cir-

cle. These four were Leopold Amery, Edward Wood, Samuel Hoare,

and Lord Robert Cecil. In addition, in the same period other members

of the Group were in the government in one position or another.

Among these were Milner, Austen Chamberlain, H. A. L. Fisher, Lord

Ernie, Lord Astor, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, and W. G. A. Ormsby-

Gore. Also, relatives of these, such as Lord Onslow (brother-in-law of

Lord Halifax), Captain Lane-Fox (brother-in-law of Lord Halifax),

and Lord Greenwood (brother-in-law of Amery), were in the govern-

ment.

In this period the influence of the Milner Group was exercised in two

vitally significant political acts. In the first case, the Milner Group ap-

pears to have played an important role behind the scenes in persuading

the King to ask Baldwin rather than Curzon to be Prime Minister in

1923. Harold Nicolson, in Curzon: The Last Phase (1934), says that

Balfour, Amery, and Walter Long intervened with the King to oppose

Curzon, and “the cumulative effect of these representations was to

reverse the previous decision.” Of the three names mentioned by

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Nicolson, two were of the Cecil Bloc, while the third was Milners

closest associate. If Amery did intervene, he undoubtedly did so as the

representative of Milner, and if Milner opposed Curzon to this extent

through Amery, he was in a position to bring other powerful influences

to bear on His Majesty through Lord Esher as well as through Brand’s

brother, Viscount Hampden, a lord-in- waiting to the King, or more

directly through Milner’s son-in-law. Captain Alexander Hardinge, a

private secretary to the King. In any case, Milner exercised a very

powerful influence on Baldwin during the period of his first govern-

ment, and it was on Milner’s advice that Baldwin waged the General

Election of 1924 on the issue of protection. The election manifesto

issued by the party and advocating a tariff was written by Milner in

consultation with Arthur Steel-Maitland.

In the period 1924-1929 the Milner Group usually held about a third

of the seats in the Cabinet (seven out of twenty-one in the government

formed in November 1924). These proportions were also held in the

period 1935-1940, with a somewhat smaller ratio in the period

1931-1935. In the Cabinet that was formed in the fall of 1931, the

Milner Group exercised a peculiar influence. The Labour Party under

Ramsay MacDonald was in office with a minority government from

1929 to September 1931. Toward the end of this period, the Labour

government experienced increasing difficulty because the deflationary

policy of the Bank of England and the outflow of gold from the country

were simultaneously intensifying the depression, increasing unemploy-

ment and public discontent, and jeopardizing the gold standard. In

fact, the Bank of England’s policy made it almost impossible for the

Labour Party to govern. Without informing his Cabinet, Ramsay

MacDonald entered upon negotiations with Baldwin and King George,

as a result of which MacDonald became Prime Minister of a new

government, supported by Conservative votes in Parliament. The

obvious purpose of this intrigue was to split the Labour Party and place

the administration back in Conservative hands.

In this intrigue the Milner Group apparently played an important, if

secret, role. That they were in a position to play such a role is clear. We

have mentioned the pressure which the bankers were putting on the

Labour government in the period 1929-1931. The Milner Group were

clearly in a position to influence this pressure. E. R. Peacock (Parkin’s

old associate) was at the time a director of the Bank of England and a

director of Baring Brothers; Robert Brand, Thomas Henry Brand, and

Adam Marris (son of Sir William Marris) were all at Lazard and

Brothers; Robert Brand was also a director of Lloyd’s Bank; Lord

Selborne was a director of Lloyd’s Bank; Lord Lugard was a director of

Barclay’s Bank; Major Astor was a director of Hambros Bank; and

Lord Goschen was a director of the Westminster Bank.

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We have already indicated the ability of the Milner Group to in-

fluence the King in respect to the choice of Baldwin as Prime Minister

in 1923. By 1931 this power was even greater. Thus the Milner Group

was in a position to play a role in the intrigue of 1931. That they may

have done so is to be found in the fact that two of the important figures

in this intrigue within the Labour Party were ever after closely

associated with the Milner Group. These two were Malcolm Mac-

Donald and Godfrey Elton.

Malcolm MacDonald, son and intimate associate of Ramsay Mac-

Donald, clearly played an important role in the intrigue of 1931. He

was rewarded with a position in the new government and has never

been out of office since. These offices included Parliamentary Under

Secretary in the Dominions Office (1931-1935), Secretary of State for

the Dominions (1935-1938 and 1938-1939), Secretary of State for the

Colonies (1935-and 1938-1940), Minister of Health (1940-1941),

United Kingdom High Commissioner in Canada (1941-1946),

Governor-General of Malaya and British South-East Asia (since 1946).

Since all of these offices but one (Minister of Health) were traditionally

in the sphere of the Milner Group, and since Malcolm MacDonald

during this period was closely associated with the Group in its other ac-

tivities, such as Chatham House and the unofficial British Com-

monwealth relations conferences, Malcolm MacDonald should prob-

ably be regarded as a member of the Group from about 1932 onward.

Godfrey Elton (Lord Elton since 1934), of Rugby and Balliol, was a

Fellow of Queen’s College, Oxford, from 1919, as well as lecturer on

Modern History at Oxford. In this role Elton came in contact with

Malcolm MacDonald, who was an undergraduate at Queen’s in the

period 1920-1925. Through this connection, Elton ran for Parliament

on the Labour Party ticket in 1924 and again in 1929, both times

without success. He was more successful in establishing himself as an

intellectual leader of the Labour Party, capping this by publishing in

1931 a study of the early days of the party. As a close associate of the

MacDonald family, he supported the intrigue of 1931 and played a

part in it. For this he was expelled from the party and became

honorary political secretary of the new National Labour Committee

and editor of its News-Letter (1932-1938). He was made a baron in

1934, was on the Ullswater Committee on the Future of Broadcasting

the following year, and in 1939 succeeded Lord Lothian as Secretary to

the Rhodes Trustees. By his close association with the MacDonald

family, he became the obvious choice to write the “official” life of J. R.

(Ramsay) MacDonald, the first volume of which was published in

1939. In 1945 he published a history of the British Empire called

Imperial Commonwealth .

After the election of 1935, the Milner Group took a substantial part

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in the government, with possession of seven places in a Cabinet of

twenty-one seats. By the beginning of September of 1939, they had

only five out of twenty-three, the decrease being caused, as we shall

see, by the attrition within the Group on the question of appeasement.

In the War Cabinet formed at the outbreak of the war, they had four

out of nine seats. In this whole period from 1935 to 1940, the following

members of the Group were associated with the government as officers

of state: Halifax, Simon, Malcolm MacDonald, Zetland, Ormsby-

Gore, Hoare, Somervell, Lothian, Hankey, Grigg, Salter, and Amery.

It would appear that the Milner Group increased its influence on the

government until about 1938. We have already indicated the great

power which they exercised in the period 1915-1919. This influence,

while great, was neither decisive nor preponderant. At the time, the

Milner Group was sharing influence with at least two other groups and

was, perhaps, the least powerful of the three. It surely was less power-

ful than the Cecil Bloc, even as late as 1929, and was less powerful,

perhaps, than the rather isolated figure of Lloyd George as late as

1922. These relative degrees of power on the whole do not amount to

very much, because the three that we have mentioned generally agreed

on policy. When they disagreed, the views of the Milner Group did not

usually prevail. There were two reasons for this. Both the Cecil Bloc

and Lloyd George were susceptible to pressure from the British elec-

torate and from the allies of Britain. The Milner Group, as a

nonelected group, could afford to be disdainful of the British electorate

and of French opinion, but the persons actually responsible for the

government, like Lloyd George, Balfour, and others, could not be so

casual. As a consequence, the Milner Group were bitterly disappointed

over the peace treaty with Germany and over the Covenant of the

League of Nations. This may seem impossible when we realize how

much the Group contributed to both of these. For they did contribute a

great deal, chiefly because of the fact that the responsible statesmen

generally accepted the opinion of the experts on the terms of the treaty,

especially the territorial terms. There is only one case where the

delegates overruled a committee of experts that was unanimous, and

that was the case of the Polish Corridor, where the experts were more

severe with Germany than the final agreement. The experts, thus,

were of very great importance, and among the experts the Milner

Group had an important place, as we have seen. It would thus seem

that the Milner Group's disappointment with the peace settlement was

largely criticism of their own handiwork. To a considerable extent this

is true. The explanation lies in the fact that much of what they did as

experts was done on instructions from the responsible delegates and the

fact that the Group ever after had a tendency to focus their eyes on the

few blemishes of the settlement, to the complete neglect of the much

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larger body of acceptable decisions. Except for this, the Group could

have no justification for their dissatisfaction except as self-criticism.

When the original draft of the Treaty of Versailles was presented to the

Germans on 7 May 1919, the defeated delegates were aghast at its

severity. They drew up a detailed criticism of 443 pages. The answer to

this protest, making a few minor changes in the treaty but allowing the

major provisions to stand, was drafted by an interallied committee of

five, of which Philip Kerr was the British member. The changes that

were made as concessions to the Germans were made under pressure

from Lloyd George, who was himself under pressure from the Milner

Group. This appears clearly from the minutes of the Council of Four at

the Peace Conference. The first organized drive to revise the draft of

the treaty in the direction of leniency was made by Lloyd George at a

meeting of the Council of Four on 2 June 1919. The Prime Minister said

he had been consulting with his delegation and with the Cabinet. He

specifically mentioned George Barnes (“the only Labour representative

in his Cabinet”) , the South African delegation (who “were also refusing

to sign the present Treaty”), Mr. Fisher (“whose views carried great

weight”), Austen Chamberlain, Lord Robert Cecil, and both the

Archbishops. Except for Barnes and the Archbishops, all of these were

close to the Milner Group. The reference to H. A. L. Fisher is especially

significant, for Fisher’s views could “carry great weight” only insofar as

he was a member of the Milner Group. The reference to the South

African delegation meant Smuts, for Botha was prepared to sign, no

matter what he felt about the treaty, in order to win for his country of-

ficial recognition as a Dominion of equal status with Britain. Smuts, on

the other hand, refused to sign from the beginning and, as late as 23

June 1919, reiterated his refusal (according to Mrs. Millen’s biography

of Smuts) .

Lloyd George's objections to the treaty as presented in the Council of

Four on 2 June were those which soon became the trademark of the

Milner Group. In addition to criticisms of the territorial clauses on the

Polish frontier and a demand for a plebiscite in Upper Silesia, the chief

objections were aimed at reparations and the occupation of the

Rhineland. On the former point, Lloyd George’s advisers “thought that

more had been asked for than Germany could pay.” On the latter

point, which “was the main British concern,” his advisers were insis-

tent. “They urged that when the German Army was reduced to a

strength of 100,000 men it was ridiculous to maintain an army of oc-

cupation of 200,000 men on the Rhine. They represented that it was

only a method of quartering the French Army on Germany and making

Germany pay the cost. It had been pointed out that Germany would

not constitute a danger to France for 30 years or even 50 years; cer-

tainly not in 15 years. . . . The advice of the British military authorities

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was that two years was the utmost limit of time for the occupation.”

To these complaints, Clemenceau had replied that “in England the

view seemed to prevail that the easiest way to finish the war was by

making concessions. In France the contrary view was held that it was

best to act firmly. The French people, unfortunately, knew the Ger-

mans very intimately, and they believed that the more concessions we

made, the more the Germans would demand. . . . He recognized that

Germany was not an immediate menace to France. But Germany

would sign the Treaty with every intention of not carrying it out. Eva-

sions would be made first on one point and then on another. The whole

Treaty would go by the board if there were not some guarantees such as

were provided by the occupation.” 1

Under such circumstances as these, it seems rather graceless for the

Milner Group to have started at once, as it did, a campaign of

recrimination against the treaty. Philip Kerr was from 1905 to his

death in 1940 at the very center of the Milner Group. His violent Ger-

manophobia in 1908-1918, and his evident familiarity with the charac-

ter of the Germans and with the kind of treaty which they would have

imposed on Britain had the roles been reversed, should have made the

Treaty of Versailles very acceptable to him and his companions, or, if

not, unacceptable on grounds of excessive leniency. Instead, Kerr,

Brand, Curtis, and the whole inner core of the Milner Group began a

campaign to undermine the treaty, the League of Nations, and the

whole peace settlement. Those who are familiar with the activities of

the “Cliveden Set” in the 1930s have generally felt that the appease-

ment policy associated with that group was a manifestation of the

period after 1934 only. This is quite mistaken. The Milner Group,

which was the reality behind the phantom-like Cliveden Set, began

their program of appeasement and revision of the settlement as early as

1919. Why did they do this?

To answer this question, we must fall back on the statements of the

members of the Group, general impressions of their psychological

outlook, and even a certain amount of conjecture. The best statement

of what the Group found objectionable in the peace of 1919 will be

found in a brilliant book of Zimmern s called Europe in Convalescence

(1922). More concrete criticism, especially in regard to the Covenant of

the League, will be found in The Round Table . And the general mental

outlook of the Group in 1919 will be found in Harold Nicolson’s famous

book Peace-Making . Nicolson, although on close personal relationships

with most of the inner core of the Milner Group, was not a member of

the Group himself, but his psychology in 1918-1920 was similar to that

of the members of the inner core.

In general, the members of this inner core took the propagandist

slogans of 1914-1918 as a truthful picture of the situation. I have in-

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dicated how the Group had worked out a theory of history that saw the

whole past in terms of a long struggle between the forces of evil and

the forces of righteousness. The latter they defined at various times as

“the rule of law” (a la Dicey), as “the subordination of each to the

welfare of all,” as “democracy,” etc. They accepted Wilson’s identifica-

tion of his war aims with his war slogans (“a world safe for

democracy,” “a war to end wars,” “a war to end Prussianism,” “self-

determination,” etc.) as meaning what they meant by “the rule of

law.” They accepted his Fourteen Points (except “freedom of the seas”)

as implementation of these aims. Moreover, the Milner Group, and ap-

parently Wilson, made an assumption which had a valid basis but

which could be very dangerous if carried out carelessly. This was the

assumption that the Germans were divided into two groups, “Prussian

autocrats” and “good Germans.” They assumed that, if the former

group were removed from positions of power and influence, and

magnanimous concessions were made to the latter, Germany could be

won over on a permanent basis from “Asiatic despotism” to “Western

civilization.” In its main outlines, the thesis was valid. But difficulties

were numerous.

In the first place, it is not possible to distinguish between “good”

Germans and “bad” Germans by any objective criterion. The distinc-

tion certainly could not be based on who was in public office in

1914-1918. In fact, the overwhelming mass of Germans — almost all the

middle classes, except a few intellectuals and very religious persons; a

considerable portion of the aristocratic class (at least half); and certain

segments of the working class (about one-fifth) — were “bad” Germans

in the sense in which the Milner Group used that expression. In their

saner moments, the Group knew this. In December 1918, Curtis wrote

in The Round Table on this subject as follows: “No one class, but the

nation itself was involved in the sin. There were Socialists who licked

their lips over Brest-Litovsk. All but a mere remnant, and those largely

in prison or exile, accepted or justified the creed of despotism so long as

it promised them the mastery of the world. The German People con-

sented to be slaves in their own house as the price of enslaving

mankind.” If these words had been printed and posted on the walls of

All Souls, of Chatham House, of New College, of The Times office in

Printing House Square, and of The Round Table office at 175 Picca-

dilly, there need never have been a Second World War with Germany.

But these words were not remembered by the Group. Instead, they

assumed that the “bad” Germans were the small group that was re-

moved from office in 1918 with the Kaiser. They did not see that the

Kaiser was merely a kind of facade for four other groups: The Prussian

Officers’ Corps, the Junker landlords, the governmental bureaucracy

(especially the administrators of police and justice), and the great in-

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dustrialists. They did not see that these four had been able to save

themselves in 1918 by jettisoning the Kaiser, who had become a lia-

bility. They did not see that these four were left in their positions of in-

fluence, with their power practically intact — indeed, in many ways

with their power greater than ever, since the new “democratic” politi-

cians like Ebert, Scheidemann, and Noske were much more subservient

to the four groups than the old imperial authorities had ever been.

General Groner gave orders to Ebert over his direct telephone line

from Kassel in a tone and with a directness that he would never have

used to an imperial chancellor. In a word, there was no revolution in

Germany in 1918. The Milner Group did not see this, because they did

not want to see it. Not that they were not warned. Brigadier General

John H. Morgan, who was almost a member of the Group and who was

on the Interallied Military Commission of Control in Germany in

1919-1923, persistently warned the government and the Group of the

continued existence and growing power of the German Officers' Corps

and of the unreformed character of the German people. As a graduate

of Balliol and the University of Berlin (1897-1905), a leader-writer on

The Manchester Guardian (1904-1905), a Liberal candidate for Parlia-

ment with Amery in 1910, an assistant adjutant general with the

military section of the British delegation to the Peace Conference of

1919, the British member on the Prisoners of War Commission (1919),

legal editor of The Encyclopedia Britannica (14th edition), contributor

to The Times , reader in constitutional law to the Inns of Court

(1926-1936), Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Lon-

don, Rhodes Lecturer at London (1927-1932), counsel to the Indian

Chamber of Princes (1934-1937), counsel to the Indian State of

Gwalior, Tagore Professor at Calcutta (1939)\*- as all of these things,

and thus close to many members of the Group, General Morgan issued

warnings about Germany that should have been heeded by the Group.

They were not. No more attention was paid to them than was paid to

the somewhat similar warnings coming from Professor Zimmern. And

the general, with less courage than the professor, or perhaps with more

of that peculiar group loyalty which pervades his social class in

England, kept his warnings secret and private for years. Only in Oc-

tober 1924 did he come out in public with an article in the Quarterly

Review on the subject, and only in 1945 did he find a wider platform in

a published book ( Assize of Arms), but in neither did he name the per-

sons who were suppressing the warnings in his official reports from the

Military Commission.

In a similar fashion, the Milner Group knew that the industrialists,

the Junkers, the police, and the judges were cooperating with the reac-

tionaries to suppress all democratic and enlightened elements in Ger-

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many and to help all the forces of “despotism” and “sin” (to use Curtis’s

words). The Group refused to recognize these facts. For this, there

were two reasons. One, for which Brand was chiefly responsible, was

based on certain economic assumptions. Among these, the chief was

the belief that “disorder” and social unrest could be avoided only if

prosperity were restored to Germany as soon as possible. By “disorder,”

Brand meant such activities as were associated with Trotsky in Russia,

Bela Kun in Hungary, and the Spartacists or Kurt Eisner in Germany.

To Brand, as an orthodox international banker, prosperity could be ob-

tained only by an economic system under the control of the old estab-

lished industrialists and bankers. This is perfectly clear from Brand’s

articles in The Round Table , reprinted in his book, War and National

Finance (1921). Moreover, Brand felt confident that the old economic

groups could reestablish prosperity quickly only if they were given con-

cessions in respect to Germany’s international financial position by

lightening the weight of reparations on Germany and by advancing

credit to Germany, chiefly from the United States. This point of view

was not Brand’s alone. It dominated the minds of all international

bankers from Thomas Lamont to Montague Norman and from 1918 to

at least 1931. The importance of Brand, from out point of view, lies in

the fact that, as “the economic expert” of the Milner Group and one of

the leaders of the Group, he brought this point of view into the Group

and was able to direct the great influence of the Group in this direc-

tion. 2

Blindness to the real situation in Germany was also encouraged from

another point of view. This was associated with Philip Kerr. Roughly,

this point of view advocated a British foreign policy based on the old

balance-of- power system. Under that old system, which Britain had

followed since 1500, Britain should support the second strongest power

on the Continent against the strongest power, to prevent the latter

from obtaining supremacy on the Continent. For one brief moment in

1918, the Group toyed with the idea of abandoning this traditional

policy; for one brief moment they felt that if Europe were given self-

determination and parliamentary governments, Britain could permit

some kind of federated or at least cooperative Europe without danger

to Britain. The moment soon passed. The League of Nations, which

had been regarded by the Group as the seed whence a united Europe

might grow, became nothing more than a propaganda machine, as

soon as the Group resumed its belief in the balance of power. Curtis,

who in December 1918 wrote in The Round Table : “That the balance

of power has outlived its time by a century and that the world has re-

mained a prey to wars, was due to the unnatural alienation of the

British and American Commonwealths” — Curtis, who wrote this in

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1918, four years later (9 January 1923) vigorously defended the idea of

balance of power against the criticism of Professor A. F. Pollard at a

meeting of the RIIA.

This change in point of view was based on several factors. In the first

place, the Group, by their practical experience at Paris in 1919, found

that it was not possible to apply either self-determination or the

parliamentary form of government to Europe. As a result of this ex-

perience, they listened with more respect to the Cecil Bloc, which

always insisted that these, especially the latter, were intimately

associated with the British outlook, way of life, and social traditions,

and were not articles of export. This issue was always the chief bone of

contention between the Group and the Bloc in regard to India. In

India, where their own influence as pedagogues was important, the

Group did not accept the Bloc’s arguments completely, but in Europe,

where the Group’s influence was remote and indirect, the Group was

more receptive.

In the second place, the Group at Paris became alienated from the

French because of the latter’s insistence on force as the chief basis of

social and political life, especially the French insistence on a perma-

nent mobilization of force to keep Germany down and on an interna-

tional police force with autonomous power as a part of the League of

Nations. The Group, although they frequently quoted Admiral

Mahan’s kind words about force in social life, did not really like force

and shrank from its use, believing, as might be expected from their

Christian background, that force could not avail against moral issues,

that force corrupts those who use it, and that the real basis of social and

political life was custom and tradition. At Paris the Group found that

they were living in a different world from the French. They suddenly

saw not only that they did not have the same outlook as their former

allies, but that these allies embraced the “despotic” and “militaristic”

outlook against which the late war had been waged. At once, the

Group began to think that the influence which they had been mobil-

izing against Prussian despotism since 1907 could best be mobilized,

now that Prussianism was dead, against French militarism and

Bolshevism. And what better ally against these two enemies in the West

and the East than the newly baptized Germany? Thus, almost without

realizing it, the Group fell back into the old balance-of-power pattern.

Their aim became the double one of keeping Germany in the fold of re-

deemed sinners by concessions, and of using this revived and purified

Germany against Russia and France. 3

In the third place, the Group in 1918 had been willing to toy with

the idea of an integrated Europe because, in 1918, they believed that a

permanent system of cooperation between Britain and the United

States was a possible outcome of the war. This was the lifelong dream

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of Rhodes, of Milner, of Lothian, of Curtis. For that they would have

sacrificed anything within reason. When it became clear in 1920 that

the United States had no intention of underwriting Britain and instead

would revert to her prewar isolationism, the bitterness of disappoint-

ment in the Milner Group were beyond bounds. Forever after, they

blamed the evils of Europe, the double-dealing of British policy, and

the whole train of errors from 1919 to 1940 on the American reversion

to isolationism. It should be clearly understood that by American

reversion to isolationism the Milner Group did not mean the American

rejection of the League of Nations. Frequently they said that they did

mean this, that the disaster of 1939-1940 became inevitable when the

Senate rejected the League of Nations in 1920. This is completely un-

true, both as a statement of historical fact and as a statement of the

Group’s attitude toward that rejection at the time. As we shall see in a

moment, the Group approved of the Senate’s rejection of the League of

Nations, because the reasons for that rejection agreed completely with

the Group’s own opinion about the League. The only change in the

Group’s opinion, as a result of the Senate’s rejection of the League, oc-

curred in respect to the Group’s opinion regarding the League itself.

Previously they had disliked the League; now they hated it — except as

a propaganda agency. The proofs of these statements will appear in a

moment.

The change in the Group’s attitude toward Germany began even

before the war ended. We have indicated how the Group rallied to give

a public testimonial of faith in Lord Milner in October 1918, when he

became the target of public criticism because of what was regarded by

the public as a conciliatory speech toward Germany. The Group ob-

jected violently to the anti-German tone in which Lloyd George con-

ducted his electoral campaign in the “khaki election’’ of December

1918. The Round Table in March 1919 spoke of Lloyd George and “the

odious character of his election campaign.” Zimmern, after a

devastating criticism of Lloyd George’s conduct in the election, wrote:

“He erred, not, like the English people, out of ignorance but deliber-

ately, out of cowardice and lack of faith.” In the preface to the same

volume ( Europe in Convalescence) he wrote: “Since December, 1918,

when we elected a Parliament pledged to violate a solemn agreement

made but five weeks earlier, we stand shamed, dishonoured, and,

above all, distrusted before mankind.” The agreement to which

Zimmern referred was the so-called Pre-Armistice Agreement of 5

November 1918, made with the Germans, by which, if they accepted

an armistice, the Allies agreed to make peace on the basis of the Four-

teen Points. It was the thesis of the Milner Group that the election of

1918 and the Treaty of Versailles as finally signed violated this Pre-

Armistice Agreement. As a result, the Group at once embarked on its

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campaign for revision of the treaty, a campaign whose first aim, ap-

parently, was to create a guilty conscience in regard to the treaty in

Britain and the United States. Zimmern’s book. Brand’s book of the

previous year, and all the articles of The Round Table were but am-

munition in this campaign. However, Zimmern had no illusions about

the Germans, and his attack on the treaty was based solely on the need

to redeem British honor. As soon as it became clear to him that the

Group was going beyond this motive and was trying to give concessions

to the Germans without any attempt to purge Germany of its vicious

elements and without any guarantee that those concessions would not

be used against everything the Group held dear, he left the inner circle

of the Group and moved to the second circle. He was not convinced

that Germany could be redeemed by concessions made blindly to Ger-

many as a whole, or that Germany should be built up against France

and Russia. He made his position clear in a brilliant and courageous

speech at Oxford in May 1925, a speech in which he denounced the

steady sabotage of the League of Nations. It is not an accident that the

most intelligent member of the Group was the first member to break

publicly with the policy of appeasement.

The Milner Group thus regarded the Treaty of Versailles as too

severe, as purely temporary, and as subject to revision almost at once.

When The Round Table examined the treaty in its issue of June 1919, it

said, in substance: “The punishment of Germany was just, for no one

can believe in any sudden change of heart in that country, but the

treaty is too severe. The spirit of the Pre-Armistice Commitments was

violated, and, in detail after detail, Germany was treated unjustly,

although there is broad justice in the settlement as a whole. Specifically

the reparations are too severe, and Germany’s neighbors should have

been forced to disarm also, as promised in Wilson’s Fourth Point. No

demand should have been made for William II as a war criminal. If he

is a menace, he should be put on an island without trial, like Napoleon.

Our policy must be magnanimous, for our war was with the German

government, not with the German people.” Even earlier, in December

1918, The Round Table said: “It would seem desirable that the treaties

should not be long term, still less perpetual, instruments. Perpetual

treaties are indeed a lien upon national sovereignty and a standing con-

tradiction of the principle of the democratic control of foreign policy.

... It would establish a salutory precedent if the network of treaties

signed as a result of the war were valid for a period of ten years only.”

In March 1920, The Round Table said: “Like the Peace Conference,

the Covenant of the League of Nations aimed too high and too far. Six

months ago we looked to it to furnish the means for peaceful revision of

the terms of the peace, where revision might be required. Now we have

to realize that national sentiment sets closer limits to international ac-

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tion than we were willing then to recognize.” The same article then

goes on to speak of the rejection of the treaty by the United States

Senate. It defends this action and criticizes Wilson severely, saying:

“The truth of the matter is that the American Senate has expressed the

real sentiment of all nations with hard-headed truthfulness. . . . The

Senate has put into words what has already been demonstrated in

Europe by the logic of events — namely that the Peace of Versailles at-

tempted too much, and the Covenant which guarantees it implies a

capacity for united action between the Allies which the facts do not

warrant. The whole Treaty was, in fact, framed to meet the same im-

practical desire which we have already noted in the reparation

terms — the desire to mete out ideal justice and to build an ideal

world.”

Nowhere is the whole point of view of the Milner Group better stated

than in a speech of General Smuts to the South African Luncheon Club

in London, 23 October 1923. After violent criticism of the reparations

as too large and an attack on the French efforts to enforce these clauses,

he called for a meeting “of principals” to settle the problem. He then

pointed out that a continuation of existing methods would lead to the

danger of German disintegration, “a first-class and irreparable

disaster. ... It would mean immediate economic chaos, and it would

open up the possibility of future political dangers to which I need not

here refer. Germany is both economically and politically necessary to

Central Europe.” He advocated applying to Germany “the benevolent

policy which this country adopted toward France after the Napoleonic

War. . . . And if, as I hope she will do, Germany makes a last appeal

. . . I trust this great Empire will not hesitate for a moment to respond

to that appeal and to use all its diplomatic power and influence to sup-

port her, and to prevent a calamity which would be infinitely more

dangerous to Europe and the world than was the downfall of Russia six

or seven years ago.” Having thus lined Britain up in diplomatic opposi-

tion to France, Smuts continued with advice against applying gener-

osity to the latter country on the question of French war debts, warn-

ing that this would only encourage “French militarism.”

Do not let us from mistaken motives of generosity lend our aid to the

further militarization of the European continent. People here are already

beginning to be seriously alarmed about French armaments on land and

in the air. In addition to these armaments, the French government have

also lent large sums to the smaller European States around Germany,

mainly with a view to feeding their ravenous military appetites. There is a

serious danger lest a policy of excessive generosity on our part, or on the

part of America, may simply have the effect of enabling France still more

effectively to subsidize and foster militarism on the Continent. ... If

things continue on the present lines, this country may soon have to start

rearming herself in sheer self-defence.

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This speech of Smuts covers so adequately the point of view of the

Milner Group in the early period of appeasement that no further

quotations are necessary. No real change occurred in the point of view

of the Group from 1920 to 1938, not even as a result of the death of

democratic hopes in Germany at the hands of the Nazis. From Smuts’s

speech of October 1923 before the South African Luncheon Club to

Smuts ’s speech of November 1934 before the RIIA, much water flowed

in the river of international affairs, but the ideas of the Milner Group

remained rigid and, it may be added, erroneous. Just as the speech of

1923 may be taken as the culmination of the revisionist sentiment of the

Group in the first five years of peace, so the speech of 1934 may be

taken as the initiation of the appeasement sentiment of the Group in

the last five years of peace. The speeches could almost be interchanged.

We may call one revisionist and the other appeasing, but the point of

view, the purpose, the method is the same. These speeches will be men-

tioned again later.

The aim of the Milner Group through the period from 1920 to 1938

was the same: to maintain the balance of power in Europe by building

up Germany against France and Russia; to increase Britain’s weight in

that balance by aligning with her the Dominions and the United States;

to refuse any commitments (especially any commitments through the

League of Nations, and above all any commitments to aid France)

beyond those existing in 1919; to keep British freedom of action; to

drive Germany eastward against Russia if either or both of these two

powers became a threat to the peace of Western Europe.

The sabotage of the peace settlement by the Milner Group can be

seen best in respect to reparations and the League of Nations. In regard

to the former, their argument appeared on two fronts: in the first

place, the reparations were too large because they were a dishonorable

violation of the Pre-Armistice Agreement; and, in the second place,

any demand for immediate or heavy payments in reparation would

ruin Germany’s international credit and her domestic economic

system, to the jeopardy of all reparation payments immediately and of

all social order in Central Europe in the long run.

The argument against reparations as a violation of the Pre- Armistice

Agreement can be found in the volumes of Zimmern and Brand already

mentioned. Both concentrated their objections on the inclusion of pen-

sion payments by the victors to their own soldiers in the total repara-

tion bill given to the Germans. This was, of course, an obvious viola-

tion of the Pre- Armistice Agreement, which bound the Germans to pay

only for damage to civilian property. Strangely enough, it was a

member of the Group, Jan Smuts, who was responsible for the inclu-

sion of the objectionable items, although he put them in not as a

member of the Group, but as a South African politician. This fact

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alone should have prevented him from making his speech of October

1923. However, love of consistency has never prevented Smuts from

making a speech.

From 1921 onward, the Milner Group and the British government (if

the two policies are distinguishable) did all they could to lighten the

reparations burden on Germany and to prevent France from using

force to collect reparations. The influence of the Milner Group on the

government in this field may perhaps be indicated by the identity of

the two policies. It might also be pointed out that a member of the

Group, Arthur (now Sir Arthur) Salter, was general secretary of the

Reparations Commission from 1920 to 1922. Brand was financial ad-

viser to the chairman of the Supreme Economic Council (Lord Robert

Cecil) in 1919; he was vice-president of the Brussels Conference of

1920; and he was the financial representative of South Africa at the

Genoa Conference of 1922 (named by Smuts). He was also a member of

the International Committee of Experts on the Stabilization of the Ger-

man Mark in 1922. Hankey was British secretary at the Genoa Con-

ference of 1922 and at the London Reparations Conference of 1924. He

was general secretary of the Hague Conference of 1929-1930 (which

worked out the detailed application of the Young Plan) and of the

Lausanne Conference (which ended reparations).

On the two great plans to settle the reparations problem, the Dawes

Plan of 1924 and the Young Plan of 1929, the chief influence was that

of J. P. Morgan and Company, but the Milner Group had half of the

British delegation on the former committee. The British members of

the Dawes Committee were two in number: Sir Robert Molesworth

(now Lord) Kindersley, and Sir Josiah (later Lord) Stamp. The former

was chairman of the board of directors of Lazard Brothers and Com-

pany. Of this firm, Brand was a partner and managing director for

many years. The instigation for the formation of this committee came

chiefly from the parliamentary agitations of H. A. L. Fisher and John

Simon in the early months of 1923.

The Milner Group was outraged at the efforts of France to compel

Germany to pay reparations. Indeed, they were outraged at the whole

policy of France: reparations, the French alliances in Eastern Europe,

the disarmament of Germany, French “militarism,” the French desire

for an alliance with Britain, and the French desire for a long-term oc-

cupation of the Rhineland. These six things were listed in The Round

Table of March 1922 as “the Poincare system.” The journal then con-

tinued: “The Poincare system, indeed, is hopeless. It leads inevitably to

fresh war, for it is incredible that a powerful and spirited people like

the Germans will be content to remain forever meekly obeying every

flourish of Marshal Foch’s sword.” Earlier, the reader was informed:

“The system is impracticable. It assumes that the interests of Poland

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and the Little Entente are the same as those of France. ... It forgets

that the peoples of Europe cannot balance their budgets and recover

prosperity unless they cut down their expenditures on armaments to a

minimum. ... It ignores the certainty that British opinion can no more

tolerate a French military hegemony over Europe than it could a Ger-

man or Napoleonic, with its menace to freedom and democracy

everywhere.”

When the French, in January 1923, occupied the Ruhr in an effort to

force Germany to pay reparations, the rage of the Milner Group almost

broke its bounds. In private, and in the anonymity of The Round

Table , they threatened economic and diplomatic retaliation, although

in public speeches, such as in Parliament, they were more cautious.

However, even in public Fisher, Simon, and Smuts permitted their real

feelings to become visible.

In the March 1923 issue The Round Table suggested that the repara-

tions crisis and the Ruhr stalemate could be met by the appointment of

a committee of experts (including Americans) to report on Germany’s

capacity to pay reparations. It announced that H. A. L. Fisher would

move an amendment to the address to this effect in Parliament. This

amendment was moved by Fisher on 19 February 1923, before The

Round Table in question appeared, in the following terms:

That this House do humbly represent to your Majesty that, inasmuch as

the future peace of Europe cannot be safeguarded nor the recovery of rep-

arations be promoted by the operations of the French and Belgian

Governments in the Ruhr, it is urgently necessary to seek effective secu-

rities against aggression by international guarantees under the League of

Nations, and to invite the Council of the League without delay to appoint

a Commission of Experts to report upon the capacity of Germany to pay

reparations and upon the best method of effecting such payments, and

that, in view of the recent indication of willingness on the part of the

Government of the United States of America to participate in a Con-

ference to this end, the British representatives on the Council of the

League should be instructed to urge that an invitation be extended to the

American government to appoint experts to serve upon the Commission.

This motion had, of course, no chance whatever of passing, and

Fisher had no expectation that it would. It was merely a propaganda

device. Two statements in it are noteworthy. One was the emphasis on

American participation, which was to be expected from the Milner

Group. But more important than this was the thinly veiled threat to

France contained in the words “it is urgently necessary to seek effective

securities against aggression by international guarantees.” This clause

referred to French aggression and was the seed from which emerged,

three years later, the Locarno Pacts. There were also some significant

phrases, or slips of the tongue, in the speech which Fisher made in sup-

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port of his motion. For example, he used the word “we” in a way that

apparently referred to the Milner Group; and he spoke of “liquidation

of the penal clauses of the Treaty of Versailles” as if that were the pur-

pose of the committee he was seeking. He said: “We are anxious to get

the amount of the reparation payment settled by an impartial tribunal.

We propose that it should be remitted to the League of Nations. . . .

But I admit that I have always had a considerable hesitation in asking

the League of Nations to undertake the liquidation of the penal clauses

of the Treaty of Versailles. ... It is an integral part of this Amendment

that the Americans should be brought in.” Lord Robert Cecil objected

to the amendment on the ground that its passage would constitute a

censure of the government and force it to resign. John Simon then

spoke in support of the motion. He said that France would never agree

to any reparations figure, because she did not want the reparations

clauses fulfilled, since that would make necessary the evacuation of the

Rhineland. France went into the Ruhr, he said, not to collect repara-

tions, but to cripple Germany; France was spending immense sums of

money on military occupation and armaments but still was failing to

pay either the principal or interest on her debt to Britain.

When put to a vote, the motion was defeated, 305 to 196. In the ma-

jority were Ormsby-Gore, Edward Wood, Amery, three Cecils

(Robert, Evelyn, and Hugh), two Astors (John and Nancy), Samuel

Hoare, Eustace Percy, and Lord Wolmer. In the minority were Fisher,

Simon, and Arthur Salter.

By March, Fisher and Simon were more threatening to France. On

the sixth of that month, Fisher said in the House of Commons: “I can

only suggest this, that the Government make it clear to France, Ger-

many, and the whole world that they regard this present issue between

France and Germany, not as an issue affecting two nations, but as an

issue affecting the peace and prosperity of the whole world. We should

keep before ourselves steadily the idea of an international solution. We

should work for it with all our power, and we should make it clear to

France that an attempt to effect a separate solution of this question

could not be considered otherwise than as an unfriendly act.” Exactly a

week later, John Simon, in a parliamentary maneuver, made a motion

to cut the appropriation bill for the Foreign Office by £100 and seized

the opportunity to make a violent attack on the actions of France. He

was answered by Eustace Percy, who in turn was answered by Fisher.

In this way the Group tried to keep the issue before the minds of the

British public and to prepare the way for the Dawes settlement. The

Round Table , appealing to a somewhat different public, kept up a

similar barrage. In the June 1923 issue, and again in September, it con-

demned the occupation of the Ruhr. In the former it suggested a three-

part program as follows: (1) find out what Germany can pay, by an ex-

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pert committee’s investigation; (2) leave Germany free to work and

produce, by an immediate evacuation of the Rhineland [!! my italics];

and (3) protect France and Germany from each other [another hint

about the future Locarno Pacts]. This program, according to The

Round Table , should be imposed on France with the threat that if

France did not accept it, Britain would withdraw from the Rhineland

and Reparations Commissions and formally terminate the Entente. It

concluded: “ The Round Table has not hesitated in recent months to

suggest that [British] neutrality . . . was an attitude inconsistent either

with the honour or the interests of the British Commonwealth.” The

Round Table even went so far as to say that the inflation in Germany

was caused by the burden of reparations. In the September 1923 issue it

said (probably by the pen of Brand): “In the last two years it is not in-

flation which has brought down the mark; the printing presses have

been engaged in a vain attempt to follow the depreciation of the cur-

rency. That depreciation has been a direct consequence of the world’s

judgment that the Allied claims for reparation were incapable of being

met. It will continue until that judgment, or in other words, those

claims are revised.”

In October 1923, Smuts, who was in London for the Imperial Con-

ference and was in close contact with the Group, made speeches in

which he compared the French occupation of the Ruhr with the Ger-

man attack on Belgium in 1914 and said that Britain “may soon have to

start rearming herself in sheer self-defence” against French militarism.

John Dove, writing to Brand in a private letter, found an additional

argument against France in the fact that her policy was injuring

democracy in Germany. He wrote:

It seems to me that the most disastrous effect of Poincare’s policy would be

the final collapse of democracy in Germany, the risk of which has been

pointed out in The Round Table . The irony of the whole situation is that

if the Junkers should capture the Reich again, the same old antagonisms

will revive and we shall find ourselves willy-nilly, lined up again with

France to avert a danger which French action has again called into being.

. . . Even if Smuts follows up his fine speech, the situation may have

changed so much before the Imperial Conference is over that people who

think like him and us mav find ourselves baffled. ... I doubt if we shall

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again have as good a chance of getting a peaceful democracy set up in

Germanv.

After the Dawes Plan went into force, the Milner Group’s policies

continued to be followed by the British government. The “policy of

fulfillment” pursued by Germany under Stresemann was close to the

heart of the Group. In fact, there is a certain amount of evidence that

the Group was in a position to reach Stresemann and advise him to

follow this policy. This was done through Smuts and Lord D’Abernon.

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There is little doubt that the Locarno Pacts were designed in the Milner

Group and were first brought into public notice by Stresemann, at the

suggestion of Lord D’Abernon.

Immediately after Smuts made his speech against France in October

1923, he got in touch with Stresemann, presumably in connection with

the South African Mandate in South-West Africa. Smuts himself told

the story to Mrs. Millen, his authorized biographer, in these words:

I was in touch with them [the Germans] in London over questions con-

cerning German South-West. They had sent a man over from their

Foreign Office to see me . 4 I can’t say the Germans have behaved very

well about German South-West, but that is another matter. Well, natu-

rally, my speech meant something to this fellow. The English were hating

the Ruhr business; it was turning them from France to Germany, the

whole English-speaking world was hating it. Curzon, in particular, was

hating it. Yet very little was being done to express all this feeling. I took it

upon myself to express the feeling. I acted, you understand, unofficially. I

consulted no one. But I could see mv action would not be abhorrent to the

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Government — would, in fact, be a relief to them. When the German

from the Foreign Office came to me full of what this sort of attitude

would mean to Stresemann I told him I was speaking only for myself.

“But you can see,” I said, “that the people here approve of my speech. If

my personal advice is any use to you, I would recommend the Germans to

give up their policy of non-cooperation, to rely on the goodwill of the

world and make a sincere advance towards the better understanding

which I am sure can be brought about.” I got in touch with Stresemann.

Our correspondence followed those lines. You will remember that

Stresemann’s policy ended in the Dawes Plan and the Pact of Locarno and

that he got the Nobel Peace for this work!”

In this connection it is worthy of note that the German Chancellor,

at a Cabinet meeting on 12 November 1923, quoted Smuts by name as

the author of what he (Stresemann) considered the proper road out of

the crisis.

Lord D’Abernon was not a member of the Milner Group. He was,

however, a member of the Cecil Bloc’s second generation and had

been, at one time, a rather casual member of “The Souls.” This, it will

be recalled, was the country-house set in which George Curzon, Arthur

Balfour, Alfred Lyttelton, St. John Brodrick, and the Tennant sisters

were the chief figures. Born Edgar Vincent, he was made Baron

D’Abernon in 1914 by Asquith who was also a member of “The Souls”

and married Margot Tennant in 1894. D’Abernon joined the Cold-

stream Guards in 1877 after graduating from Eton, but within a few

years was helping Lord Salisbury to unravel the aftereffects of the Con-

gress of Berlin. By 1880 he was private secretary to Lord Edmond

Fitzmaurice, brother of Lord Lansdowne and Commissioner for Euro-

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pean Turkey. The following year he was assistant to the British

Commissioner for Evacuation of the Territory ceded to Greece by

Turkey. In 1882 he was the British, Belgian, and Dutch representative

on the Council of the Ottoman Public Debt, and soon became presi-

dent of that Council. From 1883 to 1889 he was financial adviser to the

Egyptian government and from 1889 to 1897 was governor of the

Imperial Ottoman Bank in Constantinople. In Salisbury’s third

administration he was a Conservative M.P. for Exeter (1899-1906).

The next few years were devoted to private affairs in international

banking circles close to Milner. In 1920 he was the British civilian

member of the “Weygand mission to Warsaw.” This mission un-

doubtedly had an important influence on his thinking. As a chief figure

in Salisbury’s efforts to bolster up the Ottoman Empire against Russia,

D’Abernon had always been anti-Russian. In this respect, his

background was like Curzon’s. As a result of the Warsaw mission,

D’Abernon’s anti-Russian feeling was modified to an anti- Bolshevik

one of much greater intensity. To him the obvious solution seemed to

be to build up Germany as a military bulwark against the Soviet

Union. He said as much in a letter of 11 August 1920 to Sir Maurice

Hankey. This letter, printed by D’Abernon in his book on the Battle of

Warsaw ( The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World, published

1931), suggests that “a good bargain might be made with the German

military leaders in cooperating against the Soviet.” Shortly afterwards,

D’Abernon was made British Ambassador at Berlin. At the time, it was

widely rumored and never denied that he had been appointed prima-

rily to obtain some settlement of the reparations problem, it being felt

that his wide experience in international public finance would qualify

him for this work. This may have been so, but his prejudices likewise

qualified him for only one solution to the problem, the one desired by

the Germans. 5

In reaching this solution, D’Abernon acted as the intermediary

among Stresemann, the German Chancellor; Curzon, the Foreign

Secretary; and, apparently, Kindersley, Brand’s associate at Lazard

Brothers. According to Harold Nicolson in his book Curzon : The Last

Phase (1934), “The initial credit for what proved the ultimate solution

belongs, in all probability, to Lord D’Abernon — one of the most acute

and broad-minded diplomatists which this country has ever possessed.”

In the events leading up to Curzon’s famous note to France of 11

August 1923, the note which contended that the Ruhr occupation

could not be justified under the Treaty of Versailles, D’Abernon played

an important role both in London and in Berlin. In his Diary of an

Ambassador, D’Abernon merely listed the notes between Curzon and

France and added: “Throughout this controversy Lord D’Abernon had

been consulted.”

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During his term as Ambassador in Berlin, D’Abernon’s policy was

identical with that of the Milner Group, except for the shading that he

was more anti-Soviet and less anti-French and was more impetuous in

his desire to tear up the Treaty of Versailles in favor of Germany. This

last distinction rested on the fact that D’Abernon was ready to appease

Germany regardless of whether it were democratic or not; indeed, he

did not regard democracy as either necessary or good for Germany.

The Milner Group, until 1929, was still in favor of a democratic Ger-

many, because they realized better than D’Abernon the danger to

civilization from an undemocratic Germany. It took the world depres-

sion and its resulting social unrest to bring the Milner Group around to

the view which D’Abernon held as early as 1920, that appeasement to

an undemocratic Germany could be used as a weapon against “social

disorder.’’

Brigadier General J. H. Morgan, whom we have already quoted,

makes perfectly clear that D’Abernon was one of the chief obstacles in

the path of the Interallied Commission’s efforts to force Germany to

disarm. In 1920, when von Seeckt, Commander of the German Army,

sought modifications of the disarmament rules which would have per-

mitted large-scale evasion of their provisions, General Morgan found it

impossible to get his dissenting reports accepted in London. He wrote

in Assize of Arms: “At the eleventh hour I managed to get my reports on

the implications of von Seeckt’s plan brought to the direct notice of Mr.

Lloyd George through the agency of my friend Philip Kerr who, after

reading these reports, advised the Prime Minister to reject von Seeckt’s

proposals. Rejected they were at the Conference of Spa in July 1920, as

we shall see, but von Seeckt refused to accept defeat and fell back on a

second move.” When, in 1921, General Morgan became “gravely

disturbed” at the evasions of German disarmament, he wrote a

memorandum on the subject. It was suppressed by Lord D’Abernon.

Morgan added in his book: “I was not altogether surprised. Lord

D’Abernon was the apostle of appeasement.” In January 1923, this

“apostle of appeasement” forced the British delegation on the Disarma-

ment Commission to stop all inspection operations in Germany. They

were never resumed, although the Commission remained in Germany

for four more years, and the French could do nothing without the

British members. 6

Throughout 1923 and 1924, D’Abernon put pressure on both the

German and the British governments to pursue a policy on the repara-

tions question which was identical with that which Smuts was

advocating at the same time and in the same quarters. He put pressure

on the British government to follow this policy on the grounds that any

different policy would lead to Stresemann’s fall from office. This would

result in a very dangerous situation, according to D’Abernon (and

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Stresemann), where Germany might fall into the control of either the

extreme left or the extreme right. For example, a minute of a German

Cabinet meeting of 2 November 1923, found by Eric Sutton among

Stresemann’s papers and published by him, said in part: “To the

English Ambassador, who made some rather anxious enquiries,

Stresemann stated that the maintenance of the state of siege was

absolutely essential in view of the risk of a Putsch both from the Left

and from the Right. He would use all his efforts to preserve the unity of

the Reich. . . . Lord D’Abernon replied that his view, which was

shared in influential quarters in London, was that Stresemann was the

only man who could steer the German ship of State through the present

troubled waters/' Among the quarters in London which shared this

view, we find the Milner Group.

The settlement which emerged from the crisis, the Dawes Plan and

the evacuation of the Ruhr, was exactly what the Milner Group

wanted. From that point on to the bankingcrisis of 1931, their satisfac-

tion continued. In the years 1929-1931 they clearly had no direct

influence on affairs, chiefly because a Labour government was in office

in London, but their earlier activities had so predetermined the situa-

tion that it continued to develop in the direction they wished. After the

banking crisis of 1931, the whole structure of international finance

with which the Group had been so closely associated disappeared and,

after a brief period of doubt, was replaced by a rapid growth of

monopolistic national capitalism. This was accepted by the Milner

Group with hardly a break in stride. Hichens had been deeply involved

in monopolistic heavy industry for a quarter of a century in 1932.

Milner had advocated a system of “national capitalism" with

“industrial self-regulation" behind tariff walls even earlier. Amery and

others had accepted much of this as a method, although they did not

necessarily embrace Milner’s rather socialistic goals. As a result, in the

period 1931-1933, the Milner Group willingly liquidated reparations,

war debts, and the whole structure of international capitalism, and

embraced protection and cartels instead.

Parallel with their destruction of reparations, and in a much more

direct fashion, the Milner Group destroyed collective security through

the League of Nations. The Group never intended that the League of

Nations should be used to achieve collective security. They never

intended that sanctions, either military or economic, should be used to

force any aggressive power to keep the peace or to enforce any political

decision which might be reached by international agreement. This

must be understood at the beginning. The Milner Group never in-

tended that the League should be used as an instrument of collective

security or that sanctions should be used as an instrument by the

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League. From the beginning, they expected only two things from the

League: (1) that it could be used as a center for international coopera-

tion in international administration in nonpolitical matters, and (2)

that it could be used as a center for consultation in political matters. In

regard to the first point, the Group regarded the League as a center for

such activities as those previously exercised through the International

Postal Union. In all such activities as this, each state would retain full

sovereignty and would cooperate only on a completely voluntary basis

in fields of social importance. In regard to the second point (political

questions), no member of the Group had any intention of any state

yielding any sliver of its full sovereignty to the League. The League

was merely an agreement, like any treaty, by which each state bound

itself to confer together in a crisis and not make war within three

months of the submission of the question to consultation. The whole

purpose of the League was to delay action in a crisis by requiring this

period for consultation. There was no restriction on action after the

three months. There was some doubt, within the Group, as to whether

sanctions could be used to compel a state to observe the three months'

delay. Most of the members of the Group said “no” to this question. A

few said that economic sanctions could be used. Robert Cecil, at the

beginning, at least, felt that political sanctions might be used to compel

a state to keep the peace for the three months, but by 1922 every

member of the Group had abandoned both political and economic

sanctions for enforcing the three months' delay. There never was

within the Group any intention at any time to use sanctions for any

other purpose, such as keeping peace after the three-month period.

This, then, was the point of view of the Milner Group in 1919, as in

1939. Unfortunately, in the process of drawing up the Covenant of the

League in 1919, certain phrases or implications were introduced into

the document, under pressure from France, from Woodrow Wilson,

and from other groups in Britain, which could be taken to indicate that

the League might have been intended to be used as a real instrument of

collective security, that it might have involved some minute limitation

of state sovereignty, that sanctions might under certain circumstances

be used to protect the peace. As soon as these implications became

clear, the Group’s ardor for the League began to evaporate. When the

United States refused to join the League, this dwindling ardor turned

to hatred. Nevertheless, the Group did not abandon the League at this

point. On the contrary, they tightened their grip on it — in order to pre-

vent any “foolish” persons from using the vague implications of the

Covenant in an effort to make the League an instrument of collective

security. The Group were determined that if any such effort as this

were made, they would prevent it and, if necessary, destroy the League

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to prevent it. Only they would insist, in such a case, that the League

was destroyed not by them but by the persons who tried to use it as an

instrument of collective security.

All of this may sound extreme. Unfortunately, it is not extreme. That

this was what the Group did to the League is established beyond doubt

in history. That the Group intended to do this is equally beyond

dispute. The evidence is conclusive. >

The British ideas on the League and the British drafts of the Cove-

nant were formed by four men, all close to the Milner Group. They

were Lord Robert Cecil, General Smuts, Lord Phillimore, and Alfred

Zimmern. For drafting documents they frequently used Cecil Hurst, a

close associate, but not a member, of the Group. Hurst (Sir Cecil since

1920) was assistant legal adviser to the Foreign Office in 1902-1918,

legal adviser in 1918-1929, a judge on the Permanent Court of Interna-

tional Justice at The Hague in 1929-1946, and Chairman of the United

Nations War Crimes Commission in 1943-1944. He was the man

responsible for the verbal form of Articles 10-16 (the sanction articles)

of the Covenant of the League of Nations, for the Articles of Agreement

with Ireland in 1921, and for the wording of the Locarno Pact in 1925.

He frequently worked closely with the Milner Group. For example, in

1921 he was instrumental in making an agreement by which the British

Yearbook of International Law, of which he was editor, was affiliated

with the Royal Institute of International Affairs. At the time, he and

Curtis were working together on the Irish agreement.

As early as 1916, Lord Robert Cecil was trying to persuade the

Cabinet to support a League of Nations. This resulted in the appoint-

ment of the Phillimore Committee, which drew up the first British

draft for the Covenant. As a result, in 1918-1919 Lord Robert became

the chief government spokesman for a League of Nations and the

presumed author of the second British draft. The real author of this

second draft was Alfred Zimmern. Cecil and Zimmern were both

dubious of any organization that would restrict state sovereignty. On

12 November 1918, the day after the armistice, Lord Robert made a

speech at Birmingham on the type of League he expected. That speech

shows clearly that he had little faith in the possibility of disarmament

and none in international justice or military sanctions to preserve the

peace. The sovereignty of each state was left intact. As W. E. Rappard

(director of the Graduate School of International Studies at Geneva)

wrote in International Conciliation in June 1927, “He [Lord Cecil] was

very sceptical about the possibility of submitting vital international

questions to the judgment of courts of law and ‘confessed to the gravest

doubts’ as to the practicability of enforcing the decrees of such courts

by any ‘form of international force.\* On the other hand, he firmly

believed in the efficacy of economic pressure as a means of coercing a

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country bent on aggression in violation of its pacific agreements.” It

might be remarked in passing that the belief that economic sanctions

could be used without a backing of military force, or the possibility of

needing such backing, is the one sure sign of a novice in foreign

politics, and Robert Cecil could never be called a novice in such mat-

ters. In the speech itself he said:

The most important step we can now take is to devise machinery which,

in case of international dispute, will, at the least, delay the outbreak of

war, and secure full and open discussion of the causes of the quarrel. For

that purpose ... all that would be necessary would be a treaty binding

the signatories never to wage war themselves or permit others to wage

war till a formal conference of nations had been held to enquire into, and,

if possible, decide the dispute. It is probably true, at least in theory, that

decisions would be difficult to obtain, for the decisions of such a confer-

ence, like all other international proceedings, would have to be unani-

mous to be binding. But since the important thing is to secure delay and

open discussion, that is to say, time to enable public opinion to act and

information to instruct it, this is not a serious objection to the proposal.

Indeed, from one point of view, it is an advantage, since it avoids any

interference with national sovereignty except the interposition of a delay

in seeking redress by force of arms. This is the essential thing. ... To that

extent, and to that extent only, international coercion would be neces-

sary.

This speech of Cecils was approved by The Round Table and

accepted as its own point of view in the issue of December 1918. At the

same time, through Smuts, the Milner Group published another state-

ment of its views. This pamphlet, called The League of Nations , a

Practical Suggestion, was released in December 1918, after having

been read in manuscript and criticized by the inner circle, especially

Curtis. This statement devoted most of its effort to the use of mandates

for captured German colonies. For preserving the peace, it had con-

siderable faith in compulsory arbitration and hoped to combine this

with widespread disarmament.

The Group's own statement on this subject appeared in the

December 1918 issue of The Round Table in an article called “Win-

dows of Freedom,” written by Curtis. He pointed out that British

seapower had twice saved civilization and any proposal that it should

be used in the future only at the request of the League of Nations must

be emphatically rejected. The League would consist of fallible human

beings, and England could never yield her decision to them. He con-

tinued: “Her own existence and that of the world’s freedom are in-

separably connected. ... To yield it without a blow is to yield the

whole citadel in which the forces that make for human freedom are en-

trenched; to covenant to yield it is to bargain a betrayal of the world in

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advance. . . . [The League must not be a world government.] If the

burden of a world government is placed on it it will fall with a crash/’

He pointed out it could be a world government only if it represented

peoples and not states, and if it had the power to tax those peoples. It

should simply be an interstate conference of the world.

The Peace Conference . . . cannot hope to produce a written constitution

for the globe or a genuine government of mankind. What it can do is

establish a permanent annual conference between foreign ministers them-

selves, with a permanent secretariat, in which, as at the Peace Conference

itself, all questions at issue between States can be discussed and, if pos-

sible, settled by agreement. Such a conference cannot itself govern the

world, still less those portions of mankind who cannot yet govern them-

selves. But it can act as a symbol and organ of the human conscience,

however imperfect, to which real governments of existing states can be

made answerable for facts which concern the world at large.”

In another article in the same issue of The Round Table (“Some Prin-

ciples and Problems of the Settlement,” December 1918), similar ideas

were expressed even more explicitly by Zimmern. He stated that the

League of Nations should be called the League of States, or the

Interstate Conference, for sovereign states would be its units, and it

would make not laws but contracts. “The League of Nations, in fact, so

far from invalidating or diminishing national sovereignty, should

strengthen and increase it. . . . The work before the coming age is not

to supersede the existing States but to moralize them. . . . Membership

must be restricted to those states where authority is based upon the

consent of the people over whom it is exercised . . . the reign of law. . . .

It can reasonably be demanded that no States should be admitted

which do not make such a consummation one of the deliberate aims of

their policy.” Under this idea, The Round Table excluded by name

from the new League, Liberia, Mexico, “and above all Russia.” “The

League,” it continued, “will not simply be a League of States, it will be

a League of Commonwealths.” As its hopes in the League dwindled,

The Round Table became less exclusive, and, in June 1919, it declared,

“without Germany or Russia the League of Nations will be dangerously

incomplete.”

In the March 1919 issue. The Round Table described in detail the

kind of League it wanted — “a common clearing house for non-

contentious business.” Its whole basis was to be “public opinion,” and

its organization was to be that of “an assembly point of bureaucrats of

various countries” about an international secretariat and various

organizations like the International Postal Union or the International

Institute of Agriculture.

Every great department of government in each country whose activities

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touch those of similar departments in other countries should have its

recognized delegates on a permanent international commission charged

with the study of the sphere of international relations in question and

with the duty of making recommendations to their various Governments.

. . . Across the street, as it were, from these permanent Bureaux, at the

capital of the League, there should be another central permanent Bureau

... an International secretariat. . . . They must not be national ambas-

sadors, but civil servants under the sole direction of a non- national chan-

cellor; and the aim of the whole organization . . . must be to evolve a

practical international sense, a sense of common service.

This plan regarded the Council of the League as the successor of the

Supreme War Council, made up of premiers and foreign ministers, and

the instrument for dealing with political questions in a purely con-

sultative way. Accordingly, the Council would consist only of the

Great Powers.

These plans for the Covenant of the League of Nations were rudely

shattered at the Peace Conference when the French demanded that the

new organization be a “Super-state” with its own army and powers of

action. The British were horrified, but with the help of the Americans

were able to shelve this suggestion. However, to satisfy the demand

from their own delegations as well as the French, they spread a

camouflage of sham world government over the structure they had

planned. This was done by Cecil Hurst. Hurst visited David Hunter

Miller, the American legal expert, one night and persuaded him to

replace the vital clauses 10 to 16 with drafts drawn up by Hurst. These

drafts were deliberately drawn with loopholes so that no aggressor

need ever be driven to the point where sanctions would have to be ap-

plied. This was done by presenting alternative paths of action leading

toward sanctions, some of them leading to economic sanctions, but one

path, which could be freely chosen by the aggressor, always available,

leading to a loophole where no collective action would be possible. The

whole procedure was concealed beneath a veil of legalistic terminology

so that the Covenant could be presented to the public as a watertight

document, but Britain could always escape from the necessity to apply

sanctions through a loophole.

In spite of this, the Milner Group were very dissatisfied. They tried

simultaneously to do three things: (1) to persuade public opinion that

the League was a wonderful instrument of international cooperation

designed to keep the peace; (2) to criticize the Covenant for the “traces

of a sham world-government” which had been thrown over it; and (3)

to reassure themselves and the ruling groups in England, the Domin-

ions, and the United States that the League was not “a world-state.” All

of this took a good deal of neat footwork, or, more accurately, nimble

tongues and neat pen work. More doubletalk and doublewriting were

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emitted by the Milner Group on this subject in the two decades

1919-1939 than was issued by any other group on this subject in the

period.

Among themselves the Group did not conceal their disappointment

with the Covenant because it went too far. In the June 1919 issue of

The Round Table they said reassuringly: “The document is not the

Constitution of a Super-state, but, as its title explains, a solemn agree-

ment between Sovereign States which consent to limit their complete

freedom of action on certain points. . . . The League must continue to

depend on the free consent, in the last resort, of its component States;

this assumption is evident in nearly every article of the Covenant, of

which the ultimate and most effective sanction must be the public

opinion of the civilized world. If the nations of the future are in the

main selfish, grasping, and bellicose, no instrument or machinery will

restrain them.” But in the same issue we read the complaint: “In the

Imperial Conference Sir Wilfrid Laurier was never tired of saying,

‘This is not a Government, but a conference of Governments with

Governments.’ It is a pity that there was no one in Paris to keep on say-

ing this. For the Covenant is still marked by the traces of sham govern-

ment.”

By the March 1920 issue, the full bitterness of the Group on this last

point became evident. It said: “The League has failed to secure the

adhesion of one of its most important members, The United States, and

is very unlikely to secure it. . . . This situation presents a very serious

problem for the British Empire. We have not only undertaken great

obligations under the League which we must now both in honesty and

in self-regard revise, but we have looked to the League to provide us

with the machinery for United British action in foreign affairs . ” (my

italics; this is the cat coming out of the bag) . The article continued with

criticism of Wilson, and praise of the Republican Senate’s refusal to

swallow the League as it stood. It then said:

The vital weakness of the Treaty and the Covenant became more clear

than ever in the months succeeding the signature at Versailles. A settle-

ment based on ideal principles and poetic justice can be permanently

applied and maintained only by a world government to which all nations

will subordinate their private interests. . . . It demands, not only that they

should sacrifice their private interests to this world- interest, but also that

they should be prepared to enforce the claims of world-interest even in

matters where their own interests are in no wise engaged. It demands, in

fact, that they should subordinate their national sovereignty to an inter-

national code and an international ideal. The reservations of the

American Senate . . . point the practical difficulties of this ideal with

simple force. All the reservations . . . are affirmations of the sovereign

right of the American people to make their own policy without interfer-

ence from an International League. . . . None of these reservations, it

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should be noted, contravenes the general aims of the League; but they

are, one and all, directed to ensure that no action is taken in pursuit of

those aims except with the consent and approval of the Congress. . . .

There is nothing peculiar in this attitude. It is merely, we repeat, the

broad reflex of an attitude already taken up by all the European Allies in

questions where their national interests are affected, and also by the

British Dominions in their relations with the British Government. It gives

us a statement in plain English, of the limitations to the ideal of interna-

tional action which none of the other Allies will, in practice, dispute. So

far, therefore, from destroying the League of Nations, the American

reservations have rendered it the great service of pointing clearly to the

flaws which at present neutralize its worth.

Among these flaws, in the opinion of the Milner Group, was the fact

that their plan to use the League of Nations as a method of tying the

Dominions more closely to the United Kingdom had failed and,

instead, the Covenant

gave the Dominions the grounds, or rather the excuse, to avoid closer

union with the United Kingdom. ... It had been found in Paris that in

order to preserve its unity the British delegation must meet frequently as a

delegation to discuss its policy before meeting the representatives of for-

eign nations in conference. How was this unity of action to be maintained

after the signature of peace without committing the Dominion Govern-

ments to some new constitutional organization within the Common-

wealth? And if some new constitutional organization were to be devised

for this purpose, how could it fail to limit in some way the full national

independent status which the Dominion Governments had just achieved

by their recognition as individual members of the League of Nations? The

answer to these questions was found in cooperation within the League,

which was to serve, not only as the link between the British Empire and

foreign Powers, but as the link also between the constituent nations of the

British Empire itself. Imbued with this idea, the Dominion statesmen

accepted obligations to foreign Powers under the Covenant of the League

more binding than any obligations which they would undertake to their

kindred nations within the British Empire. In other words, they mort-

gaged their freedom of action to a league of foreign States in order to

avoid the possibility of mortgaging it to the British Government. It hardly

required the reservations of the American Senate to demonstrate the

illusory character of this arrangement. . . . The British Dominions have

made no such reservations with regard to the Covenant, and they are

therefore bound by the obligations which have been rejected by the

United States. Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand are, in

fact, bound by stronger written obligations to Poland and

Czechoslovakia, than to the British Isles. ... It is almost needless to

observe that none of the democracies of the British Empire has grasped

the extent of its obligations to the League of Nations or would hesitate to

repudiate them at once, if put to the test. If England were threatened by

invasion, the other British domocracies would mobilize at once for her

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support; but though they have a written obligation to Poland, which they

have never dreamed of giving to England, they would not in practice

mobilise a single man to defend the integrity of the Corridor to Danzig or

any other Polish territorial interest. . . . This is a dangerous and equivocal

situation. ... It is time that our democracies reviewed and corrected it

with the clearness of vision and candour of statement displayed by the

much-abused Senate of the United States. ... To what course of action do

these conclusions point? They point in the first place to revision of our

obligations under the League. We are at present pledged to guarantees of

territorial arrangements in Europe which may be challenged at any time

by forces too powerful for diplomatic control, and it is becoming evident

that in no part of the Empire would public opinion sanction our active

interference in the local disputes which may ensue. The Polish Corridor to

Danzig is a case in point. . . . Our proper course is to revise and restate our

position towards the League in accordance with these facts. . . . First, we

wish to do our utmost to guarantee peace, liberty, and law throughout the

world without committing ourselves to quixotic obligations to foreign

States, Second, we wish to assist and develop the simple mechanism of

international dealing embodied in the League without mortgaging our

freedom of action and judgment under an international Covenant. Our

policy toward the League should, therefore, be revised on the following

guiding lines: 1. We should state definitely that our action within the

League will be governed solely by our own judgment of every situation as

it arises, and we must undertake no general obligations which we may not

be able or willing, when the test comes, to discharge. 2. We must in no

case commit ourselves to responsibilities which we cannot discharge to the

full with our own resources, independent of assistance from any foreign

power. 3. We must definitely renounce the idea that the League may nor-

mally enforce its opinions by military or economic pressure on the

recalcitrant States. It exists to bring principals together for open discus-

sion of international difficulties, to extend and develop the mechanisms

and habit of international cooperation, and to establish an atmosphere in

which international controversies may be settled with fairness and good-

will. . . . With the less ambitious objects defined above it will sooner or

later secure the whole-hearted support of American opinion. . . . The

influence of the League of Nations upon British Imperial relations has for

the moment been misleading and dangerous. ... It is only a question of

time before this situation leads to an incident of some kind which will

provoke the bitterest recrimination and controversy. . .

In the leading article of the September 1920 issue, The Round Table

took up the same problem and repeated many of its arguments. It

blamed Wilson for corrupting the Covenant into “a pseudo world-

government” by adding sham decorations to a fundamentally different

structure based on consultation of sovereign states. Instead of the Cove-

nant, it concluded, we should have merely continued the Supreme

Council, which was working so well at Spa.

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In spite of this complete disillusionment with the League, the Milner

Group still continued to keep a firm grip on as much of it as Britain

could control. In the first hundred sessions of the Council of the League

of Nations (1920-1938), thirty different persons sat as delegates for

Britain. Omitting the four who sat for Labour governments, we have

twenty-six. Of these, seven were from the Milner Group; seven others

were present at only one session and are of little significance. The

others were almost all from the Cecil Bloc close to the Milner Group.

The following list indicates the distribution.

Name

Sessions as Delegate

Anthony Eden

39

Sir John Simon

22

Sir Austen Chamberlain

20

Arthur Balfour

16

Lord Robert Cecil

15

Sir Alexander Cadogan

12

E. H. Carr

8

H. A. L. Fisher

7

Sir William Malkin

7

Viscount Cranborne

5

Lord Curzon

3

Lord Londonderry

3

Leopold Amery

2

Edward Wood (Lord Halifax)

2

Cecil Hurst

2

Sir Edward H. Young

2

Lord Cushendun

2

Lord Onslow

2

Gilbert Murray

1

Sir Rennell Rodd

1

Six others

1 each

At the annual meetings of the Assembly of the League, a somewhat

similar situation existed. The delegations had from three to eight

members, with about half of the number being from the Milner Group,

except when members of the Labour Party were present. H. A. L.

Fisher was a delegate in 1920, 1921, and 1922; Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton

was one in 1923, 1926, 1927, 1928, and 1931; Lord Astor was one in

1931, 1936, and 1938; Cecil Hurst was one in 1924, 1926, 1927, and

1928; Gilbert Murray was one in 1924; Lord Halifax was one in 1923

and 1936; Ormsby-Gore was one in 1933; Lord Robert Cecil was one in

1923, 1926, 1929, 1930, 1931, and 1932; E. H. Carr was one in 1933

and 1934; etc. The Milner Group control was most complete at the

crucial Twelfth Assembly (1931), when the delegation of five members

consisted of Lord Robert Cecil, Lord Lytton, Lord Astor, Arthur

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Salter, and Mrs. Lyttelton. In addition, the Group frequently had

other members attached to the delegations as secretaries or substitutes.

Among these were E. H. Carr, A. L. Smith, and R. M. Makins.

Moreover, the Group frequently had members on the delegations from

the Dominions. The South African delegation in 1920 had Robert

Cecil; in 1921 it had Robert Cecil and Gilbert Murray; in 1923 it had

Smuts and Gilbert Murray. The Australian delegation had Sir John

Latham in 1926, while the Canadian delegation had Vincent Massey

ten years later. The Indian delegation had L. F. Rushbrook Williams

in 1925.

The Milner Group was also influential in the Secretariat of the

League. Sir Eric Drummond (now sixteenth Earl of Perth), who had

been Balfour’s private secretary from 1916 to 1919, was Secretary-

General to the League from 1919 to 1933, when he resigned to become

British Ambassador in Rome. Not a member of the Group, he was

nevertheless close to it. Harold Butler, of the Group and of All Souls,

was deputy director and director of the International Labor Office in

the period 1920-1938. Arthur Salter, of the Group and All Souls, was

director of the Economic and Financial Section of the League in

1919-1920 and again in 1922-1931. B. H. Sumner, of the Group and All

Souls (now Warden), was on the staff of the ILO in 1920-1922. R. M.

Makins, of the Group and All Souls, was assistant adviser and adviser

on League of Nations affairs to the Foreign Office in 1937-1939.

To build up public opinion in favor of the League of Nations, the

Milner Group formed an organization known as the League of Nations

Union. In this organization the most active figures were Lord Robert

Cecil, Gilbert Murray, the present Lord Esher, Mrs. Lyttelton, and

Wilson Harris. Lord Cecil was president from 1923 to 1945; Professor

Murray was chairman from 1923 to 1938 and co-president from 1938 to

1945; Wilson Harris was its parliamentary secretary and editor of its

paper. Headway , for many years. Among others, C. A. Macartney, of

All Souls and the RIIA, was head of the Intelligence Department from

1928 to 1936. Harris and Macartney were late additions to the Group,

the former becoming a member of the inner circle about 1922, while

the latter became a member of the outer circle in the late 1920s, prob-

ably as a result of his association with the Encyclopedia Britannica as

an expert on Central Europe. Wilson Harris was one of the most in-

timate associates of Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr, and other members of

the inner core in the 1920s, and this association became closer, if pos-

sible, in the 1930s. A graduate of Cambridge University in 1906, he

served for many years in various capacities with the Daily News . Since

1932 he has been editor of The Spectator , and since 1945 he has been a

Member of Parliament from Cambridge University. He was one of the

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most ardent advocates of appeasement in the period 1935-1939, espe-

cially in the meetings at Chatham House. In this connection, it might

be mentioned that he was a member of the council of the RIIA in

1924-1927. He has written books on Woodrow Wilson, the peace settle-

ment, the League of Nations, disarmament, etc. His most recent work

is a biography of J. A. Spender, onetime editor of the Westminster

Gazette (1896-1922), which he and his brother founded in 1893 in col-

laboration with Edmund Garrett and Edward Cook, when all four left

the Pall Mall Gazette after its purchase by Waldorf Astor.

The ability of the Milner Group to mobilize public opinion in regard

to the League of Nations is almost beyond belief. It was not a simple

task, since they were simultaneously trying to do two things: on the one

hand, seeking to build up popular opinion in favor of the League so

that its work could be done more effectively; and, at the same time,

seeking to prevent influential people from using the League as an in-

strument of world government before popular opinion was ready for a

world government. In general, The Round Table and The Times were

used for the latter purpose, while the League of Nations Union and a

strange assortment of outlets, such as Chatham House, Toynbee Hall,

extension courses at Oxford, adult-education courses in London, Inter-

national Conciliation in the United States, the Institute of Politics at

Williamstown, the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation at Paris, the

Geneva School of International Studies and the Graduate Institute of

International Studies at Geneva, and the various branches of the

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, were used for the

former purpose. The Milner Group did not control all of these. Their

influence was strong in all of them, and, since the influence of J. P.

Morgan and Company was also strong in most of them and since

Morgan and the Group were pursuing a parallel policy on this issue,

the Group were usually able to utilize the resources of these various

organizations when they wished.

As examples of this, we might point out that Curtis and Kerr each

gave a series of lectures at the Institute of Politics, Williamstown, in

1922. Selections from these, along with an article from the September

1922 issue of The Round Table , were published in International Con-

ciliation for February 1923. Kerr and Lord Birkenhead spoke at the In-

stitute in 1923; Sir Arthur Willert, a close associate if not a member of

the Group, spoke at the Institute of Politics in 1927. Sir Arthur was

always close to the Group. He was a member of the staff of The Times

from 1906 to 1921, chiefly as head of the Washington office; he was in

the Foreign Office as head of the News Department from 1921 to 1935,

was on the United Kingdom delegation to the League of Nations in

1929-1934, was an important figure in the Ministry of Information (a

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Milner Group fief) in 1939-1945, and wrote a book called The Empire

and the World in collaboration with H. V. Hodson and B. K. Long of

the Kindergarten.

Other associates of the Group who spoke at the Institute of Politics at

Williamstown were Lord Eustace Percy, who spoke on wartime ship-

ping problems in 1929, and Lord Meston, who spoke on Indian na-

tionalism in 1930. 7

The relationship between the Milner Group and the valuable little

monthly publication called International Conciliation was exercised

indirectly through the parallel group in America, which had been

organized by the associates of J. P. Morgan and Company before the

First World War, and which made its most intimate connections with

the Milner Group at the Peace Conference of 1919. We have already

mentioned this American group in connection with the Council on

Foreign Relations and the Institute of Pacific Relations. Through this

connection, many of the activities and propaganda effusions of the

Milner Group were made available to a wide public in America. We

have already mentioned the February 1923 issue of International Con-

ciliation , which was monopolized by the Group. A few other examples

might be mentioned. Both of General Smuts’s important speeches, that

of 23 October 1923 and that of 13 November 1934, were reproduced in

International Conciliation. So too was an article on “The League and

Minorities” by Wilson Harris. This was in the September 1926 issue. A

Times editorial of 22 November 1926 on “The Empire as It Is” was

reprinted in March 1927; another of 14 July 1934 is in the September

issue of the same year; a third of 12 July 1935 is in the issue of Sep-

tember 1935. Brand’s report on Germany’s Foreign Creditors’ Stand-

still Agreements is in the May issue of 1932; while a long article from

the same pen on “The Gold Problem” appears in the October 1937

issue. This article was originally published, over a period of three days,

in The Times in June 1937. An article on Russia from The Round Table

was reprinted in December 1929. Lord Lothian’s speeches of 25

October 1939 and of 11 December 1940 were both printed in the issues

of International Conciliation immediately following their delivery. An

article by Lothian called “League or No League,” first published in

The Observer in August 1936, was reprinted in the periodical under

consideration in December 1936. An article by Lord Cecil on disarma-

ment, another by Clarence Streit (one of the few American members of

the Group) on the League of Nations, and a third by Stephen King-

Hall on the Mediterranean problem were published in December 1932,

February 1934, and January 1938 respectively. A speech of John

Simon’s appears in the issue of May 1935; one of Samuel Hoare’s is in

the September issue of the same year; another by Samuel Hoare is in

the issue of November 1935. Needless to say, the activities of the In-

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stitute of Pacific Relations, of the Imperial Conferences, of the League

of Nations, and of the various international meetings devoted to

reparations and disarmament were adequately reflected in the pages of

International Conciliation.

The deep dislike which the Milner Group felt for the Treaty of Ver-

sailles and the League of Nations was shared by the French, but for

quite opposite reasons. The French felt insecure in the face of Germany

because they realized that France had beaten Germany in 1918 only

because of the happy fact that she had Russia, Great Britain, Italy, and

the United States to help her. From 1919 onward, France had no

guarantee that in any future attack by Germany she would have any

such assistance. To be sure, the French knew that Britain must come to

the aid of France if there was any danger of Germany defeating

France. The Milner Group knew this too. But France wanted some ar-

rangement by which Britain would be alongside France from the first

moment of a German attack, since the French had no assurance that

they could withstand a German onslaught alone, even for a brief

period. Moreover, if they could, the French were afraid that the

opening onslaught would deliver to the Germans control of the most

productive part of France as captured territory. This is what had hap-

pened in 1914. To avoid this, the French sought in vain one alternative

after another: (a) to detach from Germany, or, at least, to occupy for

an extended period, the Rhineland area of Germany (this would put

the Ruhr, the most vital industrial area of Germany, within striking

distance of French forces); (b) to get a British-American, or at least a

British, guarantee of French territory; (c) to get a “League of Nations

with teeth/’ that is, one with its own police forces and powers to act

automatically against an aggressor. All of these were blocked by the

English and Americans at the Peace Conference in 1919. The French

sought substitutes. Of these, the only one they obtained was a system of

alliances with new states, like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the en-

larged Rumania, on the east of Germany. All of these states were of

limited power, and the French had little faith in the effectiveness of

their assistance. Accordingly, the French continued to seek their other

aims: to extend the fifteen years’ occupation of the Rhineland into a

longer or even an indefinite period; to get some kind of British

guarantee; to strengthen the League of Nations by ‘‘plugging the gaps

in the Covenant”; to use the leverage of reparations and disarmament

as provided in the Treaty of Versailles to keep Germany down, to

wreck her economically, or even to occupy the Ruhr. All of these ef-

forts were blocked by the machinations of the Milner Group. At the

moment, we shall refer only to the efforts to “plug the gaps in the Cove-

nant.”

These “gaps,” as we have indicated, were put in by Cecil Hurst and

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were exactly to the taste of the Milner Group. The chief efforts of the

French and their allies on the Continent to “plug the gaps” were the

Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance (1923) and the Geneva Protocol

(1924). What the Milner Group thought of both of these can be

gathered from the following extracts from The Round Table's denun-

ciation of the Protocol. In the December 1924 issue, in an article en-

titled “The British Commonwealth, the Protocol, and the League,” we

find the following: “What is to be the British answer to this invitation

to reenter the stormy field of internal European politics? Can the

British Commonwealth afford to become permanently bound up with

the internal political structure of Europe? And will it promote the

peace and stability of Europe or the world that Europe should attempt

to solve its problems on the basis of a permanent British guarantee?

The answer in our judgment to both these questions must be an em-

phatic, No.” Then, after repeating its contention that the only purpose

of the Covenant was to secure delay in a crisis for consultation, it con-

tinued:

The idea that all nations ought to consult how they are to deal with

States which precipitate war without allowing any period for enquiry

and mediation is the real heart of the League of Nations, and, if the Brit-

ish Commonwealth wants to prevent a recurrence of the Great War, it

must be willing to recognize that it has a vital interest in working out with

other nations the best manner of giving effect to this fundamental idea.

. . . Decisions as to the rights and wrongs of international disputes, and of

what common action the nations should take when they are called to-

gether to deal with such an outlaw, must be left to be determined in the

light of the circumstances of the time. . . . The view of The Round Table is

that the British Commonwealth should make it perfectly clear . . . that it

will accept no further obligations than this and that the Covenant of the

League must be amended to establish beyond question that no authority,

neither the Council nor any arbitral body it may appoint, has any power

to render a binding decision or to order a war, except with the consent of

the members themselves.

The bitterness of the Group’s feelings against France at the time ap-

pears in the same article a couple of pages later when it asked: “Or is

the proposal implicit in the Protocol merely one for transferring to the

shoulders of Great Britain, which alone is paying her debts, some part

of the cost of maintaining that preponderance which now rests upon

the European States which profit most by it. ... It is sheer rubbish to

suggest that France needs military guarantees for security. . . . What

France really wants is a guarantee that the allies will maintain a

perpetual preponderance over Germany. This we can never give her,

for in the long run it makes not for peace but for war.”

In another article in the same issue, the Protocol was analyzed and

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denounced. The final conclusion was: “It is our firm conviction that no

alternative is acceptable which fails to provide for the free exercise by

the Parliaments and peoples of the Empire of their judgment as to how

to deal with any disturbance of the peace, or any threat of such distur-

bance, on its merits as it arises. That has been the guiding principle

throughout the political history of the British peoples. The methods of

the Protocol belong to another world, and, if for no other reason, they

should be rejected.”

The Protocol was officially rejected by Austen Chamberlain at a ses-

sion of the Council of the League of Nations in March 1925. John

Dove, Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr, and Wilson Harris went to Geneva to

be present at the meeting. After the deed was done, they went to visit

Prague and Berlin, and ended by meeting Lady Astor in Paris. From

Geneva and Paris, John Dove wrote to Brand letters which Brand later

published in his edition of The Letters of John Dove .

One of the reasons given by Austen Chamberlain in 1925 for re-

jecting the Geneva Protocol was the opposition of the Dominions. That

the Milner Group was able to affect Dominion opinion on this subject is

clear. They could use men like Massey and Glazebrook in Canada,

Bavin and Eggleston in Australia, Downie Stewart and Allen in New

Zealand, Smuts and Duncan in South Africa.

More important than the Milner Group’s ability to influence opinion

in the Dominions was its ability to influence decisions in London. In

much of this latter field, Lord Esher undoubtedly played an important

role. It is perfectly clear that Lord Esher disliked collective security,

and for the same reasons as The Round Table. This can be seen in his

published Journals and Letters. For example, on 18 February 1919, in

a letter to Hankey, he wrote: “I fervently believe that the happiness

and welfare of the human race is more closely concerned in the evolu-

tion of English democracy and of our Imperial Commonwealth than in

the growth of any international League.” On 7 December 1919, in

another letter to Hankey, he wrote: “You say that my letter was critical

and not constructive. So it was. But the ground must be cleared of

debris first. I assume that this is done. We will forget the high ideals

and the fourteen points for the moment. We will be eminently prac-

tical. So here goes. Do not let us bother about a League of Nations. It

may come slowly or not at all. What step forward, if any, can we

take? We can get a League of Empire.” Shortly afterwards, writing to

his heir, the present Viscount Esher, he called the League “a paper

hoop.” The importance of this can be seen if we realize that Lord Esher

was the most important factor on the Committee of Imperial Defence,

and this committee was one of the chief forces determining British

foreign policy in this period. In fact, no less an authority than Lord

Robert Cecil has said that the Geneva Protocol was rejected on the ad-

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vice of the Committee of Imperial Defence and that he accepted that

decision only when he was promised a new project which subsequently

became the Locarno Pacts. 8

The rejection of the Protocol by Britain was regarded subsequently

by real supporters of the League as the turning point in its career.

There was an outburst of public sentiment against this selfish and cold-

blooded action. Zimmern, who knew more than he revealed, went to

Oxford in May 1925 and made a brilliant speech against those who

were sabotaging the League. He did not identify them, but clearly in-

dicated their existence, and, as the crudest blow of all, attributed their

actions to a failure of intelligence.

As a result of this feeling, which was widespread throughout the

world, the Group determined to give the world the appearance of a

guarantee to France. This was done in the Locarno Pacts, the most

complicated and most deceitful international agreement made be-

tween the Treaty of Versailles and the Munich Pact. We cannot discuss

them in detail here, but must content ourselves with pointing out that

in appearance, and in the publicity campaign which accompanied

their formation, the Locarno agreements guaranteed the frontier of

Germany with France and Belgium with the power of these three states

plus Britain and Italy. In reality the agreements gave France nothing,

while they gave Britain a veto over French fulfillment of her alliances

with Poland and the Little Entente. The French accepted these decep-

tive documents for reasons of internal politics: obviously, any French

government which could make the French people believe that it had

been able to secure a British guarantee of France’s eastern frontier

could expect the gratitude of the French people to be reflected at the

polls. The fundamental shrewdness and realism of the French,

however, made it difficult to conceal from them the trap that lay in the

Locarno agreements. This trap consisted of several interlocking fac-

tors. In the first place, the agreements did not guarantee the German

frontier and the demilitarized condition of the Rhineland against Ger-

man actions, but against the actions of either Germany or France.

This, at one stroke, gave Britain the legal grounds for opposing France

if she tried any repetition of the military occupation of the Ruhr, and,

above all, gave Britain the right to oppose any French action against

Germany in support of her allies to the east of Germany. This meant

that if Germany moved east against Czechoslovakia, Poland, and,

eventually, Russia, and if France attacked Germany’s western frontier

in support of Czechoslovakia or Poland, as her alliances bound her to

do. Great Britain, Belgium, and Italy might be bound by the Locarno

Pacts to come to the aid of Germany. To be sure, the same agreement

might bind these three powers to oppose Germany if she drove

westward against France, but the Milner Group did not object to this

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for several reasons. In the first place, if Germany attacked France

directly, Britain would have to come to the help of France whether

bound by treaty or not. The old balance-of-power principle made that

clear. In the second place, Cecil Hurst, the old master of legalistic

doubletalk, drew up the Locarno Pacts with the same kind of loopholes

which he had put in the crucial articles of the Covenant. As a result, if

Germany did violate the Locarno Pacts against France, Britain could,

if she desired, escape the necessity of fulfilling her guarantee by slip-

ping through one of Hurst’s loopholes. As a matter of fact, when Hitler

did violate the Locarno agreements by remilitarizing the Rhineland in

March 1936, the Milner Group and their friends did not even try to

evade their obligation by slipping through a loophole, but simply

dishonored their agreement.

This event of March 1936, by which Hitler remilitarized the

Rhineland, was the most crucial event in the whole history of appease-

ment. So long as the territory west of the Rhine and a strip fifty

kilometers wide on the east bank of the river were demilitarized, as

provided in the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Pacts, Hitler

would never have dared to move against Austria, Czechoslovakia, and

Poland. He would not have dared because, with western Germany un-

fortified and denuded of German soldiers, France could have easily

driven into the Ruhr industrial area and crippled Germany so that it

would be impossible to go eastward. And by this date, certain members

of the Milner Group and of the British Conservative government had

reached the fantastic idea that they could kill two birds with one stone

by setting Germany and Russia against one another in Eastern Europe.

In this way they felt that the two enemies would stalemate one

another, or that Germany would become satisfied with the oil of

Rumania and the wheat of the Ukraine. It never occurred to anyone in

a responsible position that Germany and Russia might make common

cause, even temporarily, against the West. Even less did it occur to

them that Russia might beat Germany and thus open all Central

Europe to Bolshevism.

This idea of bringing Germany into a collision with Russia was not to

be found, so far as the evidence shows, among any members of the

inner circle of the Milner Group. Rather it was to be found among the

personal associates of Neville Chamberlain, including several members

of the second circle of the Milner Group. The two policies followed

parallel courses until March 1939. After that date the Milner Group’s

disintegration became very evident, and part of it took the form of the

movement of several persons (like Hoare and Simon) from the second

circle of the Milner Group to the inner circle of the new group rotating

around Chamberlain. This process was concealed by the fact that this

new group was following, in public at least, the policy desired by the

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Milner Group; their own policy, which was really the continuation of

appeasement for another year after March 1939, was necessarily secret,

so that the contrast between the Chamberlain group and the inner cir-

cle of the Milner Group in the period after March 1939 was not as ob-

vious as it might have been.

In order to carry out this plan of allowing Germany to drive

eastward against Russia, it was necessary to do three things: (1) to liq-

uidate all the countries standing between Germany and Russia; (2) to

prevent France from honoring her alliances with these countries; and

(3) to hoodwink the English people into accepting this as a necessary,

indeed, the only solution to the international problem. The Chamber-

lain group were so successful in all three of these things that they came

within an ace of succeeding, and failed only because of the obstinacy of

the Poles, the unseemly haste of Hitler, and the fact that at the eleventh

hour the Milner Group realized the implications of their policy and

tried to reverse it.

The program of appeasement can be divided into three stages: the

first from 1920 to 1934, the second from 1934 to 1937, and the third

from 1937 to 1940. The story of the first period we have almost com-

pleted, except for the evacuation of the Rhineland in 1930, five years

ahead of the date set in the Treaty of Versailles. It would be too

complicated a story to narrate here the methods by which France was

persuaded to yield on this point. It is enough to point out that France

was persuaded to withdraw her troops in 1930 rather than 1935 as a

result of what she believed to be concessions made to her in the Young

Plan. That the Milner Group approved this evacuation goes without

saying. We have already mentioned The Round Tables demand of

June 1923 that the Rhineland be evacuated. A similar desire will be

found in a letter from John Dove to Brand in October 1927.

The second period of appeasement began with Smuts’s famous

speech of 13 November 1934, delivered before the RIIA. The whole of

this significant speech deserves to be quoted here, but we must content

ourselves with a few extracts:

With all the emphasis at my command, I would call a halt to this war talk

as mischievous and dangerous war propaganda. The expectation of war

tomorrow or in the near future is sheer nonsense, and all those who are

conversant with affairs know it. . . . The remedy for this fear complex is

. . . bringing it into the open and exposing it to the light of day. . . . And

this is exactly the method of the League of Nations ... it is an open forum

for discussion among the nations, it is a round table for the statesmen

around which they can ventilate and debate their grievances and view-

points. . . . There are those who say that this is not enough — that as long

as the League remains merely a talking shop or debating society, and is

not furnished with “teeth” and proper sanctions, the sense of insecurity

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will remain. ... It is also felt that the inability of the League to guarantee

the collective system by means of force, if necessary, is discrediting it and

leading to its decay. ... I cannot visualize the League as a military

machine. It was not conceived or built for that purpose, it is not equipped

for such functions. And if ever the attempt were made to transform it into

a military machine, into a system to carry on war for the purpose of

preventing war, I think its fate is sealed. . . . Defection of the United

States has largely defeated its main objects. And the joining up of the

United States must continue to be the ultimate goal of all true friends of

the League and of the cause of peace. A conference of the nations the

United States can, and eventually will, join; it can never join an interna-

tional War Office. Remembering the debates on this point in the League

of Nations Commission which drafted the Covenant, I say quite definitely

that the very idea of a league of force was negatived there; and the League

would be quite false to its fundamental idea and to its great mission ... if

it allowed itself to be turned into something quite different, something

just the opposite of its original idea — into a league of force. ... To

endeavor to cast out the Satan of fear by calling in the Beelzebub of

militarism, and militarizing the League itself, would be a senseless and in-

deed fatal proceeding. . . . The removal of the inferiority complex from

Germany is just as essential to future peace as the removal of fear from the

mind of France; and both are essential to an effective disarmament

policy. How can the inferiority complex which is obsessing and, I fear,

poisoning the mind and indeed the soul of Germany be removed? There is

only one way, and that is to recognize her complete equality of status with

her fellows, and to do so frankly, freely, and unreservedly. That is the

only medicine for her disease. . . . While one understands and sympa-

thizes with French fears, one cannot but feel for Germany in the position

of inferiority in which she still remains sixteen years after the conclusion

of the War. The continuance of her Versailles status is becoming an of-

fense to the conscience of Europe and a danger to future peace. . . . There

is no place in international law for second-rate nations, and least of all

should Germany be kept in that position. . . . Fair play, sportsmanship —

indeed, every standard of private and public life— calls for frank revision

of the position. Indeed, ordinary prudence makes it imperative. Let us

break those bonds and set the captive, obsessed, soul free in a decent

human way. And Europe will reap a rich reward in tranquillity, security,

and returning prosperity. ... I would say that to me the future policy and

association of our great British Commonwealth lie more with the United

States than with any other group in the world. If ever there comes a part-

ing of the ways, if ever in the crisis of the future we are called upon to

make a choice, that , it seems to me, should be the company we should

prefer to walk with and march with to the unknown future. . . . Nobody

can forecast the outcome of the stormy era of history on which we are

probably entering.

At the time that Smuts made this significant speech, the Milner

Group had already indicated to Hitler officially that Britain was

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prepared to give Germany arms equality. France had greeted the ar-

rival to power of Hitler by desperate efforts to form an “Eastern

Locarno” against Germany. Sir John Simon, who was Foreign

Secretary from September 1931 to June 1935, repudiated these efforts

on 13 July 1934 in a speech which was approved by The Times the

following day. He warned the French that Britain would not approve

any effort “to build up one combination against another,” would refuse

to assume any new obligations herself, would insist that Russia join the

League of Nations before she become a party to any multilateral settle-

ment, and insisted on arms equality for Germany. On the same day,

Austen Chamberlain laid the groundwork for the German remilitariza-

tion of the Rhineland by a speech in which he insisted that the Locarno

agreements did not bind Britain to use troops. He clearly indicated

how Britain, by her veto power in the Council of the League, could

prevent a League request to provide troops to enforce Locarno, and

added that such a request would not be binding on Britain, even if

voted, since “there was no automatic obligation under the Government

to send our Army to any frontier.”

In a debate in the House of Lords on 5 December 1934, Lord Cecil

contradicted Smuts’s statement that “the idea of a League of force was

negatived” in 1918 and restated his own views that force should be

available to compel the observance of the three months’ moratorium

between the settlement of a question by the Council and the outbreak

of war. He said: “The thing which we were most anxious to secure

against a renewal of a great war was that there should be collective

action to prevent a sudden outbreak of war. It was never part of the

Covenant system that force should be used in order to compel some

particular settlement of a dispute. That, we thought, was going

beyond what public opinion of the world would support; but we did

think we could go so far as to say: ‘You are not to resort to war until

every other means for bringing about a settlement has been ex-

hausted.’ ” This was merely a restatement of the point of view that

Lord Cecil had held since 1918. It did not constitute collective security,

as the expression was used by the world in general. Yet this use of the

words “collective security” to mean the enforcement of a three months’

moratorium before issuing a declaration of war — this weaker

meaning — was being weakened even further by the Milner Group.

This was made perfectly clear in a speech by Lord Lothian (Philip

Kerr) immediately after Lord Cecil. On this day the latter parted from

the Milner Group program of appeasement; more than ten years after

Zimmern’s, this defection is of less significance than the earlier one

because Lord Cecil did not see clearly what was being done and he had

never been, apparently, a member of the inner circle of the Group,

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although he had attended meetings of the inner circle in the period

after 1910. 9

Lord Lothian’s speech of 5 December 1934 in the House of Lords is,

at first glance, a defense of collective security, but a second look shows

clearly that by “collective security” the speaker meant appeasement.

He contrasts collective security with power diplomacy and, having ex-

cluded all use of force under the former expression, goes on to interpret

it to mean peaceful change without war. In the context of events, this

could only mean appeasement of Germany. He said: “In international

affairs, unless changes are made in time, war becomes inevitable. . . .

If the collective system is to be successful, it must contain two elements.

On the one hand, it must be able to bring about by pacific means

alterations in the international structure, and, on the other hand, it

must be strong enough to restrain Powers who seek to take the law into

their own hands either by war or by power diplomacy, from being suc-

cessful in their efforts.” This was nothing but the appeasement pro-

gram of Chamberlain and Halifax — that concessions should be made to

Germany to strengthen her on the Continent and in Eastern Europe,

while Britain should remain strong enough on the sea and in the air to

prevent Hitler from using war to obtain these concessions. The fear of

Hitler’s using war was based not so much on a dislike of force (neither

Lothian nor Halifax was a pacifist in that sense) but on the realization

that if Hitler made war against Austria, Czechoslovakia, or Poland,

public opinion in France and England might force their governments

to declare war in spite of their desire to yield these areas to Germany.

This, of course, is what finally happened.

Hitler was given ample assurance by the Milner Group, both within

and without the government, that Britain would not oppose his efforts

“to achieve arms equality.” Four days before Germany officially de-

nounced the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, Leopold

Amery made a slashing attack on collective security, comparing “the

League which exists” and “the league of make-believe, a cloud cuckoo

land, dreams of a millennium which we were not likely to reach for

many a long year to come; a league which was to maintain peace by

going to war whenever peace was disturbed. That sort of thing, if it

could exist, would be a danger to peace; it would be employed to ex-

tend war rather than to put an end to it. But dangerous or not, it did

not exist, and to pretend that it did exist was sheer stupidity.”

Four days later, Hitler announced Germany’s rearmament, and ten

days after that, Britain condoned the act by sending Sir John Simon on

a state visit to Berlin. When France tried to counterbalance Germany’s

rearmament by bringing the Soviet Union into her eastern alliance

system in May 1935, the British counteracted this by making the Anglo-

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German Naval Agreement of 18 June 1935. This agreement, concluded

by Simon, allowed Germany to build up to 35 percent of the size of the

British Navy (and up to 100 percent in submarines). This was a deadly

stab in the back to France, for it gave Germany a navy considerably

larger than the French in the important categories of ships (capital

ships and aircraft carriers) in the North Sea, because France was bound

by treaty in these categories to only 33 percent of Britain's; and France,

in addition, had a worldwide empire to protect and the unfriendly

Italian Navy off her Mediterranean coast. This agreement put the

French Atlantic coast so completely at the mercy of the German Navy

that France became completely dependent on the British fleet for pro-

tection in this area. Obviously, this protection would not be given

unless France in a crisis renounced her eastern allies. As if this were not

enough, Britain in March 1936 accepted the German remilitarization

of the Rhineland and in August 1936 began the farcical noninterven-

tion agreement in Spain, which put another unfriendly government on

France's remaining land frontier. Under such pressure, it was clear

that France would not honor her alliances with the Czechs, the Poles,

or the Russians, if they came due.

In these actions of March 1935 and March 1936, Hitler was running

no risk, for the government and the Milner Group had assured him

beforehand that it would accept his actions. This was done both in

public and in private, chiefly in the House of Commons and in the

articles of The Times . Within the Cabinet, Halifax, Simon, and Hoare

resisted the effort to form any alignment against Germany. The

authorized biographer of Halifax wrote in reference to Halifax’s at-

titude in 1935 and 1936:

“Was England to allow herself to be drawn into war because France had

alliances in Eastern Europe? Was she to give Mussolini a free pass to Addis

Ababa merely to prevent Hitler marching to Vienna?" Questions similar

to these were undoubtedly posed by Halifax in Cabinet. His own friends,

in particular Lothian and Geoffrey Dawson of The Times , had for some

time been promoting Anglo-German fellowship with rather more fervour

than the Foreign Office. In January 1935 Lothian had a long conversation

with Hitler, and Hitler was reputed to have proposed an alliance between

England, Germany, and the United States which would in effect give

Germany a free hand on the Continent, in return for which he had prom-

ised not to make Germany “a world power" or to attempt to compete

with the British Navy. The Times consistently opposed the Eastern

Locarno and backed Hitler’s non- aggression alternative. Two days before

the Berlin talks, for instance, it advocated that they should include terri-

torial changes, and in particular the question of Memel; while on the day

they began [March 1935] its leading article suggested that if Herr Hitler

can persuade his British visitors, and through them the rest of the world,

that his enlarged army is really designed to give them equality of status

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and equality of negotiation with other countries, and is not to be trained

for aggressive purposes, then Europe may be on the threshold of an era in

which changes can be made without the use of force, and a potential ag-

gressor may be deterred by the certain prospect of having to face over-

whelming opposition! How far The Times and Lothian were arguing and

negotiating on the Government s behalf is still not clear, but that Halifax

was intimately acquainted with the trend of this argument is probable.

It goes without saying that the whole inner core of the Group, and

their chief publications, such as The Times and The Round Table , ap-

proved the policy of appeasement completely and prodded it along

with calculated indiscretions when it was felt necessary to do so. After

the remilitarization of the Rhineland, The Times cynically called this

act “a chance to rebuild/’ As late as 24 February 1938, in the House of

Lords, Lothian defended the same event. He said: “We hear a great

deal of the violation by Herr Hitler of the Treaty because he returned

his own troops to his own frontier. You hear much less today of the

violation by which the French Army, with the acquiescence of this

country, crossed the frontier in order to annihilate German industry

and in effect produced the present Nazi Party.”

In the House of Commons in October 1935, and again on 6 May

1936, Amery systematically attacked the use of force to sustain the

League of Nations. On the earlier occasion he said:

From the very outset there have been two schools of thought about the

League and about our obligations under the League. There has been the

school, to which I belong and to which for years, I believe, the Govern-

ment of this country belonged, that regards the League as a great institu-

tion, an organization for promoting cooperation and harmony among the

nations, for bringing about understanding, a permanent Round Table of

the nations in conference . . . provided always that it did not have at the

background the threat of coercion. There is another school which thinks

that the actual Articles of the Covenant, concocted in the throes of the

peace settlement and in that atmosphere of optimism which led us to ex-

pect ten million pounds or more in reparations from Germany, constitute

a sacrosanct dispensation, that they have introduced a new world order,

and would, if they were only loyally adhered to, abolish war for good and

all. The Covenant, I admit, as originally drafted, embodied both aspects

and it was because the Covenant contained the Clauses that stood for

coercion and for definite automatic obligations that the United States . . .

repudiated it. From that moment the keystone was taken out of the whole

arch of any League of coercion. . . . The League is now undergoing a trial

which may well prove disastrous to it. In this matter, as in other matters,

it is the letter that killeth. The letter of the Covenant is the one thing

which is likely to kill the League of Nations.

Amery then continued with a brief resume of the efforts to make the

League an instrument of coercion, especially the Geneva Protocol. In

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regard to this, he continued: “The case I wish to put to the House is

that the stand taken by His Majesty’s Government then and the

arguments they used were not arguments merely against the Protocol,

but arguments against the whole conception of a League based on

economic and military sanctions.” He quoted Austen Chamberlain in

1925 and General Smuts in 1934 with approval, and concluded: “I

think that we should have got together with France and Italy and

devised some scheme by which under a condominium or mandate cer-

tain if not all of the non-Amharic provinces of Abyssinia should be

transferred to Italian rule. The whole thing could have been done by

agreement, and I have no doubt that such agreement would have been

ratified at Geneva.”

This last statement was more then seven weeks before the Hoare-

Laval Plan was made public, and six weeks after its outlines were laid

down by Hoare, Eden, and Laval at a secret meeting in Paris (10

September 1935).

In his speech of 6 May 1936, Amery referred back to his October

speech and demanded that the Covenant of the League be reformed to

prevent sanctions in the future. Once again he quoted Smuts’s speech of

November 1934 with approval, and demanded “a League which is

based not upon coercion but upon conciliation.”

Between Amery ’s two speeches, on 5 February 1936, Sir Arthur

Salter, of the Group and All Souls, offered his arguments to support ap-

peasement. He quoted Smuts’s speech of 1934 with approval and

pointed out the great need for living space and raw materials for

Japan, Italy, and Germany. The only solution, he felt, was for Britain

to yield to these needs.

I do not think it matters [he said] if you reintroduce conscription and

quadruple or quintuple your Air Force. That will not protect you. I be-

lieve that the struggle is destined to come unless we are prepared to agree

to a fairer distribution of the world’s land surface and of the raw materials

which are needed by modern civilized nations. But there is a way out;

there is no necessity for a clash. I am sure that time presses and that we

cannot postpone a settlement indefinitely. ... I suggest that the way out

is the application of those principles [of Christianity], the deliberate and

conscious application of those principles to international affairs by this

nation and by the world under the leadership of this nation. . . . Treat

other nations as you would desire to be treated by them.

The liquidation of the countries between Germany and Russia could

proceed as soon as the Rhineland was fortified, without fear on Ger-

many’s part that France would be able to attack her in the west while

she was occupied in the east. The chief task of the Milner Group was to

see that this devouring process was done no faster than public opinion

in Britain could accept, and that the process did not result in any out-

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burst of violence, which the British people would be unlikely to accept.

To this double purpose, the British government and the Milner Group

made every effort to restrain the use of force by the Germans and to

soften up the prospective victims so that they would not resist the pro-

cess and thus precipitate a war.

The countries marked for liquidation included Austria,

Czechoslovakia, and Poland, but did not include Greece and Turkey,

since the Group had no intention of allowing Germany to get down

onto the Mediterranean “lifeline”. Indeed, the purpose of the Hoare-

Laval Plan of 1935, which wrecked the collective-security system by

seeking to give most of Ethiopia to Italy, was intended to bring an ap-

peased Italy into position alongside England, in order to block any

movement of Germany southward rather than eastward. The plan

failed because Mussolini decided that he could get more out of England

by threats from the side of Germany than from cooperation at the side

of England. As a result of this fiasco, the Milner Group lost another im-

portant member, Arnold J. Toynbee, who separated himself from the

policy of appeasement in a fighting and courageous preface to The

Survey of International Affairs for 1935 (published in 1936). As a result

of the public outcry in England, Hoare, the Foreign Secretary, was

removed from office and briefly shelved in December 1935. He re-

turned to the Cabinet the following May. Anthony Eden, who replaced

him, was not a member of the Milner Group and considerably more to

the public taste because of his reputation (largely undeserved) as an

upholder of collective security. The Milner Group was in no wise

hampered in its policy of appeasement by the presence of Eden in the

Foreign Office, and the government as a whole was considerably

strengthened. Whenever the Group wanted to do something which

Eden’s delicate stomach could not swallow, the Foreign Secretary went

off for a holiday, and Lord Halifax took over his tasks. Halifax did this,

for example, during the first two weeks of August 1936, when the

nonintervention policy was established in Spain; he did it again in

February 1937, when the capable British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir

Eric Phipps, was removed at Ribbentrop’s demand and replaced by Sir

Nevile Henderson; he did it again at the end of October 1937, when ar-

rangements were made for his visit to Hitler at Berchtesgaden in

November; and, finally, Halifax replaced Eden as Foreign Secretary

permanently in February 1938, when Eden refused to accept the

recognition of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in return for an Italian

promise to withdraw their forces from Spain. In this last case, Halifax

was already negotiating with Count Grandi in the Foreign Office

before Eden’s resignation statement was made. Eden and Halifax were

second cousins, both being great-grandsons of Lord Grey of the Reform

Bill of 1832, and Halifax’s daughter in 1936 married the half-brother of

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Mrs. Anthony Eden. Halifax and Eden were combined in the Foreign

Office in order that the former could counterbalance the “youthful im-

petuosities” of the latter, since these might jeopardize appeasement but

were regarded as necessary stage-settings to satisfy the collective-

security yearnings of public opinion in England. These yearnings were

made evident in the famous “Peace Ballot” of the League of Nations

Union, a maneuver put through by Lord Cecil as a countermove to the

Group’s slow undermining of collective security. This countermove,

which was regarded with extreme distaste by Lothian and others of the

inner circle, resulted, among other things, in an excessively polite

crossing of swords by Cecil and Lothian in the House of Lords on 16

March 1938.

During the period in which Halifax acted as a brake on Eden, he

held the sinecure Cabinet posts of Lord Privy Seal and Lord President

of the Council (1935-1938). He had been added to the Cabinet, after

his return from India in 1931, as President of the Board of Education,

but devoted most of his time from 1931 to 1935 in helping Simon and

Hoare put through the Government of India Act of 1935. In October

1933, the same group of Conservative members of Convocation who

had made Lord Milner Chancellor of Oxford University in 1925

selected Lord Irwin (Halifax), for the same position, in succession to

the late Lord Grey of Fallodon. He spent almost the whole month of

June 1934 in the active functions of this position, especially in drawing

up the list of recipients of honorary degrees. This list is very significant.

Among sixteen recipients of the Doctorate of Civil Law, we find the

following five names: Samuel Hoare, Maurice Hankey, W, G. S.

Adams, John Buchan, and Geoffrey Dawson.

We have indicated that Halifax’s influence on foreign policy was in-

creasingly important in the years 1934-1937. It was he who defended

Hoare in the House of Lords in December 1935, saying: “I have never

been one of those . . . who have thought that it was any part in this

dispute of the League to try to stop a war in Africa by starting a war in

Europe. It was Halifax who went with Eden to Paris in March 1936 to

the discussions of the Locarno Powers regarding the remilitarization of

the Rhineland. That his task at this meeting was to act as a brake on

Eden’s relatively large respect for the sanctity of international obliga-

tions is admitted by Lord Halifax’s authorized biographer. It was

Halifax, as we have seen, who inaugurated the nonintervention policy

in Spain in August 1936. And it was Halifax who opened the third and

last stage of appeasement in November 1937 by his visit to Hitler in

Berchtesgaden.

It is probable that the groundwork for Halifax’s visit to Hitler had

been laid by the earlier visits of Lords Lothian and Londonderry to the

same host, but our knowledge of these earlier events is too scanty to be

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certain. Of Halifax’s visit, the story is now clear, as a result of the

publication of the German Foreign Office memorandum on the subject

and Keith Feiling’s publication of some of the letters from Neville

Chamberlain to his sister. The visit was arranged by Halifax himself,

early in November 1937, at a time when he was Acting Foreign

Secretary, Eden being absent in Brussels at a meeting of signers of the

Nine-Power Pacific Treaty of 1922. As a result, Halifax had a long con-

versation with Hitler on 19 November 1937 in which, whatever may

have been Halifax’s intention, Hitler’s government became convinced

of three things: (a) that Britain regarded Germany as the chief bulwark

against communism in Europe; (b) that Britain was prepared to join a

Four Power agreement of France, Germany, Italy, and herself; and (c)

that Britain was prepared to allow Germany to liquidate Austria,

Czechoslovakia, and Poland if this could be done without provoking a

war into which the British Government, however unwillingly, would

be dragged in opposition to Germany. The German Foreign Ministry

memorandum on this conversation makes it perfectly clear that the

Germans did not misunderstand Halifax except, possibly, on the last

point. There they failed to see that if Germany made war, the British

Government would be forced into the war against Germany by public

opinion in England. The German diplomatic agents in London,

especially the Ambassador, Dirksen, saw this clearly, but the Govern-

ment in Berlin listened only to the blind and conceited ignorance of

Ribbentrop. As dictators themselves, unfamiliar with the British social

or constitutional systems, the German rulers assumed that the will-

ingness of the British Government to accept the liquidation of Austria,

Czechoslovakia, and Poland implied that the British Government

would never go to war to prevent this liquidation. They did not see that

the British Government might have to declare war to stay in office if

public opinion in Britain were sufficiently aroused. The British

Government saw this difficulty and as a last resort were prepared to

declare war but not to wage war on Germany. This distinction was not

clear to the Germans and was not accepted by the inner core of the

Milner Group. It was, however, accepted by the other elements in the

government, like Chamberlain himself, and by much of the second cir-

cle of the Milner Group, including Simon, Hoare, and probably

Halifax. It was this which resulted in the “phony war” from September

1939 to April 1940.

The memorandum on Halifax’s interview, quoting the Englishman

in the third person, says in part: 10

In spite of these difficulties [British public opinion, the English Church,

and the Labour Party] he and other members of the British Government

were fully aware that the Fuhrer had not only achieved a great deal inside

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Germany herself, but that, by destroying Communism in his country, he

had barred its road to Western Europe, and that Germany therefore

could rightly be regarded as a bulwark of the West against Bolshevism.

. . . After the ground had been prepared by an Anglo-German under-

standing, the four Great West-European Powers must jointly lay the

foundation for lasting peace in Europe. Under no conditions should any of

the four Powers remain outside this cooperation, or else there would be no

end to the present unstable situation. . . . Britons were realists and were

perhaps more than others convinced that the errors of the Versailles dic-

tate must be rectified. Britain always exercised her influence in this realis-

tic sense in the past. He pointed to Britain’s role with regard to the evac-

uation of the Rhineland ahead of the fixed time, the settlement of the

reparations problem, and the reoccupation of the Rhineland. ... He

therefore wanted to know the Fuhrer’s attitude toward the League of Na-

tions, as well as toward disarmament. All other questions could be

characterized as relating to changes in the European order, changes that

sooner or later would probably take place. To these questions belonged

Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. England was only interested that

any alterations should be effected by peaceful evolution, so as to avoid

methods which might cause far-reaching disturbances, which were not

desired either by the Fuhrer or by other countries. . . . Only one country,

Soviet Russia, stood to gain from a general conflict. All others were at

heart in favour of the consolidation of peace.

That this attitude was not Halifax’s personal argument but the point

of view of the government (and of the Milner Group) is perfectly clear.

On arrival, Halifax assured the Germans that the purposes of his visit

had been discussed and accepted by the Foreign Secretary (Eden) and

the Prime Minister. On 26 November 1937, one week after Halifax’s

conversation with Hitler, Chamberlain wrote to his sister that he

hoped to satisfy German colonial demands by giving them the Belgian

Congo and Angola in place of Tanganyika. He then added: “I don’t see

why we shouldn’t say to Germany, ‘Give us satisfactory assurances that

you won’t use force to deal with the Austrians and Czechoslovakians,

and we will give you similar assurances that we won’t use force to pre-

vent the changes you want if you can get them by peaceful means.’ ” n

It might be noted that when John W. Wheeler-Bennett, of Chatham

House and the Milner Group, wrote his book on Munich: Prologue to

Tragedy , published in 1948, he relegated the last quotation to a foot-

note and suppressed the references to the Belgian Congo and Angola.

This, however, was an essential part of the appeasement program of

the Chamberlain group. On 3 March 1938, the British Ambassador in

Berlin, Nevile Henderson, one of the Chamberlain group, tried to per-

suade Hitler to begin negotiations to carry out this plan but did not suc-

ceed. He repeated Lord Halifax’s statement that changes in Europe

were acceptable to Britain if accomplished without “the free play of

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forces/' and stated that he personally “had often expressed himself in

favour of the Anschluss." In the colonial field, he tried to interest Hitler

in an area in Africa between the 5th parallel and the Zambezi River,

but the Fiihrer insisted that his interest was restricted to restoration of

Germany’s 1914 colonies in Africa.

At the famous interview between Hitler and Schuschnigg in Febru-

ary 1938, Hitler told the Austrian that Lord Halifax agreed “with

everything he [Hitler] did with respect to Austria and the Sudeten Ger-

mans." This was reported in a “rush and strictly confidential” message

of 16 February 1938 from the American Consul General in Vienna to

Secretary of State Hull, a document released to the American press on

18 December 1948. Chamberlain and others made it perfectly clear,

both in public and in private, that Britain would not act to prevent

German occupation of Austria or Czechoslovakia. On 21 February

1938, during the Austrian crisis, John Simon said in the House of Com-

mons, “Great Britain has never given special guarantees regarding

Austrian independence.” Six days later, Chamberlain said: “We must

not try to delude small nations into thinking that they will be protected

by the League against aggression and acting accordingly when we

know that nothing of the kind can be expected." Five days after the

seizure of Austria on 12 March 1938, the Soviet Union sent Britain a

proposal for an international conference to stop aggression. The sug-

gestion was rejected at once, and, on 20 March 1938, Chamberlain

wrote to his sister: “I have therefore abandoned any idea of giving

guarantees to Czechoslovakia or to the French in connection with her

obligation to that country."

When Daladier, the French Premier, came to London at the end of

April 1938 to seek support for Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain refused

and apparently, if we can believe Feiling, put pressure on the French

to compel the Czechoslovaks to make an agreement with Hitler. On 1

May, Chamberlain wrote to his sister in this connection: “Fortunately

the papers have had no hint of how near we came to a break over

Czechoslovakia . "

In a long report of 10 July 1938, Ambassador Dirksen wrote to Rib-

bentrop as follows:

In England the Chamberlain-Halifax Cabinet is at the helm and the first

and most essential plank of its platform was and is agreement with the

totalitarian States. . . . This government displays with regard to Germany

the maximum understanding that could be displayed by any of the likely

combinations of British politicians. It possesses the inner-political strength

to carry out this task. It has come nearer to understanding the most essen-

tial points of the major demands advanced by Germany, with respect to

excluding the Soviet Union from the decision of the destinies of Europe,

the League of Nations likewise, and the advisability of bilateral negotia-

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tions and treaties. It is displaying increasing understanding of Germany’s

demands in the Sudeten German question. It would be prepared to make

great sacrifices to meet Germany’s other just demands — on the one condi-

tion that it is endeavoured to achieve these ends by peaceful means. If

Germany should resort to military means to achieve these ends, England

would without the slightest doubt go to war on the side of France.

This point of view was quite acceptable to the Milner Group. In the

leading article for December 1937, The Round Table examined the

German question at some length. In regard to the colonial problem, it

contrasted two points of view, giving greater emphasis to ‘’those who

now feel that it was a mistake to have deprived Germany of all her

colonies in 1918, and that Great Britain should contribute her share

towards finding a colonial area — say, in central west Africa — which

could be transferred to Germany under mandate. But they, too, make

it a condition that colonial revision should be part of a final all-round

settlement with Germany, and that the colonies should not be used as

leverage for fresh demands or as strategic bases.” Later it said: “A ma-

jority would regard the abandonment of France’s eastern alliances as a

price well worth paying for lasting peace and the return of Germany to

the League.” It welcomed German rearmament, since this would force

revision of the evil Treaty of Versailles. In this connection, the same ar-

ticle said: “The pressure of rearmament and the events of the last few

years have at least had this effect, that the refusal of those who have

benefited most by the peace settlement to consider any kind of change

is rapidly disappearing; for forcible changes which they have been

unable to prevent have already taken place, and further changes will

certainly follow, especially in eastern Europe, unless they are prepared

to fight a very formidable war to prevent them.” The article rejected

such a war on the grounds that its “outcome is uncertain” and it “would

entail objectionable domestic disasters.” In adding up the balance of

military forces in such a war, the article significantly omitted all men-

tion of Czechoslovakia, whose forces at that time were considerably

stronger than Germany’s. It placed the French Army at two-thirds the

size of Germany’s (which was untrue) and Britain at no more than two

or three divisions. The point of view of The Round Table was not iden-

tical with that of the Chamberlain group (which intersected, through

common members, with the second circle of the Milner Group). The

Round Table , speaking for the inner circle of the Milner Group, was

not nearly so anti-Russian as the Chamberlain group. Accordingly, it

never regarded a collision between Nazi Germany and the Soviet

Union as a practical solution of Europe’s problems. It did accept the

idea of a four-power pact to exclude Russia from Europe, but it was not

willing to allow Germany to expand eastward as she wished. The

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Milner Group’s misunderstanding of the Nazi system and of Germany

itself was so great that they envisioned a stable situation in which

Europe was dominated by a four-power pact, with Soviet Russia on

one side and an Oceanic bloc of the British Commonwealth and the

United States on the other. The Group insisted on rapid British rear-

mament and the building up of the Oceanic System because they had a

lower opinion of Britain’s own powers than did the Chamberlain group

(this idea was derived from Milner) and they were not prepared to

allow Germany to go eastward indefinitely in the hope she would be

satisfied by a war with Russia. As we shall see, the policies of the

Milner Group and the Chamberlain group went jointly forward, with

slight shifts of emphasis, until March 1939, when the Group began to

disintegrate.

In the same article of December 1937 The Round Table said that the

democracies must

make clear the point at which they are prepared to risk war rather than

retreat. . . . During the last year or two The Round Table has criticized

the popular dogma of “collective security’’ on two main grounds: that it

meant fighting to maintain an out-of-date settlement, and that security

depended, not merely on public opinion but on ability to bring effective

military superiority to bear at the critical point. On the other hand, The

Round Table is resolutely in favour of adequate defensive armaments and

of a vigorous and if necessary defiant foreign policy at those points where

we are sure that . . . we can bring superior power effectively to bear. And

for this purpose we consider that the nations of the Commonwealth

should not only act together themselves, but should also work in the

closest cooperation with all the democracies, especially the United States.

In February 1938, Lord Lothian, “leader” of the Group, spoke in the

House of Lords in support of appeasement. This extraordinary speech

was delivered in defense of the retiring of Sir Robert Vansittart. Sir

Robert, as Permanent Under Secretary in the Foreign Office from 1930

to 1938, was a constant thorn in the side of the appeasers. The opening

of the third stage of appeasement at the end of 1937 made it necessary

to get rid of him and his objections to their policy. Accordingly, he was

“promoted” to the newly created post of Chief Diplomatic Adviser, and

the Under Secretaryship was given to Sir Alexander Cadogan of the

Cecil Bloc. This action led to a debate in February 1938. Lord Lothian

intervened to insist that Sir Robert’s new role would not be parallel to

that of the new Under Secretary but was restricted to advising only on

“matters specifically referred to him by the Secretary of State, and he is

no longer responsible for the day to day work of the Office.” From this

point, Lothian launched into a long attack on the League of Nations,

followed by a defense of Germany. In regard to the former, he ex-

pressed satisfaction that

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the most dangerous aspect of the League of Nations — namely, the inter-

pretation which has habitually been put upon it by the League of Nations

Union in this country — is pretty well dead. ... It seems to me that that

[interpretation] is inevitably going to turn the League of Nations itself not

into an instrument for maintaining peace but into an instrument for

making war. That was not the original concept of the League at all. The

original concept of the League definitely left the way open for alteration

after six months’ examination even if it meant war. ... I think the League

of Nations now, at last, is going to have a chance of recovery, for the

reason that this particular interpretation, which has been its besetting sin,

the one thing which has led to its failure from the beginning, is now dead.

. . . Therefore I am more hopeful of the League today than I have been for

a good long time, because it has ceased to be an instrument to try to per-

petuate the status quo.

When Lothian turned to the problem of Germany, his arguments

became even more ridiculous. “The fundamental problem of the world

today is still the problem of Germany. . . . Why is Germany the issue?

In my view the fundamental reason is that at no time in the years after

1919 has the rest of the world been willing to concede any substantial

justice or reasonable understanding to Germany, either when she was a

Republic or since she has become a Totalitarian State.” There followed

a long attack on the war guilt thesis as applied to 1914, or even to 1870.

This thesis Lothian called “propaganda,” and from this false propa-

ganda he traced all the cruel treatment given Germany since 1919. He

disapproved of the Nazi Government s methods inside Germany, but

added: “I do not think there is any doubt that modern Germany is the

result of the policy of the United States, whom I cannot absolve from

responsibility, of ourselves, and of France; and in this matter the

responsibility of the United States and ourselves is more than that of

France for defaulting on the obligation to give France some security so

that she could allow Germany to recover.”

It seems impossible that this could be the same man who was calling

for the extirpation of “Prussianism” in 1908-1918 and who was to call

for the same crusade as Ambassador in Washington in 1940.

In this same speech Lothian laid down what might be called the

Milner Group solution to this German problem, 1938 model:

There is only one solution to this problem. You have got to combine col-

lective justice with collective security. You have got to give remedies to

those nations which are entitled to them. . . . You have got to be willing to

concede to them — and one of them is Germany — alterations in the status

quo and you have also got to incur obligations with other like-minded

nations to resist changes w r hich go beyond what impartial justice regards

as fair. . . . When we are willing to admit that we are ourselves largely re-

sponsible for the tragedy that confronts us, for the fact that Germany is

the center of the world problem, and are willing to concede to Germany

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what a fair-minded and impartial authority would say was a fair solution

of her problem, and if, in addition to that, we are willing to say, “We will

meet aggression to secure more than this with the only means in which it

can be met,” then I consider there is hope for the world.

The fallacy in all of this rests on the fact that every concession to

Germany made her stronger, with no guarantee that she ever would

stop; and if, after years of concessions, she refused to stop, she might be

too strong to be compelled to do so. The Milner Group thesis was based

not only on ignorance but also on logical deficiencies. The program of

the Chamberlain group was at least more consistent, since it involved

no effort to stop Germany at any point but aimed to solve the German

problem by driving it into Russia. Such an “immoral” solution could

not be acceptable to the Milner Group, so they should have had sense

enough to stop Germany while she was weak.

Shortly after this speech, on 24 February 1938, Lothian intervened

in the debate on Eden’s resignation to reject Eden’s point of view and

defend Chamberlain’s. He rejected the idea that Britain should commit

herself to support Czechoslovakia against Germany and criticized the

President of Czechoslovakia for his failure to make concessions to

Republican Germany. He then repeated his speech of the week before,

the chief addition being a defense of the German remilitarization of the

Rhineland in March 1936.

Four days after the seizure of Austria, Lothian again advised against

any new pledges to anyone and demanded rearmament and national

service. In regard to rearmament he said: “Unpreparedness and the

belief that you are unwilling to accept that challenge or that you do not

mean what you say, does contribute to war. That will remain to be a

condition of the world until the nations are willing in some way to pool

their sovereignty in a common federation,”

All of these ideas of Lothian’s were explictly restated by him in a

speech at Chatham House on 24 March 1938. He refuted the “war-guilt

thesis,” condemned the Versailles settlement as “a very stiff Peace

Treaty,” insisted on revision, blamed all the disasters of Europe on

America’s withdrawal from the League in 1920, called the Hitler

government a temporary “unnatural pathological state” solely caused

by the stiff treaty and the failure to revise it, defended the remilitariza-

tion of the Rhineland and the seizure of Austria, condemned

Czechoslovakia as “almost the only racially heterogeneous State left in

Europe,” praised “nonintervention” in Spain, praised Chamberlain’s

statement of the same day refusing to promise support to

Czechoslovakia, and demanded “national service” as insurance that

Hitler would not continue to use force after he obtained what he

deserved in justice.

These arguments of Lothian’s were all supported by the Group in

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other ways. The Round Table in its leading articles of March 1938,

September 1938, and March 1939 demanded "national service.” In the

leading article of June 1938 it repeated all Lothian’s arguments in

somewhat different words. These arguments could be summed up in

the slogan "appeasement and rearmament.” Then it added:

Until the nations can be brought to the two principles of collective secu-

rity already described, the best security for peace is that the world should

be divided into zones within each of which one of the great armed

Powers, or a group of them, is clearly preponderant, and in which there-

fore other Powers do not seek to interfere. Then there may be peace for a

time. The peace of the 19th century rested on the fact that the supremacy

of the British Navy kept the whole oceanic area free from general war.

. . . The vital question now arises whether in that same zone, to which

France and Scandinavia must be added, it is not possible, despite the im-

mense armaments of central Europe, Russia, and the Far East, for the

democracies to create security, stability, and peace in which liberal insti-

tutions can survive. The oceanic zone in fact constitutes the one part of the

world in which it is possible today to realise the ideals of the League of

Nations.

From this point onward (early 1938), the Milner Group increasingly

emphasized the necessity for building up this Oceanic bloc. In England

the basic propaganda work was done through The Round Table and

Lionel Curtis, while in the United States it was done through the

Rhodes Scholarship organization, especially through Clarence Streit

and Frank Aydelotte. In England, Curtis wrote a series of books and

articles advocating a new federal organization built around the

English-speaking countries. The chief work of this nature was his

Civitas Dei , which appeared in three volumes in 1934-1937. A one-

volume edition was issued in 1938, with the title The Commonwealth

of God. The first two volumes of this work are nothing more than a

rehash and expansion of the older work The Commonwealth of Nations

(1916). By a superficial and frequently erroneous rewriting of world

history, the author sought to review the evolution of the "com-

monwealth” idea and to show that all of history leads to its fulfillment

and achievement in federation. Ultimately, this federation will be

worldwide, but en route it must pass through stages, of which the chief

is federation of the English-speakingpeoples. Writing early in 1937, he

advocated that the League of Nations be destroyed by the mass resigna-

tion of the British democracies. These should then take the initiative in

forming a new league, also at Geneva, which would have no power to

enforce anything but would merely form a kind of international con-

ference. Since it would be foolish to expect any federation to evolve

from any such organization as this, a parallel, but quite separate, effort

should be made to create an international commonwealth, based on

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the example of the United States in 1788. This international com-

monwealth would differ from the League of Nations in that its

members would yield up part of their sovereignty, and the central

organization would function directly on individuals and not merely on

states. This international commonwealth would be formed, at first,

only of those states that have evolved furthest in the direction of ob-

taining a commonwealth form of government for themselves. It will be

recalled that this restriction on membership was what Curtis had

originally advocated for the League of Nations in The Round Table of

December 1918. According to Curtis, the movement toward the Com-

monwealth of God can begin by the union of any two national com-

monwealths, no matter how small. He suggested New Zealand and

Australia, or these two and Great Britain. Then the international com-

monwealth could be expanded to include India, Egypt, Holland,

Belgium, Scandinavia, France, Canada, the United States, and

Ireland. That the chief obstacle to this union was to be found in men's

minds was perfectly clear to Curtis. To overcome this obstacle, he put

his faith in propaganda, and the chief instruments of that propaganda,

he said, must be the churches and the universities. He said nothing

about the Milner Group, but, considering Curtis's position in this

Group and that Lothian and others agreed with him, it is not surpris-

ing that the chief source of this propaganda is to be found in those

agencies controlled by the Group. 12

In the United States, the chief source of this propaganda was the

organization known as Union Now, which was an offshoot of the

Rhodes Scholarship network. The publicized originator of the idea was

Clarence Streit, Rhodes Scholar at Oxford in 1920 and League of Na-

tions correspondent of The New York Times in 1929-1938. Mr. Streit s

plan, which was very similar to Curtis's, except that it included fifteen

countries to begin with, was first made public at a series of three lec-

tures at Swarthmore College in February 1939. Almost simultaneously

his book, Union Now, was launched and received wide publicity.

Before we look at that, we might mention that at the time the president

of Swarthmore College was Frank Aydelotte, the most important

member of the Milner Group in the United States since the death of

George Louis Beer. Dr. Aydelotte was one of the original Rhodes

Scholars, attending Brasenose in 1905-1907. He was president of

Swarthmore from 1921 to 1940; has been American secretary to the

Rhodes Trustees since 1918; has been president of the Association of

American Rhodes Scholars since 1930; has been a trustee of the

Carnegie Foundation since 1922; and was a member of the Council on

Foreign Relations for many years. In 1937, along with three other

members of the Milner Group, he received from Oxford (and Lord

Halifax) the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law. The other three

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recipients who were members of the Group were Brand, Ormsby-

Gore, and Sir Herbert Baker, the famous architect.

As soon as Streit’s book was published, it was hailed by Lord Lothian

in an interview with the press. Shortly afterwards, Lothian gave it a

favorable review in the Christian Science Monitor of 6 May 1939. The

book was distributed to educational institutions in various places by

the Carnegie Foundation and was greeted in the June 1939 issue of The

Round Table as “the only way,” This article said: “There is, indeed, no

other cure. ... In The Commonwealth of God Mr. Lionel Curtis

showed how history and religion pointed down the same path. It is one

of the great merits of Mr. Streit’s book that he translates the general

theme into a concrete plan, which he presents, not for the indefinite

hereafter, but for our own generation, now” In the September 1939

issue, in an article headed “Union: Oceanic or Continental,” The

Round Table contrasted Streit’s plan with that for European union of-

fered by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi and gave the arguments for both.

While all this was going on, the remorseless wheels of appeasement

were grinding out of existence one country after another. The fatal loss

was Czechoslovakia. This disaster was engineered by Chamberlain

with the full cooperation of the Milner Group. The details do not con-

cern us here, but it should be mentioned that the dispute arose over the

position of the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovak state, and as

late as 15 September 1938 was still being expressed in those terms. Up

to that day, Hitler had made no demand to annex the Sudeten area,

although on 12 September he had for the first time asked for “self-

determination” for the Sudetens. Konrad Henlein, Hitler’s agent in

Czechoslovakia and leader of the Sudeten Germans, expressed no

desire “to go back to the Reich” until after 12 September. Who, then,

first demanded frontier rectification in favor of Germany?

Chamberlain did so privately on 10 May 1938, and the Milner Group

did so publicly on 7 September 1938. The Chamberlain suggestion was

made by one of those “calculated indiscretions” of which he was so

fond, at an “off-the-record” meeting with certain Canadian and

American newspaper reporters at a luncheon arranged by Lady Astor

and held at her London house. On this occasion Chamberlain spoke of

his plans for a four-power pact to exclude Russia from Europe and the

possibility of frontier revisions in favor of Germany to settle the

Sudeten issue. When the news leaked out, as it was bound to do,

Chamberlain was questioned in Commons by Geoffrey Mander on 20

June but refused to answer, calling his questioner a troublemaker. This

answer was criticized by Sir Archibald Sinclair the following day, but

he received no better treatment. Lady Astor, however, interjected, “I

would like to say that there is not a word of truth in it.” By 27 June,

however, she had a change of heart and stated: “I never had any inten-

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tion of denying that the Prime Minister had attended a luncheon at my

house. The Prime Minister did so attend, the object being to enable

some American journalists who had not previously met him to do so

privately and informally, and thus to make his acquaintance.”

The second suggestion for revision of frontiers also had an Astor

flavor, since it appeared as a leading article in The Times on 7

September 1938. The outraged cries of protest from all sides which

greeted this suggestion made it clear that further softening up of the

British public was urgently necessary before it would be safe to hand

over Czechoslovakia to Hitler. This was done in the war-scare of

September 15-28 in London. That this war-scare was fraudulent and

that Lord Halifax was deeply involved in its creation is now clear. All

the evidence cannot be given here. There is no evidence whatever that

the Chamberlain government intended to fight over Czechoslovakia

unless this was the only alternative to falling from office. Even at the

height of the crisis, when all ways out without war seemed closed (27

September), Chamberlain showed what he thought of the case by

telling the British people over the BBC that the issue was “a quarrel in a

far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.”

To frighten the British people, the British government circulated

stories about the strength of the German Army and Air Force which

were greatly exaggerated; they implied that Germany would use

poison gas at once and from the air, although this was quite untrue;

they distributed gas masks and madly built trenches in London parks,

although the former were needless and the latter worthless. On 23

September, the British advised the Czechoslovakian government to

mobilize, although they had previously forbidden it. This was done to

increase the crisis in London, and the fact that Goring s air force al-

lowed it to go through without attack indicates his belief that Germany

did not need to fight. In fact, Goring told the French Ambassador on

12 September that he had positive assurance that Britain would not

fight. As early as 1 September 1938, Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain’s

alter ego, told the German charge d’affaires in London, Theodor

Kordt, “If we two, Great Britain and Germany, come to agreement

regarding the settlement of the Czech problem, we shall simply brush

aside the resistance that France or Czechoslovakia herself may offer to

the decision.”

The fraudulent nature of the Munich crisis appears throughout its

history. We might mention the following: (1) the suspicious fashion in

which the Runciman Mission was sent to Czechoslovakia, immediately

after Hitler’s aide, Captain Wiedemann, visited Halifax at the latter’s

home (not the Foreign Office) on 18 July 1938, and with the statement,

which was untrue, that it was being sent at the desire of the

Czechoslovaks; 13 (2) the fact that Runciman in Czechoslovakia spent

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most of his time with the Sudetens and put pressure on the government

to make one concession after another to Henlein, when it was perfectly

clear that Henlein did not want a settlement; (3) the fact that

Runciman wrote to Hitler on 2 September that he would have a plan

for a settlement by 15 September; (4) the fact that this Runciman plan

was practically the same as the Munich settlement finally adopted; (5)

the fact that Chamberlain made the war-scare over the Godesberg pro-

posals and, after making a settlement at Munich, made no effort to en-

force those provisions by which Munich differed from Godesberg, but

on the contrary allowed the Germans to take what they wished in

Czechoslovakia as they wished; (6) the fact that the government did all

it could to exclude Russia from the settlement, although Russia was

allied to both Czechoslovakia and France; (7) the fact that the govern-

ment and the French government tried to spread the belief that Russia

would not honor these commitments, although all the evidence in-

dicated that she would; (8) the fact that Chamberlain had a tete-a-tete

conference with Hitler at Berchtesgaden on 15 September, which

lasted for three hours, and at which only Hitler's private interpreter

was present as a third party, and that this was repeated at Godesberg

on 23 September; (9) the fact that the Czechoslovaks were forced to

yield to Chamberlain’s settlement under pressure of ultimatums from

both France and Britain, a fact that was concealed from the British

people by omitting a crucial document from the White Paper of 28

September 1938 (Cmd. 5847).

Two additional points, concerned with the degree of German ar-

maments and the position of the anti-Hitler resistance within Ger-

many, require further elucidation. For years before June 1938, the

government had insisted that British rearming was progressing in a

satisfactory fashion. Churchill and others had questioned this and had

produced figures on German rearmament to prove that Britain’s own

progress in this field was inadequate. These figures were denied by the

government, and their own accomplishments were defended. In 1937

and in 1938, Churchill had clashed with Baldwin and Chamberlain on

this issue. As late as March 1938, Chamberlain said that British ar-

maments were such as to make her an “almost terrifying power ... on

the opinion of the world.” But as the year went on, the government

adopted a quite different attitude. In order to persuade public opinion

that it was necessary to yield to Germany, the Government pretended

that its armaments were quite inadequate in comparison with Ger-

many.” We now know, thanks to the captured papers of the German

Ministry of War, that this was a gross exaggeration. These papers were

studied by Major General C. F. Robinson of the United States Army,

and analyzed in a report which he submitted to the Secretary of War in

October 1947. This document, entitled Foreign Logistical Organiza -

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tions and Methods , shows that all of the accepted estimates of German

rearmament in the period 1933-1939 were gross exaggerations. From

1936 to the outbreak of war, German aircraft production was not

raised, but averaged 425 planes a month. Her tank production was low

and even in 1939 was less than Britain’s. In the first 9 months of 1939,

Germany produced only 50 tanks a month; in the last 4 months of

1939, in wartime, Germany produced 247 “tanks and self-propelled

guns,” compared to a British production of 314 tanks in the same

period. At the time of the Munich crisis, Germany had 35 infantry and

4 motorized divisions, none of them fully manned or equipped. This

was no more than Czechoslovakia had alone. Moreover, the Czech

Army was better trained, had far better equipment, and had better

morale and better fortifications. As an example of this point, we might

mention that the Czech tank was of 38 tons, while the Germans, before

1938, had no tank over 10 tons. During 1938 they brought into produc-

tion the Mark III tank of less than 20 tons, and in 1939 brought into

production the Mark IV of 23 tons. Up to September 1939, the German

Army had obtained only 300 tanks of the Mark III and Mark IV types

together. Most of these were delivered during 1939. In comparison, the

Germans captured in Czechoslovakia, in March 1939, 469 of the

superior Czech tanks. At the same time they captured 1500 planes (of

which 500 were first-line), 43,000 machineguns, and over 1 million

rifles. These figures are comparable with what Germany had at

Munich, and at that time, if the British government had desired, Ger-

many would have been facing France, Britain, and Russia, as well as

Czechoslovakia.

It should perhaps be mentioned that up to September 1939 the Ger-

man Navy had acquired only 53 submarines during the Hitler regime.

No economic mobilization for war had been made and no reserve

stocks built up. When the war began, in September 1939, Germany

had ammunition for 6 weeks, and the air force had bombs for 3 months

at the rate of expenditure experienced during the Polish campaign. At

that time the Air Force consisted of 1000 bombers and 1050 fighters. In

contrast, the British air program of May 1938 planned to provide Brit-

ain with a first-line force of 2370 planes; this program was stepped up

in 1939. Under it, Britain produced almost 3000 military planes in

1938 and about 8000 in 1939. The German figures for planes produced

in these 2 years are 5235 and 8295, but these are figures for all planes

produced in the country, including civil as well as military airplanes.

As Hanson Baldwin put it, “Up until 1940, at least, Germany’s produc-

tion did not markedly outstrip Britain’s.” It might also be mentioned

that British combat planes were of better quality.

We have no way of knowing if the Chamberlain government knew

these facts. It should have known them. At the least, it should not have

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deluged its own people with untrue stories about German arms. Sur-

prisingly, the British have generally refused to modify these stories,

and, in order to perpetuate the fable about the necessity for the Munich

surrender, they have continued to repeat the untrue propaganda stories

of 1937-1939 regarding German armaments. This is as true of the

critics of Munich as of its defenders. Both have adopted the version that

Britain yielded to superior and overwhelming force at Munich. They

have done this even though this story is untrue and they are in a posi-

tion to know that it is untrue. For example, Winston Churchill, in his

war memoirs, repeats the old stories about German rearmament,

although he has been writing two years or more after the Reichswehr

archives were captured. For this he was criticized by Hanson Baldwin

in The New York Times of 9 May 1948. In his recent book, Munich:

Prologue to Tragedy , J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, the British editor of the

captured papers of the German Foreign Ministry, accepts the old prop-

aganda tales of German rearmament as axiomatic, and accordingly

does not even discuss the subject. He merely tells his readers: “By the

close of 1937 Germany’s preparedness for war was complete. The

preference for guns rather than for butter had brought forth results.

Her rearmament had reached its apogee and could hold that peak level

for a certain time. Her economy was geared to a strict regime of ration-

ing and output on a war level.” None of this was true, and Mr.

Wheeler-Bennett should have examined the evidence. If he had, he

would not have been so severe on what he calls Professor Frederick

Schumann’s “fantastic theory of the ‘Pre-Munich Plot.’ ” 14

The last piece of evidence which we might mention to support the

theory — not of a plot, perhaps, but that the Munich surrender was un-

necessary and took place because Chamberlain and his associates

wanted to dismember Czechoslovakia — is even more incriminating. As

a result of the inadequate rearmament of Germany, a group of conser-

vatives within the regime formed a plot to liquidate Hitler and his close

supporters if it appeared that his policy in Czechoslovakia would result

in war. This group, chiefly army officers, included men on the highest

level of government. In the group were Colonel General Ludwig Beck

(Chief of the General Staff), Field Marshal von Witzleben, General

Georg Thomas, Carl Friedrich Goerdeler (Mayor of Leipzig in

1930-1936), Ulrich von Hassell (ex- Ambassador to Italy), Johannes

Popitz (Prussian Minister of Finance), and Paul Schmidt (Hitler’s

private interpreter). This group formed a plot to kill Hitler and remove

the Nazis from power. The date was set eventually for 28 September

1938. Lord Halifax, on 5 September 1938, was informed of the plot by

Theodore Kordt, the German charge d’affaires in London, whose

brother, Erich Kordt, chief of Ribbentrop’s office in the Foreign

Ministry, was one of the conspirators. The message which Kordt gave

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to Halifax begged the British government to stand fast with

Czechoslovakia in the Sudeten crisis and to make perfectly clear that

Britain would go to war if Germany violated Czechoslovakian ter-

ritory. The plot was canceled at noon on 28 September, when the news

reached Berlin that Chamberlain was going to Munich. It was this plot

which eventually, after many false starts, reached fruition in the

attempt to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944.

There can be little doubt that the Milner Group knew of these anti-

Nazi plots within Germany. Several of the plotters were former Rhodes

Scholars and were in touch with members of the inner circle of the

Milner Group in the period up to 1943, if not later. One of the leaders

of the anti-Hitler plotters in Germany, Helmuth von Moltke, was prob-

ably a member of the Milner Group as well as intellectual leader of

the conspirators in Germany. Count von Moltke was the son of the

German commander of 1914 and grandnephew of the German com-

mander of 1870. His mother, Dorothy Rose-Innes, was the daughter of

Sir James Rose-Innes, whom Milner made Chief Justice of the

Transvaal in 1902. Sir James was a supporter of Rhodes and had been

Attorney General in Rhodes's ministry in 1890. He was Chief Justice of

South Africa in 1914-1927 and was always close to the Milner Group.

The von Moltkes were Christian Scientists, and Dorothy, as Countess

von Moltke after 1905, was one of the persons who translated Mary

Baker Eddy’s Science and Health into German. The younger Helmuth,

son of Dorothy, and Count von Moltke after his father’s death in 1938,

was openly anti-Nazi and came to England in 1934 to join the English

bar. He visited Lionel Curtis, at his mother’s suggestion, and “was

made a member of the family, rooms in Duke of York Street being put

at his disposal, and Kidlington and All Souls thrown open to him at

week-ends; the opportunities of contact which these brought with

them were exploited to the full. . . . He was often in England until the

summer of 1939, and in 1937 visited South Africa and the grandparents

there to whom he was deeply attached.” This quotation, from The

Round Table for June 1946, makes perfectly clear to those who can

read between the lines that Moltke became a member of the Milner

Group. It might be added that Curtis also visited the Rose-Innes family

in South Africa while Helmuth was there in 1937.

Von Moltke kept in close contact with both Curtis and Lothian even

after the war began in 1939. He was made adviser on international law

to the Supreme Command of the German Armed Forces (OKW) in

1939 and retained this position until his arrest in 1944. The intellectual

leader of the German Underground, he was the inspiration and ad-

dressee of Dorothy Thompson’s book Listen , Hans. He was the center

of a group of plotters called the “Kreisau Circle,” named after his estate

in Silesia. After his execution by the Nazis in January 1945, his connec-

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tion with the Milner Group was revealed, to those able to interpret the

evidence, in the June 1946 issue of The Round Table. This article ex-

tolled Moltke and reprinted a number of his letters. The same article,

with an additional letter, was published as a pamphlet in Johannes-

burg in 1947. 15

Another plotter who appears to be close to the Milner Group was

Adam von Trott zu Solz, a Rhodes Scholar who went to the Far East on

a mission for the Rhodes Trust in 1936 and was in frequent contact

with the Institute of Pacific Relations in the period 1936-1939. He

seems to have attended a meeting of the Pacific Council in New York

late in 1939, coming from Germany, by way of Gibraltar, after the

war began. He remained in contact with the democratic countries until

arrested and executed by the Nazis in 1944. It is not without

significance that one of the chief projects which the plotters hoped to

further in post-Hitler German foreign policy was a “federation of

Europe in a commonwealth not unlike the British Empire.” 16

All of this evidence and much more would seem to support the

theory of a “Munich plot” — that is, the theory that the British govern-

ment had no intention or desire to save Czechoslovakia in 1938 and was

willing or even eager to see it partitioned by Hitler, and only staged the

war scare of September in order to make the British people accept this

abuse of honor and sacrifice of Britain’s international position. The ef-

forts which the British government made after Munich to conceal the

facts of that affair would support this interpretation. The chief ques-

tion, from our point of view, lies in the degree to which the Milner

Group were involved in this “plot.” There can be no doubt that the

Chamberlain group was the chief factor in the scheme. There is also no

doubt that various members of the Milner Group second circle, who

were close to the Chamberlain group, were involved. The position of

the inner core of the Milner Group is not conclusively established, but

there is no evidence that they were not involved and a certain amount

of evidence that they were involved.

Among this latter evidence is the fact that the inner core of the

Group did not object to or protest against the partition of

Czechoslovakia, although they did use the methods by which Hitler

had obtained his goal as an argument in support of their pet plan for

national service. They prepared the ground for the Munich surrender

both in The Times and in The Round Table. In the June 1938 issue of

the latter, we read: “Czechoslovakia is apparently the danger spot of

the next few months. It will require high statesmanship on all sides to

find a peaceful and stable solution of the minorities problem. The

critical question for the next six months is whether the four great

Powers represented by the Franco-British entente and the Rom e-Berlin

axis can make up their minds that they will not go to war with one

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another and that they must settle outstanding problems by agreement

together.” In this statement, three implications are of almost equal im-

portance. These are the time limit of “six months,” the exclusion of

both Czechoslovakia and Russia from the “agreement,” and the ap-

proval of the four-power pact.

In the September 1938 issue of The Round Table, published on the

eve of Munich, we are told: “It is one thing to be able, in the end, to

win a war. It is a far better thing to be able to prevent a war by a

readiness for just dealing combined with resolute strength when in-

justice is threatened.” Here, as always before 1939, The Round Table

by “justice” meant appeasement of Germany.

After the dreadful deed was done. The Round Table had not a word

of regret and hardly a kind word for the great sacrifice of the Czechs or

for the magnificent demonstration of restraint which they had given

the world. In fact, the leading article in the December 1938 issue of

The Round Table began with a severe criticism of Czechoslovakia for

failure to reconcile her minorities, for failure to achieve economic

cooperation with her neighbors, and for failure to welcome a Hapsburg

restoration. From that point on, the article was honest. While accept-

ing Munich, it regarded it solely as a surrender to German power and

rejected the arguments that it was done by negotiation, that it was a

question of self-determination or minority rights, or that Munich was

any better or more lenient than the Godesberg demands. The following

article in the same issue, also on Czechoslovakia, is a tissue of untruths

except for the statement that there never was any real Sudeten issue,

since the whole thing was a fraudulent creation engineered from Ger-

many. Otherwise the article declares categorically: (1) that Czecho-

slovakia could not have stood up against Hitler more than two or three

weeks; (2) that no opposition of importance to Hitler existed in

Germany (“A good deal has been written about the opposition of the

military commanders. But in fact it does not and never did exist.”); (3)

“There is no such thing as a conservative opposition in Germany.” In

the middle of such statements as these, one ray of sanity shines like a

light: in a single sentence, The Round Table tossed onto the scrap heap

its basic argument in support of appeasement, namely the “injustices

of Versailles.” The sentence reads: “It is not Versailles but defeat that is

the essential German grievance against the western Powers.” This

sentence should have been printed in gold letters in the Foreign Office

in London in 1919 and read daily thereafter.

It is worthy of note that this issue of The Round Table discussed the

Czech crisis in two articles of twenty-seven pages and had only one

sentence on Russia. This sentence spoke of the weakness of Russia,

where “a new Tiberius had destroyed the morale and the material effi-

ciency of the Russian Army.” However, in a separate article, dealing

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largely with Soviet-German relations, we find the significant

sentences: “The Western democracies appear to be framing their

policies on the principle of ‘letting Germany go east.’. . . [Russia faces]

the fundamental need of preventing a hostile coalition of the great

Powers of western Europe.”

The final judgment of the Milner Group on the Munich surrender

could probably be found in the December 1938 issue of The Round

Table, where we read the following: “The nation as a whole is acutely

aware that Anglo-French predominance, resulting from victory in the

great war, is now a matter of history, that the conception of an interna-

tional society has foundered because the principle of the rule of law

was prostituted to perpetuate an impossible inequality. . . . The terms

of the Versailles Treaty might have been upheld for some time longer

by the consistent use of military power — notably when Germany

remilitarized the Rhineland zone — but it was illogical to expect a

defeated and humiliated foe to accept inferiority as the immutable con-

comitant of a nobler world, and it was immoral to try to build the City

of God on lopsided foundations.”

As late as the March 1939 issue, The Round Table point of view re-

mained unchanged. At that time it said: “The policy of appeasement,

which Mr. Chamberlain represents and which he brought to what

seemed to be its most triumphant moment at Munich, was the only

possible policy on which the public opinion of the different nations of

the Commonwealth could have been unified. It had already been

unanimously approved in general terms at the Imperial Conference of

1937.”

The German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939

marked the turning point for the Milner Group, but not for the

Chamberlain group. In the June 1939 issue, the leading article of The

Round Table was entitled “From Appeasement to Grand Alliance.”

Without expressing any regrets about the past, which it regarded as

embodying the only possible policy, it rejected appeasement in the

future. It demanded a “grand alliance” of Poland, Rumania, France,

Britain, and others. Only one sentence referred to Russia; it said:

“Negotiations to include Soviet Russia in the system are continuing.”

Most of the article justified the previous policy as inevitable in a world

of sovereign states. Until federation abolishes sovereignty and creates a

true world government amenable to public opinion, the nations will

continue to live in anarchy, whatever their contractual obligations

may be; and under conditions of anarchy it is power and not public

opinion that counts. . . .The fundamental, though not the only, ex-

planation of the tragic history of the last eight years is to be found in

the failure of the English-speaking democracies to realize that they

could prevent aggression only by unity and by being strongly armed

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enough to resist it wherever it was attempted.”

This point of view had been expressed earlier, in the House of Lords,

by Lothian and Astor. On 12 April 1939, the former said:

One of Herr Hitler’s great advantages has been that, for very long, what

he sought a great many people all over the world felt was not unreason-

able, whatever they may have thought of his methods. But that justifica-

tion has completely and absolutely disappeared in the last three months.

It began to disappear in my mind at the Godesberg Conference. ... I

think the right answer to the situation is what Mr. Churchill has advo-

cated elsewhere, a grand alliance of all those nations whose interest is

paramountly concerned with the maintenance of their own status-quo.

But in my view if you are going to do that you have got to have a grand

alliance which will function not only in the West of Europe but also in the

East. I agree with what my noble friend Lord Snell has just said that in

that Eastern alliance Russia may be absolutely vital. . . . Nobody will sus-

pect me of any ideological sympathy with Russia or Communism. I have

even less ideological sympathy with Soviet Russia than I had with the

Czarist Russia. But in resisting aggression it is power alone that counts.

He then went on to advocate national service and was vigorously sup-

ported by Lord Astor, both in regard to this and in regard to the

necessity of bringing Russia into the “grand alliance.”

From this point onward, the course of the Milner Group was more

rigid against Germany. This appeared chiefly as an increased emphasis

on rearmament and national service, policies which the Group had

been supporting for a long time. Unlike the Chamberlain group, they

learned a lesson from the events of 15 March 1939. It would be a

mistake, however, to believe that they were determined to resist any

further acquisition of territory or economic advantage by Germany.

Not at all. They would undoubtedly have been willing to allow frontier

rectifications in the Polish Corridor or elsewhere in favor of Germany,

if these were accomplished by a real process of negotiation and in-

cluded areas inhabited by Germans, and if the economic interests of

Poland, such as her trade outlet to the Baltic, were protected. In this

the Milner Group were still motivated by ideas of fairness and justice

and by a desire to avoid a war. The chief changes were two: (1) they

now felt, as they (in contrast to Chamberlain’s group) had long

suspected, that peace could be preserved better by strength than by

weakness; and (2) they now felt that Hitler would not stop at any point

based only on justice but was seeking world domination. The short-run

goal of the Milner Group still remained a Continent dominated by

Hitler between an Oceanic Bloc on the west and the Soviet Union on

the east. That they assumed such a solution could keep the peace, even

on a short-term basis, shows the fundamental naivete of the Milner

Group. The important point is that this view did not prohibit any

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modification of the Polish frontiers;, not did it require any airtight

understanding with the Soviet Union. It did involve an immediate

rearming of Britain and a determination to stop Hitler if he moved by

force again. Of these three points, the first two were shared with the

Chamberlain group; the third was not. The difference rested on the

fact that the Chamberlain group hoped to permit Britain to escape

from the necessity of fighting Germany by getting Russia to fight Ger-

many. The Chamberlain group did not share the Milner Groups naive

belief in the possibility of three great power blocs standing side by side

in peace. Lacking that belief, they preferred a German-Russian war to

a British-German war. And, having that preference, they differed

from the Milner Group in their willingness to accept the partition of

Poland by Germany. The Milner Group would have yielded parts of

Poland to Germany if done by fair negotiation. The Chamberlain

group was quite prepared to liquidate Poland entirely, if it could be

presented to the British people in terms which they would accept

without demanding war. Here again appeared the difference we have

already mentioned between the Milner Group and Lloyd George in

1918 and between the Group and Baldwin in 1923, namely that the

Milner Group tended to neglect the electoral considerations so impor-

tant to a party politician. In 1939 Chamberlain was primarily in-

terested in building up to a victorious electoral campaign for

November, and, as Sir Horace Wilson told German Special Represen-

tative Wohl in June, “it was all one to the Government whether the

elections were held under the cry ‘Be Ready for a Coming War’ or

under a cry ‘A Lasting Understanding with Germany.’ ”

These distinctions between the point of view of the Milner Group

and that of the Chamberlain group are very subtle and have nothing in

common with the generally accepted idea of a contrast between ap-

peasement and resistance. There were still appeasers to be found,

chiefly in those ranks of the Conservative Party most remote from the

Milner Group; British public opinion was quite clearly committed to

resistance after March 1939. The two government groups be-

tween these, with the Chamberlain group closer to the former and the

Milner Group closer to the latter. It is a complete error to say, as most

students of the period have said, that before 15 March the government

was solidly appeasement and afterwards solidly resistant. The

Chamberlain group, after 17 March 1939, was just as partial to ap-

peasement as before, perhaps more so, but it had to adopt a pretense of

resistance to satisfy public opinion and keep a way open to wage the

November election on either side of the issue. The Milner Group was

anti-appeasement after March, but in a limited way that did not in-

volve any commitment to defend the territorial integrity of Poland or

to ally with Russia.

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This complicated situation is made more so by the fact that the

Milner Group itself was disintegrating. Some members, chiefly in the

second circle, like Hoare or Simon, continued as wholehearted, if

secret, appeasers and became closer to Chamberlain. Halifax, who did

not have to run for office, could speak his mind more honestly and

probably had a more honest mind. He was closer to the Milner Group,

although he continued to cooperate so closely with Chamberlain that

he undoubtedly lost the prime minister’s post in May 1940 as a result.

Amery, closer than Halifax to the inner core of the Group, was also

more of a resister and by the middle of 1939 was finished with appease-

ment. Lothian was in a position between Halifax and Amery.

The point of view of the inner core can be found, as usual, in the

pages of The Round Table . In the issue of September 1939, the leading

article confessed that Hitler’s aim was mastery of the world. It con-

tinued: “In this light, any further accretion of German strength — for

instance through control of Danzig, which is the key to subjection of all

Poland— appears as a retreat from the ramparts of the British Com-

monwealth itself. Perhaps our slowness to realize these facts, or at least

to act accordingly in building an impregnable defence against aggres-

sion in earlier years, accounts for our present troubles.” For the Milner

Group, this constitutes a magnificent confession of culpability.

In the December 1939 issue of The Round Table , the whole tone has

reverted to that of 1911-1918. Gone is the idea that modern Germany

was the creation of the United States and Britain or that Nazism was

merely a temporary and insignificant aberration resulting from

Versailles. Instead the issue is “Commonwealth or Weltreich?” Nazism

“is only Prussianism in more brutal shape.” It quotes Lord Lothian’s

speech of 25 October 1939, made in New York, that “The establish-

ment of a true reign of law between nations is the only remedy for

war.” And we are told once again that such a reign of law must be

sought in federation. In the same issue, the whole of Lothian’s speech

was reprinted as a “document.” In the March 1940 issue, The Round

Table harked back even further than 1914. It quoted an extensive

passage from Pericles’s funeral oration in a leading article entitled “The

Issue,” and added: “That also is our creed, but it is not Hitler’s.”

The same point of view of the Group is reflected in other places. On

16 March 1939, in the Commons, when Chamberlain was still defend-

ing the appeasement policy and refusing to criticize Germany’s policy

of aggression, Lady Astor cried out to him, “Will the Prime Minister

lose no time in letting the German Government know with what horror

the whole of this country regards Germany’s action?”

The Prime Minister did not answer, but a Conservative Member,

Major Vyvyan Adams, hurled at the lady the remark, “You caused it

yourself.”

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Major Adams was not a man to be lightly dismissed. A graduate of

Haileybury and Cambridge, past president of the Cambridge Union,

member of the Inner Temple Bar, an executive of the League of Na-

tions Union, and a vice-president of Lord Davies’s New Com-

monwealth Society, he was not a man who did not know what was

going on. He subsequently published two books against appeasement

under the pseudomyn “Watchman.”

Most of the members of the inner core of the Group who took any

public stand on these issues refused to rake over the dead embers of past

policy and devoted themselves to a program of preparedness and na-

tional service. The names of Amery, Grigg, Lothian, and The Times

became inseparably associated with the campaign for conscription,

which ultimately resulted in the National Service Act of 26 April 1939.

The more aloof and more conciliatory point of view of Halifax can be

seen in his speech of 9 June in the House of Lords and the famous

speech of 29 June before the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

The lingering overtones of appeasement in the former resulted in a

spirited attack by Lord Davies, while Arthur Salter, who had earlier

been plumping for a Ministry of All the Talents with Halifax as

Premier, by the middle of the year was begging him, at All Souls, to

meet Stalin face to face in order to get an alliance. 17

The events of 1939 do not require our extended attention here,

although they have never yet been narrated in any adequate fashion.

The German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia was not much of a sur-

prise to either the Milner or Chamberlain groups; both accepted it, but

the former tried to use it as a propaganda device to help get conscrip-

tion, while the latter soon discovered that, whatever their real

thoughts, they must publicly condemn it in order to satisfy the

outraged moral feelings of the British electorate. It is this which ex-

plains the change in tone between Chamberlain’s speech of 15 March in

Commons and his speech of 17 March in Birmingham. The former was

what he thought; the latter was what he thought the voters wanted.

The unilateral guarantee to Poland given by Chamberlain on 31

March 1939 was also a reflection of what he believed the voters

wanted. He had no intention of ever fulfilling the guarantee if it could

possibly be evaded and, for this reason, refused the Polish requests for a

small rearmament loan and to open immediate staff discussions to im-

plement the guarantee. The Milner Group, less susceptible to public

opinion, did not want the guarantee to Poland at all. As a result, the

guarantee was worded to cover Polish “independence” and not her

“territorial integrity.” This was interpreted by the leading article of

The Times for 1 April to leave the way open to territorial revision

without revoking the guarantee. This interpretation was accepted by

Chamberlain in Commons on 3 April. Apparently the government

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believed that it was making no real commitment because, if war broke

out in eastern Europe, British public opinion would force the govern-

ment to declare war on Germany, no matter what the government

itself wanted, and regardless whether the guarantee existed or not. On

the other hand, a guarantee to Poland might deter Hitler from

precipitating a war and give the government time to persuade the

Polish government to yield the Corridor to Germany. If the Poles could

not be persuaded, or if Germany marched, the fat was in the fire

anyway; if the Poles could be persuaded to yield, the guarantee was so

worded that Britain could not act under it to prevent such yielding.

This was to block any possibility that British public opinion might

refuse to accept a Polish Munich. That this line of thought was not far

distant from British government circles is indicated by a Reuters news

dispatch released on the same day that Chamberlain gave the

guarantee to Poland. This dispatch indicated that, under cover of the

guarantee, Britian would put pressure on Poland to make substantial

concessions to Hitler through negotiations. According to Hugh Dalton,

Labour M.P., speaking in Commons on 3 April, this dispatch was in-

spired by the government and was issued through either the Foreign

Office, Sir Horace Wilson, John Simon, or Samuel Hoare. Three of

these four were of the Milner Group, the fourth being the personal

agent of Chamberlain. Dalton’s charge was not denied by any govern-

ment spokesman, Hoare contenting himself with a request to Dalton

“to justify that statement.” Another M.P. of Churchill’s group sug-

gested that Geoffrey Dawson was the source, but Dalton rejected this.

It is quite clear that neither the Chamberlain group nor the Milner

Group wanted an alliance with the Soviet Union to stop Hitler in 1939,

and that the negotiations were not sincere or vigorously pursued. The

Milner Group was not so opposed to such an agreement as the

Chamberlain group. Both were committed to the four-power pact. In

the case of the Chamberlain group, this pact could easily have

developed into an anti-Russian alliance, but in the case of the Milner

Group it was regarded merely as a link between the Oceanic Bloc and a

Germanic Mitteleuropa. Both groups hated and despised the Soviet

Union, but the Milner Group did not fear it as the Chamberlain group

did. This fear was based on the Marxist threat to the British economic

system, and the Milner Group was not wedded nearly as closely to that

system as Chamberlain and his friends. The Toynbee-Milner tradition,

however weak it had become by 1939, was enough to prevent the two

groups from seeing eye to eye on this issue.

The efforts of the Chamberlain group to continue the policy of ap-

peasement by making economic and other concessions to Germany and

their efforts to get Hitler to agree to a four-power pact form one of the

most shameful episodes in the history of recent British diplomacy.

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These negotiations were chiefly conducted through Sir Horace Wilson

and consisted chiefly of offers of colonial bribes and other concessions

to Germany. These offers were either rejected or ignored by the Nazis.

One of these offers revolved around a semi-official economic agree-

ment under which British and German industrialists would form cartel

agreements in all fields to fix prices of their products and divide up the

world’s market. The Milner Group apparently objected to this on the

grounds that it was aimed, or could be aimed, at the United States.

Nevertheless, the agreements continued; a master agreement,

negotiated at Dusseldorf between representatives of British and Ger-

man industry, was signed in London on 16 March 1939. A British

government mission to Berlin to help Germany exploit the newly ac-

quired areas of eastern Europe was postponed the same day because of

the strength of public feeling against Germany. As soon as this had died

down, secret efforts were made through R. S. Hudson, secretary to the

Department of Overseas Trade, to negotiate with Helmuth Wohlthat,

Reich Commissioner for the Four Year Plan, who was in London to

negotiate an international whaling agreement. Although Wholthat

had no powers, he listened to Hudson and later to Sir Horace Wilson,

but refused to discuss the matter with Chamberlain. Wilson offered:

(1) a nonaggression pact with Germany; (2) a delimitation of spheres

among the Great Powers; (3) colonial concessions in Africa along the

lines previously mentioned; (4) an economic agreement. These conver-

sations, reported to Berlin by Ambassador Dirksen in a dispatch of 21

July 1939, would have involved giving Germany a free hand in eastern

Europe and bringing her into collision with Russia. One sentence of

Dirksen’s says: “Sir Horace Wilson definitely told Herr Wohlthat that

the conclusion of a non-aggression pact would enable Britian to rid

herself of her commitments vis-a-vis Poland.” In another report, three

days later, Dirksen said: “Public opinion is so inflamed, and the war-

mongers and intriguers are so much in the ascendancy, that if these

plans of negotiations with Germany were to become public they would

immediately be torpedoed by Churchill and other incendiaries with

the cry ‘No second Munichl’ ”

The truth of this statement was seen when news of the Hudson-

Wohlthat conversations did leak out and resulted in a violent

controversy in the House of Commons, in which the Speaker of the

House repeatedly broke off the debate to protect the government. Ac-

cording to Press Adviser Hesse in the German Embassy in London, the

leak was made by the French Embassy to force a break in the negotia-

tions. The negotiations, however, were already bogging down because

of the refusal of the Germans to become very interested in them. Hitler

and Ribbentrop by this time despised the British so thoroughly that

they paid no attention to them at all, and the German Ambassador in

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London found it impossible to reach Ribbentrop, his official superior,

either by dispatch or personally. Chamberlain, however, in his

eagerness to make economic concessions to Germany, gave to Hitler £6

million in Czechoslovak gold in the Bank of England, and kept Lord

Runciman busy training to be chief economic negotiator in the great

agreement which he envisaged. On 29 July 1939, Kordt, the German

charge d'affaires in London, had a long talk with Charles Roden Bux-

ton, brother of the Labour Peer Lord Noel-Buxton, about the terms of

this agreement, which was to be patterned on the agreement of 1907

between Britain and Russia. Buxton insisted that his visit was quite

unofficial, but Kordt was inclined to believe that his visit was a feeler

from the Chamberlain group. In view of the close parallel between

Buxton’s views and Chamberlain’s, this seems very likely. This was cor-

roborated when Sir Horace Wilson repeated these views in a highly

secret conversation with Dirksen at Wilson’s home from 4 to 6 p.m. on

3 August 1939. Dirksen’s minute of the same day shows that Wilson’s

aims had not changed. He wanted a four-power pact, a free hand for

Germany in eastern Europe, a colonial agreement, an economic agree-

ment, etc. The memorandum reads, in part: “After recapitulating his

conversation with Wohlthat, Sir Horace Wilson expatiated at length on

the great risk Chamberlain would incur by starting confidential

negotiations with the German Government. If anything about them

were to leak out there would be a grand scandal, and Chamberlain

would probably be forced to resign.” Dirksen did not see how any bind-

ing agreement could be reached under conditions such as this; “for ex-

ample, owing to Hudson’s indiscretion, another visit of Herr Wohlthat

to London was out of the question.” To this, Wilson suggested that “the

two emissaries could meet in Switzerland or elsewhere.” The political

portions of this conversation were largely repeated in an interview that

Dirksen had with Lord Halifax on 9 August 1939. 18

It was not possible to conceal these activities completely from the

public, and, indeed, government spokesmen referred to them occa-

sionally in trial balloons. On 3 May, Chamberlain suggested an Anglo-

German nonaggression pact, although only five days earlier Hitler had

denounced the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 and the Polish-

German nonaggression pact of 1934. As late as 28 August, Sir Nevile

Henderson offered Germany a British alliance if she were successful in

direct negotiations with the Poles. 19 This, however, was a personal

statement and probably went further than Halifax would have been

willing to go by 1939. Halifax apparently had little faith in

Chamberlain’s ability to obtain any settlement with the Germans. If,

by means of another Munich, he could have obtained a German-Polish

settlement that would satisfy Germany and avoid war, he would have

taken it. It was the hope of such an agreement that prevented him

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from making any real agreement with Russia, for it was, apparently,

the expectation of the British government that if the Germans could get

the Polish Corridor by negotiation, they could then drive into Russia

across the Baltic States. For this reason, in the negotiations with

Russia, Halifax refused any multilateral pact against aggression, any

guarantee of the Baltic States, or any tripartite guarantee of Poland.

Instead, he sought to get nothing more than a unilateral Russian guar-

antee to Poland to match the British guarantee to the same country.

This was much too dangerous for Russia to swallow, since it would

leave her with a commitment which could lead to war and with no

promise of British aid to her if she were attacked directly, after a Polish

settlement, or indirectly across the Baltic States. Only after the Ger-

man Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 21 August 1939 did Halifax imple-

ment the unilateral guarantee to Poland with a more formal mutual

assistance pact between Britain and Poland. This was done to warn

Hitler that an attack on Poland would bring Britain into the war under

pressure of British public opinion. Hitler, as usual, paid no attention to

Britain. Even after the German attack on Poland, the British govern-

ment was reluctant to fulfill this pact and spent almost three days ask-

ing the Germans to return to negotiation. Even after the British were

forced to declare war on Germany, they made no effort to fight, con-

tenting themselves with dropping leaflets on Germany. We now know

that the German generals had moved so much of their forces to the east

that they were gravely worried at the effects which might follow an

Allied attack on western Germany or even an aerial bombing of the

Ruhr.

In these events of 1939, the Milner Group took little part. They must

have known of the negotiations with Germany and probably did not

disapprove of them, but they had little faith in them and by the early

summer of 1939 were probably convinced that war with Germany was

inevitable in the long run. In this view Halifax probably shared, but

other former members of the Group, such as Hoare and Simon, by now

were completely in the Chamberlain group and can no longer be

regarded as members of the Milner Group. From June 1939 to May

1940, the fissure between the Milner Group and the Chamberlain

government became wider.

From the outbreak of war, the Milner Group were determined to

fight the war against Germany; the Chamberlain group, on the other

hand, were very reluctant to fight Germany, preferring to combine a

declared but unfought war with Germany with a fought but

undeclared war with Russia. The excuse for this last arose from the

Russian pressure on Finland for bases to resist a future German attack.

The Russian attack on Finland began on the last day of November

1939; by 27 December, the British and French were putting pressure

on Sweden to join them in action to support the Finns. In these notes,

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which have been published by the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the

Western Powers stated that they intended to send men, equipment,

and money to Finland. By February 1940, the Western Powers had

plans for a force of 30,000 to 40,000 men for Finland and were putting

pressure on Sweden to allow passage for this force across Scandinavia.

By 2 March 1940, the British had a force of 100,000 men ready and in-

formed the Swedish and Norwegian governments that “the force with

its full equipment is available and could sail at short notice.” They in-

vited the Scandinavian countries to receive Allied missions to make all

the necessary preparations for the transit. The note to Norway, in an

additional passage, said that forces would be sent to the Norwegian

ports within four days of receiving permission, and the transit itself

could begin on 20 March. On 12 March the Allies sent to the Scandina-

vian countries a formal request for right of transit. It was refused.

Before anything further could be done, Finland collapsed and made

peace with Russia. On 5 April, Halifax sent a very threatening note to

the Scandinavian countries. It said in part:

. . . considering, in consultation with the French Government, the

circumstances attending the termination of the war between the Union of

Soviet Socialist Republics and Finland and the attitude adopted by the

Swedish Government at that time . . . they feel therefore that the time

has come to notify the Swedish Government frankly of certain vital inter-

ests and requirements which the Allied Governments intend to assert and

defend by whatever measure they may think necessary. The vital interests

and the requirements which the Allied Governments wish to bring to the

notice of the Swedish Government are the following: (a) The Allied Gov-

ernments cannot acquiesce in any further attack on Finland by either the

Soviet or German Governments. In the event therefore, of such an attack

taking place, any refusal by the Swedish Government to facilitate the

efforts of the Allied Governments to come to the assistance of Finland in

whatever manner they may think fit, and still more any attempt to pre-

vent such assistance would be considered by the Allied Governments as

endangering their vital interests. . . . (c) Any attempt by the Soviet Gov-

ernment to obtain from Norway a footing on the Atlantic seaboard would

be contrary to the vital interests of the Allied Governments.”

The Swedish Foreign Minister expressed his government’s astonishment

at this note and its determination to decide such questions for itself and

to preserve Sweden’s neutrality in the future as it had been preserved in

the past. 20

It is not clear what was the attitude of the Milner Group toward this

effort to open active hostilities against the Soviet Union while remain-

ing technically in a state of war with Germany. Halifax was still at the

Foreign Office and apparently actively concerned in this project. The

Times was wholeheartedly in favor of the plan. On 5 March, for exam-

ple, it said of the Finnish war: “It is becoming clearer every day that

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this war is no side issue. Finland is defending more than the cause of

liberty and more than her own soil. . . . Our own cause is being but-

ressed by her resistance to the evil of tryanny. . . . Our interest is clear

and there is a moral issue involved as well as the material. The whole

sentiment of this country demands that Finland should not be allowed

to fall.”

The Round Table, in the only issue which appeared during the Fin-

nish troubles, had a propagandist article on “The Civilization of

Finland.” It called Finland “one of the most democratic nations, on

any definition, in all Europe.” The rest of the article was a paean of

praise for the kind and magnanimous conduct of the Finnish govern-

ment in every crisis of its history from 1917, but nothing was said about

the Finnish war, nor was there any mention of Allied aid.

During this period the Milner Group became increasingly impatient

with the Chamberlain group. This was clear from the June 1940 issue

of The Round Table, which criticized the Cabinet reshuffle of April as

evoking “almost universal derision.” It also criticized Chamberlains

failure to include able members of his own party in the Cabinet. This

may have been a reference to Amery ’s continued exclusion. The article

said: “This lack of imagination and courage could be seen in almost

every aspect of the Chamberlain Government’s conduct of the war.” It

excluded Simon and Hoare as possible prime ministers, on the ground

that they were too close to Chamberlain. It was probably thinking of

Halifax as prime minister, but, when the time came, others thought

him, also, to be too closely associated with appeasement. On the

crucial day, 8 May 1940, the Group was badly split. In fact, on the

division that preceded Chamberlain’s resignation, Lady Astor voted

against the government, while her brother-in-law, John Jacob Astor,

voted with the government. The debate was one of the most bitter in

recent history and reached its high point when Amery cried out to the

Government benches the words of Cromwell: “You have sat too long

here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have

done with you. In the name of God, go!” In the ensuing division, the

whips were on with a vengeance, but the government’s majority was

only 81, more than a hundred Conservatives abstaining from voting.

Most of the Milner Group members, since they held offices in the

government, had to vote with it. Of the inner core, only Amery and

Lady Astor broke away. In the majority, still supporting Chamberlain,

were J. J. Astor, Grigg, Hoare, Malcolm MacDonald, Salter, Simon,

and Somervell. But the fight had been too bitter. Chamberlain was

replaced by Churchill, and Amery came to office (as Secretary of State

for India). Once again the Milner Group and the government were

united on the issues. Both, from 8 May 1940, had only one aim: to win

the war with Germany.

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1 939- 1 945

The Milner Group played a considerable role in the Second World

War, not scattered throughout the various agencies associated with the

great struggle, but concentrated in four or five chief fiefs. Among these

were: (1) the Research and Intelligence Department of the Foreign Of-

fice; (2) the British Embassy in Washington; (3) the Ministry of Infor-

mation; and (4) those agencies concerned with economic mobilization

and economic reconstruction. Considering the age of most of the inner

core of the Milner Group during the Second World War (the youngest,

Lothian, was 57 in 1939; Hichens was 65; Brand was 61; Dawson was

65; and Curtis was 67), they accomplished a great deal. Unable, in

most cases, to serve themselves, except in an advisory capacity, they

filled their chief fiefs with their younger associates. In most cases, these

were recruited from All Souls, but occasionally they were obtained

elsewhere.

We have already indicated how the Research and Press Department

of Chatham House was made into the Research and Intelligence

Department of the Foreign Office, at first unofficially and then offi-

cially. This was dominated by Lionel Curtis and Arnold Toynbee, the

latter as director of the department for the whole period 1939-1946.

Others who were associated with this activity were B. H. Sumner

(Warden of All Souls), C. A. Macartney, A. E. Zimmern, J. W.

Wheeler-Bennett, and most of the paid staff from Chatham House.

Zimmern was deputy director in 1943-1945, and Wheeler-Bennett was

deputy director in 1945.

Of even greater significance was the gathering of Milner Group

members and their recruits in Washington. The Group had based most

of their foreign policy since 1920 on the hope of “closer union” with the

United States, and they realized that American intervention in the war

was absolutely essential to insure a British victory. Accordingly, more

than a dozen members of the Group were in Washington during the

war, seeking to carry on this policy.

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Lord Lothian was named Ambassador to the United States as soon as

the war began. It was felt that his long acquaintance with the country

and the personal connections built up during almost fifteen years as

Rhodes Secretary more than counteracted his intimate relationship

with the notorious Cliveden Set, especially as this latter relationship

was unknown to most Americans. On Lothian’s unexpected and

lamented death in December 1940, the position in Washington was

considered to be of such crucial importance that Lord Halifax was

shifted to the vacant post from the Foreign Office. He retained his posi-

tion in the War Cabinet. Thus the post at Washington was raised to a

position which no foreign legation had ever had before. Lord Halifax

continued to hold the post until 1946, a year after the war was actually

finished. During most of the period, he was surrounded by members of

the Milner Group, chiefly Fellows of All Souls, so that it was almost im-

possible to turn around in the British Embassy without running into a

member of that select academic circle. The most important of these

were Lord Brand, Harold Butler, and Arthur Salter.

Lord Brand was in America from March 1941 to May 1946, as head

of the British Food Mission for three years and as representative of the

British Treasury for two years. He was also chairman of the British

Supply Council in North America in 1942 and again in 1945-1946. He

did not resign his position as managing director of Lazard Brothers un-

til May 1944. Closely associated with Brand was his protege, Adam D.

Marris, son of Sir William Marris of the Kindergarten, who was

employed at Lazard Brothers from 1929 to the outbreak of war, then

spent a brief period in the Ministry of Economic Warfare in London.

In 1940 he came to the Embassy in Washington, originally as First

Secretary, later as Counsellor. After the war he was, for six months,

secretary general of the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe.

In February 1946 he returned to Lazard Brothers.

Harold Butler (Sir Harold since 1946) came to Washington in 1942

with the rank of minister. He stayed for four years, being chiefly con-

cerned with public relations. Sir Arthur Salter, who married a Wash-

ington lady in 1940, came to America in 1941 as head of the British

Merchant Shipping Mission. He stayed until UNRRA was set up early

in 1944, when he joined the new organization as Senior Deputy Direc-

tor General. A year later he joined the Cabinet as Chancellor for the

Duchy of Lancaster. Sir Arthur was well qualified as a shipping expert,

having been engaged intermittently in government shipping problems

since he left Brasenose College in 1904. His close personal relations

with Lord Halifax went back to an even earlier period, when they both

were students at Oxford.

Among the lesser persons who came to Washington during the war,

we should mention four members of All Souls: I. Berlin, J. G. Foster,

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R. M. Makins, and J. H. A. Sparrow. Isaiah Berlin, one of the newer

recruits to the Milner Group, made his way into this select circle by

winning a Fellowship to All Souls in 1932, the year after he graduated

from Corpus Christi. Through this connection, he became a close

friend of Mr. and Mrs. H. A. L. Fisher and has been a Fellow and

Tutor of New College since 1938. In 1941 he came to New York to work

with J. W. Wheeler-Bennett in the Ministry of Information’s American

branch but stayed for no more than a year. In 1942 he became First

Secretary in the Embassy in Washington, a position but recently

vacated by Adam Marris. After the war he went for a brief period of

four months to a similar post in the British Embassy in Moscow. In

1949 he came to Harvard University as visiting lecturer on Russia.

John Galway Foster is another recent recruit to the Milner Group

and, like Berlin, won his entry by way of All Souls (1924). He is also a

graduate of New College and from 1935 to 1939 was lecturer in Private

International Law at Oxford. In 1939 he went to the Embassy in

Washington as First Secretary and stayed for almost five years. In 1944

he was commissioned a brigadier on special service and the following

year gained considerable prestige by winning a Conservative seat in

Parliament in the face of the Labour tidal wave. He is still a Fellow of

All Souls, after twenty-five years, and this fact alone would indicate he

has a position as an important member of the Group.

Roger Mellor Makins, son of a Conservative M.P., was elected a

Fellow of All Souls immediately after graduation from Christ Church

in 1925. He joined the diplomatic service in 1928 and spent time in

London, Washington, and (briefly) Oslo in the next nine years. In 1937

he became assistant adviser on League of Nations affairs to the Foreign

Office. He was secretary to the British delegation to the Evian Con-

ference on Refugees from Germany in 1938 and became secretary to

the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees set up at that meeting.

In 1939 he returned to the Foreign Office as adviser on League of Na-

tions Affairs but soon became a First Secretary; he was adviser to the

British delegation at the New York meeting of the International

Labour Conference in 1941 and the following year joined the staff of

the Resident Minister in West Africa. When the Allied Headquarters in

the Mediterranean area was set up in 1943, he joined the staff of the

Resident British Minister with that unit. At the end of the war, in 1945,

he went to the Embassy in Washington with the rank of Minister. In

this post he had the inestimable advantage that his wife, whom he mar-

ried in 1934, was the daughter of the late Dwight F. Davis, Secretary

of War in the Hoover Administration. During this period Makins

played an important role at various international organizations. He

was the United Kingdom representative on the Interim Commission for

Food and Agriculture of the United Nations in 1945; he was adviser to

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the United Kingdom delegation to the first FAO Conference at Quebec

the same year; he was a delegate to the Atlantic City meeting of

UNRRA in the following year. In 1947 he left Washington to become

Assistant Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office in London.

Another important member of All Souls who appeared briefly in

Washington during the war was John H. A. Sparrow. Graduated from

Winchester School and New College by 1927, he became an Eldon Law

Scholar and a Fellow of All Souls in 1929. He is still a Fellow of the

latter after twenty years. Commissioned in the Coldstream Guards in

1940, he was in Washington on a confidential military mission during

most of 1940 and was attached to the War Office from 1942 to the end

of the war.

Certain other members of the Group were to be found in the United

States during the period under discussion. We have already mentioned

the services rendered to the Ministry of Information by J. W. Wheeler-

Bennett in New York from 1939 to 1944. Robert J. Stopford was Finan-

cial Counsellor to the British Embassy in 1940-1943. We should also

mention that F. W. Eggleston, chief Australian member of the Group,

was Australian Minister in Washington from 1944 to 1946. And the

story of the Milner Group’s activities in Washington would not be com-

plete without at least mentioning Percy E. Corbett.

Percy Corbett of Prince Edward Island, Canada, took a M.A. degree

at McGill University in 1915 and went to Balliol as a Rhodes Scholar.

He was a Fellow of All Souls in 1920-1928 and a member of the staff of

the League of Nations in 1920-1924. He was Professor of Roman Law

at McGill University from 1924 to 1937 and had been Professor of

Government and Jurisprudence and chairman of the Department of

Political Science at Yale since 1944. He has always been close to the

Milner Group, participating in many of their Canadian activities, such

as the Canadian Royal Institute of International Affairs, the unofficial

British Commonwealth relations conferences, and the Institute of

Pacific Relations. He was chairman of the Pacific Council of the last

organization in 1942. During the war he spent much of his time in the

United States, especially in Washington, engaged in lobbying activities

for the British Embassy, chiefly in Rhodes Scholarship and academic

circles but also in government agencies. Since the war ended, he has

obtained, by his position at Yale, a place of considerable influence,

especially since Yale began, in 1948, to publish its new quarterly

review called World Politics . On this review, Professor Corbett is one

of the more influential members. At present he must be numbered

among the three most important Canadian members of the Milner

Group, the other two being Vincent Massey and George Parkin Glaze-

brook.

In view of the emphasis which the Milner Group has always placed

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on publicity and the need to control the chief avenues by which the

general public obtains information on public affairs, it is not surprising

to find that the Ministry of Information was one of the fiefs of the

Group from its establishment in 1939.

At the outbreak of war, H. A. L. Fisher had been Governor of the

BBC for four years. It was probably as a result of this connection that

L. F. Rushbrook Williams, whom we have already mentioned in con-

nection with Indian affairs and as a member of All Souls since 1914,

became Eastern Service Director of the BBC. He was later adviser on

Middle East affairs to the Ministry of Information but left this, in

1944, to become an editor of The Times. Edward Griggs, now Lord

Altrincham, was Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Informa-

tion from its creation to the Cabinet revision of 1940, when he shifted

to the War Office. J. W. Wheeler-Bennett and Isaiah Berlin were with

the New York office of the Ministry of Information, as we have seen,

the former throughout the war and the latter in 1941-1942. H. V. Hod-

son, Fellow of All Souls and probably the most important of the newer

recruits to the Milner Group, was Director of the Empire Division of

the Ministry of Information from its creation in 1939 until he went to

India as Reforms Commissioner in 1941-1942. And finally, Cyril John

Radcliffe (Sir Cyril after 1944), a graduate of New College in 1922 and

a Fellow of All Souls for fifteen years (1922-1937), son-in-law of Lord

Charnwood since 1939, was in the Ministry of Information for the

whole period of the war, more than four years of it as Director General

of the whole organization. 1

In addition to these three great fiefs (the Research and Intelligence

Department of the Foreign Office, the Embassy in Washington, and

the Ministry of Information), the Milner Group exercised considerable

influence in those branches of the administration concerned with

emergency economic regulations, although here the highest positions

were reserved to those members of the Cecil Bloc closest to the Milner

Group. Oliver Lyttelton, whose mother was a member of the Group,

was Controller of Non-Ferrous Metals in 1939-1940, was President of

the Board of Trade in 1940-1941, and was Minister of Production in

1942-1945. Lord Wolmer (Lord Selborne since 1942) was Director of

Cement in the Ministry of Works in 1940-1942 and Minister of Eco-

nomic Warfare in 1942-1945. In this connection, it should be men-

tioned that the Milner Group had developed certain economic interests

in non-ferrous metals and in cement in the period of the 1920s and

1930s. The former developed both from their interest in colonial mines,

which were the source of the ores, and from their control of electrical

utilities, which supplied much of the power needed to reduce these

ores. The center of these interests was to be found, on the one hand, in

the Rhodes Trust and the economic holdings of the associates of Milner

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and Rhodes like R. S. Holland, Abe Bailey, P. L. Gell, etc., and, on the

other hand, in the utility interests of Lazard Brothers and of the Hoare

family. The ramifications of these interests are too complicated, and

too well concealed, to be described in any detail here, but we might

point out that Lord Milner was a director of Rio Tinto, that Dougal

Malcolm was a director of Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines, that

Samuel Hoare was a director of Birmingham Aluminum Casting Com-

pany until he took public office, that the Hoare family had extensive

holdings in Associated Tin Mines of Nigeria, in British-American Tin

Corporation, in London Tin Corporation, etc.; that R. S. Holland was

an Anglo-Spanish Construction Company, on British Copper Manufac-

turers, and on the British Metal Corporation; that Lyttelton Gell was a

director of Huelva Copper and of the Zinc Corporation; that Oliver

Lyttelton was managing director of the British Metal Corporation and

a director of Metallgesellschaft, the German light-metals monopoly.

The chief member of the Group in the cement industry was Lord

Meston, who was placed on many important corporations after his

return from India, including the Associated Portland Cement

Manufacturers and the British Portland Cement Manufacturers. The

third Lord Selborne was chairman of the Cement Makers’ Federation

from 1934 to 1940, resigning to take charge of the government’s

cement-regulation program.

In lesser posts in these activities, we might mention the following.

Charles R. S. Harris, whom we have already mentioned as an associate

of Brand, a Fellow of All Souls for fifteen years, a leader-writer on The

Times for ten years, the authority on Duns Scotus who wrote a book on

Germany’s foreign indebtedness for Chatham House, was in the

Ministry of Economic Warfare in 1939-1940. He then spent two years

in Iceland for the Foreign Office, and three years with the War Office,

ending up in 1944-1945 as a member of the Allied Control Commission

for Italy. H. V. Hodson was principal assistant secretary and later head

of the Non-Munitions Division of the Ministry of Production from his

return from India to the end of the war (1942-1945). Douglas P. T. Jay,

a graduate of New College in 1930 and a Fellow of All Souls in the next

seven years, was on the staff of The Times and The Economist in the

period 1929-1937 and was city editor of The Daily Herald in 1937-

1941. He was assistant secretary to the Ministry of Supply in 1941-1943

and principal assistant secretary to the Board of Trade in 1943-1945.

After the Labour government came to power in the summer of 1945, he

was personal assistant to the Prime Minister (Clement Attlee) until he

became a Labour M.P. in 1946. Richard Pares, son of the famous

authority on Russia, the late Sir Bernard Pares, and son-in-law of the

famous historian Sir Maurice Powicke, was a Fellow of All Souls for

twenty-one years after he graduated from Balliol in 1924. He was a lec-

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turer at New College for eleven years, 1929-1940 and then was with the

Board of Trade for the duration of the war, 1940-1945. Since the war,

he has been Professor of History at Edinburgh. During most of the war

his father, Sir Bernard Pares, lectured in the United States as a pro-

Russian propagandist in the pay of the Ministry of Information. We

have already mentioned the brief period in which Adam Marris work-

ed for the Ministry of Economic Warfare in 1939-1940.

As the war went on, the Milner Group shifted their attention in-

creasingly to the subject of postwar planning and reconstruction. Much

of this was conducted through Chatham House. When the war began,

Toynbee wrote a letter to the Council of the RIIA, in which he said: “If

we get through the present crisis and are given a further chance to try

and put the world in order, we shall then feel a need to take a broader

and deeper view of our problems than we were inclined to take after

the War of 1914-1918. ... I believe this possibility has been in Mr.

Lionel Curtis’s mind since the time when he first conceived the idea of

the Institute; his Civitas Dei and my Study of History are two recon-

naissances of this historical background to the study of comtemporary

international affairs.” 2 At the end of 1942 the Group founded a

quarterly journal devoted to reconstruction. It was founded technically

under the auspices of the London School of Economics, but the editor

was G. N. Clark, a member of All Souls since 1912 and Chichele Pro-

fessor of Economic History from 1931 to 1943. The title of this journal

was Agenda , and its editorial offices were in Chatham House. These

tentative plans to dominate the postwar reconstruction efforts received

a rude jolt in August 1945, when the General Election removed the

Conservative government from power and brought to office a Labour

government. The influence of the Group in Labour circles has always

been rather slight.

Since this blow, the Milner Group has been in eclipse, and it is not

clear what has been happening. 3 Its control of The Times , of The

Round Table , of Chatham House, of the Rhodes Trust, of All Souls,

and of Oxford generally has continued but has been used without cen-

tralized purpose or conviction. Most of the original members of the

Group have retired from active affairs; the newer recruits have not the

experience or the intellectual conviction, or the social contacts, which

allowed the older members to wield such great power. The disasters

into which the Group directed British policy in the years before 1940

are not such as to allow their prestige to continue undiminished. In im-

perial affairs, their policies have been largely a failure, with Ireland

gone, India divided and going, Burma drifting away, and even South

Africa more distant than at any time since 1910. In foreign policy their

actions almost destroyed western civilization, or at least the European

center of it. The Times has lost its influence; The Round Table seems

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lifeless. Far worse than this, those parts of Oxford where the Group’s

influence was strongest have suffered a disastrous decline. The

Montague Burton Professorship of International Relations, to which

Professor Zimmer n and later Professor Woodward brought such great

talents, was given in 1948 to a middle-aged spinster, daughter of Sir

James Headlam-Morley, with one published work to her credit. The

Chichele Professorship of International Law and Diplomacy, held with

distinction for twenty-five years by Professor James L. Brierley, was

filled in 1947 by a common-law lawyer, a specialist in the law of real

property, who, by his own confession, is largely ignorant of interna-

tional law and whose sole published work, written with the collabora-

tion of a specialist on equity, is a treatise on the Law of Mortgages .

These appointments, which gave a shock to academic circles in the

United States, do not allow an outside observer to feel any great op-

timism for the future either of the Milner Group or of the great institu-

tions which it has influenced. It would seem that the great idealistic

adventure which began with Toynbee and Milner in 1875 had slowly

ground its way to a finish of bitterness and ashes.

Appendix:

A Tentative Roster of

the Milner Group

The following lists are tentative in the sense that they are in-

complete and erroneous. The errors are more likely in the attribution

of persons to one circle of the Group rather than another, and are less

likely in the attribution to the Group of persons who are not members

at all. For the names given I have sufficient evidence to convince me

that they are members of the Group, although I would not in many

cases feel competent to insist that the persons concerned knew that they

were members of a secret group. The evidence on which this list is

based is derived from documentary evidence, from private informa-

tion, and from circumstantial evidence.

Persons are listed in each group on the basis of general impression

rather than exact demarcation, because the distinction between the

two is rather vague and varies from time to time. For example, I know

for a fact that Sir Alfred Zimmern and Lord Cecil of Chelwood at-

tended meetings of the inner circle in the period before 1920, but I

have attributed them to the outer circle because this appears to be the

more accurate designation for the long period since 1920.

Within each list I have placed the names of the various individuals in

order of chronology and of importance. In some cases where I sus-

pected a person of being a member without having any very convincing

evidence, I have enclosed the name in brackets.

A. The Society of the Elect

Cecil John Rhodes

Nathan Rothschild, Baron Rothschild

Sir Harry Johnston

William T. Stead

Reginald Brett, Viscount Esher

Alfred Milner, Viscount Milner

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B. F. Hawksley

Thomas Brassey, Lord Brassey

Edmund Garrett

[Sir Edward Cook]

Alfred Beit

Sir Abe Bailey

Albert Grey, Earl Grey

Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery

Arthur James Balfour

Sir George R. Parkin

Philip Lyttelton Cell

Sir Henry Birchenough

Sir Reginald Sothern Holland

Arthur Lionel Smith

Herbert A. L. Fisher

William Waldegrave Palmer, Earl of Selborne

[Sir Alfred Lyttelton]

Sir Patrick Duncan

Robert Henry Brand, Baron Brand

Philip Kerr, Marquess of Lothian

Lionel Curtis

Geoffrey Dawson

Edward Grigg, Baron Altrincham

Jan C. Smuts

Leopold Amery

Waldorf Astor, Viscount Astor

Nancy Astor, Lady Astor

B. The Association of Helpers

1. The Inner Circle

Sir Patrick Duncan

Robert Henry Brand, Baron Brand

Philip Kerr, Marquess of Lothian

Lionel Curtis

William L. Hichens

Geoffrey Dawson

Edw^ard Grigg, Baron Altrincham

Herbert A. L. Fisher

Leopold Amery

Richard Feetham

Hugh A. Wyndham

Sir Dougal Malcolm

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Basil Williams

Basil Kellett Long

Sir Abe Bailey

Jan C. Smuts

Sir William Marris

James S. Meston, Baron Meston

Malcolm Hailey, Baron Hailey

Flora Shaw, Lady Lugard

Sir Reginald Coupland

Waldorf Astor, Viscount Astor

Nancy Astor, Lady Astor

Maurice Hankey, Baron Hankey

Arnold J. Toynbee

Laurence F. Rushbrook Williams

Henry Vincent Hodson

Vincent Todd Harlow

2. The Outer Circle

John Buchan, Baron Tweedsmuir

Sir Fabian Ware

Sir Alfred Zimmern

Gilbert Murray

Robert Cecil, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood

Sir James W. Headlam-Morley

Frederick J. N. Thesiger, Viscount Chelmsford

Sir Valentine Chirol

Edward F. L. Wood, Earl of Halifax

Sir [James] Arthur Salter

Sir Arthur H. D. R. Steel-Maitland

William G. A. Ormsby-Gore, Baron Harlech

Dame Edith Lyttelton, Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton

Frederick Lugard, Baron Lugard

Sir [Leander] Starr Jameson

Henry W. C. Davis

John A. Simon, Viscount Simon

Samuel J. G. Hoare, Viscount Templewood

Maurice P. A. Hankey, Baron Hankey

Wilson Harris

[Francis Clarke]

William G. S. Adams

[William K. Hancock]

Ernest L. Woodward

Sir Harold Butler

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Kenneth N. Bell

Sir Donald B. Somervell

Sir Maurice L. Gwyer

Charles R. S. Harris

Sir Edward R. Peacock

Sir Cyril J. Radcliffe

John W. Wheeler-Bennett

Robert J. Stopford

Robert M. Barrington- Ward

[Kenneth C. Wheare]

Edward H. Carr

Malcolm MacDonald

Godfrey Elton, Baron Elton

Sir Neill Malcolm

Freeman Freeman-Thomas, Viscount Willingdon

Isaiah Berlin

Roger M. Makins

Sir Arthur Willert

Ivison S. Macadam

3. Members in other countries

a. Canada

Arthur J. Glazebrook

Sir George Parkin

Vincent Massey

George P. de T. Glazebrook

Percy Corbett

[Sir Joseph Flavelle]

b. United States

George Louis Beer

Frank Aydelotte

Jerome Greene

[Clarence Steit]

c. South Africa

Jan C. Smuts

Sir Patrick Duncan

Sir Abe Bailey

Basil K. Long

Richard Feetham

[Sir James Rose-Innes]

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d. Australia

Sir Thomas Bavin

Sir Frederic Eggleston

[Dudley D. Braham]

e. New Zealand

Sir J ames Allen

William Downie Stewart

Arthur R. Atkinson

f. Germany

Helmuth James von Moltke

Adam von Trott zu Solz

Notes

Chapter 1

\*The sources of this information and a more detailed examination of the

organization and personnel of the Rhodes secret society will be found in Chapter

3 below.

2 On Parkin, see the biography (1929) started by Sir John Willison and fin-

ished by Parkin’s son-in-law, William L. Grant. Also see the sketches of both

Parkin and Milner in the Dictionary of National Biography. The debate in the

Oxford Union which first brought Parkin to Milner’s attention is mentioned in

Herbert Asquith’s (Lord Oxford and Asquith) Memories and Reflections (2 vols.,

Boston, 1928), I, 26.

3 The ideas for social service work among the poor and certain other ideas

held by Toynbee and Milner were derived from the teachings of John Ruskin,

who first came to Oxford as a professor during their undergraduate days. The

two young men became ardent disciples of Ruskin and were members of his

road-building group in the summer of 1870. The standard biography of Ruskin

was written by a protege of Milner’s, Edward Cook. The same man edited the

complete collection of Ruskin’s works in thirty-eight volumes. See Lord Oxford

and Asquith, Memories and Reflections (2 vols., Boston, 1928), I, 48. Cook’s

sketch in the Dictionary of National Biography was written by Asquith’s in-

timate friend and biographer, J. A. Spender.

4 The quotation is from Cecil Headlam, ed., The Milner Papers (2 vols.,

London, 1931-1933), I, 15. There exists no biography of Milner, and all of the

works concerned with his career have been written by members of the Milner

Group and conceal more than they reveal. The most important general sketches

of his life are the sketch in the Dictionary of National Biography , the obituary in

The Times (May 1925), and the obituary in The Rowid Table (June 1925, XV,

427-430). His own point of view must be sought in his speeches and essays. Of

these, the chief collections are The Nation and the Empire (Boston, 1913) and

Questions of the Hour (London, 1923). Unfortunately, the speeches after 1913

and all the essays which appeared in periodicals are still uncollected. This

neglect of one of the most important figures of the twentieth century is probably

deliberate, part of the policy of secrecy practiced by the Milner Group.

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Chapter 2

l A. C. Johnson, Viscount Halifax (New York, 1941), 54. Inasmuch as Lord

Halifax assisted the author of this biography and gave to him previously un-

published material to insert in it, we are justified in considering this an

“authorized” biography and giving its statements considerable weight. The

author is aware of the existence of the Milner Group and attributes much of

Lord Halifax’s spectacular career to his connection with the Group.

2 H. H. Henson, Retrospect of an Unimportant Life (2 vols., London,

1942-1943), II, 66.

3 C. Hobhouse, Oxford as It Was and as It Is Today (London, 1939), 18.

4 On the role of Charles Hardinge in foreign policy, see A. L. Kennedy,

“Lord Hardinge of Penshurst,” in The Quarterly Review (January 1945),

CCLXXXIII, 97-104, and Charles Hardinge, 1st Baron Hardinge of Penshurst,

Old Diplomacy ; Reminiscences (London, 1947). Although not mentioned again

in this work, A. L. Kennedy appears to be a member of the Milner Group.

5 Lord Ernie, Whippingham to Westminster (London, 1938), 248.

6 Lionel Curtis, Dyarchy (Oxford, 1920), 54.

7 Another exception was “Bron” Lucas (Auberon Herbert, Lord Lucas and

Dingwall), son of Auberon Herbert, the brother of Lord Carnavon. “Bron”

went from Balliol to South Africa as a Tunes correspondent in the Boer War and

lost a leg from overzealous devotion to the task. A close friend of John Buchan

and Raymond Asquith, he became a Liberal M.P. through the latter’s influence

but had to go to the Upper House in 1905, when he inherited two titles from his

mother’s brother. He was subsequently private secretary to Haldane (1908),

Under Secretary for War (1908-1911), Under Secretary for the Colonies (1911),

Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture (1911-1914), and President

of the Board of Agriculture (1914-1915). He thus became a member of the

Cabinet while only thirty-eight years old. He resigned to join the Royal Flying

Corps and was killed in 1916, about the same time as Raymond Asquith. Both of

these, had they lived, would probably have become members of the Milner

Group. Asquith was already a Fellow of All Souls (1901-1916). On “Bron”

Lucas, see the autobiographies of Lords Asquith and Tweedsmuir and the arti-

cle in the memorial volume to Balliol’s dead in the First World War.

8 On these clubs, see Lord Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflections (2

vols., Boston, 1928), I, 311-325.

^he chief published references to the existence of the Milner Group from

the pens of members will be found in the obituary notes on deceased members in

The Round Table and in the sketches in the Dictionary of National Biography .

In the former, see the notes on Milner, Hickens, Lord Lothian, A. J.

Glazebrook, Sir Thomas Bavin, Sir Patrick Duncan, Sir Abe Bailey, etc. See also

the references in the published works of Lionel Curtis, John Buchan (Lord

Tweedsmuir), John Dove, etc. Quotations to this effect from John Buchan and

from Lord Asquith will be found at the end of Chapter 3 below. The best

published reference to the Milner Group is in M. S. Geen, The Making of the

Union of South Africa (London, 1946), 150-152. The best account originating in

the Group itself is in the article “Twenty-five Years” in The Round Table for

September 1935, XV, 653-659.

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Chapter 3

,r rhis section is based on W. T. Stead, The Last Will and Testament of Cecil

John Rhodes (London, 1902); Sir Francis Wylies three articles in the American

Oxonian (April 1944), XXXI, 65-69; (July 1944), XXXI, 129-138; and (January

1945) , XXXII, 1-11; F. Aydelotte, The American Rhodes Scholars (Princeton,

1946) ; and the biographies and memoirs of the men mentioned.

2 No such claim is made by Sir Francis Wylie, from whose articles Dr.

Aydelotte derived most of the material for his first chapter. Sir Francis merely

mentions the secret society in connection with the early wills and then drops the

whole subject.

3 W. T. Stead, The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes (London,

1902), 110-111. The statement of 1896 to Brett is in Journals and Letters of

Reginald , Viscount Esher (4 vols., London, 1934-1938), I, 197.

4 Dr. Aydelotte quotes at length from a letter which Rhodes sent to Stead in

1891, but he does not quote the statements which Stead made about it when he

published it in 1902. In this letter he spoke about the project of federal union

with the United States and said, “The only feasible [way] to carry this idea out is

a secret one (society) gradually absorbing the wealth of the world to be devoted

to such an object.” At the end of this document Stead wrote: “Mr. Rhodes has

never to my knowledge said a word nor has he ever written a syllable, that

justifies the suggestion that he surrendered the aspirations which were expressed

in this letter of 1891. So far from this being the case, in the long discussions

which took place between us in the last years of his life, he reaffirmed as em-

phatically as at first his unshaken conviction as to the dream — if you like to call

it so — a vision, which had ever been the guiding star of his life.” See W. T.

Stead, The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes (London, 1902),

73-77.

5 Sir John Wiilison, Sir George Parkin (London, 1929), 234.

6 This paragraph and the two preceding it are from Sir Frederick Whyte,

The Life of W. T. Stead (2 vols., Boston, 1925), 270-272 and 39.

7 See Journals and Letters of Reginald , Viscount Esher (4 vols., London,

1938), I, 149-150. It should be noted that the excision in the entry for 3

February marked by three points (. . .) was made by Lord Esher’s son when he

edited the journals for publication.

8 See F. Whyte, Life of W. T. Stead (2 vols., Boston, 1925), 199-212.

9 No mention of the secret society is to be found in either Sir Harry Johnston,

The Story of My Life (London, 1923), or in Alex. Johnston, Life and Letters of

Sir Harry Johnston (London, 1929). The former work does contain an account

of Johnston’s break with Rhodes on page 497. More details are on pages 145-148

of the later work, including a record of Rhodes’s saying, “I will smash you,

Johnston, for this.” Johnston was convinced that it was a result of this enmity

that Milner rather than he was chosen to be High Commissioner of South Africa

in 1897. See pages 338-339.

10 Rhodes’s reason for eliminating him (given in the January 1901 codicil to his

will) was “on account of the extraordinary eccentricity of Mr. Stead, though

having always a great respect for him, but feeling the objects of my Will would

be embarrassed by his views.” Milner’s reasons (given in the “Stead Memorial”

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number of The Review of Reviews , May 1912) were his “lack of balance,” which

was “his Achilles heel.” See also the letter of 12 April 1902 from Edmund Gar-

rett to Stead, quoted below, from F. Whyte, The Life of W. T. Stead (2 vols.,

Boston, 1925), 211.

11 The quotation is from the sketch of Lord Esher in the Dictionary of Na-

tional Biography. The other quotations from Brett are from The Journals and

Letters of Reginald , Viscount Esher (4 vols., London, 1934-1938).

12 E. T. Cook, Edmund Garrett (London, 1909), 158. The excision in this let-

ter marked by three points (...) was made by Cook. Cook was a protege of

Milner’s, found in New College, invited to contribute to the Pall Mall Gazette in

1881, and added to the staff as an editor in August 1883, when Milner was

acting as editor-in-chief, during the absence of Morley and Stead. See F. Whyte,

The Life of W. T. Stead (2 vols., Boston, 1925), I, 94. Cook remained close to

Milner for many years. On 4 October 1899 Lord Esher wrote to his son a letter

in which he said: “Cook is the Editor of the Daily News and is in close touch

with Milner and his friends”— Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher

(4 vols., London, 1938), I, 240.

13 F. Whyte, Life of W. T. Stead (2 vols., Boston, 1925), 211. The quotation

in the next paragraph is from the same place.

14 As an example of this and an example of the way in which the secret society

functioned in the early period, see the following passage from the Journals and

Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher (4 vols., London, 1938), under the date 21

November 1892: “I went to London on Friday and called on Rhodes. He had

asked me to do so. . . . Rhodes asked for the Government carriage of his

telegraph poles and 200 Sikhs at Blantyre. Then he will make the telegraph. He

would like a gunboat on Tanganyika. I stayed there to lunch. Then saw

Rosebery. He was in good spirits.” From Sir Harry Johnston’s autobiography, it

is clear that the 200 Sikhs were for him.

I5 S. G. Millen, Rhodes (London, 1934), 341-342.

16 In the House of Commons, Maguire was a supporter of Parnell, acting on

orders from Rhodes, who had given £10,000 to Parnell’s cause in 1888. Rhodes’s

own explanation of w’hy he supported Parnell is a typical Milner Group state-

ment. He said that he gave the money “since in Mr. Parnell’s cause. ... I believe

he’s the key to the Federal System, on the basis of perfect Home Rule in every

part of the Empire.” This quotation is from S. G. Millin, Rhodes (London,

1934), 112, and is based on W. T. Stead, The Last Will and Testament of Cecil

John Rhodes (London, 1902).

l7 The first quotation is from Edmund Garrett, “Milner and Rhodes,” in The

Empire and the Century (London, 1905), 478. According to The Times

obituary of Milner, 14 May 1925, Rhodes repeated these sentiments in different

words on his deathbed, 26 March 1902. The statement to Stead will be found in

W. T. Stead, The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes (London,

1902), 108.

18 See Cecil Headlam, ed.. The Milner Papers , 1897-1905 (2 vols., London,

1931-1933), II, 412-413; the unpublished material is at New College, Oxford, in

Milner Papers, XXXVIII, ii, 200.

Chapter 4

! The obituary of Patrick Duncan in The Round Table (September 1943),

XXXIII, 303-305, reads in part: “Duncan became the doyen of the band of

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brothers, Milner’s young men, who were nicknamed . . . The Kindergarten,’

then in the first flush of youthful enthusiasm. It is a fast ageing and dwindling

band now; but it has played a part in the Union of South Africa colonies, and it

is responsible for the foundation and conduct of The Round Table. For forty

years and more, so far as the vicissitudes of life have allowed, it has kept

together; and always, while looking up to Lord Milner and to his successor in

South Africa, the late Lord Selborne, as its political Chief, has revered Patrick

Duncan as the Captain of the band.” According to R. H. Brand, ed., The Let-

ters of John Dove (London, 1938), Duncan was coming to England to the

meetings of the Group as late was 1932.

The above list of eighteen names does not contain all the members of the

Kindergarten. A complete list would include: (1) Harry Wilson (Sir Harry after

1908), who was a “Seeley lecturer” with Parkin in the 1890s; was chief private

secretary to Joseph Chamberlain in 1895-1897; was legal adviser to the Colonial

Office and to Milner in 1897-1901; was Secretary and Colonial Secretary to the

Orange River Colony in 1901-1907; was a member of the Intercolonial Council

and of the Railway Committee in 1903-1907. (2) E. B. Sargant, who organized

the school system of South Africa for Milner in 1900-1904 and was Director of

Education for both the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony in 1902-1904;

he wrote a chapter for The Empire and the Century in 1905. (3) Gerard Craig

Sellar, who died in 1929, and on whom no information is available. There was a

Craig-Sellar Fellowship in his honor at Balliol in 1946. (4) Oscar Ferris

Watkins, a Bible Clerk at All Souls at the end of the nineteenth century, re-

ceived a M.A. from this college in 1910; he was in the South African Con-

stabulary in 1902-1904; was in the Transvaal Civil Service in 1904-1907; was in

the East African Protectorate Service and the E.A. Civil Service from 1908, be-

ing a District Commissioner in 1914, Acting Chief Native Commissioner in

1920-1927, a member of the Legislative Council in 1920-1922, Deputy Chief

Native Commissioner of Kenya in 1921-1927; he was Director of Military

Labour under Smuts in German East Africa in 1914-1918. (5) Percy Girouard

(later Sir Percy) was chairman of the Egyptian Railway Board in 1898-1899;

was Director of Railways in the Boer War in 1899-1902; was Commissioner of

Railways and Head of the Central South African Railways in 1902-1904; was

High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria in 1907-1908 and Governor in

1908-1909; was Governor of the East African Protectorate in 1909-1912; was

director of Armstrong, Whitworth and Company in 1912-1915; and was Direc-

tor General of Munitions Supply in 1914-1915. He was fired by Lloyd George

for inefficiency in 1915.

3 Douglas Malcolm’s sister in 1907 married Neill Malcolm (since 1919 Major

General Sir Neill Malcolm), who was a regular army officer from 1889 to his

retirement in 1924. He was on the British Military Mission to Berlin in

1919-1921; Commanding General in Malaya, 1921-1924; a founder of the

RIIA, of which he was chairman from 1926 (succeeding Lord Meston) to 1935

(succeeded by Lord Astor). He was High Commissioner for German Refugees in

1936-1938, with R. M. Makins (member of All Souls and the Milner Group and

later British Minister in Washington) as his chief British subordinate. He is

president of the British North Borneo Company, of which Dougal Malcolm is

vice-president.

Ian Malcolm (Sir Ian since 1919), a brother of Neill Malcolm, was an attache

at Berlin, Paris, and Petersburg in 1891-1896; and M.P. in 1895-1906 and again

1910-1919; assistant private secretary to Lord Salisbury (1895-1900); parlia-

mentary private secretary to the Chief Secretary for Ireland (George Wynd-

ham) in 1901-1903; Secretary to the Union Defence League, organized by

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Walter Long, in 1906-1910; a Red Cross officer in Europe and North America

(1914-1917); on Balfour’s mission to the United States in 1917; private secretary

to Balfour during the Peace Conference (1919); and British representative on the

Board of Directors of the Suez Canal Company. He wrote Walter Long’s

biography in the Dictionary of National Biography.

4 See W. B. Worsfold, The Reconstruction of the New Colonies under Lord

Milner (2 vols., London, 1913), II, 207-222 and 302-419.

5 The last quotation is from Dyarchy (Oxford, 1920), liii. The other are from

The Problem of the Commonwealth (London, 1915), 18, and 200-219.

6 Fisher was one of the most important members of the Milner Group, a fact

which would never be gathered from the recent biography written by David

Ogg, Herbert Fisher , 1865-1940 (London, 1947). He was associated with

members of the Group, or persons close to it all his life. At New College in the

period 1884-1888, he was a student of W. L. Courtney, whose widow. Dame

Janet Courtney, was later close to the Group. He became a Fellow of New Col-

lege in 1888, along with Gilbert Murray, also a member of the Group. His

pupils at New College included Curtis, Kerr, Brand, Malcolm, and Hichens in

the first few years of teaching; the invitation to South Africa in 1908 came

through Curtis; his articles on the trip were published in The Times. He sailed to

India in 1913 with Herbert Baker of the Group (Rhodes’s architect). He refused

the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1918, so it was given to Amery’s

brother-in-law; he refused the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign

Affairs in December 1918, when Robert Cecil resigned. He played a certain role

in drafting the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1919 and the Government of

Ireland Bill of 1921, and piloted the latter through Commons. He refused the

post of Ambassador to Washington in 1919. Nevertheless, he did not see eye to

eye with the inner core of the Group on either religion or protection, since he

was an atheist and a free-trader to the end. His book on Christian Science

almost caused a break with some members of the Group.

7 H. H. Henson, Memoirs of Sir William Anson (Oxford, 1920), 212.

8 Cecil Headlam, ed.. The Milner Papers , 1897-1905 (2 vols., London,

1931-1933), II, 501.

9 R. H. Brand, The Union of South Africa (Oxford, 1909), 39.

10 Smuts was frequently used by the Milner Group to enunciate its policies in

public (as, for example, in his speeches of 15 May 1917 and 13 November 1934).

The fact that he was speaking for the Milner Group was generally recognized by

the upper classes in England, was largely ignored by the masses in England, and

was virtually unknown to Americans. Lord Davies assumed this as beyond the

need of proof in an article which he published in The Nineteenth Century in

January 1935. He was attacking the Milner Group’s belief that British defense

could be based on the Dominions and the United States and especially on its ef-

forts to reduce the League of Nations to a simple debating society. He pointed

out the need for an international police force, then asked, “Will the Dominions

and the United States volunteer as special constables? And, if they refuse, does it

mean that Great Britain is precluded from doing so? The reply of The Round

Table is ‘yes,’ and the most recent exposition of its policy is contained in the

speech delivered by General Smuts at the dinner given in his honor by the Royal

Institute of International Affairs on November 13”— The Nineteenth Century

(January 1935), CXVII, 51.

Smuts ’s way in imperial affairs was much smoothed by the high opinion

which Lord Esher held of him; see, for example. The Journals and Letters of

Reginald Viscount Esher (4 vols., London, 1938), IV, 101, 224, and 254.

n Lord Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflections 1852-1927 (2 vols..

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Boston, 1928), I, 213-214. Asquith was a member of the Cecil Bloc and of “The

Souls.” He was a lifelong friend of both Balfour and Milner. It was the former

who persuaded Asquith to write his memoirs, after talking the matter over

privately with Margot Asquith one evening while Asquith himself was at

Grillions. When Asquith married Margot Tennant in 1894, the witnesses who

signed the marriage certificates were A. J. Balfour, W. E. Gladstone, Lord

Rosebery, Charles Tennant, H. J. Tennant, and R. B. Haldane. Asquith’s

friendship with Milner went back to their undergraduate days. In his

autobiography Asquith wrote (pp. 210-211): “We sat together at the Scholar’s

table in Hall for three years. We then formed a close friendship, and were for

many years on intimate terms and in almost constant contact with one another.

... At Oxford we both took an active part at the Union in upholding the un-

fashionable Liberal cause. ... In my early married days [1877-1885] he used

often to come to my house at Hampstead for a frugal Sunday supper when we

talked over political and literary matters, for the most part in general agree-

ment.” For Milner’s relationship with Margot Tennant before her marriage to

Asquith in 1894, see her second fling at autobiography, More or Less about

Myself (London, 1932). On 22 April 1908, W. T. Stead wrote to Lord Esher

that Mrs. Asquith had three portraits over her bed: Rosebery, Balfour, and

Milner. See The Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher (4 vols., Lon-

don, 1938), II, 304.

Chapter 5

l The Times s obituary on Milner (14 May 1925), obviously written by a per-

son who knew the situation well (probably either Dawson or Amery), said; “He

would never in any circumstances have accepted office again. . . . That he

always disliked it, assumed it with reluctance, and laid it down with infinite

relief, is a fact about which in his case there was never the smallest affectation.”

It will be recalled that Milner had refused the Colonial Secretaryship in 1903;

about six years later, according to The Times obituary, he refused a Unionist of-

fer of a Cabinet post in the next Conservative government, unless the party

would pledge itself to establish compulsory military training. This it would not

do. It is worth recalling that another initiate, Lord Esher, shared Milner’s fond-

ness for compulsory military training, as well as his reluctance to hold public of-

fice.

2 E. Garrett, The Empire and the Century (London, 1905), 481. Eight years

later, in 1913, in the introduction to a collection of his speeches called The Na-

tion and the Empire (Boston, 1913), Milner said almost the same thing. Milner’s

distaste for party politics was shared by Lord Esher and Lord Grey to such an

extent as to become a chief motivating force in their lives. See H. Begbie, Albert ,

Fourth Earl Grey (London, 1918), especially p. 52, and The Journals and Let-

ters of Reginald, Viscount Esher (4 vols., London, 1938), passim.

3 Letter of Milner to Congdon, 23 November 1904, in Cecil Headlam, ed..

The Milner Papers (2 vols., London, 1931-1933), II, 506.

4 Cecil Headlam, ed., The Milner Papers (2 vols., London, 1931-1933), I,

267 and 288; II, 505. Milner’s antipathy for party politics was generally shared

by the inner circle of the Milner Group. The future Lord Lothian, writing in

The Round Table , August 1911, was very critical of party politics and used the

same arguments against it as Milner. He wrote: “At any moment a party

numbering among its numbers all the people best qualified to manage foreign

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affairs may be cast from office, for reasons which have nothing to do with their

conduct of these matters. ... If the people of Great Britain manage to keep at

the head of the great Imperial offices of State, men who will command the con-

fidence of the Dominions, and who pursue steadfastly a . . . successful policy,

and if the people of the Dominions are tolerant and far-sighted enough to accept

such a policy as their own, the present arrangement may last. Does history give

us any reason for expecting that the domestic party system will produce so great

a combination of good fortune and good management?” ( The Round Table , I,

414-418).

In the introduction to The Nation and the Empire , written in 1913, Milner

expressed himself in a similar vein.

5 Marquess of Crewe, Lord Rosebery (2 vols., London, 1931), 615.

6 See John, Viscount Morley, Recollections (2 vols., New York, 1917), II.

HTie fact that a small “secret” group controlled the nominations for

Chancellor of Oxford was widely recognized in Britain, but not frequently men-

tioned publicly. In May 1925 the Earl of Birkenhead wrote a letter to The Times

to protest against this usurpation by a nonofficial group and was answered, in

The Times , by a letter which stated that, when the group was formed after the

interruption of the First World War, he had been invited to join it but had never

acknowledged the invitationl Milners nomination was made by a group that

met in New College, under the chairmanship of H. A, L. Fisher, on 5 May 1925.

There were about thirty present, including Fisher, Lord Astor, Lord Ernie,

Steel-Maitiand, Pember, Wilkinson, Brand, Lucas, M. G. Glazebrook, Sir

Herbert Warren (classmate and friend of Milner’s), Archbishop Davidson, Cyril

Bailey, etc. The same group, according to Lord Halifax’s biographer,

nominated Lord Halifax to the Chancellorship in 1933.

8 The editors were assisted in the work of producing the two volumes by

Margaret Toynbee. The influence of the Milner Group can be discerned in the

list of acknowledgments in the preface to Weaver’s volume. Among eighteen

names listed may be found those of Cyril Bailey (Fellow of Balliol, 1902-1939,

and member of the Ministry of Munitions, 1915-1918); C. R. M. F. Cruttwell

(member of All Souls and the Round Table Group, Principal of Hertford Col-

lege since 1930); Geoffrey Dawson, H. A. L. Fisher; and Ernest Swinton

(Fellow of All Souls, 1925-1939). Apparently these persons decided what names

should be included in the Dictionary.

Chapter 6

■The Milner Group’s control over these lectures appears as much from the

list of presiding officers as from the list of lecturers, thus:

President

A. D. Steel-Maitiand

Lord Bryce

Lord Milner

Lord Selborne

Earl St. Aldwyn

Lord Sumner

Speaker

Michael Sadler

Charles Lucas

A. L. Smith

H. A. L. Fisher

Philip Kerr

G. R. Parkin

Title

The Universities and the War

The Empire and Democracy

The People and the Duties of Empire

Imperial Administration

The Commonwealth and the Empire

The Duty of the Empire in the World

2 Buckle came to The Times staff in 1880 because of his All Souls connection,

being recommended by Sir William Anson, according to the official History of

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The Times. He was apparently selected to be the future editor from the begin-

ning, since he was given a specially created position as “confidential assistant” to

the editor, at a salary “decidedly higher than an Oxford graduate with a good

degree could reasonably hope to gain in a few years in any of the regular profes-

sions.” See The History of The Times (4 vols., London, 1935), II, 529. Buckle

may have been the link between Lord Salisbury and The Times , since they could

easily meet at All Souls. Obviously The History of the Times, which devotes a

full volume of 862 pages to the period of Buckle’s editorship, does not tell the full

story on Buckle, since he rarely appears on the scene as an actor and would

seem, from the History, to have been ignorant of most of what was happening in

his offices (the Rhodes-Jameson connection, for example). This is difficult to

believe.

The History of The Times is unsatisfactory on other grounds as well. For ex-

ample, it is not possible from this work to construct a complete record of who

held various staff positions. We are told, for example, that Flora Shaw became

head of the Colonial Department in 1890, but that ends that department as far

as the volume is concerned. There is considerable material on Miss Shaw,

especially in the chapters on the Transvaal, but we never find out who was her

successor, or when she left the staff, or if (as appears likely) the Colonial Depart-

ment was a creation for her occupancy only and did not survive her (undated)

withdrawal from the staff; similarly the exact dates and positions of men like

Amery and Grigg are not clear.

\*The History of The Times (4 vols., London, 1935), III, 755.

4 There were others, but they are not of primary, or even secondary impor-

tance in the Milner Group. We might mention Aubrey L. Kennedy (son of Sir

John Kennedy of the diplomatic service), who was on The Times staff from 1910

to 1942, in military intelligence in 1914-1919, diplomatic correspondent for the

BBC in 1942-1945, and an influential member of Chatham House since 1919.

5 E. Moberly Bell, Flora Shaw (London, 1947), 115.

6 At the suggestion of the British Foreign Office, copies of these articles were

circulated in America and in Europe. See E. Moberly Bell, Flora Shaw (Lon-

don, 1947), 228.

7 The History of The Times (4 vols., London, 1935), III, 212, 214.

8 A11 quotations are from The History of The Times (4 vols., London, 1935),

III, chapters 7 and 9.

9 See E. T. Cook, Edmund Garrett (London, 1909), 118-119. The difference

of opinion between Stead and the others can be traced in F. Whyte, The Life of

W. T. Stead (2 vols., Boston, 1925), Ch, 21.

The failure of the plotters in Johannesburg to revolt so haunted the plotters

elsewhere that they salved their wounds by fantasy. Stead wrote this fantasy for

The Review of Reviews annual of January 1897, and consulted with Garrett,

who had similar plans for the Christmas 1896 number of the Cape Times. In

Steads story, the Jameson fiasco was to be turned into a smashing success by a

heroic South African editor, who, when all appeared lost, would rush to Johan-

nesburg, stir up the revolt, and save the day. Garrett, who was to be the original

model for the hero, wrote back: “A suggestion which will help to keep us

distinct, give you a much grander theme, and do something for C.J.R. which no

one has yet dared — I went nearer to ‘Cecil Rhodes’ Dream’ but that was a hint

only: viz. Make world see what he was driving at and what would have come if

all had come off and if Johannesburg had played up. . . . As to making me the

hero. No. . . . But he must be not only me but you also, and A. Milner, and a

few more rolled into one; and he must do what I dreamed of doing but time and

space prevented.” For the name of this hero Garrett suggested combining the

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three names into “Milner Garsted” or “Milstead.” Ultimately, Stead made the

hero a woman. The new model was probably Flora Shaw. The story appeared

with the title “The History of a Mystery.” See F. Whyte, The Life of W. T.

Stead , 94-95

,0 Even after the view of the majority prevailed, Stead refused to yield and

published his version of a proper defense in The Scandal of the South African

Committee (London, 1899). It was Steads belief that preparation for “a raid”

was a patriotic act which, if confessed, would have won public acclaim rather

than condemnation.

ll On this see Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher , (4 vols., Lon-

don, 1938), I, 196-202.

l2 The History of The Times (4 vols., London, 1935), III, 244. It is clear from

Miss Moberly Bell’s biography of Flora Shaw (183-188) that Buckle knew this

fact at least by 24 May 1897, although Miss Shaw had previously written him a

letter stating explicitly (probably for the record) that she had been acting

without either Buckle’s or Bell’s knowledge. The night before Miss Shaw

testified before the Select Committee, Buckle sent her a detailed letter of instruc-

tion on how to answer the committee’s questions.

13 W. S. Blunt, My Diaries (London, 1932), 226.

l4 See The History of The Times (4 vols., London, 1935), III, 315-316.

Chapter 7

•L. Curtis, Dyarchy (Oxford, 1920), 41.

There can be no doubt that the original inspiration for the Round Table

movement was to be found in anti-German feeling. In fact, there are some in-

dications that this was the primary motive and that the stated purpose of work-

ing for imperial federation was, to some extent at least, a mask. The Round

Table , in 1940, in its obituary of Abe Bailey (September 1940, XXX, 743-746),

attributes its foundation to this cause as follows: “German ambitions to destroy

and supplant the British Commonwealth were manifest to those who had eyes to

see. » . . [These asked] ‘Can not all the Dominions be brought to realise the com-

mon danger that confronts them as much as it confronts Great Britain and think

out in mutual discussion the means of uniting all the force and resolution of the

Empire in its defense?’ To the solution of this question the founders of the Closer

Union Societies resolved to apply a similar procedure. Round Table Groups

were established in all the British Dominions to study the problem.” A similar

cause for the founding appeared in The Round Table as recently as the issue of

September 1948.

\*The original leader of the Round Table Groups in New Zealand was ap-

parently James Allen (Sir James after 1917), who had been educated in

England, at Clifton School and Cambridge University, and was an M.P. in New

Zealand from 1887 to 1920. He was Minister of Defense (1912-1920), Minister of

Finance and Education (1912-1915), and Minister of Finance (1919-1920),

before he became in 1920, New Zealand’s High Commissioner in London. He

was a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

In the Round Table Group for New Zealand, Allen was soon supplemented

and eventually succeeded by William Downie-Stewart as the most important

member. Stewart was at the time Mayor of Dunedin (1913) but soon began a

twenty-one-year period as an M.P. (1914-1935). He was also Minister of

Customs (1921-1928); Minister of Internal Affairs (1921-1924); Minister of In-

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dustries and Commerce (1923-1926); Attorney General (1926); Minister of

Finance (1926-1928, 1931-1933); Acting Prime Minister (1926); New Zealand

delegate to the Ottawa Conference (1932); Vice-Chancellor of Otago Univer-

sity; prominent businessman, and president of the New Zealand Institute of In-

ternational Affairs (1935- ). According to Doves letters, he attended a Milner

Group discussion meeting at Lord Lothian’s country house in October 1932.

3 The chief leaders in Australia were Thomas Bavin (Sir Thomas after 1933)

and Frederic W. Eggleston (Sir Frederic since 1941). The former, who died in

1941 (see obituary in The Round Table for December 1941), was a barrister in

New South Wales from 1897; Professor of Law and Modern History at the

University of Tasmania (1900-1901); private secretary to the first Prime

Minister of Australia, Sir Edmund Barton, in 1901-1904; Secretary and Chief

Law Officer of Australia in 1907; It. commander in naval intelligence in

1916-1918; an Australian M.P. in 1919-1935; held many cabinet posts in New

South Wales from 1922 to 1930, ending as Premier (1927-1930). He finished his

career as a judge of the Supreme Court in 1935-1941. He was one of the original

members of the Round Table Group in Australia, a regular contributor to The

Round Table , and an important member of the Australian Institute of Interna-

tional Affairs.

Eggleston was a barrister from 1897; a member, correspondent, and chief

agent in Australia for The Round Table from 1911; a member of the Legislative

Assembly of Australia, (1920-1927); Minister for Railways, (1924-1926); chair-

man of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, (1934-1941); Minister of

China (1941-1944) and to the United States (1944-1946). He was one of the

founders and chief officers of the Australian Institute of International Affairs

and its representative on the council of the Institute of Pacific Relations.

4 Glazebrook, although virtually unknown, was a very important figure in

Canadian life, especially in financial and imperialist circles, up to his death in

1940. For many years he had a practical monopoly in foreign exchange transac-

tions in Toronto, through his firm, Glazebrook and Cronyn (founded 1900).

Like most members of the Milner Group, he was interested in adult education,

workers’ education, and university management. He promoted all of these in

Toronto, lecturing himself to the Workers’ Educational Association, and at the

University of Toronto where he was assistant Professor of Banking and Finance

(1926-1937). He was the chief adviser of leading bankers of Canada, and of

London and New York bankers on Canadian matters. The Round Table says of

him; “Through his friendship with Lord Milner and others he had at one time a

wide acquaintance among the prominent figures in British public life, and it is

well-known to his intimates that on numerous occasions British ministers,

anxious to secure reliable information about certain Canadian affairs through

unofficial channels, had recourse of Glazebrook. ... By precept and example he

exercised an immense influence for good upon the characters and outlook of a

number of young Canadians who had the privilege of his society and knew him

as ‘The Sage.’ Some of them, who have come to high place in the life of the

Dominion, will not be slow to acknowledge the value of the inspiration and

enlightenment which they derived from him. Continually he preached the doc-

trine to his young friends that it was their duty, if fortune had placed them in

comfortable circumstances, to give some of their time to the intelligent study of

public affairs and to the service of the community, and he awakened in not a

few minds for the first time the idea that there were better goals in life than the

making of money. It is true that the Round Table Groups which he organized

with such enthusiasm have now faded into oblivion, but many of their members

did not lose the zest for an intelligent study of politics which Glazebrook had im-

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planted in them, and after the last war they proved keen supporters of the Cana-

dian Institute of International Affairs as an agency for continuing the political

education which Glazebrook had begun.”

5 That Curtis consulted with Lord Chelmsford on the planned reforms before

Lord Chelmsford went to India in 1916 was revealed in the House of Lords by

Lord Crewe on 12 December 1919, and by Curtis in his book Dyarchy (Oxford,

1920), xxvii.

6 Dyarchy (Oxford, 1920), 74.

7 See R. H. Brand, ed., Letters of John Dove (London, 1938), 115-116.

8 See R. H. Brand, ed., Letters of John Dove (London, 1938), 326, 340.

9 Some of Milner’s Canadian speeches in 1908 and in 1912 will be found in

The Nation and the Empire (Boston, 1913). Kerr’s speech at Toronto on 30 July

1912 was published by Glazebrook in June 1917 as an aid to the war effort. It

bore on the cover the inscription “The Round Table in Canada.” Curtis’s

speech, so far as I can determine, is unpublished.

10 See R. L. Schuyler, “The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England,” in The

Political Science Quarterly (September 1928 and December 1921); O. D.

Skelton, Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt (Toronto, 1920), 440; and

C. A. Bodelson, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism (Copenhagen, 1924),

104.

11 All of these papers will be found in The Proceedings of the Royal Colonial

Institute , VI, 36-85; XII, 346-391; and XI, 90-132.

12 The ideas expressed by Lionel Curtis were really Milner’s ideas. This was

publicly admitted by Milner in a speech before a conference of British and

Dominion parliamentarians called together by the Empire Parliamentary

Association, 28 July 1916, At this meeting “Milner expressed complete agree-

ment with the general argument of Mr. Curtis, making lengthy quotations from

his book, and also accepted the main lines of his plan for Imperial Federation.

The resulting discussion showed that not a single Dominion Member present

agreed either with Mr. Curtis or Lord Milner.” H. D. Hall, The British Com-

monwealth of Nations (London, 1920), 166. The whole argument of Curtis’s

book was expressed briefly by Milner in 1913 in the Introduction to The Nation

and the Empire.

13 Milner’s two letters were in Cecil Headlam, ed., The Milner Papers (2 vols.,

London, 1931-1933), I, 159-160 and 267; On Edward Wood’s role, see A. C.

Johnson, Viscount Halifax (New York, 1941), 88-95. The project for devolution,

on a geographic basis for political matters and on a functional basis for

economic matters, was advocated by The Round Table in an article entitled

“Some problems in democracy and reconstruction” in the issue of September

1917. The former type was accepted by Curtis as a method for solving the Irish

problem and as a method which might well have been used in solving the Scot-

tish problem in 1707. He wrote: “The continued existence in Edinburgh and

London of provincial executives and legislatures, entrusted respectively with in-

terests which were strictly Scottish and strictly English, was not incompatible

with the policy of merging Scots and Englishmen in a common state. The

possibility of distinguishing local from general interests had not as yet been

realized.” Again, he wrote: “If ever it should prove expedient to unburden the

Parliament of the United Kingdom by delegating to the inhabitants of England,

Ireland, Scotland, and Wales the management of their own provincial affairs,

and the condition of Ireland should prove no bar to such a measure, the Irish

problem will once for all have been closed” — The Commonwealth of Nations

(London, 1916), 295,518.

14 R. H. Brand, ed., Letters of John Dove (London, 1938), 321.

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15 “The Financial and Economic Future” in The Round Table (December

1918), IX, 114-134. The quotation is from pages 121-123.

l6 The Commonwealth of Nations (London, 1916), 8. This emphasis on duty

to the community is to be found throughout the Milner Group. See, for exam-

ple, Lord Greys violent retort to a Canadian (who tried to belittle A. J.

Glazebrook because he made no real effort to accumulate wealth) in The Round

Table obituary of Glazebrook (March 1941 issue). The same idea was advocated

by Hichens and Milner to settle the problems of management and labor within

the industrial system. In a speech at Swanwick in 1919, the former said: “The

industrial problem is primarily a moral one. ... If we have rights, we also have

duties. ... In the industrial world our duty clearly is to regard our work as the

Service which we render to the rest of the community, and it is obvious that we

should give, not grudgingly or of necessity but in full measure” ( The Round

Table , December 1940, XXXI, 11). Milner’s views are in Questions of the Hour

(London, 1923).

17 In the August 1911 issue of The Round Table the future Lord Lothian

wrote: “There are at present two codes of international morality — the British or

Anglo-Saxon and the continental or German. Both cannot prevail. If the British

Empire is not strong enough to be a real influence for fair dealing between na-

tions, the reactionary standards of the German bureaucracy will triumph, and

it will then only be a question of time before the British Empire itself is victim-

ized by an international 4 hold-up’ on the lines of the Agadir incident. Unless the

British peoples are strong enough to make it impossible for backward rivals to

attack them with any prospect of success, they will have to accept the political

standards of the aggressive military powers” (The Round Table , August 1911, 1,

422-423). What a disaster for the world that Lord Lothian, in March 1936, was

not able to take to heart his own words written twenty-five years earlier I

I8 As a matter of fact, one American Rhodes Scholar was a Negro; the experi-

ment was not a success, not because of any objections by the English, but

because of the objections of other American Rhodes Scholars.

19 L. Curtis, Dyarchy (Oxford, 1920), liii-liv.

20 The Commonwealth of Nations (London, 1916), 16, 24.

2{ The Commonwealth of Nations (London, 1916), 181. See also The Prob-

lems of the Commonwealth (London, 1915), 18-19.

22 The quotations from Curtis will be found in The Commonwealth of Na-

tions (London, 1916), 181 and 176; also The Problem of the Commonwealth

(London, 1915), 18-19; the quotation from Dove is in a long letter to Brand,

dated 9 September 1919, in Letters of John Dove , edited by R. H. Brand (Lon-

don, 1938), 96-106; Philip Kerr’s statement will be found in L. Curtis, Dyarchy

(Oxford, 1920), 73. See also Kerr’s speech at King’s College in 1915, published in

The Empire and the Future (London, 1916); he attacks jingo-imperialism,

racial superiority, and national conceit as “Prussian heresy” and adds: “That the

spirit of Prussia has brooded over this land is proved by the shortest examination

of the history of Ireland.” He then attacks the Little Englanders and economic

or commercial imperialism, giving shocking examples of their effects on native

lives and cultures. He concludes: “The one thing you cannot do, if you are a

human being, is to do nothing. Civilization cannot stand on one side and see

native tribes destroyed by so-called civilized looters and marauders, or as the

result of the free introduction of firearms, drink, and other instruments of vice.

He decides that Britain, by following a middle ground, has “created not an Em-

pire but a Commonwealth” and defines the latter as a community activated by

the spirit “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” (The Empire and the Future , 70-86).

George R. Parkin expresses similar ideas in the same volume on pp. 95-97. Kerr

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had expressed somewhat similar sentiments in a speech before the Canadian

Round Table in Toronto, 30 July 1912. This was published by Glazebrook as a

pamphlet (Toronto, 1917).

23 The quotations from A. L. Smith are from The Empire and the Future

(London, 1916), 29-30.

Chapter 8

! The success of the Group in getting the foreign policy they wanted under a

Liberal government may be explained by the pressure from without through

The Times and the assistance from within through Asquith, Grey, and Haldane,

and through the less obvious but no less important work of persons like Sir Eyre

Crowe and above all Lord Esher.

2 During this period Lord Esher played a vital but still mysterious role in the

government. He was a strong supporter of Milner and his Group and was an in-

fluential adviser of Lloyd George. On 12 November 1917, he had a long walk

with his protege, Hankey, in Paris and “urged the vital importance of sending

Milner as Ambassador, Minister-Plenipotentiary, call him what you will. Henry

Wilson cannot stand alone.” Later the same day he spoke to Lloyd George\*. “I

urged most strongly that he should send Milner here, on the ground that he

would give stability where there is none and that his presence would ensure

Henry Wilson getting ‘information/ This I urged specially in view of the future

as of the present. Otherwise we might one day find the Italian position

reproduced in France. He finds Milner almost indispensable, but he will

seriously think of the proposal.” Milner was sent to Paris, as Esher wished, four

months later. On 2 February 1918, Esher had another conversation, in which

Lloyd George spoke of putting Milner in Derby’s place at the War Office. The

change was made two months later. (Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount

Esher [4 vols., London, 1938], 158-159 and 178.)

3 Zimmern was unquestionably one of the better minds in the Milner Group,

and his ideas were frequently closer to Milner’s than those of others of the inner

circle. Although Zimmern agreed with the others in 1919 about the severity of

the treaty, his reasons were quite different and do credit to both his integrity

and his intelligence. He objected to the severity of the treaty because it was a

breach of the pre- armistice commitments to the Germans; at the same time he

wanted a continuation of the alliance that had won the war and a strong League

of Nations, because he had no illusions about converting the Germans to

peaceful ways in the near future. The inner circle of the Milner Group were

against a severe treaty or a strong League or an alliance with France because

they believed that Germany could be converted to the British way of thinking

and acting and because they wanted to rebuild Germany as a weapon in a

balance-of-power system against “Russian bolshevism” and “French

militarism.” Part II of Europe in Convalescence (New York, 1922) remains to

this day the most brilliant summary available on what went wrong in 1919.

Chapter 9

1 In June 1908, in a speech to the Royal Colonial Institute, Milner said:

“Anything like imperial federation — the effective union of the self-governing

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states — is not, indeed, as some think, a dream, but is certainly at present little

morethan an aspiration” (Milner, The Nation and the Empire [Boston, 1913],

293). In 1891 Sir Charles Tupper said: “Most people have come to the conclu-

sion stated by Lord Rosebery at the Mansion House, that a Parliamentary

Federation, if practicable, is so remote that during the coming century it is not

likely to make any very great advance.” In 1899, Rosebery said: “Imperial

Federation in any form is an impossible dream.” See H. D. Hall, The British

Commonwealth of Nations (London, 1920), 70-71. In October 1905, Joseph

Chamberlain said: “You cannot approach closer union by that means.” Philip

Kerr in 1911 spoke of federation as “the ill-considered proposals of the Imperial

Federation League” ( The Round Table , August 1911, 1, 374). By this last date,

only Lionel Curtis, of the Milner Group, had much faith in the possibility of

federation. This is why his name alone was affixed, as editor, to the two volumes

published by the Group in 1916.

2 On the secret group of 1903-1905, see H. D. Hall, The British Common-

wealth of Nations (London, 1920). The group was clearly made up of members

of the Cecil Bloc and Milner Group. On its report, see the Proceedings of the

Royal Colonial Institute for 1905, appendix; W. B. Worsfold, The Empire on

the Anvil (London, 1916); and R. Jebb, The Imperial Conference (London,

1911), Vol. II. Lyttleton’s dispatch is Cond. 2785 of 1905. Kerr's remark is in

The Round Table (August 1911), I, 410.

3 This opinion of the important role played by Milner in the period

1916-1921 undoubtedly originated from Geoffrey Dawson, but it was shared by

all the members of the Kindergarten. It is stated in different words by Basil

Williams in The Dictionary of National Biography and by John Buchan in his

autobiography, Pilgrims Way (Boston, 1940).

4 On the reaction to the speeches of Smuts and Halifax, see J. G. Allen,

Editorial Opinion in the Contemporary British Commonwealth and Empire

(Boulder, Colorado, 1946).

5 On this whole section, see “George Louis Beer” in The Round Table

(September 1920), X, 933-935; G. L. Beer, African Questions at the Peace

Conference (New York, 1923), 424-425; H. D. Hall, Mandates , Dependencies ,

and Trusteeship (Washington, 1948); U.S. State Department, Foreign Relations

of the United States. Paris Peace Conference 1919 , VI, 727-729. That Kerr

wrote Article 22 is revealed in H. V. Temperley, History of the Peace

Conference , VI, 501. That Curtis wrote “Windows of Freedom” and showed it

to Smuts before he wrote his memorandum was revealed by Curtis in a private

communication to Professor Quincy Wright, according to Q. Wright, Mandates

under the League of Nations (Chicago, 1930), 22-23, note 53a.

6 W. K. Hancock, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs (3 vols., Lon-

don, 1940-1942), I, 125.

7 S. G. Millen, General Smuts (2 vols., London, 1936), II, 321.

Chapter 10

1 Robert Jemmett Stopford (1895- ) was a banker in London from 1921 to

1928. He was private secretary to the chairman of the Simon Commission in

1928-1930, a member of the “Standstill Committee” on German Foreign Debts,

a member of the Runciman Commission to Czechoslovakia in 1938, Liaison Of-

ficer for Refugees with the Czechoslovakian government in 1938-1939, Finan-

cial Counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington in 1943-1945.

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Chapter 11

, See Journals and Letters oj Reginald , Viscount Esher (4 vols., London,

1938), II, 56, and III, 8.

2 According to David Ogg, Herbert Fisher , 1865-1940 (London, 1947), 96,

Fisher, “helped Mr. Montagu in drafting the Montagu-Chelmsford Report.”

sThis memorandum was published, with Lord Halifax’s permission, in A. C.

Johnson, Viscount Halifax (New York, 1941).

Chapter 12

1 See the minutes of the Council of Four, as recorded by Sir Maurice Hankey,

in U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the

United States. The Paris Peace Conference , (Washington, D.C., 1946), VI,

138-160.

2 In Europe in Convalescence (New York, 1922), Alfred Zimmern wrote of

October 1918 as follows: “Europe, ‘from the Rhine to the Volga’ to quote from a

memorandum written at the time, was in solution. It was not a question now of

autocratic against popular government; it was a question of government against

anarchy. From one moment to the next every responsible student of public af-

fairs, outside the ranks of the professional revolutionaries, however red his

previous affiliations may have been, was turned perforce into a Conservative.

The one urgent question was to get Europe back to work” (80).

In The Round Table for December 1918 (91-92) a writer (probably Curtis)

stated: “Modern civilization is at grips with two great dangers, the danger of

organized militarism . . . and the more insidious, because more pervasive

danger of anarchy and class conflict. ... As militarism breeds anarchy, so

anarchy in its turn breeds militarism. Both are antagonistic to civilization.”

In The Round Table for June 1919, Brand wrote: “It is out of any surplus on

her foreign balance of trade that Germany can alone — apart from any im-

mediately available assets — pay an indemnity. Why should Germany be able to

do the miracle that France and Italy cannot do, and not only balance her trade,

but have great surpluses in addition to pay over to her enemies? ... If, as soon

as peace is declared, Germany is given assistance and credit, she can pay us

something, and should pay all she can. But what she can pay in the next five

years must be, we repeat, limited. If, on the other hand, we take away from her

all her liquid assets, and all her working capital, if furthermore, she is bound in

future to make yearly payments to an amount which will in any reasonable

human expectation exceed her capacity, then no one outside of a lunatic asylum

will lend her money or credit, and she will not recover sufficiently to pay

anything” — War and National Finance (London, 1921), 193.

3 The attitude of the Group toward “French militarism” can be found in

many places. Among others, see Smuts’s speech of October 1923, quoted below.

This attitude was not shared by Professor Zimmern, whose understanding of

Europe in general and of France in particular was much more profound than

that of other members of the Group. In Europe in Convalescence (158-161) he

wrote: “A declaration of British readiness to sign the Guarantee Treaty would

be the best possible answer to French, and it may be added also to Belgian,

fears. ... He little knows either the French peasant or the French townsman

who thinks that aggression, whether open or concealed, against Germany need

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ever be feared from their country. . . . France feels that the same willfully un-

comprehending British policy, the same aggravatingly self-righteous professions

of rectitude, pursue her in the East, from Danzig to Upper Silesia, as on the

Western frontier of her hereditary foe; and in her nervous exasperation she puts

herself ever more in the wrong with her impeccably cool-headed neighbor.’'

The Group’s attitude toward Bolshevism was clearly stated is an article in The

Round Table for March 1919: “Bolshevism is a tyranny — a revolutionary tyr-

anny if you will — which is the complete abnegation of democracy and of all

freedom of thought and action. Based on force and terroristic violence, it is

simply following out the same philosophy which was preached by Nietzsche and

Haeckel, and which for the past twenty-five years has glorified the might of

force as the final justification of all existence. ... In its present form Bolshevism

must either spread or die. It certainly cannot remain stationary. And at the

present moment, it stands as a very real menace to the peace of Europe and to

any successful establishment of a League of Nations. This is the real problem

which the Allied delegates in Paris have now to face. ” (The italics are mine.)

4 The German emissary, whose name Smuts does not mention, was Walter de

Haas, Ministerialdirektor in the Foreign Ministry in Berlin.

5 When the Labour government was in power in 1924 and the Dawes settle-

ment of reparations was an accomplished fact, Stresemann was so afraid that

D’Abernon would be replaced as British Ambassador in Berlin that he wrote a

letter to Lord Parmoor (father of Stafford Cripps, Lord President in the Labour

Cabinet, and delegate at the time to the League of Nations), asking that D’Aber-

non be continued in his post as Ambassador. This letter, dated 16 September

1924, was answered by Lord Parmoor on 18 September from Geneva. He said,

in part: “I think that in the first instance Lord D’Abernon was persuaded to go

to Berlin especially in relation to financial and economic difficulties, but

perhaps he may be persuaded to stay on, and finish the good work he has begun.

In any case your letter is sure to be fully considered by our Foreign Minister,

who is also our Prime Minister.” See E. Sutton, Gustav Stresemann : His Diaries ,

Letters , and Papers (New York, 1935), I, 451-454.

6 This paragraph is largely based on J. H. Morgan, Assize of Arms (London,

1945), especially 199, 42, and 268. It is worthy of note that H. A. L. Fisher con-

sulted with both Lord D’Abernon and General Morgan on his visit to Germany

in 1923 and came away accepting the ideas of the former. Furthermore, when

Gilbert Murray went to Geneva in 1924 as League delegate from South Africa,

Fisher wrote him instructions to this effect. See D. Ogg, Herbert Fisher (Lon-

don, 1947), 115-117.

7 On this organization, see Institute of Politics, Williams College, The In-

stitute of Pdlitics at Williamstown : Its First Decade (Williamstown, Mass.,

1931).

8 Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, The Great Experiment (London, 1941), 166.

The quotations from Lord Esher’s Journals and Letters (4 vols., London, 1938)

are in Vol. IV, 227, 250, and 272.

9 Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, The Great Experiment (London, 1941), 250.

10 The whole memorandum and other valuable documents of this period will

be found in USSR, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Documents and Materials

Relating to the Eve of the Second World War (5 vols., 1948-1949), Vol. I,

November 1937-1938. From the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Af-

fairs , 13-45. The authenticity of these documents was challenged by an “un-

named spokesman” for the British Foreign Office when they were first issued,

but I am informed by the highest American authority on the captured German

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documents that the ones published by the Russians are completely authentic.

11 Keith Feiling, Life of Neville Chamberlain (London, 1941), 333. The

author is a Fellow of All Souls, close to the Milner Group, and wrote his book on

the basis of the late Prime Minister’s papers, which were made available by the

family.

12 See Lionel Curtis, Civitas Dei; The Commonwealth of God (London,

1938), 914-930.

13 Robert ]. Stopford, a close associate of the Milner Group whom we have

already mentioned on several occasions, went to Czechoslovakia with

Runciman as a technical adviser. See J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich: Prologue

to Tragedy (New York, 1948), 79, n.l.

14 The reference to Professor Schumann is in J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich

(New York, 1948), 436, n.l. If Mr. Wheeler-Bennett had placed a little

more credence in the “pre-Munich plot,” many of the facts which he cannot ex-

plain would be easily fitted into the picture. Among them we might point out

the mystifying (to Mr. Wheeler-Bennett) fact that Lord Runciman’s report of 16

September went further than either Hitler or Henlein in demanding sacrifices

from the Czechs (see Munich , p. 112). Or again he would not have had to make

such an about-face as that between page 96 and page 97 of the book. On page

96, The Times $ demand of 7 September was similar to the views of Mr.

Chamberlain, as expressed at Lady Astor’s on 10 May, and “Geoffrey Dawson

was a personal friend of Lord Halifax.” But on page 97, “The thoughtless ir-

responsibility of The Times did not voice at that moment the views of His

Majesty’s Government. If Mr. Wheeler-Bennett had added to his picture a few

additional facts, such as a more accurate version of German rearmaments,

Runciman’s letter of 2 September to Hitler, etc. , he would have found it even

more difficult to make his picture of Munich stand up.

15 Count Helmuth James von Moltke , a German of the Resistance (Johan-

nesburg, 1947). See also Allen W. Dulles, Germany s Underground (New York ,

1947) , 85-90. The additional letter added to the Johannesburg publication was

written by von Moltke to his wife just before his death. Curtis s name is men-

tioned in it.

16 On this whole movement, see Hans Rothfels, The German Opposition to

Hitler (Hinsdale, Illinois, 1948), and F. L. Ford, “The Twentieth of July in the

History of the German Resistance” in The American Historical Review (July

1946), LI, 609-626. On Kordt’s message to Lord Halifax, see Rothfels, 58-63.

17 A. C. Johnson, Viscount Halifax (New York, 1941), 531.

18 USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Documents and Materials Relating to

the Eve of the Second World War. II Dirksen Papers (1938-1939) (Moscow,

1948) , 126-131.

19 British Blue Book , Cmd. 6106.

20 All documents on these negotiations will be found in a Swedish Foreign

Ministry White Paper, Forspelet till det tyska angreppet pa Danmark och Norge

den 9 April 1940 (Stockholm 1947).

Chapter 13

1 On the Ministry of Information during the war, see Great Britain, Central

Office of Information, First Annual Report , 1947-1948. This is Cmd. 7567.

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2 This extract is printed in the Report of the Council of the Royal Institute of

International Affairs for 1938-1939.

3 The last important public act of the Milner Group was the drawing of the

Italo-Yugoslav boundary in 1946. The British Delegate on the Boundary Com-

mission was C. H. Waldock, now a Chichele Professor and Fellow of All Souls,

assisted by R. J. Stopford.

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