

# Journal of Liberal HISTORY



## Liberals and International Policy

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Eugenio Biagini

**Gladstone's Midlothian campaign** The realpolitik of Christian humanitarianism

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**The heyday of Liberal internationalism** The League of Nations Union

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Andrew S. Thompson

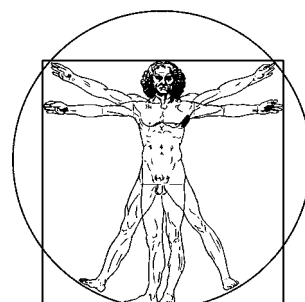
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Ian Hunter

**Sir Archibald Sinclair** The Liberal anti-appeaser

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Liberal Democrat History Group

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'From triumph to triumph' (*Punch*, 5 May 1920). (See page 4.)



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## Journal of Liberal History

The *Journal of Liberal History* is published quarterly by the Liberal Democrat History Group.

ISSN 1479-9642

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Cover design concept: **Lynne Featherstone**

Published by the Liberal Democrat History Group, c/o 38 Salford Road, London SW2 4BQ

Printed by **Kall-Kwik**,  
426 Chiswick High Road, London W4 5TF

March 2004

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### Liberal Democrat History Group

The Liberal Democrat History Group promotes the discussion and research of historical topics relating to the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party, and SDP, and of Liberalism. The Group organises discussion meetings and produces the *Journal* and other occasional publications.

For more information, including details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, tape records of meetings and archive and other research sources, see our web site at: [www.liberalhistory.org.uk](http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk).

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# LIBERALS AND INTE

**Richard S. Grayson introduces this special issue of the Journal of Liberal History, on Liberals and international policy**

International policy is at the top of the political agenda. With the Liberal Democrats playing a central role in offering a distinctive vision of current issues, this special issue on the roots of liberal internationalism is well-timed.

Understanding the basis of the Liberal approach can shed light on how the Liberal Democrats arrived where they are, and can also pose some challenges for the development of liberal internationalism in the future.

**'From triumph to triumph' (Punch, 5 May 1920). 'Mr Lloyd George: "I've made peace with Germany, with Austria, with Bulgaria, and now I've made peace with France, so there's only Turkey, Ireland and Lord Northcliffe left".'**



**T**his special issue covers a broad chronological sweep, beginning with the heydays of both the British Empire and the Gladstonian Liberal Party. In dealing with the Empire, Dr Andrew Thompson offers new thoughts on the relationship between imperialism and the development of both democracy and liberalism in the UK. He argues that there was an important interplay between the issues, with UK perceptions of the iniquities of the Empire helping to galvanise liberal opinion in favour of defending and advancing democracy.

Eugenio Biagini analyses Gladstone's approach to foreign

affairs, which is so often cited as the root of contemporary liberal internationalism. Dr Biagini challenges those who characterise Gladstone as an idealist, arguing that he approached international policy from a more 'realistic' perspective, based on careful consideration of British interests.

Two further articles move us into the 1920s and 1930s. With the Liberal Party falling apart electorally, Professor Martin Ceadel shows how, conversely, liberal internationalism had never been more influential. Similarly, Ian Hunter demonstrates how Archibald Sinclair, as Liberal leader, became one of the country's foremost critics of appeasement.

# INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Malcolm Baines and Julie Smith then draw together some of the main themes and events in the development of liberal internationalism. Dr Baines shows how, out of the embers of a near-dead Liberal Party, the case for European integration emerged – though not without tensions and debates. Dr Smith highlights the application of liberal internationalism to the development of a formal international body, namely, Liberal International.

Focusing on a specific event is the task of Michael McManus on the Suez crisis. This influenced the development of the Grimond Liberal Party and is still talked about by many party activists today. McManus highlights the effect that Suez had on the party's public profile, which has interesting parallels with the effect of the recent war in Iraq on the standing of the Liberal Democrats.

Aside from this broad range of articles, this special issue reprints a speech from Lloyd George. Made in September 1914, essentially as an encouragement to potential recruits to the army, it provides an insight into the Liberal mind at the outbreak of the Great War. Heavy on the language of sacrifice and patriotism, it had a major impact in terms of unifying the nation in pursuit of total war, and is a key example of how Liberal principles were applied to that concept.

Finally, this special issue includes two book reviews. Peter Truesdale's review of Margaret MacMillan's *Peacemakers* reminds us of the profound effect that Liberals had on the post-Great War settlement, especially in the person of that great

American liberal, President Woodrow Wilson. This process, of course, involved building nations out of the ruins of war, and the role of Liberals in nation-building is also tackled in Piers Hugill's review of *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*.

A number of key themes emerge from these articles. The consistency of approach is clear, from Gladstone's time to the present: a belief in arbitration, international law, and building international institutions, based on a sense that nations can be made to behave like individuals if the right rules and procedures are in place. Meanwhile, Lloyd George's text illustrates the place of war in liberal internationalism.

There is also a clear pattern of liberal internationalism reaching out to people outside the Liberal Party. This was perhaps most clear through the work of the League of Nations Union, but also at the time of Suez and during debates on appeasement. Liberal internationalism has been a trend in British politics that has sometimes wielded influence well above the numbers of Liberal MPs in Parliament at any given time.

But perhaps the strongest theme to emerge is the centrality of international policy to Liberal Party politics, and to politics more widely. Andrew Thompson's article sets the scene for this in his analysis of the discourse between imperial debates and events and the development of ideology on more domestic issues. Furthermore, a key part of Gladstone's appeal to the nation was his enunciation of liberal interna-

**The strongest theme to emerge is the centrality of international policy to Liberal Party politics.**

tionalism, and later, a similar vision had the capacity to inspire people to political action, entirely free of party activity, through the League of Nations Union.

This centrality of international policy to the daily business of politics has, of course, never been more evident than in the late 1930s and during the Suez crisis. It is encouraging that then, as in 2004, the principles of liberal internationalism have provided Liberal politicians with a sound basis for a coherent policy position on the issues of the day. That bodes well for the future.

However, liberal internationalists should be careful about resting on their laurels. Inevitably, liberal internationalism looks forward to a time when there are international institutions and laws in place which are respected and used by all nations. Before such a time, there are two challenges. The first is to develop the policies that will allow collective international action against nations which flout international law, for example, by abusing human rights. That means significant reform of the United Nations. The second challenge for today is the more short-term problem of building the international political will to act against such violations when the existing structures and relationships have been through such difficult times.

*Dr Richard S. Grayson is author of Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement and of Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe. He has been Liberal Democrat Director of Policy since 1999.*

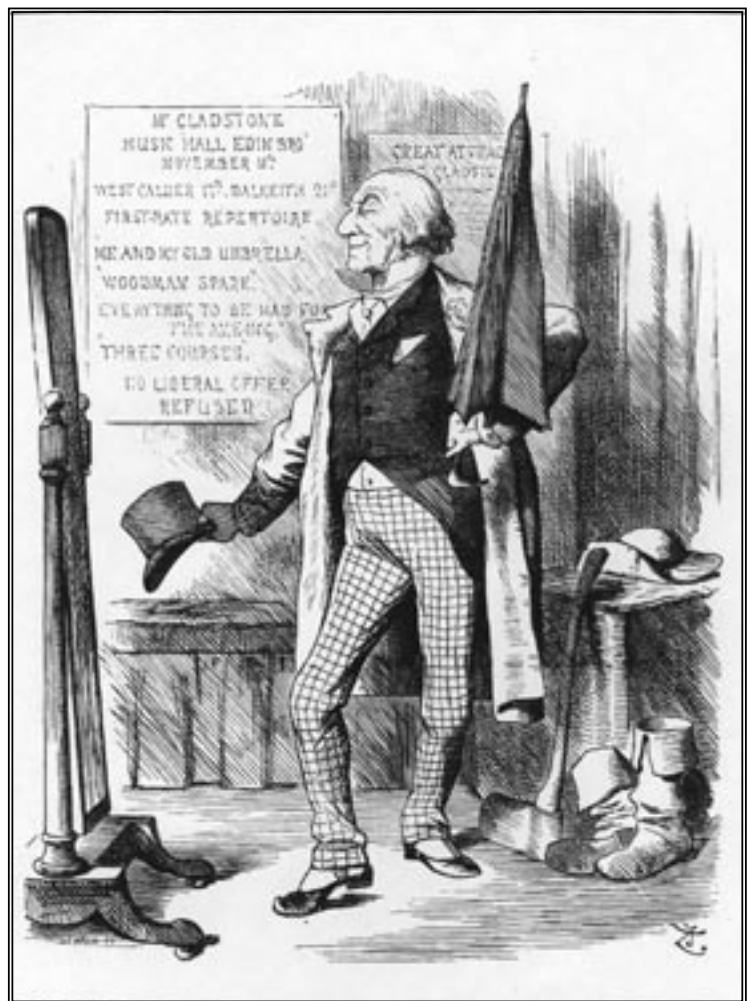
# GLADSTONE'S MIDLOTHIAN

## THE REALPOLITIK OF

**E. F. Biagini  
analyses  
Gladstone's  
principles of  
foreign policy,  
challenging those  
who characterise  
him as an idealist.**

When he set off on his pre-electoral tour in November 1879, the 'People's William' was ostensibly preparing to wrest the constituency of Midlothian from the sitting Tory MP, the Earl of Dalkeith. However, from the start many thought that the campaign had more ambitious aims, namely wresting the party leadership from the Marquis of Hartington and, indeed, the premiership from the Earl of Beaconsfield. Less evident at the time was the extent to which the Midlothian speeches would become a lasting monument to a certain liberal tradition in international relations.

**'Reappearance of the Popular Favourite' (*Punch*, 7 November 1885) – Gladstone returns to the scene of his Midlothian Campaign triumphs, with speeches in Edinburgh, West Calder and Dalkeith**



Later generations would regard the Midlothian doctrine on foreign policy as a precursor of Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' or the Charter of the UN.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Gladstone's emphasis on Europe's cultural and moral unity and the supranational forms of legitimacy

and authority emanating from that unity seemed to prefigure the modern process of European integration.

More recently historians have grown rather sceptical about Gladstone's motives and achievements. Richard Shannon has pointed out that, although his principles seem to stand like 'a



# IAN CAMPAIGN OF 1879 OF CHRISTIAN HUMANITARIANISM

great historical monument of bronze and marble', the latter, like all monuments, was held together by less noble 'wires and strings', including personal ambition and a degree of self-deception.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in the end he seems to confirm the old 'idealist' interpretation, and, almost echoing Victorian Tories, criticises the GOM for his disregard for 'the logic of imperial argument'. 'That logic had no bearing on Gladstone's actions or intentions ... He acted throughout for Europe, within a European frame of assumptions and intentions.'<sup>3</sup>

Of course, in Victorian Britain the Tories were not alone in fearing that Gladstone would sacrifice national interest to abstract principle. Within the Liberal Party many expressed similar concerns. As Jonathan Parry has written, Hartington and other leading Whig landowners distrusted Gladstone for many reasons, including his 'populist mode of leadership', tendency to fall into 'states of morbid excitement', and Christian fervour.<sup>4</sup> Parry's analysis is very accurate. Hartington and Gladstone differed in temperament, style and priorities. However, did these differences imply different foreign policy aims? Was Gladstone an irresponsible and impractical visionary who neglected national interest for the sake of abstract moral principle and 'ethical' foreign policy?

A number of historians, including the present writer, disagree with this interpretation. They accept Shannon's warning about the 'wires and strings', but draw different conclusions about Gladstone's attitude to principles, his (often hypocritical) readiness to apply them selectively, and his handling of Britain's interests. They feel that Gladstone's conduct of international relations anticipated the late twentieth-century democratic dilemma – so evident in recent U.S. foreign policy – between universal principles and national interest.<sup>5</sup> Although these historians disagree with one another as to how precisely Gladstone dealt with this dilemma, they follow Colin Matthew in arguing that his foreign policy reflected a realistic assessment of Britain's global interests and an effective – occasionally ruthless – pursuit of imperial stability within the constraints of the international context.<sup>6</sup> His emphasis on the European Concert was generally based on a more realistic appreciation of Britain's long-term interests and vulnerability than the unilateralism of those who preached a strategy of 'national assertion'. The present article applies this interpretation to the specific case of the Midlothian Principles, which Gladstone first presented in ten public speeches in 1879.

**Gladstone's conduct of international relations anticipated the late twentieth-century democratic dilemma between universal principles and national interest.**

## **The six 'right principles'**

The British Empire was then a superpower – in the sense of being a power with global interests and the military and financial means to pursue them anywhere in the world. Gladstone was concerned that this position of power should not be misused or abused, particularly by adopting unilateralist policies abroad, or by fomenting chauvinism and warlike passions at home.<sup>7</sup> He had long regarded both practices as morally wrong and politically misguided, indeed ultimately disastrous to British interests.

This was exemplified by the Tory government in 1876: '[the] point upon which we quarrelled [with the other Powers] was this: Whether coercion was under any circumstances to be applied to Turkey to bring about the better government of that country'.<sup>8</sup> By rejecting the 1876 Berlin Memorandum, with which the Continental powers proposed a concerted action to deal with civil unrest and the violation of human rights in the Ottoman Empire, Britain prevented the development of a common European policy<sup>9</sup> without proposing viable alternatives. Later, Beaconsfield's decision to send the fleet to the Dardanelles and Indian troops to Cyprus without previous consultation with the other European governments maximised the risk of a general war.

## GLADSTONE'S MIDLOTHIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1879

The second mistake that Gladstone denounced in Midlothian was Beaconsfield's encouragement of jingoism, which caused uneasiness and alarm abroad. Gladstone claimed that this had resulted in Britain's international isolation and the unsettling of the stock markets, both of which were bound to sap British power. This is interesting for the light it throws on Gladstone's view of the British Empire. The latter – he insisted – did not depend either on its military might (real or perceived), or on its territorial extent, but only on the vitality of British industry, trade and finance.

He saw the Empire as a British-dominated global *economic* system, which, through free trade, benefited both Britain and the rest of the western world, and simultaneously offered peace, law and order to colonies, protectorates and dependencies in Asia and Africa. However, in 1875–79 the stability of the imperial edifice as well as the future of this 'benign' form of globalisation had been undermined by Beaconsfield. His jingoism and unilateralism were more dangerous to British interest than Russia's ambitions in the Balkans. Hence the need for patriotically-minded Englishmen to denounce and oppose the government, despite the general principle that in foreign affairs '[it] is most important to maintain our national unity in the face of the world.'<sup>10</sup> To Gladstone it was a choice of evils: 'I ... have always admitted, and admit now, that our responsibility in opposing the Government has been immense, but their responsibility in refusing to do right has been still greater.'

Because the government controlled a large majority that prevented effective opposition in Parliament, Gladstone felt that it was his duty to bring the issue directly to the people, to the electors, to whom that majority was ultimately accountable. Here he introduced a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate uses of populist oratory. Appealing to the

people was good, provided it was inspired by a desire to increase their civic awareness. A legitimate use of populist rhetoric depended on making the people fully aware of their moral and political, almost legal, responsibilities before the international community:

The great duty of a Government, especially in foreign affairs, is to sooth and tranquillise the minds of the people, not to set up false phantoms of glory which are to delude them into calamity, not to flatter their infirmities by leading them to believe that they are better than the rest of the world ... but to proceed upon a principle that recognises the sisterhood and equality of nations, the absolute equality of public right among them.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, populist rhetoric which was 'calculated to excite, calculated to alarm, calculated to stir pride and passion, and calculated to divide the world' was illegitimate. This was what the Tory government had been doing: '[t]heir business has been to appeal to pride and passion, to stir up those very feelings which every wise man ought to endeavour to allay.'<sup>12</sup>

It has frequently been pointed out that Gladstone was never patronising when addressing artisans and working men: he made 'the most obscure man in the hall feel that he was contributing to the moral judgement of the world on great events.'<sup>13</sup> But in Midlothian he went beyond speaking to working *men*: remarkably, he devoted the final part of his second speech to *women*: 'I speak to you, ladies, as women', he said, 'in virtue of the common nature which runs through us all', as 'the present political crisis has to do not only with human interests at large, but especially with those interests which are most appropriate ... to you. ... "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform"'. All of these words, ladies, are connected with the promotion of human happiness.<sup>14</sup> It was to

women that he addressed some of the most famous and frequently quoted passages of his 1879 speeches, when his indictment of Tory imperialism among the Zulus and the Afghans culminated in an emotional proclamation of rights – rights which were established by the Almighty and were shared by all human beings, irrespective of national, religious and race barriers:

Remember the rights of the savage, as we call him. Remember that the happiness of his humble house, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own. Remember that He who has united you together as human beings in the same flesh and blood, has bound you by the laws of mutual love; that that mutual love is not limited by the shores of this island, it is not limited by the boundaries of Christian civilisation; that it passes over the whole surface of the earth, and embraces the meanest along with the greatest in its unmeasured scope.<sup>15</sup>

Gladstone expected that this politics of crusading humanitarianism would be as electorally viable as the equally emotional politics of jingoism. He thought that, unlike jingoism, humanitarianism spanned the gap between the genders' 'separate spheres', evoking strong responses among women of different social classes. While he may have been wrong about women's unresponsiveness to jingoism, he was certainly shrewd in identifying humanitarianism as one of the distinctive features of 'feminine' liberalism.<sup>16</sup>

The Third Speech was delivered at West Calder to a gathering of electors and non-electors, in 'a district which was partly agricultural and partly mining'. Perhaps it was not the most influential audience in Scotland, but it was to this gathering that Gladstone chose to deliver the most important

**He saw the Empire as a British-dominated global economic system, which, through free trade, benefited both Britain and the rest of the western world, and simultaneously offered peace, law and order.**



and complete exposition of his views on foreign policy. It contained the famous six 'right principles'. The cornerstone was 'to foster the strength of the Empire by just legislation and economy at home, thereby producing two of the great elements of national power – namely, wealth, which is a physical element, and union and contentment, which are moral elements – and to reserve the strength of the Empire, to reserve the expenditure of that strength, for great and worthy occasions abroad.'<sup>17</sup> However, imperial strength was better saved than spent, a consideration which led to Gladstone's second principle, namely 'to preserve to the nations of the world and especially ... to the Christian nations of the world – the blessings of peace.' The third principle was really a corollary of the second, because it indicated the chief means whereby peace would be preserved among 'Christian nations':

To strive to cultivate and maintain ... what is called the Concert of Europe; to keep the powers of Europe in union together. And why? Because by keeping all in union together you neutralise and fetter and bind up the selfish aims of each. I am not here to flatter either England or any of them. They have selfish aims, as, unfortunately, we in late years have too sadly shown that we too have had selfish aims; but then common action is fatal to selfish aims. Common action means common objects; and the only objects for which you can unite together the Powers of Europe are objects connected with the common good of them all.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth principle was 'to avoid needless and entangling engagements', such as unnecessary annexations of territory which would overstretch the military and human resources of the Empire without adding to British strength. While this was consistent with the Concert of Europe – which required an

undisturbed balance of power – it was also linked to the fifth principle, which was 'to acknowledge the equal rights of all nations'. To Disraeli's Latin motto of *Imperium et Libertas*, Gladstone objected that Britain was not 'the new Rome' and had no special 'imperial mission'. What Beaconsfield meant, Gladstone argued in his Third Midlothian Speech, was simply this:

Liberty for ourselves, Empire over the rest of mankind ... the policy of denying to others the rights that we claim ourselves ... No doubt, gentlemen, Rome may have had its work to do, and Rome did its work. But modern times have brought a different state of things. Modern times have established a sisterhood of nations, equal, independent; each of them built up under that legitimate defence which public law affords to every nation, living within its own borders, and seeking to perform its own affairs.<sup>19</sup>

This fully expressed Gladstone's hostility to, and contempt for, jingoism:

In point of right all [nations] are equal, and you have no right to set up a system under which one of them is to be placed under moral suspicion or espionage, or to be made the constant subject of invective ... if you claim for yourself a superiority, a pharisaical superiority over the whole of them, then ... you are a misjudged friend of your country, and in undermining the basis of the esteem and respect of other people for your country you are in reality inflicting the severest injury upon it.

The sixth and final principle was that, 'subject to all the limitations that I have described, the foreign policy of England should always be inspired by the love of freedom'. He insisted that support for self-government and constitutional movements abroad should

**There was no hint of pacifism in his principles, but only a resolute attempt to promote peace and regulate the use of force by subjecting it to international authority.**

be 'founded not upon visionary ideas, but upon the long experience of many generations within the shores of this happy isle, that in freedom you lay the firmest foundations both of loyalty and order'.<sup>2</sup>

### Context

In a sense it is correct to say that the six principles 'form[ed] a landmark in the history of Liberal internationalism'.<sup>21</sup> Yet, in Gladstone's formulation, they were not supposed to have universal application: on the whole they were limited, first, to 'the Christian nations of the world'; and, second, to non-Christian nations with a stable government with which Britain could establish treaties and formal agreements, such as China, Japan, the Emir of Afghanistan or the Zulu king. By contrast, they did not apply either to countries which had 'long forfeited' their independence and were no longer 'nations' (e.g. Egypt), or to regions within which there was no established or recognised government and 'anarchy' reigned. Although the human rights of the people living in these areas ought to be respected, their countries as such had no 'right' to self-government, nor were they entitled to membership of the 'sisterhood of nations'.

Moreover, though Gladstone's dislike for imperialism was genuine, there was no hint of pacifism in his principles, but only a resolute attempt to promote peace and regulate the use of force by subjecting it to international authority, i.e. to the Concert of Europe, which embodied 'the best available institutional representation of Christian morality in international affairs'.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the Concert included only the Great Powers – those whose decisions actually 'mattered' – added a strong dimension of *Realpolitik* to his vision.

His 'realism' was strengthened by his conviction that there was a strict interdependence between foreign and financial policy. In

## GLADSTONE'S MIDLOTHIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1879

1874 Gladstone had sought to impose a 'fiscal constitution' on the Foreign Office and the Colonial and War departments in an attempt to prevent them from pursuing imperialist expansion in 'fits of absent-mindedness' (such as the 1873 expedition to West Africa).<sup>23</sup>

Earlier, in his days as Palmerston's Chancellor of the Exchequer (1859–65) he had tried, with mixed success, to produce financial policies which would restrain expenditure on external affairs, a Cobdenite strategy which helped to improve his relationship with the Radicals. Indeed Gladstone had drawn closer to Richard Cobden in the 1850s, when they had jointly opposed Palmerston's gunboat diplomacy in Greece (the Don Pacifico case, in 1850) and in China (the so-called *Arrow* incident, leading to the second 'Opium War', in 1856–60). It was then that Gladstone made appeal, for the first time, to the 'sisterhood among nations' and their rights irrespective of power and size.

Although many Cobdenite Radicals liked what they heard, as Matthew has written, 'Gladstone was, outside free trade, no Cobdenite'. While Cobden had always supported non-intervention, Gladstone 'saw intervention as a natural part of the maintenance of the civilised order of the world ... Every Cabinet he had sat in since 1843 had dispatched a military expedition'.<sup>24</sup> His philosophy implied almost universal intervention – provided it was sanctioned by the Concert of Europe – and was based on a version of *inter*-nationalism that ascribed to nation-states a leading role in human progress. Finally, while Cobden was a genuine critic of the Empire as well as imperialism, Gladstone was an unreconstructed advocate of imperial power: he could be represented as 'anti-imperialist' only in the fervidly jingoistic climate of the end of the century. Even his 1876 speeches to stop the Bulgarian atrocities

– which so outraged imperialist and 'patriotic' opinion – contained the 'implicit reaffirmation of Britain's right to dictate events in the eastern Mediterranean', a claim which was 'delivered with the charisma of an Old Testament prophet', but was 'calculated to appeal to Britons, whatever their background'.<sup>25</sup>

His foreign policy was not derived from Cobden, but from the 1841–46 government of Sir Robert Peel, whose Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, had been Gladstone's mentor. Aberdeen personified the connection between 'Peace', 'Retrenchment' and the preservation of the 'Concert of Europe'. The latter was, originally, a conservative system derived from the 1815 Vienna settlement. Based on the notion of collective responsibility, its aim was the avoidance of full-scale conflicts by means of consultation among the big Powers, whose representatives would meet periodically at congresses and conferences. These powers – Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia – were prepared to apply diplomatic and military pressure on trouble-makers, for the preservation of the balance of powers and a Christian-inspired 'international law'.

At first interpreted in conservative terms under the 'Holy Alliance', 'international law' gradually acquired a more liberal significance after 1830, when the establishment of a liberal regime in France allowed for the development of an *entente cordiale* between London and Paris. This worked on behalf of liberal revolutionaries in Belgium, Spain and Portugal without significantly altering the mechanism or the legitimacy of the 'Concert.' After 1851 Napoleon III, though often unpredictable and generally distrusted, remained loyal to the system, which was reasserted during the Crimean War and the ensuing Paris Congress of 1856.

For these reasons the Crimean War weakened the Russian Empire, but did not undermine

**Gladstone  
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the European balance of power. The latter was more seriously threatened in 1859–60, with Italian unification, which asserted the principle of nationality and destroyed the Vienna Treaty settlement. However, united Italy was not a real power, and Cavour, like other liberal diplomats, valued the 'moral consortium' among governments more than abstract theories of nationality: he saw it as the counterpart to his free-trade project of an ordered and rational progress, sustained by foreign as well as national investments.

Thus, when we consider the extraordinary British enthusiasm for the Risorgimento (enthusiasm which Gladstone shared) we must bear in mind the liberal-conservative nature of the new Italian state, which stabilised the internal affairs of the peninsula after decades of upheavals and rebellions. Indeed Palmerston had envisaged a settlement of the Italian question along similar lines as early as 1848, when British diplomacy was deployed to support the Piedmontese liberals against both Austrian reactionary intentions in Lombardy and French Republican ambitions on Savoy and Nice.

Although Palmerston favoured the creation of a north-Italian state under the Piedmontese constitutional monarchy – a sort of Italian Belgium – he was not originally favourable to unification. Indeed in 1859 he tried unsuccessfully to avoid the outbreak of the Franco-Austrian war in northern Italy, which, he feared, could lead to the dismemberment of the Austrian empire. Eventually Italy was unified, but on terms uniquely favourable to British interests in the Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> Palmerston played the international moralist on the cheap, and his government reaped where others had sown. Of course this strategy did not always work: in 1864 Palmerston committed British support to another constitutional monarchy, Denmark, but when the latter was attacked by

Prussia and Austria his bluff was called. Britain was in no position to engage in a continental war: the Danes were defeated, and lost Schleswig-Holstein to the German Confederation.

Was this combination of liberalism and pragmatism superseded by a more idealistic approach once Gladstone replaced Palmerston as Liberal Party leader? Not really. Undoubtedly there were differences of style, outlook and especially rhetoric between the two statesmen, but in terms of actual policy and overall strategy the continuities and the common ground between them are striking. In 1859–65 Palmerston relied heavily on Gladstone, who, in turn, was genuinely appreciative of Palmerston's liberalism. If Palmerston enjoyed bullying Greece and China, Gladstone was 'as ruthless a wielder of power as any contemporary when he saw a necessity or a benefit' – as he would show in 1882, with the invasion of Egypt.<sup>27</sup> Generally, however, he advocated an approach which allowed for the peaceful solution of international problems and the enforcement of international treaties. This was exemplified by his response to the three major international crises of 1870–71, when he was Prime Minister.

These crises involved Britain's relations with, respectively, Germany, Russia, and the USA. At the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war, Gladstone took energetic steps to preserve the independence of Belgium: had its neutrality been violated by either France or Germany, Britain – he said – would have fought for Brussels. This policy followed an established tradition in British politics – a tradition which Palmerston had strongly endorsed throughout his career. In particular, from the 1830s the British government had guaranteed Belgian neutrality, and in 1848 Palmerston made it clear to the new republican government in Paris that an invasion of Belgium would be a *casus belli* for Britain. Belgian neutrality

was not violated either in 1848 or 1870. However, in 1871 Gladstone was not able to prevent the Germans from annexing Alsace and Lorraine against the will of their inhabitants – a failure reminiscent of Palmerston's Schleswig-Holstein fiasco in 1864. More successful was Gladstone's Russian policy, when he convinced the St Petersburg government to come to the negotiating table, rather than unilaterally to break the Black Sea Clauses of the 1856 Paris Treaty.

Finally, Gladstone managed to settle by international arbitration the Anglo-American dispute over the losses inflicted to US shipping by British-built Confederate cruisers during the American Civil War. This was the famous *Alabama* case, after the name of one of the privateering warships. Eventually a specially convened international court of arbitration ruled that the British government owed reparations to Washington, and Gladstone accepted to pay.

It is questionable whether Palmerston would have relished this 'surrender' to foreign judges, but it is likely that he would have grudgingly acknowledged that the peaceful settlement of this question was a great success for the British Empire. Conscious of Britain's vulnerability, he had always been careful to combine assertive rhetoric with the resolute avoidance of conflicts with major powers, including the USA in 1861–65. In 1871–72 Gladstone's decision to submit to arbitration averted an escalation of tension which was likely to cause long-term problems in Anglo-American relations, and, in the worst scenario, might have led to an armed conflict. And it was evident that, in case of a war, the minuscule Crown forces – thinly spread along the Canadian frontier – would have been no match for the US Army and its Civil War veterans. Furthermore, the cost of a full-scale war, not to mention the difficulty of protecting other British dependencies overseas against American naval raids,

simply bore no comparison with the settlement paid by the Liberal government after arbitration.

However, Gladstone was not primarily concerned about the material advantages of arbitration, but about the general principle it involved – namely, that international conflicts between Christian powers should be settled without recourse to force. Commitment to this overarching philosophy was perhaps the single most important difference between his approach and Palmerston's, and represents the area in which he was closer to Cobden and Bright. Yet, in practice if not in theory, Palmerston reluctantly accepted what Gladstone fervently preached, i.e. that the pursuit of British interests required 'the concurrence of other and jealous powers'.<sup>28</sup> Against this background it is easier to see why in 1879 Gladstone argued that unilateralism was both immoral and impolitic. His sense of the unity of Europe bred what has appropriately been described as 'cosmopolitan patriotism' – or, in other words, the *Realpolitik* of Christian humanitarianism. Palmerston would have put it differently: '[t]here was no cheap war to be had in Europe or North America'.<sup>29</sup>

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- 1 J. L. Hammond, 'Gladstone and the League of Nations Mind', in J. A. K. Thompson and A. J. Toynbee (eds.), *Essays in Honour of Gilbert Murray* (London, 1936), pp. 95–118; F. R. Flournoy, 'British Liberal theories of international relations (1848–1898)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. VII, No. 2, 1946, pp. 195–217.
- 2 R. T. Shannon, 'Midlothian: 100 years after', in P. J. Jagger (ed.), *Gladstone, Politics and Religion* (London, 1985), p. 90.
- 3 Shannon, *Gladstone: Vol. 2, Heroic Minister, 1865–1898* (London, 1999), p. 305.

**His sense of the unity of Europe bred what has appropriately been described as 'cosmopolitan patriotism' – or, in other words, the Realpolitik of Christian humanitarianism.**

## GLADSTONE'S MIDLOTHIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1879

- 4 J. P. Parry, *The rise and fall of Liberal government in Victorian Britain* (London, 1993), pp. 257–60, 290–92.
- 5 R. T. Harrison, *Gladstone's Imperialism in Egypt: Techniques of imperial domination* (Westport, CT, 1995); J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams. Opium and the Arrow War (1856–1860) in China* (Cambridge, 1998), esp. pp. 431–33; and E. F. Biagini, 'Exporting "Western and Beneficent Institutions": Gladstone and Empire, 1880–1885', in D. Bebbington and R. Swift (eds.), *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool, 2000), pp. 202–24.
- 6 H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1875–1898* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 1–60.
- 7 W. E. Gladstone, *Midlothian Speeches 1879* (Leicester, 1971), First Speech, pp. 35–36.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 9 Interestingly, in this case Gladstone insisted on a European consensus, to the exclusion of the USA, only because he reckoned that '[our] American friends have too remote an interest in [the Ottoman Empire] to take part' (*ibid.*, p. 54).
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 36 and 37.
- 13 J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (London, 1964), p. 706.
- 14 Gladstone, *Midlothian Speeches*, Second Speech, pp. 89–90.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 16 Cf. J. Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London, 2001); J. Alberti, *Eleanor Rathbone* (London, 1996); and S. Pedersen, 'National bodies, unspeakable acts: the sexual politics of colonial policy-making', *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (December 1991).
- 17 Gladstone, *Midlothian Speeches*, Third speech, p. 115.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 D. W. Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: faith and politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), p. 179.
- 22 Matthew, *Gladstone 1875–1898*, p. 23.
- 23 H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809–1874* (Oxford, 1986), p. 225.
- 24 Matthew, *Gladstone 1875–1898*, p. 123; cf. W. Hinde, *Richard Cobden* (London, 1987), pp. 202–03, 207–08, 270–71.
- 25 A. Pottinger Saab, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria and the working classes 1856–1878* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), p. 94.
- 26 On the international dimensions of this question see D. Beales and E. F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London, 2002), pp. 114–33, 163–75.
- 27 Matthew, *Gladstone, 1875–1898*, p. 198. In 1879 Gladstone thought that Disraeli's purchase of the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal had amounted to assuming 'the virtual government of Egypt', in so far as Britain, jointly with France, was now in control of Egyptian revenue and responsible for the servicing of her national debt (*Midlothian Speeches*, First Speech, p. 49). His understanding was that Britain had accepted a virtual 'Protectorate' on the Nile – with all the political and moral obligations that a protectorate entailed. This helps to explain why he was so readily persuaded to invade Egypt in 1882.
- 28 E. D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism 1855–1865* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 246.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

# LETTERS

## Lib-Labs

Roy Douglas

Andrew Hudson's interesting article on the Lib-Labs (*Journal* 41) raises a few points which call for comment.

The National Agent Francis (not Henry) Schnadhorst and the Chief Whip Herbert (later Viscount) Gladstone were both interested in securing the election of more working-class MPs, but at different periods. Schnadhorst retired from the post of Secretary of the National Liberal Federation in 1893 and from Chairmanship a year later. His health collapsed about that time, and he died early in 1900. Herbert Gladstone was Chief Whip from 1899 until he joined Campbell-Bannerman's government late in 1905.

The Hanley by-election of 13 July 1912 did not result in a Tory victory (though many people, including the *Punch* cartoonist, anticipated otherwise), but in a victory by the Liberal land-taxing enthusiast R. L. Outhwaite. The result was: Outhwaite 6647; Rittner (Tory) 5993; Finney (Labour) 1694.

The author is right in stating that the affiliation of the Miners' Federation to the Labour Party 'was not universally welcomed'. In the general election of January 1910, the Lib-Lab miners' MPs who defected to the Labour Party were only able to hold their seats where they had no Liberal against them. The only one of their number who encountered Liberal opposition was John Johnson in Gateshead. The feeling of the local miners was indicated on polling day when eight thousand of them

demonstrated against him in the streets of the town. The Liberal won the seat; Johnson ran a poor third.

## Archie Macdonald

Michael Meadowcroft

Excellent issue (*Journal* 41) just arrived! On Jaime Reynolds' and Robert Ingham's biography of Archie Macdonald, I knew Francis Boyd very well. He was the Lobby Correspondent for the *Guardian* for very many years and he told me that when Archie Macdonald appeared at the Commons in 1950 he, Francis, sought Archie out, basically to introduce himself as just about the only Liberal journalist around the place. He duly met Archie and congratulated him warmly on

his election. Archie's response was the comment, 'Ah, yes – now there's three things wrong with the *Manchester Guardian* ...'!

The novelist Ernest Raymond was the conduit for the 1962 victory in the Town Ward of Hampstead Borough which put Archie Macdonald on to that council. There's a hilarious account of it in Ernest's autobiography, *Please You, Draw Near*, published by Cassell in 1969, pages 115–19. It's particularly about persuading his friend and fellow author, Pamela Frankau, to stand with him and Archie in the three-member ward on the guarantee that she wouldn't win! All three of them came to my Liberal councillors' training sessions that year and I recall Archie putting on an air of some superiority as an ex-MP.

**Martin Ceadel examines the importance of Liberal ideals in the inter-war years, in spite of the weakness of the Liberal Party.**



# THE HEYDAY OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

**T**he relationship between the Liberal Party and liberal ideology is complex. A striking illustration of this is that, just at the moment when the former went into steep decline, the latter's international vision achieved a pinnacle of popularity in Britain. In the aftermath of the First World War, as the Liberal Party split and was overtaken electorally by Labour, liberal internationalism began to capture the public imagination. This was largely because of the creation, as part of the post-war settlement, of the League of Nations, 'the supreme creative effort of liberalism to save its maimed civilisation from another war', as the socialist journalist H. N. Brailsford later described it.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the 1920s the League had become the focus of many Britons' hopes, though confidence in it fell sharply away after 1936. The Liberal Party as an institution was largely irrelevant to this ideological rise and fall.

**Registration of a treaty at the Secretariat of the League of Nations in Geneva.**

During the nineteenth century liberals had pinned their hopes for the eventual abolition of war mainly on free trade and arbitration.<sup>2</sup> Only a handful of them had thought that an international organisation was required to assist with the resolution of disputes between countries or the enforcement of arbitral awards. The outbreak of war among the great powers in August 1914 caused them to think again; and the need for a league of nations with dispute-resolution and law-enforcement powers soon became an article of faith among progressive opinion generally. Following an initiative by a Liberal MP, Aneurin Williams, a League of Nations Society was established as early as May 1915. Its ideas crossed the Atlantic and found favour with President Woodrow Wilson, which meant that, after the United States entered the war, some of Britain's self-styled realists accepted that a league had become inevitable, and sought to ensure that it promoted British national interests. A

second society, the League of Free Nations Association, was therefore created in the summer of 1918 to campaign for the immediate formation of a league based on the wartime alliance against Germany. When it became apparent that the war was ending, the two societies merged in October 1918, as the League of Nations Union (or LNU for short).

Predictably, the international organisation that emerged from the Paris peace conference disappointed most progressives. Those on the radical wing of the Liberals, many of whom had opposed the war on isolationist grounds and had for that reason left the party for Labour, condemned it as a league of victors rather than a true league of nations. Many socialists complained that it was a league of capitalist states rather than of peoples, their ideological disapproval being summed up by the delegate who told the Labour Party Conference in 1925: 'The policy of the League of Nations was the policy of Liberalism and

## THE HEYDAY OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM



**Demonstration in support of the League in Yorkshire, organised by the League of Nations Union.**

particular, has become a sign of respectability.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, when the LNU's Hampshire Federation was formed in the headmaster's study at Winchester College, its organising committee comprised four knights, two colonels, a canon, and a titled lady.<sup>9</sup> The novelist Evelyn Waugh was to make his dissipated 1920s undergraduate Sebastian Flyte, facing repeated injunctions to improve his behaviour, ask himself: 'How does one mend one's ways? I suppose one joins the League of Nations Union ...'<sup>10</sup> The LNU provided a partial substitute for not only a declining Liberal Party but also a waning protestant nonconformity: the future Conservative Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare noted how the LNU's disarmament meetings in the late 1920s 'became semi-religious services ... They began and ended with prayers and hymns, and were throughout inspired by a spirit of emotional revivalism.'<sup>11</sup>

From September 1931, when the Japanese seized Manchuria, the international situation began deteriorating. Isolationist sentiment revived in Britain – particularly after Hitler came to power and withdrew Germany from the League of Nations and the World Disarmament Conference in October 1933; and a book published at that time identified 'Keep Britain out of war' as 'the one rallying cry which seems to unite all shades of opinion'.<sup>12</sup> On the left, isolationism took the form of pacifism and war resistance: for example, the Labour Party's 1933 conference passed by acclamation a motion 'to take no part in war'. (This had been proposed by Sir Charles Trevelyan, a former Liberal who, having resigned from the Asquith government when it went to war in 1914 and joined Labour, was now on his new party's left wing.) On the right, isolationism took the form of armed neutralism. Even Winston Churchill went through a phase of justifying the rearmament for which he was calling with the argument that it would enable Britain 'to maintain

not of Socialism'.<sup>13</sup> And the LNU, though ideologically comfortable with a policy of liberalism, was worried that the League had been granted too few powers.

However, Lord Robert Cecil, the former Foreign Office minister who had been one of the architects of the League Covenant, took over the leadership of the LNU and persuaded it to conceal its doubts and instead promote the League enthusiastically as a breakthrough in international relations. Though a Conservative – indeed, the son of a Tory prime minister – Cecil took an essentially liberal approach to international relations: he later privately admitted feeling intellectually 'more at home with the Liberals' than with any other party.<sup>4</sup> During the war he had been minister in charge of the blockade of Germany, his belief in the efficacy of economic pressure being one reason why he believed that the League of Nations could be effective.

As the international situation improved in the aftermath of the Dawes Plan and Locarno Treaties, the League came to be seen, potentially at least, as an effective organisation. Working in close partnership with Gilbert Murray, a committed Liberal who held the chair of classics at Oxford, Cecil was therefore able to build the LNU into a highly respectable association with all-party support. It had sufficient Conservative members for

Noel Buxton, a convert from Liberalism to Labour who frequently spoke at peace meetings, to claim in 1928 that LNU branches consisted 'mainly of the [Baldwin] government's supporters'.<sup>5</sup> And although many in the Labour Party, including Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, remained suspicious of both the League and the LNU, Arthur Henderson, helped by Hugh Dalton and Philip Noel Baker, persuaded a majority of their Labour colleagues during the second half of the 1920s that both were forces for good. By the 1929 general election, therefore, the party was prepared to claim that its foreign policy was based 'firmly on the foundation of the League of Nations'.<sup>6</sup> To overcome the continuing complaint from the left of the party that the League was a liberal not a socialist idea, Henderson defended it as 'a revolutionary break with the traditions of international anarchy' and an expression of 'the socialist principle of cooperation'.<sup>7</sup>

By 1931 the LNU had 3,040 local branches and collected 406,868 annual subscriptions. It had become a byword for respectability and moral earnestness. Its branches were, in Hugh Dalton's words, 'decorated by Elder Statesmen, Peers of the Realm, Bishops, retired Admirals and Generals and philanthropic ladies of the middle class. To be a "supporter of the League", especially when it is doing nothing in

our neutrality effectively'.<sup>13</sup> The Beaverbrook and Rothermere newspapers did the same, and also published newspaper polls claiming that the public was turning against the League of Nations as an institution because it risked entangling Britain in other nations' quarrels.

In 1934 Cecil persuaded the LNU to fight back with the 'Peace Ballot', arguably the most ambitious action ever undertaken by a British pressure group. This was a pro-League propaganda campaign disguised as a private referendum. Between November 1934 and June 1935,<sup>14</sup> 38 per cent of the adult population were canvassed, of whom 95 per cent declared themselves in favour of the League. There was also majority support for what was starting to be called 'collective security': 87 per cent favoured the imposition of economic sanctions by the League against an aggressor, and 54 per cent military sanctions. The Peace Ballot was thus a great success, undermining the claims of the isolationist press about the state of British public opinion and also influencing the Baldwin government's decision to support (albeit mild) economic sanctions against Italy after Mussolini attacked Abyssinia in October 1935. However, as was indicated by the marked difference in the degrees of support for economic and military sanctions, a third of those taking part in the Peace Ballot favoured collective security on the assumption that it was a way of checking aggression by using economic pressure alone.

This assumption was soon disproved by the triple crisis which occurred in the spring of 1936, when Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland, Mussolini's conquest of Abyssinia, and Franco's rebellion in Spain woke Britain up to the fact that collective security required rearmament and a willingness to intervene militarily. The LNU accepted this fact, but went into rapid decline as many former supporters of the League became appeasers or pacifists instead. In his inaugural lecture

as professor of international relations at Aberystwyth, E. H. Carr, an appeaser, criticised sanctions and called for 'peaceful change', thereby scandalising the benefactor of his chair, who had created it to promote the League and collective security.<sup>15</sup> Carr developed his ideas into the pioneering text of 'realist' international relations theory, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, which laid the blame for the 'utopianism' of British hopes for the League squarely on the liberal tradition as mediated by Woodrow Wilson: 'Nearly all popular theories of international politics between the two world wars were reflexions, seen in an American mirror, of nineteenth-century liberal thought'.<sup>16</sup>

The short-term impact of Carr's book was spoiled by the fact that it was published just after the outbreak of the Second World War had demonstrated the failure of the policy of appeasement. One of those who reviewed it critically was Sir Norman Angell. Initially famous as the author of the neo-Cobdenite best-seller *The Great Illusion*, which had appeared before the First World War, Angell had gone through isolationist and near-pacifist phases, but from the mid-1930s had been a resolute supporter of collective security. Indeed, despite having joined the Labour Party and represented it in the House of Commons, Angell had realised he was ideologically a liberal, informing Gilbert Murray in 1940 that 'having tried to make the best of all the Socialist slogans and Marxist incantations, I have been pushed more and more to the conviction that it is your type of Liberalism which alone can save us'.<sup>17</sup>

Angell's review of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* for the LNU's journal observed: 'If Chamberlainite "appeasement" had succeeded and we had maintained peace, there would have been a certain plausibility in many of the theories Professor Carr expounds'. But as things had turned out, Angell insisted, it was the policy of collective security favoured by many supposed 'utopians' which

had proved more realistic.<sup>18</sup> Yet, in the long term, Carr's criticism of the doctrine of the harmony of interests among states carried the day. Liberal internationalism never fully recovered from the realist onslaught, as is evidenced by the fact that the United Nations Association never approached the popularity of the LNU.

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- 1 H. N. Brailsford, *Property or Peace* (1934), p. 132.
- 2 See Martin Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention: the British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1730–1854* (1996), and *Semi-detached Idealists: the British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (2000).
- 3 *Labour Party Conference Report* (1925), p. 255.
- 4 Cecil to Noel Baker, 27 April 1932: Cecil Papers, British Library Add. MSS 51107.
- 5 Noel Buxton to Murray, 14 June 1928: Gilbert Murray Papers.
- 6 Labour Party, *Labour and the Nation* (1928), p. 41.
- 7 *Labour Party Conference Report* (1934), p. 155–57.
- 8 H. Dalton, *Towards the Peace of Nations* (1928), p. 89.
- 9 Minutes, Organising Committee, LNU Hampshire Federation, 24 May 1932.
- 10 E. Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), p. 93.
- 11 Viscount Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years* (1954), p. 113.
- 12 E. N. Porter Goff, *The Christian and the Next War* (1933), p. 41.
- 13 Cited in R. A. C. Parker, *Churchill and Appeasement* (2000), p. 34.
- 14 M. Ceadel, 'The first British referendum: the Peace Ballot, 1934–5', *English Historical Review* 95 (1980), pp. 810–39.
- 15 E. H. Carr, 'Public Opinion as Safeguard of Peace', *International Affairs* (Nov/Dec 1936), pp. 846–62. B. Porter, 'David Davies and the Enforcement of Peace', in D. Long and P. Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis* (1995), pp. 58–78.
- 16 E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1945), p. 27.
- 17 Angell to Murray, 13 July 1940: Gilbert Murray Papers.
- 18 *Headway* (Jan. 1940), pp. 4–5.



# HOW DID THE EMP

**Andrew S. Thompson looks at three case studies to examine the impact of imperialism on democracy and liberalism in Britain between 1865 and 1920.<sup>1</sup>**

For a century or more, the empire has been blamed for debasing British politics. The experience of governing the colonies is said to have imported attitudes and values into Britain that were inimical to the growth of a modern democracy. Liberals have been at the forefront of such criticisms.



The cartoonist David Low created the pompous reactionary and ultranationalistic Colonel Blimp, originally for the *Evening Standard*.

At the start of the twentieth century, the New Liberal intellectual, J. A. Hobson, railed against the fact that the south of England was 'richly sprinkled' with a class of retired colonial soldiers and officials, 'men openly contemptuous of democracy, devoted to material luxury, social display, and the shallower arts of intellectual life ... the wealthier among them discover political ambitions,

introducing into our Houses of Parliament the coarsest and most selfish spirit of "Imperialism"'.<sup>2</sup>

Thirty or so years later, yet in a similar vein, the New Zealand-born political cartoonist, David Low (1891–1963), took great delight in deriding the xenophobic and racist, if by then ultimately irrelevant and futile, attitudes of that archetypal imperialist, Colonel Blimp.<sup>3</sup> Jose Harris's study of later-Victorian and Edwardian political culture ploughs a similar furrow:

# IRE STRIKE BACK?

Imperial visions injected a powerful strain of hierarchy, militarism, 'frontier mentality', administrative rationality, and masculine civic virtue into British political culture, at a time when domestic political forces were running in quite the opposite direction towards egalitarianism, 'progressivism', consumerism, popular democracy, feminism and women's rights.<sup>4</sup>

Is it fair, then, to characterise imperialist ideology as essentially anti-democratic? Clearly this is a big question that could be tackled in a variety of ways. Here the focus will be on the domestic political repercussions of three well-known episodes of colonial oppression and settler rapacity: the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica (1865), the Anglo-Indian protest against Lord Ripon's Ilbert Bill (1883) and the Amritsar massacre at Jallianwala Bagh (1919). Surely in times of colonial crisis there was a strong temptation to drop any pretence at inclusiveness, liberalism and tolerance, and to rally behind those who were prepared to 'save the Empire' by upholding and defending racial privileges and, if necessary, by a show of armed force?

## Governor Eyre

Take the Governor Eyre controversy, an event that brought to the forefront of British politics the nature of colonial rule and the relationship between white settlers and black subjects. Eyre responded swiftly and brutally to the march of several hundred angry, land-

hungry blacks on the courthouse of the small town of Morant Bay in Jamaica. During a month-long period of martial law, people were shot, hanged and flogged, and many houses were razed.<sup>5</sup> Jamaica's white planters praised Eyre for his handling of the crisis. But the severity of the measures that he had taken left the British government with little choice but to suspend this Australian explorer turned colonial official, and to set up a Royal Commission to enquire into his conduct.

Opinion in the country, meanwhile, was deeply divided.<sup>6</sup> The Victorian intelligentsia, in particular, were at sixes and sevens as to whether the Jamaican Governor had acted responsibly or not. A Jamaica Committee, led by John Stuart Mill, and backed by such luminaries as John Bright, Charles Darwin, Frederic Harrison, Thomas Huxley, and Herbert Spencer, organised a campaign to prosecute Eyre privately, while an Eyre Defence Committee, supported by Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Alfred Tennyson, Charles Kingsley and Charles Dickens, established a fund to pay his legal expenses.

Though the Jamaica Committee set out to mobilise 'gentlemanly opinion', Eyre's critics also comprised many people of more modest means. From the outset, abolitionist, missionary and dissenting groups – known collectively as 'Exeter Hall' – had not only bombarded the Colonial Office with petitions and memorials, but staged numerous mass meetings. Eyre's figure was even

burnt in effigy by a large gathering of working-class radicals at Clerkenwell Green in London.

Eyre's supporters included clergymen, peers and members of the armed forces. Their case was made at a welcome home dinner, in the pamphlet and periodical press and at various provincial societies. They raised a significant sum of money (rumoured to be over £10,000) on Eyre's behalf.

Some scholars have taken this episode as proof of a marked hardening of racial attitudes in mid-Victorian Britain. The view of black people as inherently inferior to whites is said to have gained a much wider currency as a result of the Eyre controversy.<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere I question this interpretation, arguing that working-class racial attitudes do not fit comfortably into the 'boxes' to which they have often been assigned.<sup>8</sup> Here it needs to be emphasised that even though the Jamaica Committee's four legal actions failed, Eyre was nonetheless forced into premature retirement, turned down for several government posts, and deprived of the patronage and perks to which other ex-governors had grown accustomed. Even the debate on Eyre's legal expenses in 1872 was enough to bring his opponents out of the woodwork and previous passions back to the boil.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, martial law continued to be invoked in the face of future colonial disturbances, and a string of other massacres was to litter Britain's twentieth-century imperial record. Yet, in a sense, this is to miss the point. In 1865, many of Eyre's opponents,

**Surely in times of colonial crisis there was a strong temptation to drop any pretence at inclusiveness, liberalism and tolerance, and to rally behind those who were prepared to 'save the Empire'?**

## HOW DID THE EMPIRE STRIKE BACK?

especially Liberals, perceived a risk of authoritarian and arbitrary methods of government seeping back from colony to mother country – this was why the debate focused as much (or more) on the uses and abuses of martial law as on rival theories of race. At a time when many people in Britain were agitating for a further extension of the franchise, the prospect of West Indian methods of repression being adopted at home was all the more alarming. Such anxieties may well have weighed with the British government when it decided to replace the old regime of rule by the planter class with a more direct form of government from London. Though this looks like a throwback to the past, the decision actually held out some hope for black Jamaicans in so far as it curbed the powers of the island's 'plantocracy'. In the words of Niall Ferguson, 'the liberalism of the centre' had prevailed over 'the racism of the periphery'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the years that followed, the cry of 'democracy in danger' continued to have considerable political purchase during moments of colonial crisis.<sup>11</sup>

### The Ilbert Bill

The determination and skill with which Anglo-Indians mobilised metropolitan opinion against the Ilbert bill (1883–84) may seem a more straightforward example of imperialists riding roughshod over the principle of racial equality (enshrined in the royal proclamation of 1858).<sup>12</sup> Lord Ripon,<sup>13</sup> Vice-roy of India from 1880 to 1884, was responsible for introducing a raft of liberal reforms, including those to promote local self-government. These were attacked by his Tory opponents as a 'policy of sentiment', but Ripon returned to England to provide a vigorous defence of his policies at the National Liberal Club in February 1885.

The Ilbert bill needs to be set in this context. It was a statutory amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code whereby Indian judges and magistrates in country areas (the *Mofussil*) would be given

**'The Jamaica Question' (Punch, 23 December 1865). White planter: 'Am not I a man and brother too, Mr Stiggins?'**



**'The Anglo-Indian Mutiny – A bad example to the elephant!' (Punch, 15 December 1883)**



the power to try British offenders in criminal cases. It became the focus of a 'White Mutiny' – a heady cocktail of racial and sexual fears, which fed on memories of 1857, and engulfed India's community of English businessmen, planters and professionals. A European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association was formed. It staged protest meetings, threatened boycotts and even tried to get army volunteers to resign.

Crucially, it was well-connected to the British press. As Chandrika Kaul shows, several London newspapers and reviews clubbed together to stop the liberal Viceroy in his tracks: 'the anti-bill papers did not simply articulate [Anglo-Indian] grievances, but provided a focus which heightened the entire agitation movement'.<sup>14</sup> Chief among these were *The Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Morning Post*, the *Standard*, and the *Spectator*. Much of their information was derived from the Anglo-Indian press – by the 1880s, telegraphic communication had slashed the time taken for Indian news to reach Britain. *The Times* spearheaded the anti-bill agitation; it relied on advice from its correspondent, J. C. Macgregor, a Calcutta barrister who was thoroughly opposed to the measure.<sup>15</sup> It was argued that indigenous Indians were incapable of shouldering the responsibility the bill entailed; that British prestige would be irreparably damaged; that Europeans (especially planter families) would be increasingly harassed; and that there was simply no necessity for change.

In the end, the Anglo-Indian 'jingo', as Ripon called them, got their way. The Ilbert bill was emasculated: Europeans were to have the right to be tried by juries at least half of whose members were themselves European. Although the distinction between Indian and British district magistrates and session judges was abolished, the difficulty of empanelling such a jury, and the costs and delays of transferring cases to the high courts, made it very difficult to secure a conviction. Yet

victory had not been achieved without a fight. Several pro-bill newspapers – the *Daily News*, the *Echo*, *Reynolds' News*, the *Weekly Times*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Contemporary Review* – had rallied round Ripon. They argued for the importance of a more sympathetic and sensitive approach on the part of the Government of India to the 'native population'. They affirmed the ability of Indians to participate more fully in the administration. They also reported on the meetings that were organised by John Bright and other Liberal MPs to back the bill. Ripon's resolve was certainly stiffened by these expressions of support.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the anti-bill agitation was very much a press affair. Only a handful of Tory MPs raised the matter at Westminster, and the response from the Tory party caucus was likewise lacklustre.<sup>17</sup> In so far as opinion in the rest of the country was caught up in the Ilbert bill controversy there is no evidence to suggest that it sided with Anglo-India. Even the emissary sent by the Defence Association – F. T. Atkins – to arouse British engineering and railway employees against the bill proved a complete failure: 'at his most important meeting in Edinburgh, a motion was carried unanimously against him'.<sup>18</sup>

To a large extent, Ripon had himself to blame for what happened in 1883–84. Not only was he too far ahead of Anglo-Indian opinion, he had failed to properly brief his cabinet colleagues on the details of the bill, to take sufficient care in its drafting, or to have it properly debated in parliament – the latter, in particular, 'created a political vacuum' for the pro-bill press to exploit.<sup>19</sup> In Ripon's defence, he was not the only person to have underestimated the strength of Anglo-Indian feeling. Charles Hobhouse had twenty-six years of ICS experience but wrongly predicted that the racial passions aroused by the bill were 'so much froth' and would soon subside once it became law.<sup>20</sup> Other pro-bill periodicals, how-

**1883 was not so much a crossroads in the history of the Raj, whereby colour-blind justice was rejected in favour of a racially segregated colonial state, as a poorly judged and badly timed, albeit well-intentioned, reform.**

ever, showed greater perspicacity, regretting that Ripon had thrust the measure on Anglo-India at a moment when he was engaged 'in the gigantic and difficult task of introducing local government reform'.<sup>21</sup> There were also those who supported the liberalisation of municipal government but opposed the Ilbert bill because they felt that it would do more harm than good, not least because only a handful of anglicised Indian civil servants – the so-called 'Bengali Babus' – allegedly stood to gain.<sup>22</sup> Understood in this way, 1883 was not so much a crossroads in the history of the Raj, whereby colour-blind justice was rejected in favour of a racially segregated colonial state, as a poorly judged and badly timed, albeit well-intentioned, reform.

#### Amritsar

The British reaction to the massacre of an unarmed crowd, gathered in the Punjab city of Amritsar on 13 April 1919, adds further weight to my argument. The irascible Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer had issued a proclamation banning such meetings. He ordered his men to fire on a crowd of some 20,000 people without any warning, or without first demanding that it disperse. The firing continued for a full ten minutes. Official figures recorded 379 deaths and over 1,200 wounded. Indian estimates were much higher. The British government moved quickly to disavow Dyer's actions and he was forced to resign. Again Anglo-Indian opinion was inflamed, and sections of the metropolitan press, a minority of MPs and a majority of peers protested against Dyer's 'punishment'. By discharging his duty and teaching the 'rebels' a lesson, Dyer, they argued, had 'saved India', only to be abandoned by craven and cowardly politicians at Westminster.<sup>23</sup> A defence (or 'Scapegoat') fund was set up by the editor of the *Morning Post* newspaper, Howell Gwynne; almost £15,000 was collected within a few weeks.

## HOW DID THE EMPIRE STRIKE BACK?

The wider political context for the defence of Dyer is the build up of 'diehard' Tory sentiment during the years 1919–22. Diehardism drew strength from the hardships of the post-war depression, and from antipathy to Lloyd George, but home affairs were not at the core of its creed. Much more fundamental was the notion of imperial weakness – the feeling that the British Empire might be living on borrowed time.<sup>24</sup> Diehards believed Britain to have 'providentially sanctioned imperial obligations',<sup>25</sup> and insisted that challenges to colonial authority had to be resisted, whether in Ireland, Egypt or India. Their finest hour may have been the removal from office of the well-known Indian sympathiser and Liberal politician, Edwin Montagu (1879–1924), author of the 1917 declaration that the goal of British policy in India was the 'increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration', and architect of the 1919 constitutional reforms. Montagu was replaced as Secretary of State for India by the Conservative, Viscount Peel, who lost no time in pouring cold water on a scheme for the Indianisation of the army. Montagu's Jewish antecedents, and his rather tactless remarks in the House of Commons on 8 July 1920, had incensed 'diehard' MPs and left them bayoning for his blood.<sup>26</sup>

But just how powerful was the public demonstration of support for Dyer? His defenders were a somewhat disparate group, made up of Anglo-Indians, military members of the army council, Ulster Unionists (led by Sir Edward Carson), and a few right-wing newspapers. The Dyer fund drew donations from a wider range of people, but the manual workers and schoolchildren who parted with their pennies were predominantly Anglo-Indian. Working-class opinion in Britain was on the whole far less sympathetic. For example, the well-attended Labour Party conference at Scarborough in 1920 passed a resolution denouncing the 'cruel and barbarous actions'

of British officers in the Punjab, and called for the repeal of all repressive legislation: there was a real fear of labour unrest at home meeting with similar treatment.<sup>27</sup> As the progressive newspaper, the *Manchester Guardian*, commented immediately after the debate in the Commons: 'General Dyer's more thorough supporters by no means intend to stop at India ... After India, Ireland. After Ireland, British workmen on strike.'<sup>28</sup>

Other elements of the anti-Dyer camp, which included many senior politicians (Asquith, Bonar Law, Churchill) and *The Times*, took their stand on the British government's obligation to maintain a single standard of justice across the British Empire,<sup>29</sup> while Churchill went so far as to call this 'the most frightful of all spectacles, the strength of civilisation without its mercy'. There is a real danger therefore of inflating the importance of the xenophobia and racialism that characterised many of the pro-Dyer utterances in 1919–20. Diehardism was a minority, if passionately held, view. Ranged against it was a phalanx of much more liberal and progressive sentiment.

During the Morant Bay uprising, the Ilbert bill controversy, and the Amritsar uprising the Empire did indeed strike back on the British political scene. For Liberals such as J. A. Hobson, and for many historians and political commentators who share Hobson's perspective, such episodes provide further proof of imperialism's tendency to debase and corrupt British public life. Yet even when it involved the sanctioning of martial law and the use of armed force, there is little evidence to suggest that colonial rule constituted a serious or sustained threat to liberal and progressive values or to widening political participation in Britain.

On the contrary, as this essay suggests, the domestic political effects of arbitrary and authoritarian rule in the colonies were as likely to run in the opposite direction – namely, to galvanise 'liberal' opinion to defend the virtues of a

parliamentary system of government and the necessity of a free press. In the fashioning of a more democratic political culture, therefore, the Empire arguably proved as much of a friend as a foe.

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**In the fashioning of a more democratic political culture, the Empire arguably proved as much of a friend as a foe.**

- 1 This essay is drawn from a more extensive analysis of the political repercussions of imperialism in my new book, *The Empire Strikes Back: Imperialism's impact on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day* (Longmans, forthcoming). I am grateful to Richard Grayson and Richard Whiting for their comments.
- 2 J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (1938 edition), p. 151.
- 3 M. Bryant (ed.), *The Complete Colonel Blimp* (1991).
- 4 Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: a social history of Britain, 1870–1914* (1993), p. 6.
- 5 G. Hueman, 'The British West Indies' in A. Porter (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1999), Vol. III, pp. 486–87; D. Judd, *Empire: The British imperial experience from 1765 to the present* (1996), pp. 82–83.
- 6 C. Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (1971), pp. 82–108; B. Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy* (1962), chs. 1, 3, 4, 6; G. B. Workman, *The Reactions of Nineteenth-Century English Literary Men to the Governor Eyre Controversy* (University of Leeds Ph.D., 1973).
- 7 Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, pp. 102–06; C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and colony in the English imagination* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 25, 424; D. A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (Leicester, 1978), pp. 12, 200.
- 8 Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*, ch. 3.
- 9 G. Dutton, *The Hero as Murderer* (1967), p. 390.
- 10 N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the modern world* (2003), p. 195.
- 11 M. Taylor, 'Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (1991), pp. 1–18.
- 12 Sir Courtenay Ilbert (1841–1924), who brought forward the legislation, was the law member of the Viceroy's council (1882–86). He subsequently became the Clerk of the House of

- Commons (1902–21).
- 13 George Frederick Robinson (1827–1909), 1st Marquis of Ripon, went on to lead the Liberal Party in the House of Lords, 1905–08.
  - 14 C. Kaul, 'England and India: the Ilbert Bill, 1883: a case study of the metropolitan press', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (1993), pp. 413–36. Quote from p. 435.
  - 15 S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, 1880–1884* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 151–52.
  - 16 A. Denholm, *Lord Ripon, 1827–1909: A political biography* (1982), p. 156; J. L. Sturgis, *John Bright and the Empire* (1969), pp. 74–75.
  - 17 There was a single National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations pamphlet issued on the Ilbert bill (Lord Ripon's Policy in India, 1883), while the party's campaign guide described the bill as a 'misguided' but nevertheless 'innocuous' measure: *NUCCA Campaign Guide* (1885), p. 18.
  - 18 L. Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, Vol. II (1921), pp. 128, 141. Atkins also asked the Secretary of the TUC for support, but was again rebuffed: Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, p. 155.
  - 19 Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, pp. 136–37, 150–51, 153–54; Kaul, 'England and India', p. 418.
  - 20 C. Hobhouse, 'Plain facts in India Policy', *Macmillan's Magazine* (October 1883), pp. 465–73. See also W. Summer, 'Mr Ilbert's Bill', *British Quarterly Review* (October 1883), pp. 432–41.
  - 21 'India and Our Colonial Empire', *Westminster Review* (April 1883), pp. 610–14.
  - 22 J. Goldsmid, 'Questions of the day in India', *The Nineteenth Century* (May 1883), pp. 740–58.
  - 23 For Dyer's supporters, see D. Sayer, 'British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919–20', *Past and Present* (1991), pp. 149–50, 157–63.
  - 24 K. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918–22* (Oxford, 1979), ch. 10; A. S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British politics* (Longman, 2000), pp. 163–65.
  - 25 G. Studdart-Kennedy, 'The Christian Imperialism of the Diehard Defenders of the Raj, 1926–35', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (1990), pp. 342–35.
  - 26 Sir W. Sutherland to D. Lloyd George, 9/7/1920, copy in M. Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. IV [Companion, Part 2, Documents], pp. 1140–41.
  - 27 Sayer, 'British Reaction', p. 152.
  - 28 'Unionist Revolt', *Manchester Guardian*, 9/7/1920, pp. 6–7.
  - 29 H. Fein, *Imperial Crime and Punishment: The massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and British judgement, 1919–1920* (Honolulu, 1977), pp. 138–44.

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 3) for inclusion here.

### Cornish Methodism and Cornish political identity, 1918–1960s.

Researching the relationship through oral history. *Kayleigh Milden*, *I of Cornish Studies*, Hayne Corfe Centre, Sunningdale, Truro TR1 3ND; [KMSMilden@aol.com](mailto:KMSMilden@aol.com).

**History of the Liberal Party.** Roy Douglas (author of *The History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* and a dozen or so other historical books) is working on a new book about the Liberal Party and its history. This will trace events from the rather indeterminate 19th century date when the party came into existence to a point as close as possible to the present. He believes that the story requires attention to be given not only to the glamorous deeds of major politicians but also to such mundane matters as party organisation and finance. ideas, please! *Roy Douglas*, 26 Downs Road, Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 1AA; 01737 552 888.

**Hon H. G. Beaumont (MP for Eastbourne 1906–10).** Any information welcome – especially from anyone having access to material about the history of Liberalism in Eastbourne – particularly on his political views (he stood as a Radical). *Tim Beaumont*, 40 Elms Road, London SW4 9EX.

**Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65).** Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete edition of his letters. *Dr A. Howe*, Department of International History, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE; [a.howe@lse.ac.uk](mailto:a.howe@lse.ac.uk). (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, see [www.lse.ac.uk/collections/cobdenLetters/](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/cobdenLetters/)).

**Liberal foreign policy in the 1930s.** Focussing particularly on Liberal anti-appeasers. *Michael Kelly*, 12 Collinbridge Road, Whitewell, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 7SN; [mmjkelly@msn.com](mailto:mmjkelly@msn.com).

**Liberal Party and the wartime coalition 1940–45.** Sources, particularly on Sinclair as Air Minister, and on Harcourt Johnstone, Dingle Foot, Lord Sherwood and Sir Geoffrey Maunders (Sinclair's PPS) particularly welcome. *Ian Hunter*, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; [ian.hunter@curtishunter.co.uk](mailto:ian.hunter@curtishunter.co.uk).

**Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16.** *Andrew Gardner*, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; [agardner@ssees.ac.uk](mailto:agardner@ssees.ac.uk).

**Liberals and the local government of London 1919–39.** *Chris Fox*, 173 Worpleston Road, Guildford GU2 6XD; [christopher.fox7@virgin.net](mailto:christopher.fox7@virgin.net).

**Political life and times of Josiah Wedgwood MP.** Study of the political life of this radical MP, hoping to shed light on the question of why the Labour Party replaced the Liberals as the primary popular representatives of radicalism in the 1920s. *Paul Mulvey*, 112 Richmond Avenue, London N1 0LS; [paulmulvey@yahoo.com](mailto:paulmulvey@yahoo.com).

### Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935.

Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. *H Street*, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; [N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk).

**SDP in Central Essex.** Contact with anyone who had dealings with the area, and in particular as many former SDP members of the area as possible, with a view to asking them to take part in a short questionnaire. Official documents from merger onwards regarding the demise of the local SDP branches and integration with the Liberals would also be appreciated. *Elizabeth Wood*, The Seasons, Park Wood, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex CM15 0SN; [Lizawsea@aol.com](mailto:Lizawsea@aol.com).

**Student radicalism at Warwick University.** Particularity the files affair in 1970. Interested in talking to anybody who has information about Liberal Students at Warwick in the period 1965–70 and their role in campus politics. *Ian Bradshaw*, History Department, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL; [I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk)

**Welsh Liberal Tradition – A History of the Liberal Party in Wales 1868–2003.** Research spans thirteen decades of Liberal history in Wales but concentrates on the post-1966 formation of the Welsh Federal Party. Any memories and information concerning the post-1966 era or even before welcomed. The research is to be published in book form by Welsh Academic Press. *Dr Russell Deacon*, Centre for Humanities, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff CF23 6XD; [rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk](mailto:rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk).



Before the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914, Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was one of the members of the Liberal Cabinet most cautious about British participation in a European war. Even afterwards he remained uneasy about British intervention. Yet within six weeks he was deploying his considerable

# THROUGH

rhetorical skills in the service of the recruiting drive. **Dr J. Graham Jones** introduces Lloyd George's Queen's Hall speech of 19 September 1914 – the first clear indication for all the world to see of Lloyd George's 'conversion' and commitment to the concept of 'total war'. News of a succession of disastrous reversals for the Allied war campaign had convinced him of the necessity to come out powerfully in support of Kitchener's recruiting campaign.

**T**he ostensible purpose of the speech was to boost recruitment among Welshmen living in London. The response to Kitchener's call for 100,000 recruits had been encouraging; more than 120,000 had joined up. Lloyd George was convinced that the British people would not as yet rally behind Churchill's call for military conscription. His Queen's Hall speech was intended both as an overt declaration of support for Kitchener's recruitment campaign, and a resounding reaffirmation of British unity and a vindication of the Allied cause.

Lloyd George invariably crafted his major public speeches with extraordinary care and precision; on this occasion his dedication was total. On the day of the speech Lord Riddell found him 'terribly nervous, feeling, he said, as if he were about to be executed. It was a curious sight to see him lying on the sofa, yawning and stretching himself in a state of high nervous excitement'. It was fully three years since Lloyd

George had delivered a truly great speech, and some of his colleagues had forgotten his oratorical capacity. The Queen's Hall speech was to comprise his first major pronouncement on the course and purpose of the war; he needed to convince his expectant audience that he wholeheartedly and unreservedly supported the decision to go to war. He rose to speak following a spirited rendering of *The Men of Harlech*.

Lloyd George declared that Britain was honour-bound to defend the integrity of Belgium in her innocence and suffering, and to remain true to treaty obligations, as treaties were 'the currency of international statesmanship'. He declared himself anxious to guard against exaggeration, and then referred to Serbia, yet another small nation which had refused to make the cowardly submission demanded of her by another bullying empire – a preoccupation which led him to a rhapsody on the subject of small nations. The speaker then contrasted Russia, which had made great sacrifices in the name



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of freedom (for instance, on behalf of Bulgaria) with modern Prussia, which had made no sacrifice for others. He stressed that the fight was against the false idea of civilisation embraced by the German authorities rather than against the German people who were themselves the victims of it. The peroration came to an end in a spirit of growing and almost mystical exaltation, but with a firm emphasis on the price which would eventually have to be paid.

Lloyd George's immediate personal reaction to his impassioned speech was a claim that he had found his audience to be 'far too stodgy', and that he had felt himself unable to penetrate their complacency. But the outcome was a formidable stream of recruits during the next few days. It immediately became headline news in all the Sunday newspapers printed the following day, each editorial column lavish in its praise and commendation. The dailies the next week followed in like fashion. Almost immediately letters of support and congratulation

began pouring in, as did a stream of insistent invitations to deliver similar speeches at other venues.

It was undoubtedly Lloyd George's most effective public peroration since his Limehouse speech back in 1909, but now he united the nation rather than dividing it. Among Liberal politicians and editors who effusively showered praise on the Chancellor were Asquith, Grey, Masterman, J. A. Spender of the *Westminster Gazette* and Robertson Nicoll of the *British Weekly*. Even more remarkable was the rush of commendation from the Tory side – from Bonar Law downwards to the party rank and file, and the columns of the Northcliffe press. Within days the speech had seen the light of day in print, and was subsequently reprinted as a pamphlet over and over again, running to dozens of editions. It formed the focal centre-piece of the *From Terror to Triumph* collection of war speeches published in September 1915. Ultimately, the Queen's Hall speech was translated into fourteen languages.

**Lloyd George invariably crafted his major public speeches with extraordinary care and precision; on this occasion his dedication was total.**

There is much to admire in the speech. It reflects admirably its author's heartfelt, if reluctant, realisation that ultimate victory could come only following a long ordeal and at notably heavy cost. It was scrupulously fair to the German people, choosing to condemn only imperial policy-making, and it magnanimously offered the prospect of a better world to follow the conclusion of hostilities. But it is probably fair to say that the speech stressed overmuch the fate of the small nations, notably Belgium, and over-played the 'sacrifice' theme to an extent which made Lloyd George appear somewhat insincere.

Its immediate impact was, however, undeniable; the speech transformed entirely both the public mood (and its perception of the war effort) and the standing of its author. Thereafter Lloyd George was to be the nation's foremost civilian war leader, with a mass popular following, perhaps now marked out as a Prime-Minister-in-waiting to succeed the generally ineffectual Asquith.

# 'THE GREAT PINNACLE OF SACRIFICE POINTING LIKE A RUGGED FINGER TO HEAVEN'

**T**here is no man who has always regarded the prospect of engaging in a great war with greater reluctance and with greater repugnance than I have done throughout the whole of my political life. There is no man more convinced that we could not have avoided it without national dishonour. I am fully alive to the fact that every nation which has ever engaged in any war has always invoked the sacred name of honour. Many a crime has been committed in its name; there are some being committed now. All the same, national honour is a reality, and any nation that disregards it is doomed.

Why is our honour as a country involved in this war? Because, in the first instance, we are bound by honourable obligations to defend the independence, the liberty, the integrity of a small neighbour that has always lived peaceably. She could not have compelled us; she was weak; but the man who declines to discharge his duty because his creditor is too poor to enforce it is a blackguard. We entered into a treaty – a solemn treaty – two treaties – to defend Belgium and her integrity. Our signatures are attached to the documents. Our signatures do not stand alone there; this country was not the only country that undertook to defend the integrity of Belgium. Russia, France, Austria, Prussia – they are all there. Why are Austria and Prussia not performing the obligations of their bond? It is suggested that when we quote this treaty it is purely an excuse

on our part – it is our low craft and cunning to cloak our jealousy of a superior civilisation that we are attempting to destroy. Our answer is the action we took in 1870. What was there? Mr. Gladstone was then Prime Minister. Lord Granville, I think, was then Foreign Secretary. I have never heard it laid to their charge that they were ever Jingo.

What did they do in 1870? That treaty bound us then. We called upon the belligerent Powers to respect it. We called upon France and we called upon Germany. At that time, bear in mind, the greatest danger to Belgium came from France and not from Germany. We intervened to protect Belgium against France, exactly as we are doing to protect her against Germany. We proceeded in exactly the same way. We invited both the belligerent Powers to state that they had no intention of violating Belgian territory. What was the answer given by Bismarck? He said it was superfluous to ask Prussia such a question in view of the treaties in force. France gave a similar answer. We received at that time the thanks of the Belgian people for our intervention in a very remarkable document. It is a document addressed by the municipality of Brussels to Queen Victoria after that intervention. It reads:

The great and noble people over whose destiny you preside has just given a further proof of its benevolent sentiments towards our country ... The voice of the English Nation has been heard

above the din of arms, and it has asserted the principles of justice and right. Next to the unalterable attachment of the Belgian people to their independence, the strongest sentiment which fills their hearts is that of an imperishable gratitude.

That was in 1870. Mark what followed. Three or four days after that document of thanks, a French army was wedged up against the Belgian frontier, every means of escape shut out by a ring of flame from Prussian cannon. There was one way of escape. What was that? Violating the neutrality of Belgium. What did they do? The French on that occasion preferred ruin and humiliation to the breaking of their bond. The French Emperor, the French marshals, 100,000 gallant Frenchmen in arms, preferred to be carried captive to the strange land of their enemies, rather than dishonour the name of their country. It was the last French army in the field. Had they violated Belgian neutrality, the whole history of that war would have been changed; and yet, when it was the interest of France to break the treaty then, she did not do it.

## 'Treaties are the currency of international statesmanship'

It is the interest of Prussia to-day to break the treaty, and she has done it. She avows it with cynical contempt for every principle of justice. She says: 'Treaties only bind you when it is your interest to keep them.' 'What is a treaty?'

**We are bound by honourable obligations to defend the independence, the liberty, the integrity of a small neighbour that has always lived peaceably.**

says the German Chancellor: 'A scrap of paper.' Have you any £5 notes about you? Have you any of those neat little Treasury £1 notes? If you have, burn them; they are only scraps of paper. What are they made of? Rags. What are they worth? The whole credit of the British Empire. Scraps of paper! I have been dealing with scraps of paper within the last month. One suddenly found the commerce of the world coming to a standstill. The machine had stopped. Why? I will tell you. We discovered that the machinery of commerce was moved by bills of exchange. I have seen some of them – wretched, crinkled, scrawled over, blotched, frowsy – and yet those wretched little scraps of paper move great ships laden with thousands of tons of precious cargo from one end of the world to the other. What is the motive power behind them? The honour of commercial men.

Treaties are the currency of international statesmanship. Let us be fair: German merchants, German traders, have the reputation of being as upright and straightforward as any traders in the world; but if the currency of German commerce is to be debased to the level of that of her statesmanship, no trader from Shanghai to Valparaiso will ever look at a German signature again. This doctrine of the scrap of paper, this doctrine which is proclaimed by Bernhardt, that treaties only bind a nation as long as it is to its interest, goes under the root of all public law. It is the straight road to barbarism. It is as if you were to remove the Magnetic Pole because it was in the way of a German cruiser. The whole navigation of the seas would become dangerous, difficult and impossible; and the whole machinery of civilisation will break down if this doctrine wins in this war. We are fighting against barbarism, and there is only one way of putting it right. If there are nations that say they will only respect treaties when it is to their interest to do so, we must make it to their interest to do so for the future.

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What is their defence? Consider the interview which took place between our Ambassador and the great German officials. When their attention was called to the treaty to which they were parties, they said: 'We cannot help that. Rapidity of action is the great German asset.' There is a greater asset for a nation than rapidity of action, and that is honest dealing. What are Germany's excuses? She says that Belgium was plotting against her; Belgium was engaged in a great conspiracy with Britain and with France to attack her. Not merely it is not true, but Germany knows it is not true. What is her other excuse? That France meant to invade Germany through Belgium. That is absolutely untrue. France offered Belgium five army corps to defend her if she were attacked. Belgium said: I do not require them; I have the word of the Kaiser. 'Should Caesar send a lie?' All these tales about conspiracy have been vamped up since then. A great nation ought to be ashamed to behave like a fraudulent bankrupt, perjuring its way through obligations. What she says is not true. She has deliberately broken this treaty, and we were in honour bound to stand by it.

**'Their crime was that they trusted to the word of a Prussian king'**

Belgium has been treated brutally. How brutally we shall not yet know. We already know too much. But what had she done? Had she sent an ultimatum to Germany? Had she challenged Germany? Was she prepared to make war on Germany? Had she inflicted any wrong upon Germany which the Kaiser was bound to redress? She was one of the most unoffending little countries in Europe. There she was – peaceable, industrious, thrifty, hard-working, giving offence to no one. And her corn-fields have been trampled, her villages have been burnt, her art treasures have been destroyed, her men have been slaughtered – yea, and her women and children, too.

Hundreds and thousands of her people, their neat, comfortable little homes burnt to the dust, are wandering homeless in their own land. What was their crime? Their crime was that they trusted to the word of a Prussian king. I do not know what the Kaiser hopes to achieve by this war. I have a shrewd idea what he will get; but one thing he has made certain, and that is that no nation will ever commit that crime again.

I am not going to enter into details of outrages. Many of them are untrue, and always are in a war. War is a grim, ghastly business at best or at worst, and I am not going to say that all that has been said in the way of outrages must necessarily be true. I will go beyond that, and I will say that if you turn two millions of men – forced, conscript, compelled, driven – into the field, you will always get amongst them a certain number who will do things that the nation to which they belong would be ashamed of.

I am not depending on these tales. It is enough for me to have the story which Germans themselves avow, admit, defend and proclaim – the burning and massacring, the shooting down of harmless people. Why? Because, according to the Germans, these people fired on German soldiers. What business had German soldiers there at all? Belgium was acting in pursuance of the most sacred right – the right to defend its homes. But they were not in uniform when they fired! If a burglar broke into the Kaiser's palace at Potsdam, destroyed his furniture, killed his servants, ruined his art treasures – especially those he has made himself – and burned the precious manuscripts of his speeches, do you think he would wait until he got into uniform before he shot him down? They were dealing with those who had broken into their household. But the perfidy of the Germans has already failed. They entered Belgium to save time. The time has gone. They have not gained time; but they have lost their good name.

But Belgium is not the only little nation that has been attacked in this war, and I make no excuse for referring to the case of the other little nation, the case of Serbia. The history of Serbia is not unblotted. Whose history, in the category of nations, is unblotted? The first nation that is without sin, let her cast a stone at Serbia. She was a nation trained in a horrible school, but she won her freedom with a tenacious valour, and she has maintained it by the same courage. If any Serbians were mixed up in the assassination of the Grand Duke, they ought to be punished. Serbia admits that. The Serbian Government had nothing to do with it. Not even Austria claims that. The Serbian Prime Minister is one of the most capable and honoured men in Europe. Serbia was willing to punish any one of her subjects who had been proved to have any complicity in that assassination. What more could you expect?

### **'Who can doubt the valour of Serbia?'**

What were the Austrian demands? Serbia sympathised with her fellow countrymen in Bosnia – that was one of her crimes. She must do so no more. Her newspapers were saying nasty things about Austria; they must do so no longer. That is the German spirit; you had it in Zabern. How dare you criticise a Prussian official? And if you laugh, it is a capital offence – the colonel in Zabern threatened to shoot if it was repeated. In the same way the Serbian newspapers must not criticise Austria. I wonder what would have happened if we had taken the same line about German newspapers. Serbia said: 'Very well, we will give orders to the newspapers that they must in future criticise neither Austria nor Hungary, not anything that is theirs.' Who can doubt the valour of Serbia when she undertook to tackle her newspaper editors? She promised not to sympathise with Bosnia; she promised to write no critical articles about Austria; she would have no public meetings in

**This is the story of two little nations.**

**The world owes much to little nations ...**

which anything unkind was said about Austria.

But that was not enough. She must dismiss from her army the officers whom Austria should subsequently name. Those officers had just emerged from a war where they had added lustre to the Serbian arms; they were gallant, brave and efficient. I wonder whether it was their guilt or their efficiency that prompted Austria's action! Serbia was to undertake in advance to dismiss them from the army, the names to be sent in subsequently.

Can you name a country in the world that would have stood that? Supposing Austria or Germany had issued an ultimatum of that kind to this country, saying: 'You must dismiss from your Army – and from your Navy – all those officers whom we shall subsequently name.' Well, I think I could name them now. Lord Kitchener would go; Sir John French would be sent away; General Smith-Dorrien would go; and I am sure that Sir John Jellicoe would have to go. And there is another gallant old warrior who would go – Lord Roberts. It was a difficult situation for a small country. Here was a demand made upon her by a great military Power that could have put half a dozen men in the field for every one of Serbia's men, and that Power was supported by the greatest military Power in the world. How did Serbia behave? It is not what happens to you in life that matters; it is the way in which you face it, and Serbia faced the situation with dignity. She said to Austria: 'If any officers of mine have been guilty, and are proved to be guilty, I will dismiss them.' Austria said: 'That is not good enough for me.' It was not guilt she was after, but capacity.

Then came Russia's turn. Russia has a special regard for Serbia; she has a special interest in Serbia. Russians have shed their blood for Serbian independence many a time, for Serbia is a member of Russia's family, and she cannot see Serbia maltreated. Austria knew that. Germany knew it, and she

turned round to Russia and said: 'I insist that you shall stand by with your arms folded whilst Austria is strangling your little brother to death.' What answer did the Russian Slav give? He gave the only answer that becomes a man. He turned to Austria and said: 'You lay hands on that little fellow, and I will tear your ramshackle Empire limb from limb.' And he is doing it.

This is the story of two little nations. The world owes much to little nations ... The greatest art in the world was the work of little nations; the most enduring literature of the world came from little nations; the greatest literature of England came when she was a nation of the size of Belgium fighting a great Empire. The heroic deeds that thrill humanity through generations were the deeds of little nations fighting for their freedom. Yes, and the salvation of mankind came through a little nation. God has chosen little nations as the vessels by which He carries His choicest wines to the lips of humanity, to rejoice their hearts, to exalt their vision, to stimulate and strengthen their faith; and if we had stood by when two little nations were being crushed and broken by the brutal hands of barbarism, our shame would have rung down the everlasting ages.

### **'The highest standard of civilisation is the readiness to sacrifice for others'**

But Germany insists that this is an attack by a lower civilisation upon a higher one. As a matter of fact, the attack was begun by the civilisation which calls itself the higher one. I am no apologist for Russia; she has perpetrated deeds of which I have no doubt her best sons are ashamed. What Empire has not? But Germany is the last Empire to point the finger of reproach at Russia. Russia has made sacrifices for freedom – great sacrifices. Do you remember the cry of Bulgaria when she was torn by the most insensate tyranny that Europe had ever



seen? Who listened to that cry? The only answer of the 'higher civilisation' was that the liberty of the Bulgarian peasants was not worth the life of a single Pomeranian soldier. But the 'rude barbarians' of the North sent their sons by the thousand to die for Bulgarian freedom. What about England? Go to Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, France – in all those lands I could point out places where the sons of Britain have died for the freedom of those peoples. France has made sacrifices for the freedom of other lands than her own. Can you name a single country in the world for the freedom of which modern Prussia has ever sacrificed a single life? By the test of our faith the highest standard of civilisation is the readiness to sacrifice for others.

I will not say a single word in disparagement of the German people. They are a great people, and have great qualities of head and hand and heart. I believe, in spite of recent events, that there is as great a store of kindness in the German peasant as in any peasant in the world; but he has been drilled into a false idea of civilisation. It is efficient, it is capable; but it is a hard civilisation; it is a selfish civilisation; it is a material civilisation.

They cannot comprehend the action of Britain at the present time; they say so. They say: 'France we can understand; she is out for vengeance; she is out for territory – Alsace and Lorraine.' They say they can understand Russia; she is fighting for mastery, she wants Galicia. They can understand you fighting for vengeance, they can understand you fighting for mastery, they can understand you fighting for greed of territory; but they cannot understand a great Empire pledging its resources, pledging its might, pledging the lives of its children, pledging its very existence to protect a little nation that seeks to defend herself. God made man in His own image, high of purpose, in the region of the spirit; German 'civilisation' would re-create him



What the war was to mean for Lloyd George ... 'Delivering the Goods' (*Punch*, 21 April 1915) – as Minister of Munitions (bottom) – and Lloyd George in 1916, as Prime Minister (top).

## THROUGH TERROR TO TRIUMPH

in the image of a Diesel machine – precise, accurate, powerful, but with no room for soul to operate.

Have you read the Kaiser's speeches? If you have not a copy, I advise you to buy one; they will soon be out of print, and you will not have many more of the same sort. They are full of the glitter and bluster of German militarism – 'mailed fist' and 'shining armour'. Poor old mailed fist! Its knuckles are getting a little bruised. Poor shining armour! The shine is being knocked out of it. There is the same swagger and boastfulness running through the whole of the speeches. The extract which was given in the *British Weekly* this week is a very remarkable product as an illustration of the spirit we have to fight. It is the Kaiser's speech to his soldiers on the way to the front:

Remember that the German people are the chosen of God. On me, the German Emperor, the Spirit of God has descended. I am His sword, His weapon and His Vice-general. Woe to the disobedient, and death to cowards and unbelievers.

Lunacy is always distressing, but sometimes it is dangerous; and when you get it manifested in the head of the State, and it has become the policy of a great Empire, it is about time that it should be ruthlessly put away.

I do not believe he meant all these speeches; it was simply the martial straddle he had acquired. But there were men around him who meant every word of them. This was their religion. Treaties? They tangle the feet of Germany in her advance. Cut them with the sword! Little nations? They hinder the advance of Germany. Trample them in the mire under the German heel. The Russian Slave? He challenges the supremacy of Germany in Europe. Hurl your legions at him and massacre him! Britain? She is a constant menace to the predominance of Germany in the world. Wrest the trident out of her hand.

Christianity? Sickly sentimentalism about sacrifice for others! Poor pap for German digestion! We will have a new diet. We will force it upon the world. It will be made in Germany – the diet of blood and iron. What remains? Treaties have gone. The honour of nations has gone. Liberty has gone. What is left? Germany. Germany is left! '*Deutschland uber Alles!*'

That is what we are fighting – that claim to predominance of a material, hard civilisation which, if it once rules and sways the world, liberty goes, democracy vanishes. And unless Britain and her sons come to the rescue it will be a dark day for humanity.

### **'Small nationalities in his way are hurled to the road-side'**

Have you followed the Prussian Junker and his doings? We are not fighting the German people. The German people are under the heel of this military caste, and it will be a day of rejoicing for the German peasant, artisan and trader when the military caste is broken. You know its pretensions. They give themselves the air of demigods. They walk the pavements, and civilians and their wives are swept into the gutter; they have no right to stand in the way of a great Prussian soldier. Men, women, nations – they all have to go. He thinks all he has to say is, 'We are in a hurry.' That is the answer he gave to Belgium – 'Rapidly of action is Germany's greatest asset,' which means, 'I am in a hurry; clear out of my way.'

You know the type of motorist, the terror of the roads, with a sixty-horse-power car, who thinks the roads are made for him, and knocks down anybody who impedes the action of his car by a single mile an hour. The Prussian Junker is the road-hog of Europe. Small nationalities in his way are hurled to the road-side, bleeding and broken. Women and children are crushed under the wheels

of his cruel car, and Britain is ordered out of his road. All I can say is this: if the old British spirit is alive in British hearts, that bully will be torn from his seat. Were he to win, it would be the greatest catastrophe that has befallen democracy since the day of the Holy Alliance and its ascendancy.

They think we cannot beat them. It will not be easy. It will be a long job; it will be a terrible war; but in the end we shall march through terror to triumph. We shall need all our qualities – every quality that Britain and its people possess – prudence in counsel, daring in action, tenacity in purpose, courage in defeat, moderation in victory; in all things faith.

It has pleased them to believe and to preach the belief that we are a decadent and degenerate people. They proclaim to the world through their professors that we are a non-heroic nation skulking behind our mahogany counters, whilst we egg on more gallant races to their destruction. This is a description given of us in Germany – 'a timorous, craven nation, trusting to its Fleet'. I think they are beginning to find their mistake out already – and there are half a million young men of Britain who have already registered a vow to their King that they will cross the seas and hurl that insult to British courage against its perpetrators on the battlefields of France and Germany. We want half a million more; and we shall get them.

### **'I envy you young people your opportunity'**

Wales must continue doing her duty. That was a great telegram that you, my Lord (The Earl of Plymouth), read from Glamorgan. I should like to see a Welsh Army in the field. I should like to see the race that faced the Normans for hundreds of years in a struggle for freedom, the race that helped to win Crecy, the race that fought for a generation under Glendower against

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the greatest captain in Europe – I should like to see that race give a good taste of its quality in this struggle in Europe; and they are going to do it.

I envy you young people your opportunity. They have put up the age limit for the Army, but I am sorry to say I have marched a good many years even beyond that. It is a great opportunity, an opportunity that only comes once in many centuries to the children of men. For most generations sacrifice comes in drab and weariness of spirit. It comes to you to-day, and it comes to-day to us all, in the form of the glow and thrill of a great movement for liberty, the impels millions throughout Europe to the same noble end. It is a great war for the emancipation of Europe from the thralldom of a military caste which has thrown its shadows upon two generations of men, and is now plunging the world into a welter of bloodshed and death. Some have already given their lives. There are some who have given more than their own lives; they have given the lives of those who are dear to them. I honour their courage, and may God be their comfort and their strength. But their reward is at hand; those who have fallen have died consecrated deaths. They have taken their part in the making of a new Europe – a new world. I can see signs of its coming in the glare of the battle-field.

The people will gain more by this struggle in all lands than they comprehend at the present moment. It is true they will be free of the greatest menace to their freedom. That is not all. There is something infinitely greater and more enduring which is emerging already out of the great conflict – a new patriotism, richer, nobler, and more exalted than the old. I see amongst all classes, high and low, shedding themselves of selfishness, a new recognition that the honour of the country does not depend merely on the maintenance of its

glory in the stricken field, but also in protecting its homes from distress. It is bringing a new outlook for all classes. The great flood of luxury and sloth which had submerged the land is receding, and a new Britain is appearing. We can see for the first time the fundamental things that matter in life, and that have been obscured from our vision by the tropical growth of prosperity.

May I tell you in a simple parable what I think this war is doing for us? I know a valley in North Wales, between the mountains and the sea. It is a beautiful valley, snug, comfortable, sheltered by the mountains from all the bitter blasts. But it is very enervating, and I remember how the boys were in the habit of climbing the hill above the village to have a glimpse of the great mountains in the distance, and to be stimulated and freshened by the breezes which came from the hilltops, and by the great spectacle of their grandeur. We have been living in a sheltered valley for generations. We have been too comfortable and too indulgent – many, perhaps, too selfish – and the stern hand of fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the great everlasting things that matter for a nation – the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven.

We shall descend into the valleys again; but as long as the men and women of this generation last, they will carry in their hearts the image of those great mountain peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war.

*Dr J. Graham Jones, who wrote the Introduction, is Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales. He was also a contributor to the Liberal Democrat History Group's third publication, Great Liberal Speeches (Politico's Publishing, 2001).*

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## Liberal Magazine

The National Liberal Club has an almost complete run of the *Liberal Magazine* following on from the last – 1941 – bound volume until its cessation in February 1950.

The Club wishes to have them bound in order to make them available in the Clubhouse. However, there are just two issues missing: May 1945 and June 1949.

Does any reader have these available or have suggestions as to where to obtain them? The Club would willingly swap copies from its duplicates.

Contact Michael Meadowcroft, Honorary Librarian, National Liberal Club:

- Waterloo Lodge, 72 Waterloo Lane, Leeds LS13 2JF
- meadowcroft@bramley.demon.co.uk

## East Riding of Yorkshire Museums Service

The Museums Service is committed to recording and preserving the heritage of the area.

We are looking to compile a database of local history projects taking place in the East Riding to help us do this. These projects might include book research, the restoration of a local historic building, oral histories, photographic exhibitions, lecture programmes, the creation of new museums, heritage trails or any other heritage projects or events.

We would be grateful for any information about any local history project under way, or undertaken in the past, in the East Riding area.

- Contact Shona Cormack, East Riding of Yorkshire Museums Service, The Chapel, Lord Roberts Road, Beverley, East Yorkshire HU17 9BE; Tel: 01482 392776; or
- Stefan Ramsden, stefan.ramsden@eastriding.gov.uk



**Ian Hunter  
examines the  
Liberal leader's  
role as a critic of  
appeasement**

Sir Archibald Sinclair. Leader of the Liberal Party from 1935 to 1945, was the last Liberal MP to hold a Cabinet position at Westminster, serving as Churchill's Air Minister from May 1940 to May 1945. He was also one of the first parliamentarians to voice concerns about the National Government's policy of appeasement during the mid-1930s. Historians have consistently overlooked the key role played by the Liberal Party between 1936 and 1939.<sup>1</sup> This is mainly because of the focus on the internal dissent within the Conservative Party and on the particular role played by Winston Churchill, from the wilderness of the backbenches, in opposing his party's international policies.

# SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR THE LIBERAL



**Sinclair  
speaking against  
appeasement  
at the Central  
Hall, Tollcross,  
Edinburgh, late  
1930s.**

In the first volume of his war memoirs, *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill himself fails to mention the part played by the Liberal Party, painting instead a self-portrait of enormous vanity in which he casts himself as almost the sole prophet of vision and reason to have been warning of Hitler's threat to European peace. The reality was very different – and the Liberal Party, and Sinclair in particular, played a major role in developing and proposing clear alternatives to the Government's foreign policy.

Archibald Sinclair was born in 1890, and was educated at Eton.

Having then attended Sandhurst, he became a regular soldier in 1910, and served with distinction in the Great War as Churchill's second in command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots Fusiliers in Flanders. He became Churchill's private secretary in 1919 when Lloyd George appointed Churchill to the combined War Office and Air Ministry role (1919–21) to oversee demobilisation and to deal with the anti-Bolshevik White Russians. Sinclair continued to support his mentor when Churchill moved to the Colonial Office (1921–22) for the last eighteen months of the Coalition Government.

# BALD SINCLAIR ANTI-APPEASER

With Churchill's encouragement, Sinclair stood for election as a Liberal in his home constituency of Caithness and Sutherland, entering Parliament in 1922. He climbed rapidly through the Liberal Parliamentary Party ranks, becoming Chief Whip in 1930. He entered the National Government with Herbert Samuel, the Liberal leader, where he served in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Scotland in 1931–32, prior to the resignation of the Liberals over the Ottawa Trade Tariff Agreements. When Samuel lost his seat at the 1935 general election Lloyd George nominated Sinclair for the parliamentary party leadership, to which he was elected unopposed.

Sinclair inherited a quarrelsome, demoralised and disparate group of twenty-one MPs. Between 1935 and 1939 he led an effective internal reorganisation, redefining the role and responsibilities of the Liberal Party's central organisation, and initiated a number of policy reviews. However, the issue on which he was to find a national voice was his early support for rearmament, often speaking in Parliament as one of the first opponents of the National Government's policy of appeasing Hitler's territorial ambitions in Central Europe.

Sinclair inherited from Herbert Samuel a policy position that opposed rearmament and was over-reliant on the supposition

that the League of Nations could be relied on to intervene and resolve international problems on Britain's behalf. The Liberals fought the November 1935 general election on a platform that claimed 'the national defences must be kept efficient and large enough for the needs of the times, but a colossal, panic expenditure upon arms is not the road to peace ... Through strengthening the League of Nations, and through international disarmament, and there alone, the true path to security lies.'<sup>2</sup> Although sympathetic to this position, Sinclair became increasingly dissatisfied with the viability of opposing rearmament in the face of the emergence of undemocratic regimes in continental Europe.

On 14 March 1935, eight months before the general election, a major debate on the naval supply estimates took place in the House of Commons; it marked the last time that Sinclair opposed increased spending on the armed services. Sinclair made a lengthy speech attacking the Government's policy of increasing naval spending, arguing that over £660 million had been spent during the preceding ten years, to little value. Concluding his attack, he argued that 'in the absence of any clear relation between this country's armament policy and a policy for a collective system, we on these benches will feel bound by speech and vote to do all in

our power to deflect the Government's policy from its present dangerous and wasteful course'.<sup>3</sup> Sinclair was keen to see the Government move to a defence policy that was more reliant on the collective security offered by the League of Nations. The next day Churchill passed a note to Sinclair which, while calling his manner of delivery 'admirable', described his argument as 'false' and his purpose as 'morbid' and finished by attacking Sinclair's anti-rearmament stance as 'fatal'. Sinclair responded to Churchill, claiming that his former mentor had misjudged his purpose and that as regards his arguments Churchill should 'think it over – surely better than you admit and not wholly separated from your own'.<sup>4</sup>

It is not clear whether further discussion took place and what, if any, greater role Churchill played in changing Sinclair's views, but it is apparent that from April 1935 onwards Sinclair shifted his stance and focused increasingly on the dangers that political extremism raised in continental Europe. Certainly this was the last occasion on which he was to attack any government proposal for rearmament. Instead, by May 1935, Sinclair was arguing in support of the Government's proposals to increase air defences as 'an emergency contribution to the collective system of peace under the League of Nations'. This position was to form one of

**From April 1935 onwards Sinclair shifted his stance and focused increasingly on the dangers that political extremism raised in continental Europe.**

the central planks of party policy under Sinclair. At its simplest, Sinclair threw Liberal support behind the need for collective security through the Covenant of the League of Nations and pressed the Government to target expenditure on building a first-rate Royal Air Force and secure naval defences.<sup>5</sup> In this policy the Liberals were offering a genuine alternative to Chamberlain's counsels of despair.

The Liberals were also able to offer a policy in distinct contrast to the refusal of Attlee and the Labour Party to face up to growing threats from abroad. Between 1931 and 1937 Labour adopted what can only be described as a policy of unilateral disarmament and isolation. The Labour Party Conference in 1932 unanimously passed a motion pledging the party to 'take no part in war and to resist it with the whole force of the Labour movement'. In the key defence spending votes of the mid-1930s (the March 1935 debate on the Defence White Paper, the 1935 and 1936 army, navy and air estimates, and the 1937 Defence Loans Bill) the Labour Party consistently voted against building up the country's military capabilities. As late as July 1937 the party abstained in the vote over the final appropriation for defence. This was not a proud record with which to face a Government increasingly committed to the policy of appeasement.<sup>6</sup>

When Sinclair took over the Liberal leadership in 1935, he accepted the position only after he had obtained a promise from his fellow MPs that the party would give priority to defence. There were five occasions in each parliamentary session when the Liberals, as the smaller opposition party, could choose the subject for debate.<sup>7</sup> At each of these opportunities the Liberals raised the issues of defence and rearmament, especially in relation to the air force.

Throughout 1936 and 1937, in the face of a significant surge in German rearmament, Sinclair urged Chamberlain's government further to increase spending on

Britain's armed forces. In tandem, at every available opportunity, he criticised the Government for failing to demonstrate its commitment to the League of Nations as the route for curtail-ing the ambitions of aggressor nations. Sinclair's outrage at the announcement of the Hoare-Laval Pact, which overturned Britain's support for the League of Nations' policy of applying sanctions to persuade Mussolini to withdraw from Abyssinia, was trumpeted in the House of Commons on 19 December 1935. Sinclair claimed that the Government had failed in its obligations to give a lead to the League of Nations and had turned its back on its original proposals for dealing with Italian aggression. He asserted that, thanks to Baldwin, 'the British Empire is now neuter in the counsels of the League'.<sup>8</sup> He urged that the Government should stand firm in support of sanctions or else be seen to have been party to rewarding aggression.

The German reoccupation of the demilitarised Rhineland in March 1936 and the resulting concerns about the extent of German ambitions provided a further platform for Sinclair to expand on his thinking to the House of Commons. On 26 March 1936 he laid out Liberal policy for dealing with the perceived injustices that Germany claimed the Treaty of Versailles imposed on her. He urged that Britain should take the lead in organising a World Conference to reach a new settlement on colonial and economic issues and to provide the basis for a policy of 'military and economic disarmament, of collective security in which all countries, and not merely groups of allies, must participate, and of justice and equality for all nations'.<sup>9</sup> This became the basis for policy proposals from the Liberal benches until the Munich crisis in 1938, when the need to seek a defensive alliance with the Soviet Union would become a major concern.

Sinclair built on his stance in a powerful speech delivered on 23

June 1936. Incensed by the Government's refusal to stand up to Italy over its invasion of Abyssinia, he made one of the first parliamentary attacks on what was to become the policy of appeasement. 'The Foreign Secretary [Eden] knows that aggression is an appetite that grows by what it feeds on. The Government's policy puts a premium on successful aggression and makes the world safe for dictatorship.'<sup>10</sup> Together with his colleague Geoffrey Mander, Liberal MP for Wolverhampton East, Sinclair harassed the Government for shedding one potential ally after another and for refusing to use the powers of the League of Nations to resist aggression effectively.

During 1936 Sinclair came under pressure from his colleagues in the Parliamentary Liberal Party to consider forming a closer tie with the Popular Front organisation which had been set up to encourage non-Conservative parties to cooperate against the domestic policy of the National Government. There was much feeling that the Popular Front platform should be extended to international policy. Sinclair was very hesitant about this route to Liberal-Labour cooperation, as he feared that it would lead to the ultimate absorption of the independent Liberal Party by Labour. He did, however, cooperate informally with fellow opponents of the National Government and spoke at the December 1936 'Arms and the Covenant' rally at the Royal Albert Hall, sharing a platform with Churchill and a couple of Labour leaders (Citrine and Dalton) to urge the promotion of collective security through the League of Nations. This event was overshadowed by the same day's breaking news of the relationship between the King and Mrs Simpson.

At the end of May 1937 Chamberlain replaced a weary and dispirited Baldwin as Prime Minister. Sinclair was certain that the autocratic and lofty style of Chamberlain, who was particularly ruthless with any dissent

**When Sinclair took over the Liberal leadership in 1935, he accepted the position only after he had obtained a promise from his fellow MPs that the party would give priority to defence.**

and dismissive of the slightest criticism from both the opposition parties and his own backbenches, would lead to a split within the Tory party that would provide a golden opportunity for the Liberals. He was right about the former but overly optimistic about the latter.

The first signs of open discontent over Chamberlain's premiership arose in February 1938 when the tensions between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, broke into public view over the policy to be pursued against Italy. Eden had become increasingly incensed by Chamberlain's dabbling in foreign affairs without proper consultation. In January 1938 Chamberlain initiated talks with Mussolini with a view to try to detach him from the German camp. Without agreeing the details with Eden, Chamberlain offered Mussolini a deal whereby Britain would recognise Italy's control over Abyssinia in return for a promise of withdrawal of Italian troops from the Spanish Civil War and the offer of access to a loan from Britain on preferential terms. This was an offer that Mussolini, already safely in control of the African country and comfortable that he had backed the winning side in Spain, found it easy to decline. Chamberlain was also reluctant to pursue an offer, favoured by Eden, from President Roosevelt to set up an international conference to deal with the Abyssinian crisis. Chamberlain did not believe that the Americans would be able to influence the Italians any more successfully than could Britain.<sup>11</sup> However, this proved to be the final break with Eden. Incensed by Chamberlain's unwarranted intervention in the responsibilities of his own office, Eden resigned from the government on 20 February.

Sinclair regarded Eden's resignation as a calamity for the chances of turning British policy away from appeasement, and was appalled by the terms that had been offered to Mussolini. Not only was the Italian invasion of an independent country being tacitly

approved, but the intervention in Spain was being ignored and, in a further humiliation to Britain, Mussolini was being offered access to loans and grants on a promise of future good behaviour. In the House of Commons Sinclair asked exactly what Britain was getting in return for this display of incredible largesse. The answer that nothing had been won by such an approach came all too quickly, as it became plain that, in addition to Italian expansion remaining uncurtailed, Germany was also moving to expand her control in Central Europe, encouraged by Britain's reluctance to confront aggression.

With the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and the March 1938 *Anschluss* with Austria, deep concerns were expressed in all British political parties regarding Germany's territorial ambitions in Central Europe. Sinclair, Attlee and Chamberlain met to see if any joint policy could be developed in response to Germany and Austria's union but failed to agree a united position. In the summer of 1938 Germany pressed its claims for the return of the Sudetenland, then part of Czechoslovakia, to the Reich. In Parliament Sinclair initially argued that the Czechoslovaks might have to make concessions to avoid conflict but swiftly realised that this would reduce Czechoslovakia's ability to defend itself from further aggression and by September had reversed his position to opposing vigorously any deal over the Sudetenland. In the Commons Sinclair argued that a general European settlement was necessary and that Britain had to prove to Germany that aggression would be resisted.

On 14 September 1938 Sinclair and Lord Crewe<sup>12</sup> wrote to Chamberlain offering the Liberal Party's wholehearted support if the Government made it clear to Germany 'that an unprovoked attack upon Czechoslovakia cannot be regarded with indifference by Great Britain, and that if France were to be involved in hostilities consequent upon such

## **The Munich crisis allowed Sinclair and Churchill to cooperate more openly.**

an attack this country would at once stand firm in arms by her side.'<sup>13</sup> Sinclair did not deny that Germany had the right to argue for a better settlement than had been imposed at Versailles but he did not believe that concessions should be made to Germany under duress. When Chamberlain met Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Sinclair was quick to dismiss the outcome of the meetings as a further example of a 'hurried, disorderly, and humiliating rout'.<sup>14</sup> Chamberlain had indeed betrayed the Czechoslovaks at his meeting in Munich with Hitler.

The Munich debate at Westminster took place on 3 October and Sinclair was one of the most damning commentators on the deal. Calling Chamberlain's foreign policy a 'policy of successive retreats in the face of aggressive dictatorships' he made clear that Munich had been a humiliating surrender in the face of threatened force. Sinclair also noted that there was a very reliable guide to Hitler's intentions available and that the Prime Minister would do well to read it: 'Two sources of enlightenment I enjoy about Herr Hitler's intentions. One is his public speeches and the expression of his opinions and intentions in public and in private, and the other is *Mein Kampf*. I prefer *Mein Kampf*, because it has never yet let me down, and I commend it to the Prime Minister.'

The Munich Agreement convinced Sinclair that Germany now had the upper hand in Europe and that Britain's traditional attitude of maintaining a balance of power to stop any one country becoming too dominant was being foolishly abandoned. It would now be a more difficult task to stop Germany from dominating Europe than it would have been before. Sinclair was becoming reluctantly convinced that war was unavoidable. Dingle Foot observed, in an unpublished short essay,<sup>15</sup> that the Munich crisis allowed Sinclair and Churchill to cooperate more openly. For example, in November 1938, when Sinclair moved an amendment to set up

## SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR: THE LIBERAL ANTI-APPEASER

an immediate Ministry of Supply in order to speed up rearmament, Churchill appealed in vain for fifty of his fellow Conservative MPs to support the amendment to make the Government act. Only two Tory MPs (Brendan Bracken and Harold Macmillan) joined him in the Liberal lobby. This incident provoked great resentment on the Conservative benches and Churchill was threatened with an official Conservative opponent in the Epping Division. Although the local party did not deselect Churchill he was told firmly that he was on probation. Sinclair and the local Liberal candidate (who in 1935 had polled 12,000 votes) assured Churchill that in the event of an early election there would be no Liberal opposition and that they would do their utmost to induce Liberal voters to give him their support.<sup>16</sup>

In the House of Commons, throughout the rest of 1938 and into the spring of 1939, Sinclair and Churchill continued to work closely together in condemning the Munich agreement, urging the formation of a Ministry of Supply (reflecting their experience of the Ministry of Munitions in 1918) and arguing that Britain's foreign policy must focus on isolating and encircling Germany by forging an understanding with the Russians in the face of a common threat. However, no matter how effective Sinclair's arguments were in the Commons, he failed to convince many outside the House and, indeed, some of his own backbenchers remained hostile to his policy of opposing appeasement. Even in the two votes at the end of the Munich agreement, four out of the small group of twenty Liberal MPs voted in support of Chamberlain.<sup>17</sup>

Outside the parliamentary party, Sinclair failed to win support from a small intellectual group centred around Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) and J.A. Spender, a devoted Asquithian Liberal and Chairman of the Liberal Council. Letters appeared in the press opposing Sinclair and

arguing for the Liberals to adhere to the 'traditional' values of isolationism, retrenchment and pacifism. Within parliament Sinclair was frequently attacked by Tory MPs as a warmonger. It was left to Sinclair, Mander and a handful of other Liberals such as Sir Percy Harris (Chief Whip) to oppose the Government and urge a new approach to dealing with Germany. The elder statesman of the party, David Lloyd George, though opposed to the Munich agreement, was compromised by his ill-judged comments proclaiming Hitler as a 'great man' after they had met in 1936. Lord Samuel, the former leader, was more concerned with finding a personal route back to office within the National Government and sent warm congratulations to Chamberlain after Munich, saying 'any fool can go to war but it often needs the highest qualities of statesmanship to keep the peace'.<sup>18</sup> Spender publicly referred to Sinclair's policy as being motivated by personal hatred of Chamberlain.

The Munich agreement was hugely popular with the general public and it took great political courage for Sinclair to be so outspoken in his condemnation. He was certainly quicker than the official Labour opposition to realise that Hitler must be stopped. However, it is only in retrospect that it is clear that Sinclair was right. At the time many people in Parliament and in the country believed that Chamberlain had saved Britain from an unnecessary conflict. It was not until the last year of the 1930s that Sinclair's views began to chime with those of the wider public.

By April 1939 the European situation was darkening to such an extent that Sinclair now won widespread support for a scathing attack on Chamberlain and other members of the Cabinet. German demands that Danzig, since 1919 a free city under the mandate of the League of Nations, be returned to German control, together with other lands of the old East Prussia initiated another



Sir Archibald Sinclair (1890–1970)

European diplomatic crisis. In a debate on the international situation on 3 April Sinclair declared that peace would only be possible 'if we are to convince Herr Hitler of our inflexible determination to resist aggression henceforward, there must be no hedging in the policy of His Majesty's Government and no whittling down of their pronouncements'. Sinclair went on to be scathing about the Government's record in maintaining its purpose in the face of the action of the dictators. He reminded the House of every retreat that the National Government had presided over.

Let us be quite clear about this matter. Peace will depend on the ability of His Majesty's Government to convince Herr Hitler that this time they really will be firm. It will not be easy to convince him. He will remember the Government's pledges at the last election about steady and collective resistance to unprovoked aggression and, four or five weeks later, the Hoare-Laval negotiations. He will remember that the independence of Austria was proclaimed by this Government to be an object of British policy. He will remember the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at Lanark last August which was universally interpreted as meaning that we should, in the last resort, support Czecho-Slovakia against unprovoked aggression ... Tremendous exertions are called for from the Government and this country if we are to live down that record and convince Herr Hitler that in future we will be steadfast.

Churchill, speaking next, declared that 'this is a fine hour in the life of the Liberal Party, because from the moment when they realised that rearmament was necessary, they have seemed to seek to bring forward together both the material and moral strength of this country, and I believe that at the moment they represent what is the heart and soul of the British nation'.<sup>19</sup>

It was, of course, too late by this date to deter Hitler. Although Britain and France gave guarantees that they would protect Polish independence, Hitler was ready to risk war to further his eastern empire. Hitler and Stalin's deal over Poland and their non-aggression pact sealed the fate of Poland and made war certain. By the summer of 1939 there were few policy options available to Britain other than to prepare to stand with France and oppose Germany militarily.

Sinclair built a high profile in both Parliament and the country as a leading opponent of the Government's international policy. His anti-appeasement policy centred on a policy of strong national defence combined with resistance to aggression through collective agreements and the resolution of grievances through international conferences. Sinclair urged the development of a new foreign policy that would show that aggression would be resisted and that just grievances would be settled through international conference, rather than secret diplomacy. He also argued that there must be cooperation across the parties by those opposed to appeasement, and he lent the support of the Liberal Party to anti-appeasement candidates at two by-elections (Oxford and Bridgewater). He also supported the Conservative MP, the Duchess of Athol, when she resigned her seat to fight an unsuccessful by-election in protest at Chamberlain's handling of appeasement.

However, the campaign against Munich failed because Munich itself enjoyed enormous support throughout the country. The bulk of the British people were overjoyed to have avoided another war; Sinclair's message was not one they wanted to hear. Irrespective of this, Sinclair should be given credit for fashioning Liberal foreign policy into a coherent body that offered a clear alternative to the dangerous policy of appeasement. There were signs that Sinclair's policy stance was turning into a vote-winner and that had the 1940 general

election gone ahead as planned (that is, if war had broken out twelve months later than it did) then the Liberal Party might have seen a significant improvement in its electoral position. In July 1939 the Liberals fought and won their first by-election since 1934 when Tom Horabin held North Cornwall with an increased majority in a straight fight with a Conservative. Horabin stood as a Liberal candidate with the support of the Popular Front and his nomination papers were signed by both Labour and dissident Conservatives.

In his maiden speech Horabin spoke of the 'infirmity of purpose that many people in this country and many people in neutral and allied countries, and certainly I believe, the leaders of the Axis powers saw in the British Government'.<sup>20</sup> He argued that Chamberlain had done more harm to the world than Hitler, on the grounds that the man who lets the mad bull out of the field to run amok is more responsible than the bull for the damage done. What is particularly interesting is the evidence that this by-election suggests that had Sinclair chosen to cooperate more with cross-party organisations, such as the Popular Front, rather than remain aloof in fear of jeopardising Liberal independence, his anti-appeasement stance might have been more effective. Certainly, high-profile Liberal MPs such as Dingle Foot, Richard Acland and Megan Lloyd George felt that Sinclair could have positioned the Liberal Party as the pivot around which could have gathered both Labour and Conservative dissenters from the National Government's foreign policy. But it would have been a risky initiative, requiring, at the very least, electoral cooperation with the Labour Party – a risk that Sinclair did not feel able to take.

The frustration that the Liberal Party felt at having been correct in its policy but powerless to enact its beliefs was articulated by Violet Bonham Carter in a speech given to a Liberal Action Group dinner: 'For twenty-five years we have been right on almost every great

issue of public policy – Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, Munich, Ministry of Supply – dead right all the time and all along the line – in those crucial, those disastrous pre-war years. Yet our rightness availed us nothing – and it availed the country nothing either. We were right but we were impotent – utterly impotent to avert the cataclysm we saw approaching and which has engulfed us all. We've got to make sure that the Liberal Party is not only right but great and formidable as well.'<sup>21</sup>

*Ian Hunter has edited the collected correspondence between Archibald Sinclair and Winston Churchill 1915–1960 (Politico's Publishing, forthcoming).*

### Further reading:

Gerard De Groot, *Liberal Crusader – The life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (Hurst, 1993)

Richard S. Grayson, *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement: The Liberal Party, 1919–39* (Frank Cass, 2001)

R. A. C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement* (Macmillan, 1994)

**Sinclair should be given credit for fashioning Liberal foreign policy into a coherent body that offered a clear alternative to the dangerous policy of appeasement.**

- 1 There are exceptions to this rule, and Richard Grayson's excellent book *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement: The Liberal Party, 1919–39* (Frank Cass, 2001), is a very clear overview of the development of various strands of Liberal thinking, both in and out of Parliament, during the interwar years.
- 2 [www.libdemmanifesto.com/1935/1935-liberal-manifesto.shtml](http://www.libdemmanifesto.com/1935/1935-liberal-manifesto.shtml)
- 3 *Hansard*, 14 March 1935, p. 612.
- 4 *Thurso Papers*, THRS II 25/3, Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 5 Interestingly, considering that Sinclair is frequently viewed as having been too much in Churchill's pocket, Sinclair's anti-appeasement stance, with its emphasis on collective security, was significantly different from the line that Churchill developed. Churchill had little time for the niceties of collective security. He wanted a strong independent Britain with armed forces, especially the air force, capable of resisting any continental threat. In short, Churchill's policy was to make sure Britain was strong enough to ignore the League of Nations and rely on French power, backed by British naval and air support, to keep Europe quiet.

concluded on page 48

Julie Smith  
explores the  
growth of global  
cooperation  
between Liberal  
parties

# THE GROWTH OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL

In October 2003, Liberals from across the globe descended on Dakar, Senegal for the 52ND Congress of the Liberal International (LI). On 15 June 2003 the Africa Liberal Network was launched in Johannesburg, South Africa. Both events are symbolic of the vitality of LI and also of the presence of Liberalism and Liberal parties in Africa. All this is a far cry from the early days of LI, when the vast majority of members were European, when democracy was under threat or entirely absent from many parts of the world and when the future for Liberalism seemed somewhat bleak. Fascism was a very recent memory, Communism was a potent reality for millions and many states, notably those in Africa, were still colonies of European powers. At the same time, parties of the moderate left and right were beginning to espouse the values of liberalism, at least rhetorically, leaving little space on the political spectrum for Liberal parties. It was against this unpromising background that Liberal International was established in 1947.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Liberals from Belgium, the UK and Norway began to think about ways of creating links with Liberals from other countries. Liberal parties had begun to cooperate in 1910, with formal links being established within the framework of the *Entente Internationale des Parties Radicales et*

**The founders of Liberal International at Wadham College, Oxford, April 1947. (Reproduced with the kind permission of Liberal International.)**

*des Partis Démocratiques similaires*, which met from 1925 until 1934. With the advent of war these contacts had all but disappeared. After the Second World War there were two forces that contributed to the re-emergence of cooperation among Liberals, one Anglo-Norwegian, the other Belgian.

In 1945, John MacCullum Scott was posted to the Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces in Norway. MacCullum Scott was a Liberal, but one whose relationship with the party was fairly loose. Nevertheless, he was determined to build up contacts with Norwegians Liberals during his posting. While he initially found it difficult to identify Liberal interlocutors in Norway, MacCullum Scott eventually made contacts who were willing to cooperate and whose views he felt were sufficiently in tune with his own.<sup>1</sup> His attempts to get the British Liberal Party to join his venture came to little, however, as the Liberals were recovering from electoral devastation in the 1945 general election. Thus, the British contribution to the creation of what became Liberal International came from a small group of interested individuals, not the party. These people established the British Liberal International Council (BLIC, later renamed the Liberal International (British Group)) in 1946, and it was the Council which worked to create LI.

The leader of the Belgian Liberals, Senator Roger Motz, also

sought to bring together Liberals from a range of countries. The centenary of the *Parti Libéral Belge* in 1946 provided the opportunity for an international gathering, which gave plenty of scope for networking as well as producing the Declaration of Brussels, which set out Liberal principles. Moreover, on this occasion the British Liberal leader, Clement Davies, did endorse internationalism, inviting the Liberals to meet again the following year, this time in the UK. However, it was left to the BLIC actually to organise the conference, which eventually brought together Liberals from nineteen countries in Oxford in April 1947.

The vast majority of participants at the Oxford conference were European, although there were also representatives from South Africa, Canada and the United States. This was to be the pattern for many years, as Liberalism failed to flourish in other continents. Even in Europe, Liberalism was constrained by the Communist regimes that prevailed in the East; owing to the nature of their national governments, Hungary and Estonia were represented at Oxford by exiles (as was Spain because of its right-wing, rather than left-wing, regime). Later, Czechoslovakia's option of participating in Liberal circles was also curtailed by Communism.

Cooperation in the early years of LI was often among



like-minded individuals rather than political parties. This clearly affected the organisation's capacity for action since individuals, even well-known individuals, rarely enjoy the ability to influence events that political parties possess. Over the years there were discussions as to whether or not the role of political parties within LI should be strengthened and a decision to end individual membership was taken in the early 1990s, when it was decided that greater party involvement would strengthen the organisation. Yet, if individual affiliation to LI has ceased, non-party membership persists in the form of 'Groups' – literally groups of liberal-inclined (there is no requirement to be a member of a Liberal party) people who wish to be involved. The BLIC was the first such group, with the Netherlands, Germany and Israel also creating groups, which are members of LI alongside the respective Liberal parties from those countries.<sup>2</sup>

LI devoted most of its energies to Europe in the early years, in part because that was where most of the members came from and in part because it was committed to the new process of European integration that was occurring. Other parts of the world were not ignored entirely, but Africa and Asia appeared more as subjects of debates at LI Congresses than as regions likely to produce partners for European Liberals in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.<sup>3</sup> It was the decision of the European Community to hold direct elections to the European Parliament that finally altered the course of LI's history. With the prospect of elections it was decided that a European party federation should be set up to compete against Social and Christian Democrat parties. This decision led to the birth, in 1976, of the Federation of Liberal and Democratic Parties of the European Community. Shorn of its European identity, LI began to look for a new role. Gradually, Liberal parties began to emerge in other continents as democracies were established or as existing

party systems changed. Thus, the change in direction was not as difficult to achieve as it seemed in the mid-1970s.

From the start LI, with MacCullum Scott as its first Secretary General, had sought to widen its membership. Even within Europe there were several states that were not represented, while further afield it proved harder to secure support. The Canadian Liberals have long been electorally successful but, perhaps for that reason, they saw other parties as their natural allies. Moreover, the anti-clericalism of many continental Liberal parties was a problem for a party that looked to the Québécois Catholics for votes. In the United States there was profound hostility to the name 'Liberal', while in Australia and New Zealand, there were few Liberals to be found. Elsewhere the situation was similar or even worse.

Gradually, however, links were forged with Liberals from other continents. When Pierre Trudeau was elected Prime Minister of Canada, he was willing to work with LI and eventually the Canadian Liberal Party joined LI in 1973. Since then the party has been a key member, providing a venue for LI's first Congress held outside Europe (in Ottawa in 1979); Canadian Liberals have also served in senior positions in LI. As Latin America embraced democracy, Liberal parties affiliated to LI and then established the first of a series of regional bodies. In 1986, the Federación Liberal Centroamericana y del Caribe (FELICA) was set up to bring together Liberals from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador. The initiative was a sound one, since parties that are reasonably close geographically clearly find it easier to collaborate more regularly than they can at a global level. FELICA depended on the support of the German Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, an organisation that has served to foster emerging Liberal parties around the world. FELICA was not ultimately successful, however,

withering away in the 1990s. Nevertheless, a model had been created and other Liberal groupings have been established and in some cases have flourished. In particular, the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats, established in 1993, has been extremely active, bringing together Liberals from a range of countries. Their 'Eastern' Liberalism might differ somewhat from that of the West, but CALD member parties are all members or observers of LI and are thus all deemed to be Liberal.

Progress in Africa has, perhaps inevitably, been slower than elsewhere, owing to the slow process of democratisation in the continent. Yet, even in Africa, Liberal parties have been established and there are Liberal heads of government, notably Maitre Adboulaye Wade, President of Senegal, and the host of the most recent LI Congress. LI has moved a long way from its origins geographically but its aims have remained the same – to serve as 'the pre-eminent network for liberal parties and for the strengthening of liberal democracy around the world'.<sup>4</sup>

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**LI has moved a long way from its origins geographically but its aims have remained the same – to serve as 'the pre-eminent network for liberal parties and for the strengthening of liberal democracy around the world'.**

- 1 The different origins of Liberal parties within Europe as well as the connotations of the word 'liberal', which in some countries, such as the United States, are negatively perceived, has been a problem for LI throughout its history.
- 2 The German Group was established at a time when West German political parties were gradually being formed and before the Free Democrats were seen as an automatic ally of LI.
- 3 One theme of the 1953 Congress, for example, was 'the future of Africa', while the 1954 Congress considered 'the emancipation of Asia'. The latter topic in particular highlights the challenges that were facing Liberalism and even democracy in that part of the world.
- 4 Liberal International, 'An overview of the world federation of liberal parties'.

**Michael McManus examines the Liberal role in the Suez crisis of 1956, and the long-term consequences for the Liberal Party.**



# LIBERALS AND THE SUEZ CRISIS

**E**vents' was Harold Macmillan's famous answer when asked what he feared most in politics. Yet it was events – or rather one event in particular – that propelled him into the job that, in his deceptively laid-back way, he had long coveted, that of Prime Minister.

The Conservatives under Winston Churchill had received fewer votes than Labour at the general election of 1951, but won more seats. In 1955, under Anthony Eden, the party had gained both votes and seats and began to reclaim the mantle of the 'natural party of government'. Although it was already clear that Eden was no longer the man he had been – the principled and courageous *matinée* idol who resigned from the Chamberlain Government as a protest against appeasement – the economic situation was beginning to improve and both Prime Minister and party looked settled for a decent tenure.

The Liberal Party was effectively becalmed in the 1955

**The Liberals' new leader, Jo Grimond, on the campaign trail.**

general election. Leader Clem Davies was enduring one of his increasingly common bouts of ill health and the party's Chief Whip, Jo Grimond, had largely led the line in his stead. Although the party's manifesto was criticised both for lack of invention and for its leaden tone, in its way it was arguably both radical and far-sighted, advocating closer British involvement in Western European integration, parliamentary assemblies for Scotland and Wales, measures against monopolistic practices in industry, and protection for individual citizens against racial prejudice, union harassment and even against arbitrary actions by the state itself. The number of candidates – 110 – was one higher than in 1951 and the Liberals neither lost nor gained any seat. In only a tiny handful of constituencies did the party's support rise significantly, notably in North Cornwall and North Devon, where Jeremy Thorpe's newly minted brand of highly personalised campaigning was setting the pace.

What is not always recognised nowadays is the fact that the position of the Liberal Party had already begun to recover even before the Suez Crisis. Local elections in 1954 and 1955 had shown only the tiniest flickers of improvement, but parliamentary by-elections began to bring some seriously good news. At Torquay in December 1955, Peter Bessell increased the Liberal vote by almost 10 per cent. Only two months later, at Gainsborough and at Hereford, Liberal candidates enjoyed significant swings in their favour. The foundations were fragile, to be sure, but the first shoots of recovery were apparent and, when the party enjoyed a number of unexpected gains in the local elections of May 1956, some of the younger generation of Liberals apparently began to feel that a renewed leadership might be able to take better advantage of the shift in public opinion.

Then came the 'event' to end all events for a country still grappling with its decline from

imperial power to the international second division. Following the refusal of the Americans and British to finance the Aswan Dam in southern Egypt, on 26 July 1956 the Egyptian President Gamal Abd al-Nasser summarily nationalised the Suez Canal. The governments of Britain and France, the two countries where most of the shares in the Canal were held, immediately concluded that they should settle for nothing less than 'regime change' and, in due course, entered into a secret and opportunistic arrangement with the Israeli government – the notorious Sèvres Protocol – to bring that about, by military means if necessary. There followed a domestic political crisis that would bring the British political establishment to breaking point, also fundamentally and permanently changing many people's perceptions of the Conservative Party. A huge opportunity was about to be created for a re-energised Liberal Party.

An entry in Violet Bonham Carter's diaries, describing a meeting of the Liberal Party Committee on 31 July 1956, both records the (possibly surprising) initial reaction of one leading Liberal of the time – the then Chief Whip Jo Grimond – to the Suez situation and neatly embodies the Liberal dilemma in the face of such unilateral aggression:

Jo – describing himself as the Capt. Waterhouse of the Lib. Party – is in favour of 'going it alone' & landing troops in the Canal Zone. He says Nasser's action is the parallel of Hitler's when he invaded the Rhineland & that unless we bring about his fall the whole Middle East will go his way – nationalise their oil, threaten to cut us off, etc. I think this is true. Yet I hardly feel that we can 'go it alone' & align world opinion against us ...

Confronting the Suez Crisis was not at all straightforward for the Liberal Party of 1956. Even a parliamentary party of only six MPs

was seriously divided on the matter. In many ways the Liberals were still close to the Conservatives in a way that seems quite alien today. Two of the party's MPs – Donald Wade in Huddersfield and Arthur Holt in Bolton – held their seats only because they were involved in *de facto* pacts with local Tories, and three others – Clement Davies, Rhys Hopkin Morris and Roderic Bowen – had been greatly helped by the absence of Conservative candidates in their constituencies at the 1955 general election. Decisive leadership was now required; the party desperately needed someone to forge a distinctively Liberal position around which everyone could unite. Importantly, Jo Grimond himself was soon engaged in a profound 'learning process', which no doubt involved some interesting exchanges with Lady Violet.

Grimond moved rapidly away from his Blimpish initial reaction towards Nasser's occupation of the Canal Zone. In a statement on 18 August 1956, for instance, he denounced the Government's pompous behaviour at the disastrous Suez conference. He was certain that, as soon as Nasser had nationalised the Canal, 'the best that could be hoped for from the conference was a compromise by which the Egyptian act of nationalisation would be virtually accepted, while the canal administration was placed under some sort of international control'.<sup>1</sup> He also foresaw longer-term problems arising from oil and the Middle East. On Thursday 13 September 1956, however, along with Arthur Holt and Donald Wade, he did give the Eden Government the benefit of the doubt by supporting it in two critical divisions on Suez. Rhys Hopkin Morris too had privately evinced robust support for Anthony Eden's stance at Suez, but as a Deputy Speaker he kept his views off the public record and did not take part in these controversial divisions.

It is impossible to separate Jo Grimond's assumption of the Liberal leadership from the Suez

Crisis. Clem Davies stepped down from the leadership at the party's autumn conference in Folkestone in late September, when the opening act of the Crisis was being played at full intensity, and Grimond emerged effortlessly from a field of one as the obvious successor. By a peculiar twist of fate, Grimond had to travel to the USA for a six-week tour and was not even in the hall when Davies made his emotional speech of resignation, the tears streaming down his cheeks. By the time he returned to the UK, it was all too clear that the situation at Suez was about to turn ugly. He had learned at first hand that, even though it was arguably the Americans who had precipitated the seizure of the Canal by abruptly refusing to finance the Aswan Dam, in an election year neither the Democrats nor the Republicans had any intention of supporting a military intervention. Nonetheless, at the end of October the Israeli army deliberately provoked hostilities by invading the Sinai peninsula and, given that pre-arranged and agreed pretext, British and French forces began to land at Port Said and occupy the canal on 5 November – the very day on which Jo Grimond was confirmed as leader of the parliamentary Liberal party at an eve-of-session dinner with his five colleagues at the House of Commons.

Grimond had still been in the USA when the most recent crucial votes on Suez had taken place, on Thursday 1 November 1956. Holt had abstained but Davies, Wade and Bowen had supported the Labour opposition. By the time Grimond returned to take up the reins as the party's parliamentary leader, the British and French governments had issued an ultimatum to the Egyptians and, once Nasser had summarily rejected it, the threat of invasion was both real and immediate. Grimond knew that the Liberals must come completely off the fence. He was supported in this by the officers of the Liberal Party Organisation, who agreed

**Confronting the Suez Crisis was not at all straightforward for the Liberal Party of 1956. Even a parliamentary party of only six MPs was seriously divided on the matter.**

on 2 November that, 'the policy of the Government, because it has dealt a serious blow at the establishment of the rule of law, would stand condemned even if it were successful'.<sup>2</sup> Yet both Hopkin Morris and Holt still sympathised with Eden's actions, and Wade too had to be mindful of his vulnerable situation in Huddersfield should he become too outspoken in his criticisms.

Although his public stance was slightly equivocal in the early days, Grimond's old friend David Astor told me that he was privately at one with the sceptics from the start, regularly attending meetings of a group that Astor set up to organise anti-Eden forces. He arrived at this position by an impeccably rational process. The Liberals had always been in favour of a stronger United Nations, and had long argued that it should ideally have set up some kind of international 'police force' to deal with just this type of situation. As it was, the British and the Israelis were dealing with the problem in their own way, which could not be tolerated. As the Korean War so nearly did, it could have dragged the superpowers into a conflict that was being waged by their allies and *de facto* surrogates. Even the UN as it was, short on respect, might and firepower, would be a better arbiter at Suez than Eden and his post-imperial 'might is right' coalition. Up in Bolton, Arthur Holt continued to argue that, although it would have been greatly preferable for the UN to be up to the job, until and unless it was suitably 'beefed up', the British and their allies were perfectly entitled to get on with sorting out the Suez situation by themselves. On that basis, Grimond could argue, the disagreement was about tactics rather than principles.

In his first speech in the House of Commons as Liberal leader, Grimond was cheered from the Labour benches when he mocked the Government's claim to have inspired the creation of a United Nations force to sort out the

**In his first speech in the House of Commons as Liberal leader, Grimond was cheered from the Labour benches when he mocked the Government's claim to have inspired the creation of a United Nations force to sort out the mess at Suez.**

mess at Suez. This, he said, 'was like the burglar claiming that that by his skill and violence he had compelled the police to improve their methods greatly'. Grimond felt that the Suez crisis had been the inevitable consequence of years of weak policy towards the region, and pressed the Government to adopt a sustainable and coherent attitude towards the Middle East. He now proposed what he described as a policy of the 'extreme centre', under which clear guidelines would be drawn up for the final stages of decolonisation. Britain would also have to play a leading role, working through the Commonwealth and Europe, in setting up really effective international mechanisms for dealing with future flare-ups in the Middle East and elsewhere. In his New Year message for 1957, Grimond warned against Britain becoming a new Middle West – 'midway between Europe and America, understanding neither, vaguely resentful of both, trying to wrap jingoism around us and vent our troubles on foreigners; yet expecting the same foreigners, particularly the Americans, to lend us money and give us oil'.

Suez provided Grimond with a wonderful political opportunity. By the time of the last critical vote on the crisis, on Thursday 6 December, he was able to lead all of his colleagues into the opposition lobby. Furthermore, along with the question of colonial policy, Suez had the effect of dramatically radicalising a section of public opinion. By playing up the Liberals' opposition to Eden's policy, Grimond greatly enhanced their image as an 'anti-system' party. For the thousands of people who were stimulated into political activity by their opposition to Suez, the Liberals now looked like a serious and attractive proposition. The crisis also gave Grimond the opportunity of making a mark in Parliament. As Ian Trethowan wrote in the *News Chronicle*, 'day by day, he was able to wait until some luckless Minister had backed himself

into a corner ... Then, gracefully but mockingly, Grimond rose to deliver the knock-out.'<sup>3</sup>

Although the Suez Crisis clearly buoyed Jo Grimond through his early months as Liberal leader, the likely long-term political consequences must have been less easy to discern at the time. It was unfortunate for Grimond that his assumption of the leadership was followed by a series of political misfortunes for the party. The first by-election, for instance, took place at Chester, where the Liberals never had a chance. Then Rhys Hopkin Morris died suddenly and unexpectedly on the night of 21–22 November 1956. Hopkin Morris had won his seat by fewer than 500 votes in both 1950 and 1951 and, although his majority had risen to over 3,000 in 1955, he had a sizeable personal vote and Carmarthen was by any token a highly marginal seat. Labour's by-election candidate was Megan Lloyd George, formerly deputy leader of the Liberals, and the local Liberals selected John Morgan Davies, who shared Hopkin Morris's pro-government views on Suez. To his great regret, Grimond felt obliged to support the candidature of a man with whom he disagreed profoundly on the most important issue facing the nation. In February 1957, Megan Lloyd George was returned to the House of Commons as Labour MP for Carmarthen and the Liberal parliamentary party was reduced to only five MPs.

In this instance the night most certainly was darkest before the dawn. As Grimond and his circle had hoped, the Carmarthen result was not indicative of some deep malaise for the Liberals. It was almost entirely attributable to local factors, not least the deep local affection that there had been for Hopkin Morris and the sheer force of personality of Megan Lloyd George. Suez had not only changed the way in which Britain thought about itself: it had permanently moved the political goalposts. There had been a

subtle shift in public opinion, particularly with regard to the Conservative Party, and a small but significant group of voters and (perhaps more importantly) political activists had detached themselves from the Tories. They were now in search of a new home, and the Liberals' charismatic new leader was just the man to build one for them. One obvious gain close to home was the decision of Laura Grimond's brother Mark to turn down overtures from the Conservative Party, and stick with the Liberals instead. His narrow victory at the Torrington by-election in 1958 would be come to be seen as a watershed, the first Liberal gain at a by-election for three decades.

With Suez and Carmarthen out of the way, Grimond began in earnest to lead his party on its long march and 1957 became the year in which he made his personal imprint on the Liberal Party, setting out a distinctive political platform on nuclear defence, the economy and Europe.

Suez reared its head again at the end of March 1957, when the French press first leaked word of the Sèvres Protocol, the secret document in which collusion between Britain, France and Israel had been formalised. The Government had explicitly denied in the House of Commons that Britain had any foreknowledge of the Israeli attack on Egypt; so, said Grimond, if these French disclosures were true, they would demonstrate that the Eden Government was 'made up of rogues and their dupes – not to mention incompetents'.<sup>4</sup> Outside the furnace of Westminster twenty years later, Grimond was able to take a more relaxed view – 'while I personally rather welcome the veil which has been drawn over this incident – there may well be occasions when ministers must lie in the national interest – yet the contrast between the treatment of the dissemblers on this occasion and the way that others have been expelled from public life for lesser offences, is strange to say the least of it'.<sup>5</sup>

**What Grimond always knew, however, was that Suez had given the Liberals – and him personally – a crucial lifeline when they were at their weakest.**

What he always knew, however, was that Suez had given the Liberals – and him personally – a crucial lifeline when they were at their weakest. At by-elections in Gloucester, Rochdale and Torrington, the Liberals soon demonstrated that they knew how to campaign – and how to hurt the two big parties. In the wake of Suez, the Liberal Party was back in business.

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- 1 *Guardian*, 20 August 1956.
- 2 *The Times*, 3 November 1956.
- 3 *News Chronicle*, 18 December 1956.
- 4 *The Times*, 1 April 1957.
- 5 Jo Grimond, *Memoirs*, p. 192.

## REVIEWS

### Reformism and the Risorgimento

Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini: *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (Longman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2002)

Reviewed by **Piers Hugill**

**D**erek Beales (with, in this new edition, additional input from Eugenio Biagini) has set out a knowingly revisionist history of the Italian Risorgimento, at least from the point of view of traditional Italian historiography. In fact, as Beales himself recognises, there have been a number of reassessments of the Risorgimento since the fall of fascism and the consequent historical anti-fascist consensus of the Italian Republic.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this post-fascist revisionist trend, by consciously historicising the process of unification in Italy, has entailed reviewing the concept of 'nation' itself and the very idea of a national unity project ever having existed in Italy in the accepted form of Risorgimento.

Part of this reassessment of the processes that defined and facilitated Italian unification is evident in Beales' decision to go further back in time than is usual and to

trace his chosen narrative from the end of the Austrian War of Succession in 1748. The signing of the Treaty of Aix-La-Chapelle, which 'inaugurated nearly fifty years of peace in Italy', was first considered the starting point of the Risorgimento by the poet Giosué Carducci (1835–1907). However, it is only comparatively recently that it has been suggested again (the first edition of this book was published in 1971). Previous reckoning began with the Napoleonic invasion of Italy in 1796 (for the left and liberals) or with the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (for conservatives).

Since this book was originally intended to form part of a series of works reassessing historical topics from a contemporary liberal political perspective, it is no surprise perhaps that the origins of the Risorgimento should be sought in the Enlightenment (or the indigenous Italian form of *Iluminismo*) and in the slow

## REVIEWS

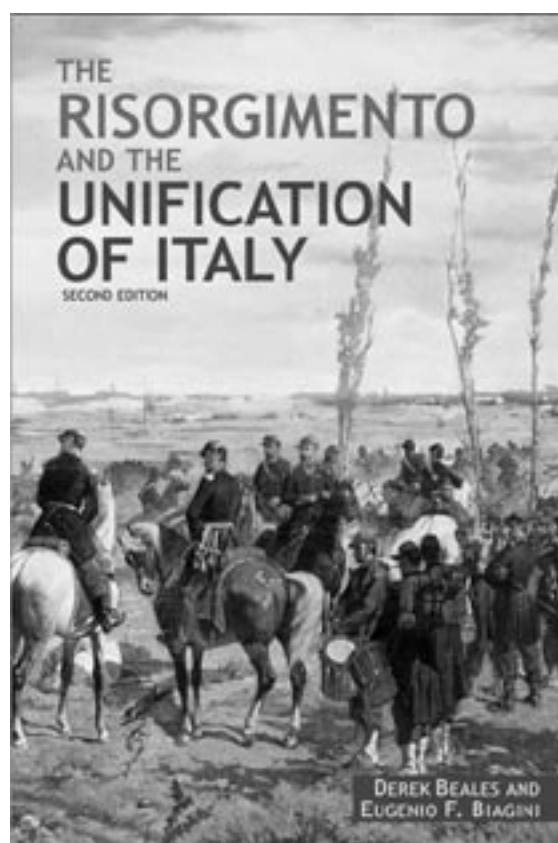
development of both democratic political institutions and free-market economic forms by the Italian bourgeoisie. A theme running throughout is the distinction between radical and revolutionary activity and progressive liberal democratic trends, usually consisting of upper-middle-class and aristocratic Italian elements, which fought more for free trade and greater economic rights than for consistent democratic or political ends.

Beales is keen to show that the real solutions to Italian bourgeois problems, which comprise the real history of the *Risorgimento* and unification, were to be found in 'progressive' politics – i.e. reformism. This countered the potentially more dangerous elements of *Carbonarism*<sup>2</sup> which brought with it only repression and failed constitutional reforms. The steadier approach of the reformist tendency meanwhile, especially as exemplified by Cavour's period as Prime Minister of Piedmont, was infinitely more successful in achieving lasting ends in terms of constitution-building, national unification and economic progress. The underlying theme that Beales develops is the progressive nature of cross-class unity, in contradistinction to the socialist instinct for class conflict and the divergence of political and economic interest. Nevertheless, the narrative offered by this volume doesn't always seem to bear these conclusions out.

Real conflicts of interest certainly were manifest throughout the period covered by the book. For instance, attitudes towards the clergy varied enormously across classes, but for very different reasons. In this context it is interesting to see how Beales traces the neo-Guelph and pro-clerical moderates' change in attitude towards the Papacy after 1848, when it became obvious how reactionary the Church really was. It is also clear that a significant underlying causal factor in the process leading to

unification was the necessity to open up markets and constitute Italy not only as a geographical expression but as an economic one too. The enormously complicated and burdensome tariff system operating in pre-revolutionary Italy, in addition to the lack of navigable rivers or other forms of transport across the Appenines, meant that anything like a national trading network was impossible before unification. The urgency of Italian unity, when it came, was therefore in no small way prompted by the need to develop such an infrastructure, enabling Italy to operate as a single and coherent economic entity. However, while bourgeois factory owners and financiers acted in a revolutionary manner in 1848–49 in the Veneto, Lombardy and Piedmont, because of the urgency of reducing tariffs and opening markets, the burgeoning northern Italian proletariat were equally intent on reducing working hours, unionising their factories and protecting industries that would lose precious jobs if opened to free trade.

Cavour had no sympathy for such objections to his economic policies, and instead initiated reforms to the law that scrapped many of the older traditional fairs and holidays to ensure greater productivity in the nascent manufacturing industries. Beales is very open about the degree of bourgeois self-interest manifest in the democratic and radical politics of the time, although he would also have us believe that cross-class action was central to the success of these endeavours. There is a danger in making these assumptions without acknowledging the very limited sympathy that existed between social classes at the time. Those moments when cross-class action did seem to have real impact were the revolutionary moments of 1821, 1830 and 1848–49 when very complicated social and political processes were establishing



themselves as elements of modern life.

If 1848–51 was a death knell for the 'old' Europe, initiating the era of high capitalism, the immediate post-unification period in Italy demonstrated some very stark differences in social interests. At this time capitalism was a genuinely progressive force, and part of the 'miracle' of the Italian *Risorgimento* lies in the way in which the liberal conception of an outward-looking open nationhood so quickly came into being.<sup>3</sup> In any case, an important aim of the Congress of Vienna was to crush both Jacobinism and nationalism at the same time, since the victors of the Napoleonic wars considered them to be two sides of the same French expansionist coin. Whilst the poison of fascist nationalism was a much later development it is instructive to see how Beales rehearses the differences between these two attitudes towards nationhood. One was open, secular, liberal and democratic, embracing and supporting all nations' right to self-determination and equality.

The other was inward, messianic, authoritarian and absolute, unable to see the validity or worth in other peoples or ethnicities. The differences between Mazzini's and Mussolini's attitude towards the Italian nation could not be greater.

While Garibaldi and his 'Thousand' were welcomed with open arms in Sicily when it was first liberated from the decaying Bourbon regime, it was not long before the real significance of the unification process hit home for the island's peasantry. This was not altogether Garibaldi's fault. Nevertheless, very soon the burden of taxation under Cavour was far greater even than it had been under the Bourbons and Gramsci's 'agrarian revolution *manqué*' was as much in evidence post-unification as before.<sup>4</sup> Garibaldi, the supreme pragmatist, was even put in the position of a counter-revolutionary to regain order on the island. An opportunity for genuinely egalitarian land redistribution had been missed and decades of rural disquiet were to follow.

And it wasn't just the countryside. The fiscal policy of the new Italian state was soon causing ordinary Italians major problems too. The *tassa sul macinato* (grist tax), for instance, meant that millions of Italians could no longer afford to feed themselves adequately. The increasing tax burden on the Italian middle classes, land reform that favoured only the largest owners, and the effective suppression of demand in the new Italy all meant that the hopes of both the liberal petit-bourgeois and the working classes were dashed. The hope of an egalitarian 'nation' of Italians came to an end and, with the rise of fascism after the chaos of the First World War, a very different sense of nationality arose.

Fascinating in this respect is the chapter on 'Women and the Risorgimento'. Beales very clearly demonstrates the important part that women played, as well as the extreme difficulty

that they faced in gaining, and maintaining, a voice. It is also interesting that a significant proportion of the women described were from abroad – coming to Italy, marrying Italians and, subsequently, getting involved in Italian politics. Such, for example, were the cases of Anita Garibaldi, Rosalie Montmasson Crispi, Margaret Fuller Ossoli, or Jessie White Mario. All of these women, whether Italian or not, were either highborn or from independently wealthy backgrounds. What is clear is that working-class women were effectively invisible in this struggle, once again demonstrating the stark class divisions in Italian society and their relation both to political and social activity and to people's own interests. The Calabrian peasantry, for instance, was quite clearly indifferent to the entire process of unification and not much concerned who oppressed them. That they had absolutely no stake in the new Italy must have been perfectly self-evident.

The book is very well written and beautifully presented, although the indexing seems incomplete somehow: I would have preferred entries on more general issues, such as the southern question, that are dealt with extensively in the book but which are not covered by the index. However, while the index may leave something to be desired, there is a magnificent selection of documents, constituting more than a third of the whole length of the book. This is an excellent approach to the subject, allowing those with a special interest in any particular area to refer straight to the original sources relating to it. These annexes are one of the best features of the book.

Given the significance the authors attach to the cultural life of Italy, and to the importance poets, writers and painters had to the development of a sense of nation, a fuller picture of those individuals responsible,

such as Manzoni and Foscolo, could have improved the book. In addition, the chapter on the Italian language was weakened by insufficient attention given to the very special linguistic situation there. At the time of the unification, not only were there innumerable dialects in existence (many of them mutually incomprehensible) but also substantial communities of Greek and Albanian speakers in the south as well as Slavonic, French and German speakers in the north. It was these communities in the south especially, with their own independent traditions and interests, that in some significant way have led to those peculiar and characteristic problems now known infamously as *il problema del Sud*. Even with Berlusconi at the helm, the Italian mass media have still failed to overcome that cultural barrier to nation-building.

Despite these small shortcomings, however, this is an excellent introduction to a fascinating period of Italian history and as such is to be highly recommended.

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**Beales is keen to show that the real solutions to Italian bourgeois problems, which comprise the real history of the Risorgimento and unification, were to be found in 'progressive' politics – i.e. reformism.**

- 1 Denis Mack Smith's *Italy: A Modern History* is a good example of English revisionism in this tradition and, from Italy, Paul Ginsbourg's *Italy and its Discontents*.
- 2 A form of indigenous Jacobinism with much influence from the Italian tradition of freemasonry espoused by Giuseppe Mazzini and Filippo Buonarroti, a descendent of Michelangelo who was the nearest early nineteenth century Italy had to a communist.
- 3 Thus giving the lie to Prince Metternich's famous dictum that Italy was nothing more than a 'geographical expression'.
- 4 Beales argues that the old Italian Communist Party's official version of events was only really applicable to Sicily.



## An inept and flawed peace

Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (John Murray, 2003)

Reviewed by **Cllr Peter Truesdale**

This is a necessary book. Briskly and clearly it chronicles the proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference. And not only does it fill a gap in the market, but MacMillan strikes a judicious balance between detail and overview and has a handy way with pen portraits. Yet in performing her task MacMillan begs a number of questions.

The first question begged concerns the relationship between the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and that of Versailles. Brest-Litovsk shed brutal clarity on the German war aims (or what the German war aims had become by 1917). Can there be any doubt that a similarly Carthaginian peace settlement would have been imposed on the western front in the event of victory by the Central Powers?

By contrast the peace settlement devised by the allied powers was a ramshackle affair with local deals stitched up, former promises called in and secret deals half acknowledged. Brest-Litovsk was imposed by the victor on a vanquished but still functioning state. The same was not true of the peace determined at Paris: an armistice had been arrived at but Austria-Hungary had effectively disintegrated and Germany was convulsed by actual or threatened revolution. Furthermore, Brest-Litovsk was imposed by a state effectively controlled by the victorious military. By contrast the victorious European powers at Paris had publics exhausted by war with no stomach for the further military adventures necessary to impose a settlement upon the chaos of central Europe and the Balkans.

General Wilson admirably captured the dilemma of the peacemakers when he said to Lloyd George: 'It really is no use abusing this or that small state. The root of the evil is that the Paris writ does not run.'

General Wilson certainly proved wiser than his presidential namesake. It is hard to warm to Woodrow Wilson. He is reminiscent in his headstrong rectitude of that other diplomatic disaster of the twentieth century, Neville Chamberlain. Was Woodrow Wilson's judgement fundamentally flawed? Surely we must answer 'Yes'. The racial and language mosaic of middle Europe did not afford the redrawing of boundaries and the creation of new independent states without the creation of many new minorities. One might make allowances for Wilson's failure to recognise the structural differences between Moravia and Michigan, but his failure to secure the effective support of the Senate was inexcusable.

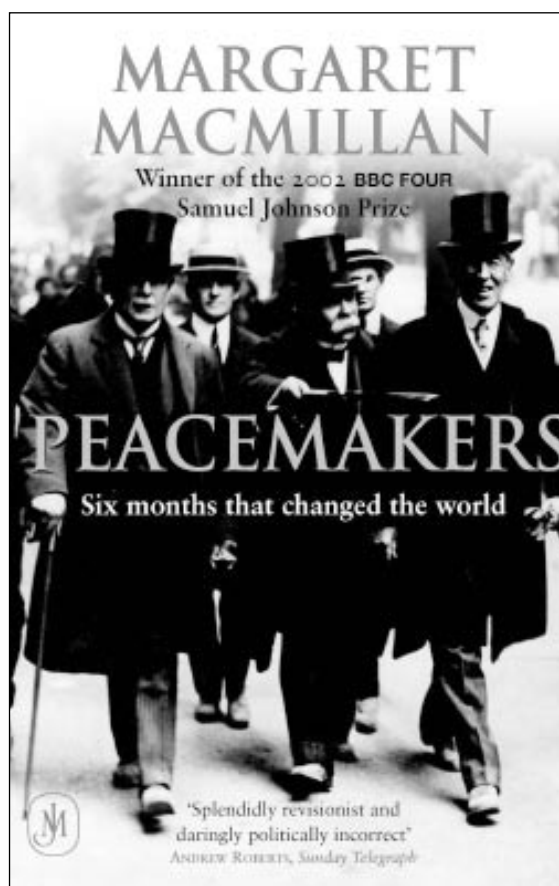
At least Wilson had, in the Fourteen Points, a coherent, if wrongheaded, vision of the Europe that he wished to see. Britain and France, on the other hand, lacked both the power to inflict a truly Carthaginian peace on Germany and the vision to forge a more peaceful and consensual Europe.

Another contrast with the past that suggests itself is with the Congress of Vienna. While arguably forged under more favourable circumstances, the Vienna settlement was more durable than that of 1919 – and certainly proved a more effective restraint on the former aggressor and disturber of European peace.

MacMillan rightly warns against judging the 1919 settlement in the light of its subsequent failure: 'It has become a commonplace to say that the peace settlements of 1919 were a failure, that they led directly to the Second World War. That is to overestimate their power.' She is technically correct but the incoherence of the process she describes in the body of the book only increases the suspicion that the peace was flawed and inept. The sixteen-page chapter on 'The End of the Ottomans' captures this beautifully and displays MacMillan's singular eye for incisive and amusing quotes.

MacMillan's chronicle of what happened will stand for a generation. The subject is now crying out for a more detailed study of the diplomatic roots of the settlement and a higher-level strategic analysis.

*Cllr Peter Truesdale is Leader of Lambeth Borough Council.*



**Malcolm Baines  
traces the  
development  
of the Liberal  
commitment to  
Europe, 1945–  
1964**



# LIBERALS AND EUROPE

**T**he years immediately after 1945 were ones in which the Liberal Party was more preoccupied with survival as an independent political party than with policy development. The only Liberal policy that had any salience at all with the electorate was the support for free trade that had been part of the Liberal lexicon since the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the foundations of the Liberals' pro-European views in the later twentieth century had already been laid.

In one sense, however, it was surprising that the Liberals should have taken such a favourable position in respect of the cause of European unity. Liberal tradition since Cobden and Gladstone had consistently combined an opposition to international entanglements with a sympathy for the rights of small nations; something that did not necessarily lead to support for joining a political confederation such as the European Community.

Immediately before the Second World War, Liberals such as Lord Lothian, one-time adviser to Lloyd George, later Under-Secretary of State for India in the National Government and finally the UK's ambassador to

**What Liberals  
fought for: signing  
the Treaty of  
Accession of the  
UK to the EEC,  
Brussels, 24  
January 1972**

the United States, had considered federalism as a possible response to the rise of Germany. However, Lothian's idea was for the possibility of a federation of the English-speaking peoples, including the United States, the United Kingdom and the Dominions. In an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1938, he concluded that a federal Europe was a good idea in principle but that he did not see the UK as a part of it.<sup>1</sup> Beveridge, on the other hand, did argue for British participation in a European federation. There was therefore some Liberal support in favour of involvement in a deeper arrangement than just an association of countries such as the United Nations, but not necessarily in one encompassing other European nations. It should be remembered, though, that neither Lothian, a former Tory, nor Beveridge, who did not join the Liberals until July 1944, were part of the mainstream Liberal tradition.

The Second World War made UK membership of a European federation more attractive. By the end of the war, the Liberal leaders were not only enthusiastically supportive of the view that the United Nations should have greater authority, but had

also become involved with the early moves towards European unity.<sup>2</sup> This began as a result of a speech by Churchill in September 1946 in which he called for a United States of Europe. During 1947, Churchill, still Conservative leader, brought supporters of that view together, including Violet Bonham Carter and Lord Layton, both Liberals but – significantly – both close friends of Churchill. In December 1947, the European Movement was formed; it held its first major meeting at The Hague in May 1948. Liberals present included Lady Rhys Williams, later to defect to the Conservatives, and Frances Josephy, candidate in Cambridge in 1950 and 1951. However, it was clear from the outset that in this area, as in many others, the wider Conservative Party leadership did not support Churchill. Eden, in particular, Churchill's heir apparent and former Foreign Secretary, was firmly opposed. He, like many in the British establishment, still saw the UK as having a world role – as one of the 'big three' along with the Soviet Union and the USA.<sup>3</sup>

With senior Liberals committed to it, it perhaps seems surprising that support for Britain's

entry into the Common Market took so long to become a prominent party policy. Although the Liberal Assemblies in 1947 and 1948 voted for greater European integration on a federal model, no particular questions were raised about potential conflicts between this policy and the party's continuing support for free trade.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the 1947 Assembly had also endorsed the abolition of food and raw material tariffs as the precursor to the elimination of all other tariffs. Primarily, of course, this inconsistency was simply a reflection of the fact that the framework for the new European entities that were to lead to the European Community did not take shape until the 1950s. When they did, both the Schuman Plan and later the European Defence Community were endorsed by the Liberals shortly after they were established.

Therefore, during the period of the Attlee Government, Liberals, in so far as they were able to consider practical policy issues whilst the party's future was in considerable doubt, proved perfectly capable of holding both their traditional free-trade views and sympathy for some sort of wider European unity. The latter, however, should be seen as part of the Cobdenite tradition of internationalism that had also manifested itself in opposition to big-power vetoes on the United Nations Security Council and in general support for both an international police force and world government. Free trade was a major lynchpin of that world view – and therefore most Liberals probably did not see any intrinsic conflict between it and a vague Europeanism.

The early 1950s, following the 1951 general election when the Liberal Party reached its nadir in terms of popular support, was the highpoint of the free-trade influence in the party in the post-war period. Many of the most ardent free traders, led by Oliver Smedley, felt that the party had seriously underplayed the emphasis on this key policy in the election.

They began to campaign more vigorously to make free trade the cornerstone of party policy. There was a substantial risk that had free trade become the party's main theme, membership of the Common Market would have been impossible because of the extent to which it would have represented a complete turn-around in policy from ardent free trade to the acceptance of a common external tariff with the other member states. The 1953 Assembly marked the apogee of Smedley and his followers. It declared that free trade was the only sound economic policy for Britain and committed the party to abolishing tariffs unilaterally by inserting the phrase 'irrespective of the attitude of any other state' in the final motion.<sup>5</sup> However, the triumph of 'the abominable nomen', as the free-trade fanatics were known by their opponents, was spoilt by the scene in which Jeremy Thorpe, the candidate for North Devon and later a keen supporter of Britain's membership of the European Community, seized the conference microphone and proclaimed to the Assembly that neither he nor a number of other candidates in rural seats could fight the next general election on a platform of removing all subsidy from agriculture.

The following assemblies in 1954 and 1955 marked a steady retreat from unilateral free trade. The collective party leadership realised that strident free trade was not necessarily a policy with which it wished the party to be associated. Further development of free-trade policy was sidelined into a free-trade committee that rarely met and was finally dissolved in March 1959.<sup>6</sup>

It was the beginning of cooperation between France and Germany in respect of their coal industries, in 1952, followed by the Messina conference in 1955 and the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which led to the Liberals adopting a more purposeful Europeanism and ultimately to a major defeat for the longstanding policy

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of free trade. No doubt, too, the Suez crisis of October 1956 would have pushed the Liberals towards a greater receptiveness to closer cooperation with other European countries, as it became clear that the UK could no longer act unilaterally as a great power.

Interestingly, as well, the development of the Common Market took place whilst the Tories under Churchill, Eden and Macmillan were in power. Despite his calls for European unity immediately after the Second World War, Churchill did not show any real interest in addressing the practical issues and political difficulties that would have enabled Britain to take part. Not only was Churchill now in his late seventies, but he would have had to overcome the opposition of Eden and the Foreign Office establishment with little support from elsewhere in the Conservative Party, which still very much saw Britain's role as that of a world power. In any event, throughout his premiership Churchill was preoccupied by other issues, such as establishing a better relationship with the Soviet Union. The Liberals were therefore developing their general Europeanism in isolation from most of the broader UK polity.

The 1956 Liberal Assembly welcomed the proposal to form the Common Market but by the following year, the party was expressing its opposition to the Treaty of Rome and its proposal for an exclusive Customs Union. Instead the party supported the European Free Trade Area (EFTA).<sup>7</sup> A National League of Young Liberals/Union of University Liberal Societies pamphlet published the following year was typical of how a vague Europeanism had been taken on as part a more general internationalism. The paper argued that the main priorities in Europe were the abolition of restriction on movement between the different countries, together with free trade to bring Europeans together and an international police force under UN control.<sup>8</sup> The 1 February 1957 *Liberal News* stated that

Liberals 'support the proposal that the United Kingdom should join the free trade area – not the Customs Union'. The party's paper specifically stated that this policy had the endorsement of Jo Grimond. This meant that the Liberals only favoured joining the Common Market if there was no common external tariff and each country retained control over its trade policy in relation to non-members – leaving the UK free to abolish its own tariffs.<sup>9</sup>

However, during the next few years the party leadership became much keener on Britain joining the Common Market regardless of its policy on members' tariffs. It seems that Violet Bonham Carter had a major influence in the timing of this change. She and Lord Layton, Liberal economist and newspaperman, both European Movement members, were keen to progress an institutional dimension to European unity and had little affection for the party's traditional free-trade policy. In this approach, they were supported by Mark Bonham Carter, Lady Violet's son, and winner, in March 1958, of the Torrington by-election. By the end of that year, Grimond (Violet Bonham Carter's son in law) and Arthur Holt, MP for Bolton West and one of Grimond's closest political allies, had been converted to this approach.<sup>10</sup> To that extent, it was significant that Grimond succeeded Clement Davies as Liberal leader in 1956. A commitment to Britain becoming part of the Common Market fitted well with his view that, in order to achieve some political success, the party had to adopt more 'modern' policies.

By early 1959, the Party Committee (responsible for day-to-day policy development and dominated by nominees of the party leader, including Holt, Frank Byers and Mark Bonham-Carter) had decided that the party's position should be rethought and that Britain should enter the Common Market regardless of the external tariff problem.<sup>11</sup> The 1959 election manifesto did not mention Europe, presumably as

there had been no party assembly between the decision to change approach and the election. However, the importance of free trade as a policy was downgraded in that document.

The leadership's rethinking manifested itself in Parliament as early as December 1959 when Macmillan, then Prime Minister, tabled a motion welcoming the formation of the European Free Trade Association. Grimond put down an amendment regretting Britain's failure to become a founder member of the European Community. The amendment was not selected for debate but the Liberals forced a division on the issue. With Labour abstaining the vote was lost 185–3 and, according to Jeremy Thorpe, Arthur Holt shouted across at the Tory front bench: 'What you should be doing is to make an application under Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome for negotiations to join the Community!'<sup>12</sup>

Joining the European Economic Community was not yet official party policy, however, and immediately before the 1960 Liberal Assembly, on 24 July 1960, Grimond, Holt, Clement Davies and Thorpe put out a statement calling for Britain to initiate discussions on joining the EEC, whilst on the same day a committee working under Grimond published a pamphlet making the same argument. This exercise in softening Liberal opinion was very effective, and when the new policy was put to the 1960 Liberal Assembly, a resolution was overwhelmingly passed favouring British participation in the Common Market. This was primarily seen as a step towards the political integration of Western Europe, although whether Britain should join would depend both on the terms agreed and on the impact on the Commonwealth.<sup>13</sup>

The following year, there were only six votes against a motion welcoming Britain's application to join the European Economic Community. By 1962, opinion in the party had moved further on,

and the Assembly adopted a resolution in favour of Britain's membership without any reference to free trade or the effect on other countries. Arguments from Oliver Smedley that this meant joining a customs union and would therefore make the Liberals 'just another protectionist party' were dismissed.<sup>14</sup> As so often the case in Liberal politics, firm leadership was able to swing the rank and file behind significant changes in policy with very little opposition. Oliver Smedley resigned his candidature in protest and Air Vice-Marshal Bennett, the former MP for Middlesbrough West, left the party entirely. By the 1970s Smedley was campaigning strongly against membership of the European Community on the grounds of loss of sovereignty, whilst Bennett had become involved with racist groups. However, a Gallup poll taken in October 1962 showed that Liberal opinion in the country was split on the issue to a greater extent than the party itself, with 42 per cent supporting joining the EEC and 32 per cent against.<sup>15</sup>

The 1964 manifesto stated unequivocally that Britain was part of Europe and should be playing a major role in the united Europe movement. This, however, was put in a political and not an economic context – as a means to strengthen the West against communism, not as a route to greater material prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

In a relatively short time, therefore, and with little effective internal opposition, Grimond had shifted the Liberals towards a political Europeanism that has been an important part of the party's outlook ever since. In essence, that shift took place because of the influence of a few leading Liberals in shaping the party's policy within the context of a broad internationalism amongst the rank and file. For a few years in the 1950s, it was not clear whether the party would opt for a purist free-trade position or for supporting membership of the Common Market and an allegiance to the European ideal. In

**A commitment to Britain becoming part of the Common Market fitted well with Grimond's view that, in order to achieve some political success, the party had to adopt more 'modern' policies.**

# LIBERALS IN LIVERPOOL: THEIR LEGACY

Liverpool has long been a Liberal Democrat success story – but why? Leading figures from the history of Liberalism in Liverpool outline the pioneering campaigning that took the city from Labour, and its continuing legacy.

Speakers: **Sir Trevor Jones** and **Cllr Mike Storey** (Leader of Liverpool City Council). Chair: **Lord Rennard**.

**8.00pm Friday 19th March 2004**

Stanley Room, Prince of Wales Hotel, Southport

the end, the party was willing to accept the arguments of its leaders that free trade was not part of the modern world, but that support for Europe was – and since then the party has not really questioned the protectionist approach at the heart of the European Community in any public way. In part this may have been helped by the number of new recruits brought into the party under Grimond's leadership. In that sense, the change from free-trade party to European party was significant and indicative of a broader change in personnel and attitude that marked a major shift in what it meant to be a Liberal.

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- 1 J. Pinder, *The Federal Idea: A British Contribution*
- 2 M. Pottle (ed.), *Daring to Hope: Diaries and letters of Violet Bonham-Carter, 1946–1969*
- 3 R. Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*
- 4 A. Butt Philip, 'The Liberals and Europe', in V. Bogdanor (ed.), *Liberal Party Politics*
- 5 *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1953
- 6 J. S. Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party*
- 7 *Liberal News*, 1 February 1957
- 8 NLYL/UULS Joint Political Committee Minutes 1957–1968, Draft Policy Pamphlet 1 November 1957
- 9 *Liberal News*, 1 February 1957
- 10 Roy Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970*
- 11 *Liberal News*, 12 February 1959
- 12 Jeremy Thorpe, *In My Own Time*
- 13 Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970*
- 14 J. S. Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party*
- 15 Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970*
- 16 Iain Dale (ed.), *Liberal Party General Election Manifestos, 1900–1997*

## Sir Archibald Sinclair: The Liberal Anti-Appeaser

(continued from page 35)

- 6 R. A. C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement* (Macmillan, 1993) provides an excellent record of the alternative policy positions adopted by the Labour and Liberal parties to the National Government's foreign policy as regards Nazi Germany.
- 7 The five occasions were moving an amendment to the Address at the start of Parliament and the three and a half supply (debating) days they were allocated in the parliamentary calendar.
- 8 House of Commons, 19 December 1935.
- 9 House of Commons, 26 March 1936.
- 10 Quoted in Geoffrey Mander, *We Were Not All Wrong* (Victor Gollancz, 1941), p. 66.
- 11 For a full account of the various factors prompting Eden's resignation see D. R. Thorpe, *Eden* (Chatto & Windus, 2003), pp. 200–06.
- 12 Liberal Leader in the House of Lords.
- 13 Quoted in the *Liberal Magazine*, October 1938.
- 14 Quoted in the *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1938.
- 15 See the file DGFT 7/14 at Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 16 See Dingle Foot's description of this period in DGFT 7/11, Churchill College.
- 17 Although twenty-one MPs had been elected in 1935, Herbert Holdsworth defected to the Liberal Nationals in 1936.
- 18 Although a man of principle, Samuel was increasingly desperate to return to Government. In September 1939 when Sinclair declined the offer of a cabinet seat from Chamberlain, Samuel broke ranks and offered his personal services to the Government. Chamberlain declined the offer, saying that he had 'no suitable post' for Samuel. A full account of this incident is given by Professor John Vincent in 'Chamberlain, the Liberals and the outbreak of war, 1939', *English Historical Review*, April 1998.
- 19 *Hansard*, 3 April 1939, col. 2497. It should also be noted that earlier in the speech Sinclair had called for the restoration of Churchill to the Cabinet, which may in part explain Churchill's warm reception of Sinclair's performance.
- 20 Quoted in Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, p. 269.
- 21 Speech to Liberal Action, 5 October 1943, Lady Violet Bonham Carter papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Unfortunately the author is unable to provide a file reference as he consulted these papers prior to their formal cataloguing by the Library.