

# Journal of Liberal

# HISTORY



## David Lloyd George 1863–1945

Kenneth O. Morgan

**Lloyd George and leadership** The influences of Gladstone and Lincoln

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Alan Sharp

**'If I had to go to Paris again ...'** Lloyd George and the revision of the Versailles Treaty

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Stella Rudman

**Lloyd George and the appeasement of Germany, 1922–1945**

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Peter Clarke

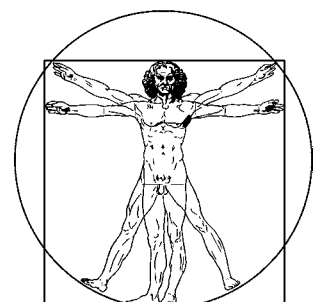
**'We can conquer unemployment'** Lloyd George and Keynes

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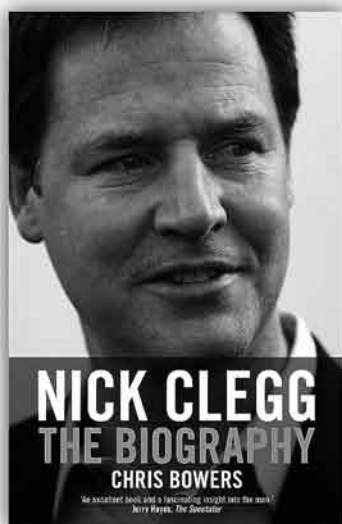
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## Issue 77: Winter 2012–13

### David Lloyd George, 1863–1945 4

Kenneth O. Morgan introduces this special edition of the *Journal*.

### Lloyd George and leadership 6

The influences of Gladstone and Abraham Lincoln; by **Kenneth O. Morgan**

### Lloyd George, nonconformity and radicalism 12

Ian Machin examines Lloyd George's career and beliefs from 1890 to 1906

### Lloyd George's coalition proposal of 1910 18

and its impact on pre-war Liberalism; by **Martin Pugh**

### Lloyd George's war rhetoric, 1914–1918 24

**Richard Toye** analyses Lloyd George's rhetorical skills at the height of his powers

### 'If I had to go to Paris again ...' 30

Lloyd George and the revision of the Treaty of Versailles; by **Alan Sharp**

### Lloyd George and the appeasement of Germany 38

**Stella Rudman** looks at Lloyd George's stance on Germany, 1922–1945

### 'We can conquer unemployment' 46

Lloyd George and Keynes; by **Peter Clarke**

### The wonderful wizard as was 54

Lloyd George, 1931–1945; by **David Dutton**

### The Beaverbrook Library 64

A. J. P. Taylor and the rise of Lloyd George studies; by **Chris Wrigley**

### Lloyd George archives 68

**J. Graham Jones** surveys manuscript sources

### Reviews 71

Hattersley, *The Great Outsider: David Lloyd George*, reviewed by **Ian Packer**; Rudman, *Lloyd George and the Appeasement of Germany 1919–45*, reviewed by **Chris Cooper**

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### Liberal Democrat History Group

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

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# DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

**T**HIS SPECIAL ISSUE of the *Journal* commemorates the 150th anniversary of the birth of David Lloyd George, arguably our greatest Liberal in peace and in war, certainly our most radical Prime Minister.

Lloyd George was always to be linked with his almost native Wales, although his birth actually took place in New York Place, Manchester, which allowed LG opportunities, as appropriate, to declare himself to be a 'Lancashire lad'. It was an astonishing life, packed with crisis and controversy. This was captured in February 1934 by the *Daily Express* cartoonist, 'George' Strube, who always depicted his subject accompanied by a pheasant and a mangold wurzel, thereby never allowing him to forget a famous agricultural error from one of Lloyd George's speeches in his pre-1914 land campaign. Strube's cartoon is on the theme of one man in his life paying many parts. Two columns of Lloyd George effigies are lined up. The one on the left depicts, among others, the Birmingham Policeman, the Ratscatcher of Limehouse and the Munitions Minister; the one on the right includes the Welsh Bard, the Wizard, the Court Jester. The two lines of effigy meet at the end with the simple depiction 'The Man who won the War'. But these many characterisations only hint at the rich variety of a glittering career that, as Churchill so memorably proclaimed in the Commons in March 1945 at the time of his old friend's death, did so much to shape the domestic and international history of Britain in the early twentieth century.

Many of these aspects are covered by the distinguished team of scholars who have contributed to this special issue. Four of the essays broadly cover Lloyd George's earlier career down to the end of the



First World War in 1918. The present writer covers his subject's ideas of leadership and the influence upon them of two transcendent statesmen: Gladstone, still a great figure in the Commons when Lloyd George entered parliament at a by-election in April 1890, and that other country lawyer, Abraham Lincoln.

Ian Machin shows how central to Lloyd George's earlier ventures in Liberal politics was popular nonconformity, but how nevertheless it enabled him to straddle the Old Liberalism of civic democracy and the New Liberalism of social reform. Martin Pugh recalls Lloyd George's unique contribution to the Liberalism of welfare in the Edwardian years, but also how his partisan Liberalism could be shunted aside by ideas of coalition, as in 1910. Lloyd George was never

a party regular, to his ultimate cost. Richard Toye illuminates a central asset of Lloyd George's political style, his command of rhetoric, never displayed to more powerful effect than during the First World War.

Four other contributions deal with the years after 1918, the time of fleeting international greatness and ultimate marginalisation. Alan Sharp examines the post-war peace settlement when Lloyd George, one of its architects, came to advocate a fundamental revision, and discusses what the components of that revision might have been. Peter Clarke recalls the fascinating relationship between Lloyd George and Maynard Keynes, a bewildering story that moves from Keynes's powerful indictment of Versailles in a famous tract to their brilliant cooperation in proposing remedies for

# GEORGE, 1863 – 1945

long-term depression and unemployment, and finally to the savage *dénouement* when Keynes's *Essay in Biography* created the legend of Lloyd George as purposeless, a man 'rooted in nothing'. Stella Rudman describes Lloyd George as an advocate of appeasement towards Germany and dangerously emollient towards Hitler, though in the end a fearsome critic of Chamberlainite foreign policy who helped to bring down his old foe in 1940 in his last great speech. David Dutton illustrates how throughout the 1930s the ageing Lloyd George remained a formidable front-line politician, though increasingly marginalised in his last years. Controversy continued to dog Lloyd George in the years after his death, and Chris Wrigley, finally, describes how the opening up of the Lloyd George archives in 1967 in the Beaverbrook Library under the incomparable direction of Alan Taylor led to a new, far more creative phase in Lloyd George studies.

There are other important contributions here as well: two relevant book reviews and an authoritative archival study by John Graham Jones of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, on the MS materials on which research on Lloyd George can continue to be pursued.

All these admirable contributions, of course, offer only a part of the myriad themes of Lloyd George's extraordinary odyssey. Others could include such immense topics as war strategy, labour relations, Irish independence, women's suffrage, empire, Welsh devolution, his role as the first modern Prime Minister, his radicalism towards parliament, party, the civil service, the City, the Crown. But this is only to reinforce the point that Lloyd George, like Walt Whitman, contained multitudes. His influence penetrated almost every aspect of

the political, social and economic history of Britain, and of Wales. It helped carry his fellow citizens, to quote Adlai Stevenson, kicking and screaming into the twentieth century.

Lloyd George's reputation has gone through many historical phases, with many highs and lows. Down to the end of the First World War, he was hailed as the great democratic social reformer, a brilliant boy from a poor home in rural Caernarfonshire who moved up, in the title of an early biography, 'from Village Green to Downing Street', as his hero Lincoln had progressed from log cabin to President. In 1918 Bonar Law observed: 'He can be Prime Minister for life if he likes'.

After the coalition of 1918–22, which left a sour taste, the victory of his enemies Baldwin and MacDonald saw a total reversal. The popular hero turned universal scapegoat, as Asquithian opponents denounced him for splitting, almost destroying his party, and for the evil record of the Black and Tans in Ireland, Labour condemned him for betraying the miners over coal nationalisation, and Conservatives despised him for corrupting the Lords through cash for peerages, for dangerous liaisons with Hitler and the Soviet Union, and for being, in Baldwin's illuminating description, simply 'a dynamic force', which was 'a very dangerous thing'. Worse still, many studies, including one by his eldest son, Richard, saw Lloyd George condemned as an immoral libertine. The nadir came after the end of the puritanical, hypocritical 1950s, when Earl Lloyd-George's book coincided with the Lady Chatterley trial and Mervyn Griffith Jones, another chapel-bred Welshman, inquiring of the Old Bailey jury whether it was a proper book for their wives or servants to read.

A third and decisive phase has completely changed the approach. The 1960s were marked by a new politics (with men like Macmillan, Wilson and Foot, who greatly admired Lloyd George) and of course they were 'swinging' and their moral climate more liberated. Most important, the treasures of the Beaverbrook Library meant that the release of new sources enabled Lloyd George's career to be explored with a new seriousness, and his importance for Britain and the world in the twentieth century to emerge with new clarity and depth. He now seems relevant to our world as never before. There are, at present, 443 biographies and other studies of him recorded in the Bodleian catalogue in Oxford. Almost all the recent ones, including incomplete multi-volume works by my late friends John Grigg and Bentley Gilbert, take a far more positive view of their subject's achievements and his visionary qualities, the high road of national and global politics as well as the low road of coalitionist manoeuvres.

This issue of the *Journal of Liberal History*, I hope, will take the process further. I am immensely grateful to Duncan Brack for asking me to be the guest editor, a great honour, and to all my colleagues for their efficiency and enthusiasm for the project. David Lloyd George was the subject of my very first book, a short biography published fifty years ago in February 1963. I wrote then as an immature enthusiast. I do so now tempered by age, experience (and a little ermine). But my view remains much the same as it was then: the judgement of my old mentor Alan Taylor, another famous 'trouble-maker' (in a foreword to another book of mine) that Lloyd George was our greatest ruler since Oliver Cromwell.

Kenneth O. Morgan

**My view remains much the same as it was then: the judgement of my old mentor Alan Taylor, another famous 'trouble-maker', that Lloyd George was our greatest ruler since Oliver Cromwell.**

# LLOYD GEORGE AND THE INFLUENCES OF GLADSTONE

Lloyd George believed in leadership. His heroes in history were strong leaders like Caesar, Cromwell, Napoleon, Theodore Roosevelt – and, alas! Hitler. When he first cast eyes on the House of Commons in November 1880, his mind led him, approvingly, to the leadership style of William the Conqueror. ‘I will not say but that I eyed the assembly in a spirit similar to that in which William the Conqueror eyed England on his visit to Edward the Confessor, the region of his future domain.’<sup>1</sup> **Kenneth O. Morgan** analyses the impact on Lloyd George of two powerful leaders: William Gladstone and Abraham Lincoln.



LLOYD GEORGE'S OWN moment of conquest came when he emerged as the nation's leader at the height of wartime in 1916. Thereafter his highly personal style and method of leadership led to his own downfall nearly six years later: hence Baldwin's disapproving judgement on Lloyd George as 'a dynamic force'.<sup>2</sup> Hence also Lloyd George's inability to work in government with another great egoist, Winston Churchill, in 1940. But Lloyd George, the self-styled 'cottage-bred man', saw himself as a special kind of leader, a democratic leader, an instrument of populism. Two

powerful influences on his vision of leadership were William Ewart Gladstone and Abraham Lincoln. The bicentenary of both in 2009 may afford an opportunity to examine what kind of influences they actually were.

As far as Gladstone is concerned, he and Lloyd George could not have been more different. Gladstone came from a wealthy mercantile family who had profited from sugar and tobacco plantations (and slave labour) in Demerara and Jamaica; he was a product of Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Lloyd George, whose father died when he was one year old, grew up in

# AND LEADERSHIP ONE AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

a shoemaker's home in the small Caernarfonshire village of Llanystumdy. He went to the small local National school, but his education came primarily from the university of life. In contrast to Gladstone's devout high Anglicanism, Lloyd George was an aggressive radical nonconformist, a Campbellite Baptist located on the further reaches of dissent. His youthful hero was the Unitarian, Joseph Chamberlain, along with Michael Davitt, the Irish nationalist and quasi-socialist land nationaliser. Even so, Gladstone had to come to terms with the strange young apostles of *Cymru Fydd* ('Young Wales') after the Liberal schism on Irish home rule in 1886.<sup>3</sup> It was part of his growing involvement with the radicalism of the Celtic fringe, so-called, that helped to turn him into 'the People's William'. In that process he came into contact with the young Lloyd George.

Elected to parliament in the Caernarfon Boroughs by-election of April 1890 (a Liberal gain by just eighteen votes), he had several encounters with Gladstone as a young MP. In his *War Memoirs*, over forty years later, he described a conversation he had had with Gladstone at the home of Sir Edward Watkin in 1892, when the Liberal leader gave an inspirational address at Cwmllan.<sup>4</sup> It does not read now as an intellectually challenging exchange of views. Gladstone seems to have rambled on about the decline of rural drunkenness, the price of sugar candy and the qualities of corrugated iron roofing. More interestingly, he then launched a paean of praise of the intellectual and political qualities

of the people of France, whom he considered more intelligent than the English, and looked forward to stronger contacts with them after the construction of a Channel Tunnel (of which Sir Edward Watkin was a fervent advocate).

Gladstone was present in the House in June 1890 when Lloyd George gave his maiden speech, a lively affair dealing with the taxation of landlords' licences, a favourite theme of Lloyd George and his colleagues. Lloyd George excitedly told his wife how the old man was 'delighted' with his performance.<sup>5</sup> For his part Lloyd George told Lord Riddell years later how impressed he was by Gladstone as a parliamentary speaker and presence: 'Head and shoulders above anybody else I have ever seen in the House of Commons', in gesture, language, fire and, latterly, wit. He had tremendous power, though at times he tended to go on too long.<sup>6</sup> Like others, he was in awe of the riveting effect of Gladstone's eye. His fellow Welsh backbencher, Sam Evans, once told him that he wished Gladstone 'would take that terrible eye off us'.<sup>7</sup>

But the young Lloyd George and the Grand Old Man soon came into conflict. They clashed over the Clergy Discipline (Immorality) Bill, a measure in which Lloyd George had no direct interest at all, but which allowed him to raise the topic of the establishment of the Church of England. Gladstone was profoundly irritated by the Welsh backbencher's impertinent remarks, including an observation that drunken parsons were more agreeable than sober ones. Stuart Rendel was infuriated by 'the madness of

Wales in slapping John Morley and Mr Gladstone in the face'.<sup>8</sup> Lloyd George also showed a tiresome independence of outlook on other ecclesiastical and agrarian issues. In return Gladstone tried to bully him, somewhat pointlessly, challenging him on how many chapels there were in Wales in 1742, a point on which Lloyd George was ignorant.<sup>9</sup> (The answer, apparently, was 162.)

Lloyd George was not impressed with Gladstone's last government of 1892–94. He thought it far too conservative and unable to do enough for ordinary working people or for the national needs of Wales. He told his brother, William George, minding the shop for the family solicitor's firm back in Portmadoc, that there were too many 'mangy old hacks' around Gladstone. It was a 'combination of ineptitudes'. One junior minister, Kay-Shuttleworth, was 'fodder for the undertaker'.<sup>10</sup> Lloyd George had very mixed feelings when his Welsh colleague, Tom Ellis, agreed to become junior whip (later Chief Whip) when Rosebery succeeded Gladstone in 1894, and there was evidence of tension between the two Welshmen on whether Ellis's alleged 'grasping the Saxon gold' was or was not a betrayal of the needs of Wales.<sup>11</sup>

Gladstone was irritated in return. First, he was, as a Churchman, far more hesitant about disestablishment in Wales, as opposed to Ireland where he had disestablished the Church in 1869, and only came to accept it for Wales, with some reluctance, in 1893. The four Welsh dioceses, after all, were an organic part of the province of

Left:  
*History repeats itself*  
The Premier: 'Yes, Mr Lincoln, we have practically the same task that you had: to fight for human freedom – to spare life by losing it.'  
*Western Mail*, 13 February 1917

Canterbury. Secondly, Gladstone was anxious to show, as he put it in 1892 when arguing against having a Royal Commission on Welsh Land, that 'it was not the Irish case all over again', in political or agrarian terms,<sup>12</sup> and that home rule for Wales was not a practical or desirable objective.

Lloyd George, for all his populism, was somewhat relieved when Rosebery and not Sir William Harcourt succeeded Gladstone as Prime Minister in March 1894, since Rosebery appeared to be more sympathetic to the nonconformist viewpoint. He then led a brief four-man revolt against a tottering government on the issue of the primacy to be accorded Welsh disestablishment, which had stood second in the Liberals' Newcastle Programme in 1891. His backbench manoeuvres, which led to the Liberals' majority falling in committee to only seven, perhaps helped towards the ignominious fall of the government on the trivial 'cordite vote' in June 1895. The Home Secretary at the time, Herbert Asquith, was not enamoured of the Welsh freebooter's views on party and personal loyalty then or later. He told Tom Ellis that 'you showed rather too great a tendency to whitewash him [Lloyd George], after the underhand and disloyal way in wh[ich] he undoubtedly acted'.<sup>13</sup> H. H. Fowler, one of Asquith's former Cabinet colleagues, shared this view. In fact, the quasi-nationalism of *Cymru Fydd* in Wales at this time was not compatible with the approach of the Liberal government, or any mainstream British political party. Until *Cymru Fydd* collapsed in January 1896, riven by internal divisions, it was the most erratic phase of Lloyd George's career.

Thereafter Lloyd George's Liberalism followed a very different path from that of Gladstone, especially after the Welshman became a government minister after December 1905. First, the New Liberalism of social reform, with which Lloyd George was strongly identified at the Treasury from April 1908 onwards, meant an expanded role for the central state and a programme of progressive, redistributive direct taxation far beyond what Gladstone would have ever countenanced. The People's Budget of 1909, and even more that of 1914, marked a total contrast with

Gladstonian finance, and launched quite new principles of public taxing and spending policies that endured down to the regime of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s.

Secondly, Lloyd George was a good deal less devout on free trade than the Grand Old Man had been. His measures while at the Board of Trade in 1905–08, especially the Patents and Merchant Shipping Bills, showed a remarkable casualness for a Liberal minister towards protectionist tendencies. Lloyd George's peacetime coalition of 1918–22 made marked inroads into tariff reform, notably the Anti-Dumping Bill of 1921 with its protective attitude toward key industries and 'collapsed exchanges'. He did not object to the imperial preference introduced at the Ottawa conference in 1932. On free trade, as in religion, he was a free thinker.

And, thirdly, on Church questions Lloyd George's inclinations as a belligerent nonconformist led him inevitably in new directions. He led the onslaught on Church schools in the 1902 Education Act and organised the mass passive resistance by Welsh local authorities against it. He fiercely defended Church disendowment in 1912 and accused Unionist critics of it as themselves 'dripping with the fat of sacrilege'. And it was under Lloyd George that the Church in Wales was finally disestablished and disendowed in 1920.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Lloyd George's later reflections on Gladstone were generally negative. He told Frances Stevenson, 'I admired him but I never liked him'.<sup>14</sup> He said much the same to Riddell. He claimed that Gladstone 'hated nonconformists', especially Welsh nonconformists. He also 'had no real sympathy' for the poor or for the working class. He told his close Welsh ally, Herbert Lewis, that Gladstone 'was always a Tory at heart' with the bogus aristocratic pretensions of the worst of the middle class.<sup>15</sup> The temperamental and ideological gulf between them came out clearly in their attitudes towards the American Civil War. Gladstone from the start sympathised with the South and its plantation owners (his own inherited wealth from the slave system in Jamaica was something on which he tended to remain notably quiet).

**In many ways Lloyd George was a lifelong follower of the Gladstonian cause ... he inherited many of his fundamental principles from his venerable leader.**

In 1862 he declared that Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, 'had made a nation'.<sup>16</sup> It was a view which he later regretted and had to recant. Lloyd George, by contrast, was always a fervent devotee of Abraham Lincoln. In time he turned some of his animus towards Gladstone against his son Herbert Gladstone – 'the finest living embodiment of the Liberal principle that talent is not hereditary'.

And yet in many ways Lloyd George was a lifelong follower of the Gladstonian cause. Of course, he split his party in 1918, as Gladstone had done over Irish home rule in 1886. But, more importantly, he inherited many of his fundamental principles from his venerable leader.

First there was a strong commitment to political reform. He took Gladstone's views on the House of Lords, that is, focusing on the powers of the upper house rather than fussing about its composition. Lloyd George's stance during the debates on the Parliament Act in 1910–11 was identical with that of Gladstone at the time of his resignation in 1894, when he tried in vain to get his younger colleagues in government to reduce decisively the power of the Lords to delay or wreck Irish home rule. His casualness in awarding titles during the so-called 'honours scandal' in 1918–22 showed how little the quality of the composition of the upper house meant to him. He told J.C.C. Davidson that it 'keeps politics far cleaner than any other method of raising funds' to sell titles rather than to sell policies, as happened in the United States.<sup>17</sup> Again, Lloyd George's government in 1918 passed a major Reform Act, the first since Gladstone's in 1884. There was, of course, a crucially important extra ingredient with the inclusion of votes for women, which Lloyd George always supported and which Gladstone had resisted.

Lloyd George inherited a good deal – though far from all – of Gladstone's passion for Ireland, with the important difference that Lloyd George was always swayed by Joseph Chamberlain's concern for protection of the Protestant minority in Ulster. In 1921, he turned decisively from a shameful policy of 'retaliation' to pursuing Gladstonian policies again in Ireland, and entering into successful



negotiations with the leaders of Sinn Fein. The Free State Act of January 1922, which partitioned the island, amalgamated Gladstone's and Chamberlain's perspectives, giving Ireland a far greater meed of independence than Parnell had advocated, and it achieved an enduring settlement in Ireland, which neither of them had managed to do.

Lloyd George's early approach towards imperial questions was at first distinctly Gladstonian, especially during the South African War, when he emerged as a formidable critic of Chamberlainism. Indeed, he had earlier condemned Gladstone's own ventures into imperialism, notably his invasion and subsequent occupation of Egypt in 1882. Like Gladstone, Lloyd George was always wary of the Liberal Imperialist tendency, embodied by Asquith and Grey amongst others. However, it should be added that he himself became distinctly more sympathetic towards imperial objectives in later life, notably in the Middle Eastern settlement that followed the First World War. In the debates over Indian self-government in the 1930s, Lloyd George was an unhelpful presence. Winston Churchill had asked Brendan Bracken to 'make Lloyd George take a decent line over India', and the latter often expressed sympathy for the reactionary views of his old ally. 'We should keep a free hand in India', Lloyd George observed in 1934. He added, 'so long as the natives stick to rice, we shan't have much trouble'. If their diet changed to wheat, there would be problems.<sup>18</sup>

Finally there was much that was Gladstonian in Lloyd George's governing principles in foreign affairs. Like Gladstone he began as a strong sympathiser with republican France. He saw the French as a great democracy and a civilised force in the world, and warmly welcomed the Entente Cordiale of 1904. This remained an abiding view despite his New Liberal endorsement of the social welfare policies of the German empire in the later Bismarckian period. France, the cradle of revolution in 1789, which had actually disestablished its own Church in 1905, embodied the Old Liberal in him always. During the war, Lloyd George and Clemenceau gave the Entente a new buoyancy

despite many arguments, and certainly enjoyed a closer relationship than did Churchill and de Gaulle in the Second World War.<sup>19</sup> So did the British Premier with Aristide Briand in the conferences of post-war.

In the 1919 Paris peace conference, Lloyd George promoted a broadly Gladstonian agenda, and shared some of Gladstone's preferences on national issues, notably in the Balkans. Above all, Lloyd George, like Gladstone, was strongly anti-Turk and pro-Greek on the strategic issues of the eastern Mediterranean. The confrontation with the Turks at Chanak in August 1922 resulted from the British Prime Minister's intemperate and impractical support for the vast territorial designs in Asia Minor of the Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos. This led directly to the ultimate crisis of the Coalition and the backbench Tory rebellion against Austen Chamberlain on 19 October 1922 which resulted in Lloyd George's resignation. Even Bonar Law turned against his old ally. Sir Alfred Mond, still a Lloyd George Liberal, told his leader after the election of the 'enormous support from all our old Liberal non-conformists for the protection of Christian minorities and of women from the hands of the Turk', but it was not enough.<sup>20</sup> The abiding Balkan legacy of Gladstone thus led to Lloyd George's exclusion from power for the rest of his life.

~

Abraham Lincoln was assassinated when Lloyd George was only two years old. But he became an immense personal hero and lifelong inspiration. Lincoln enjoyed a generally heroic status in Wales. The Protestant Welsh had been strongly anti-slavery and overwhelmingly supported the North in the American Civil War.<sup>21</sup> Over 90 per cent of the Welsh who had emigrated to America resided in the northern states; a Welsh radical like Samuel Roberts of Llanbryn-mair, who founded a Welsh settlement in the slave state of Tennessee and appeared to sympathise with the Confederate cause, virtually destroyed his reputation in his native land for so doing.<sup>22</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first published in Britain in the Welsh language (in magazines),

not in English, and a Welsh radical like the journalist-bard William Rees ('Gwilym Hiraethog') gave its message of human equality massive publicity. There was a famous Lincoln enthusiast, the Unitarian innkeeper-bard William Williams, who held pro-Federal sessions nightly in his inn 'The Stag'. Williams enjoyed the bardic name *Carw Coch* (the stag) as a result. By the time the war came to its end, portraits of Gladstone and of Lincoln hung side by side in many a humble cottage, the Grand Old Man and Honest Abe in libertarian partnership.

One passionate enthusiast for Lincoln was Lloyd George's Uncle Lloyd, and his nephew followed him avidly. A portrait of Lincoln still is to be seen today in the tiny living room of the old shoemaker's home, 'Highgate', in Llanystumdwy. To Lloyd George, Lincoln symbolised the common man come good – the great democrat though not necessarily, as will be seen, the great emancipator. Like the young Lloyd George, he was a country lawyer taking on the vested interests in his society. The Log Cabin theme was made much of by Lloyd George's biographers, as in *From Village Green to Downing Street* by J. Hugh Edwards and Spencer Leigh Edwards, in 1908. Lloyd George also compared himself to Lincoln in more personal ways, as in a shared liking for women. He quoted Lincoln as regarding meeting women to be rather like eating gingerbread – 'I like it very much but I never get any' (which, in Lloyd George's case, may well be doubted).<sup>23</sup> They both, so Lloyd George believed, endured difficult marriages. He saw Lincoln as a deeply human man and, as such, far more interesting than George Washington. 'Lincoln', he told Riddell in 1920, was a much bigger man than Washington who was always so correct that he was uninteresting'.<sup>24</sup>

Lincoln, one may surmise, was a more appealing model for him as head of government, since Lloyd George's own style as Prime Minister was distinctly presidential, with his Cabinet secretariat, his bevy of special advisers in the 'Garden Suburb', and his highly personal approaches to business, the trade unions and journalists. As head of a Conservative-dominated coalition in 1916–22 he would have been

**Lincoln, one may surmise, was a more appealing model for him as head of government, since Lloyd George's own style as Prime Minister was distinctly presidential.**

impressed by Lincoln's skill in reconciling the viewpoints – and the strong egos – of such Cabinet ministers as William H. Seward, Edwin M. Stanton, Salmon B. Chase and Edward Bates, and making this 'team of rivals' into an effective executive, with the President himself very much first among equals. Lloyd George's Cabinet colleagues in 1919–21 would have sympathised with Seward's comment on Lincoln – 'There is but one vote cast in the Cabinet and that is cast by the President'.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, Gladstone's methods as Prime Minister would have appeared casual and idiosyncratic, with a personal bias towards aristocratic Whigs like Granville and Spencer and too much 'counting of noses' in his Cabinets. Of course, Lloyd George, an obsessively political individual of fleeting cultural interests, could never have allowed his prime ministerial energies to be diverted into such arcane pursuits as Homer, Horace or the origins of Christianity.

Lincoln added another dimension to Lloyd George's vision of leadership – that of war leader. He emphasised Lincoln's transcendent qualities in this respect in his Lincoln's Day message to the American people in February 1917. Whether Gladstone would have made a great leader in war he was privately less certain.<sup>26</sup>

Lloyd George made many comparisons between Lincoln's experience of war and his own. He praised Lincoln's firm handling of his generals during the Civil War, as in his dismissal of Meade, the victor of Gettysburg, for failing to follow up his victory and allowing Robert E. Lee's defeated Confederate forces to escape south over the River Potomac. Lincoln had sacked General McClellan for insubordination, much as he himself had sacked Robertson, his Chief of the General Staff. He also commended Lincoln's choice of Grant as commander in chief and compared it with his own support for, and ultimate satisfaction with, Marshal Foch in 1918.<sup>27</sup> Always he noted his own wartime difficulties with his own military commanders, especially Haig and Robertson. It was emphasised that the strategic judgement of the civilian Lincoln was almost always superior to that of the military.

He also hailed Lincoln's constant and uncompromising stance

on behalf of victory and unconditional surrender, and cited this precedent to American journalists who questioned the curtailment of civil liberties in wartime Britain. They had both found it necessary to make serious inroads into the legal principle of *habeas corpus*. Lloyd George also made free, and historically doubtful, comparison between the threat of secession from the Confederate South and from Sinn Féin and republicans generally in Ireland.<sup>28</sup> Above all, Lloyd George praised Lincoln as the great reconciler, out to bind up the nation's wounds, at the end of the Civil War. His purpose was above all to avoid a vindictive, Carthaginian peace. Most significantly, Lloyd George did not praise the great emancipator at all, and criticised the radical Republicans like Sumner and Wade for their partisan extremism in the latter stages of the war. He never showed enthusiasm for the idea of turning a civil war fought to defend the Union into a crusade on behalf of racial equality for disinherited black Americans.

Lincoln's name often cropped up during the peace conference in Paris in 1919. Lloyd George exchanged views with Woodrow Wilson (a conservative Southerner whose hero was Gladstone and who gave highly conciliatory interpretations of the Civil War so as not to upset southern opinion) and Clemenceau (who visited the United States in 1865 shortly after Lincoln's death, crossed the Atlantic eight times in all, and actually married an American woman).<sup>29</sup> Lloyd George greatly preferred Theodore Roosevelt, pioneer of the New Nationalism, to his rival Woodrow Wilson, spokesman for the New Freedom. He noted with horror Wilson's extreme coldness on hearing of Roosevelt's death during the Paris conference. 'I was aghast at the acrid detestation which flowed from Wilson's lips.'<sup>30</sup> Lincoln, he felt, was far superior to Wilson in every way. He had the human touch and was also a far more decisive President. 'Wilson's philanthropy was purely intellectual, whereas Lincoln's came straight from the heart.'<sup>31</sup> Lloyd George elaborated further on Lincoln's virtues at the unveiling of the Saint Gaudens statue of Lincoln in Parliament Square in 1920. Lincoln, he declared, 'had lost his nationality in

death'. He was 'one of those giant figures who belong to mankind.' Lloyd George had exhibited some rare nervousness beforehand about this speech, since he would be sharing the stage with such eminences as Elihu Root and James Bryce, former US Secretary of State and British Ambassador to Washington respectively, but his was the speech that endured in the public memory.<sup>32</sup> It is fitting perhaps that Lloyd George's own statue, the only non-Conservative British Prime Minister there, now stands tall in the Square close to that of his hero.

In 1923 Lloyd George visited the United States for the first and last time. It was arranged by Welsh-Americans of the 'Gorsedd' (bardic society) in Ohio state and was an immense, gruelling tour covering 6,000 miles and thirty meetings, in Canada as well as the United States. The £30,000 he earned for syndicated newspaper columns massively boosted his income.<sup>33</sup> Lloyd George was hailed by Americans as 'the most famous man in the world', to which he responded with due modesty. He met celebrities from President Coolidge to Charlie Chaplin. But Lincoln and his abiding message provided the central focus. The highlight was a visit to Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln's one-time home. Here Lloyd George laid a wreath on Lincoln's tomb and met his son, Robert Todd Lincoln. In his speech in Springfield, his praise was remarkably effusive. Lincoln was:

... the finest product in the realm of statesmanship of Christian civilisation, and the wise counsel he gave his own people in their day of their triumph he gives today to the people of Europe in the hour of their victory over the forces that menace their liberties.<sup>34</sup>

He then took time off to visit Civil War battlefields in Virginia and meet some aged Confederate veterans there.<sup>35</sup> He was presented with a copy of Nicolay and Hay's biography of Lincoln in the course of his visit.

In fact, Lincoln's career provided the basis for Lloyd George's international message in 1923. He spelt out two supreme priorities after the Great War. They were the reconciliation of a shattered continent

**Lincoln's career provided the basis for Lloyd George's international message in 1923. He spelt out two supreme priorities after the Great War. They were the reconciliation of a shattered continent and faith in democracy.**

and faith in democracy – ‘Reconcile the Vanquished’ and ‘Trust the Common People’, as Lloyd George put it.<sup>36</sup> Both were drawn from the message of Lincoln of 1865. Both were used to press the United States not to be too isolationist in its foreign policy and not to encourage a punitive peace settlement with Germany. He attacked ‘vindictive men who wanted to trample on the defeated South’ in 1865, and he warned against a similar attitude of vengeance towards the defeated Germans. There was need for ‘the Lincoln touch’ – in peace, magnanimity.

Lloyd George’s views reflected the last phase of British admiration for Lincoln. Wales and Britain followed a different course thereafter. Lincoln remained as an abiding symbol of the need for sustaining the enduring links between the two ‘Anglo-Saxon’ powers, and the desirability of some kind of ‘special relationship’ based on kinship and shared values. A famous sentimental play by John Drinkwater emphasised this theme.<sup>37</sup> Its conclusions were reinforced by the popular reception of the biography of Lincoln by Lord Charnwood. But the distinctly Liberal values identified with Lincoln’s name after 1865 were receding into history. Lincoln was far less of a hero for the British left now since the Labour movement tended to see the US and all its Presidents as harbingers of capitalism. Aneurin Bevan never mentioned Lincoln in his speeches. The Liberal MP, Isaac Foot, bracketed Lincoln with his revered Cromwell as a mighty champion of liberty. His son, the socialist Michael Foot, less sympathetic to the United States, did not – his hero was the distinctly Atlanticist figure of Thomas Jefferson, apostle of the European enlightenment.<sup>38</sup> The decline of the Liberal Party saw Lincoln move away from centre stage amongst British politicians, perhaps until the election of that other representative of Illinois, Barack Obama, in 2008. For Lloyd George and his generation, the inspiration of Lincoln and his values was an eternally dominating theme, but times were changing.

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Gladstone and Lincoln are both pivotal to Lloyd George’s political

**Gladstone and Lincoln are both pivotal to Lloyd George’s political principles, style and rhetoric.**

principles, style and rhetoric. Gladstone embodied his belief in the values of Liberalism and nationality overseas. But Gladstone, the friend of Whigs who described himself as ‘an out and out inequalitarian’ and cherished the landed aristocracy as the basis for social leadership,<sup>39</sup> was never a natural democrat. Lincoln it was, therefore, who stood out for Lloyd George as the symbol of his faith in democracy and popular sovereignty in times of peace, and of defending them in times of war with a terrible swift sword. Lloyd George’s vision of leadership straddled them both. Both were absorbed by Lloyd George, and both were essential parts of his greatness.

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- 1 Diary entry of 12 Nov. 1880, quoted in William George, *The Making of Lloyd George* (Faber, London, 1976), p. 101.
- 2 Speech at the Carlton Club, 19 Oct. 1922.
- 3 See Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868–1922* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1963), pp. 76ff.
- 4 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I (Odhams, London, 1938 edn.), pp. 2–3.
- 5 David Lloyd George to Mrs. Lloyd George, 14 June 1890, quoted in Kenneth O. Morgan (ed.), *Lloyd George: Family Letters* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff and Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 29.
- 6 *Lord Riddell’s War Diary* (Nicolson and Watson, 1933), p. 33 (7 March 1915); *Lord Riddell’s Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918–1923* (Gollancz, 1933), p. 158 (1 January 1920).
- 7 A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: a Diary by Frances Stevenson* (Hutchinson, 1971), p. 306 (17 April 1935).
- 8 Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 117; Stuart Rendel to A.C.

- Humphreys-Owen, 28 May 1892 (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Glansevern MSS., 596).
- 9 Roy Hattersley, *David Lloyd George: the Great Outsider* (Little Brown, 2010), p. 59.
- 10 William George, op.cit., p. 100.
- 11 J. Arthur Price to John Edward Lloyd, 14 Oct. 1892 (UW Bangor, Lloyd Papers, MSS. 314, no. 449).
- 12 Gladstone to Stuart Rendel, 12 Nov. 1892 (British Library, Gladstone Papers, Add. MSS. 44549, f. 39). In fact, Gladstone was persuaded to set up a Royal Commission after all, and not a mere Select Committee.
- 13 Asquith to Tom Ellis, 30 Nov. 1895 (NLW Aberystwyth, Ellis papers, 74).
- 14 Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: a Diary*, p. 291 (16 Nov. 1934).
- 15 *Lord Riddell’s War Diary*, pp. 66–67 (7 March 1915); diary of Sir Herbert Lewis, 27 Dec. 1907 (NLW, Aberystwyth, Lewis Papers).
- 16 Speech at Newcastle, 6 Oct. 1862.
- 17 Memorandum by Davidson, 1927, printed in Robert Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 279.
- 18 Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: a Diary*, p. 257 (21 February 1934); Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness* (Macmillan, London, 2007), p. 289.
- 19 See Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘The Goat and the Tiger: Lloyd George and Clemenceau’, in *Ages of Reform* (I.B. Tauris, London, 2010), pp. 93–104.
- 20 idem, *Consensus and Disunity: the Lloyd George Coalition 1918–1922* (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 348–51; Sir Alfred Mond to Lloyd George, 5 Nov. 1922 (Parliamentary Archives, House of Lords, Lloyd-George of Dwyfor Papers, G/14/5/2).
- 21 For this theme, see a fuller discussion in Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘Abraham Lincoln and Wales’, in Richard Cardwardine and Jay Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2011).
- 22 *Y Cronid*, 1863, pp. 78–86.
- 23 Colin Cross (ed.), *A.J. Sylvester: Life with Lloyd George* (Macmillan, 1975), pp. 82–83 (10 November 1932).
- 24 Lord Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After*, p. 226 (24 July 1920). That did not prevent him describing Hitler, disastrously, in 1936 as ‘the George Washington of Germany’ (*Daily Express*, 17 Sept. 1936).

concluded on page 74

# DAVID LLOYD NONCONFORMITY AND RA

David Lloyd George took a natural place in both radical and nonconformist traditions, on account of his family background and his upbringing in Wales. **Ian Machin** examines his story from 1890 to 1906. In particular, he traces how Lloyd George's performance in relation to the Education Bill of 1902 and its aftermath was of pivotal significance in his career, building his political position in time for the Liberals' return to office in December 1905, which in turn enabled him to demonstrate his striking abilities in subsequent years.



**A**LTHOUGH BORN IN Manchester, Lloyd George was taken to Wales by his Welsh parents when he was two months old, in 1863. They lived in Pembrokeshire, his schoolmaster father William's native county, where William took the lease of a smallholding for health reasons, but died from tuberculosis in 1864.

David and his sister (a brother, William, was born posthumously) were then taken by their mother to live at Llanystumdwy, near Criccieth in south Caernarfonshire, at the home of her brother Richard Lloyd, a lay preacher for the Disciples of Christ and owner of a small shoemaking business. 'Uncle Lloyd' acted as a father to his

# DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

## RADICALISM, c.1890 – 1906

sister's three children and greatly influenced them.

When David was born, modern British radicalism – having a central aim of franchise extension and reform, and further aims, especially nonconformist ones, to advance equality – was about a hundred years old; and nonconformity – avowing and demonstrating religious separation from the established Church of England, and to a lesser extent that of Scotland – was about three hundred. The two often formed a natural partnership, though this was by no means an exclusive one – many radicals were not Dissenters, and many Dissenters were not radicals.

Radicals never formed an organised political party of their own, or even an organised section within a party, though radicals who supported a particular reform quite often formed an association to work for it by political means (for example the Anti-Corn Law League, the Chartists, and the Anti-State Church Association, which was founded in 1844 and known as the Liberation Society from 1853). Radicals had been loosely attached to the Whig party before 1830, and generally became part of the broadening Liberal Party, as the Whigs were coming to be known by the mid-1830s. However, there continued to be some marked differences between Whigs and radicals, and between some radicals and other radicals, in the Liberal Party. This was still the case, to a reduced extent, after the party split over Irish home rule in 1886.

Nineteenth-century nonconformity used radical methods and support to seek the abolition of Anglican privilege in regard to education, payment of church rates and tithes to help maintain parish churches, the use of parish burial grounds, and an established position as a state church. By 1880 these aims – though not disestablishment or abolition of tithes – had been largely attained; and disestablishment in general was encouraged by the passage of that reform for Ireland in 1869, though further hopes of achieving it were disappointed in Parliament in the early 1870s and in the general election of 1885.<sup>1</sup> Wesleyanism had initially provided a variation from this radical-nonconformist connection by inclining towards Toryism, but by the later nineteenth century Wesleyans were coming to have more political resemblance to the Congregationalists and Baptists, which (together with the Quakers and Unitarians and some Methodist and Presbyterian denominations) were the strongest radical elements among nonconformists.

His upbringing seemed to make Lloyd George a radical of the radicals and a nonconformist of the nonconformists, impressive in the pronounced religious separatism in which he was reared. His sect, the Disciples of Christ, or Campbellites, had been founded in America by Alexander Campbell earlier in the nineteenth century (they were much more numerous in the United States than they

became in Britain, and one of their most prominent later members was Ronald Reagan). Uncle Richard Lloyd's chapel at Criccieth had previously belonged to the Scotch Baptists (founded in Edinburgh in 1765, and owing their establishment in North Wales to a sea journey from Glasgow to Caernarfon by missionaries). Before joining the Scotch Baptists the chapel had belonged to the main British Baptist denomination, the Particular Baptists. Successive secessions by the chapel from both the Particular Baptists and the Scotch Baptists had resulted from a search for pure and pristine Christianity. The secession from the Scotch Baptists and union with the Disciples took place in 1841, when Richard Lloyd's father (David Lloyd George's grandfather) was minister. The Disciples, although maintaining the practice of adult baptism, were not at that time Baptist by affiliation, though the Welsh ones became so much later when they joined the Welsh Baptist Union in the 1930s. As well as holding to adult baptism, the Disciples believed in the literal truth of the Bible, had no formal creeds and no ordained and salaried ministry, and eschewed the 'elitist' title of Reverend.

Thus David's early environment was intensely religious. As a boy, he and his family walked two miles each way to and from his uncle's chapel at Criccieth, three times on Sundays and once on Wednesdays. As a fourteen year-old at the National (Anglican) elementary

Left:  
David Lloyd  
George in 1903

school at Llanystumdwy he organised a refusal to recite the Apostle's Creed on an important formal occasion; and this revolt, although failing at first, ultimately succeeded in gaining some local concessions for Dissenting pupils. It was his first known radical action, the first of his repeated challenges to the Established Church, and the first of his many involvements in disputes over religious education. It also brought him his first taste of fame, if only as yet in Llanystumdwy.<sup>2</sup>

By 1884, when he was twenty-one and newly launched as a solicitor in Criccieth, David was developing promising powers of eloquence and organisation as a champion of radical causes which were largely (though not exclusively) nonconformist – such as disestablishment, temperance, opposition to the levy of tithes, undenominational education, and the right of non-Anglicans to burial in parish churchyards. These causes – though none of them required any kind of religious commitment from their supporters, and all of them had some radical Anglican support – were notably strong in Wales because of its nonconformist majority which, through suffrage extension and the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872, enjoyed rapidly increasing political strength from the general election of 1868 onwards.<sup>3</sup> The number of nonconformists returned for Welsh constituencies rose strikingly, from none in 1865 to twenty-two (out of a total of thirty-four MPs) in 1892.<sup>4</sup>

This period coincided with Lloyd George's childhood and youth. In 1892 he was, though now an MP, still under thirty – an aspiring young politician who was strongly identified, as a radical nonconformist, with a very marked contemporary trend in Welsh politics. Behind his return to Westminster in 1890 lay several years of assiduous local radical activity on his part. He had been secretary of the South Caernarfonshire Anti-Tithe League and of the local branch of the United Kingdom Alliance (the main temperance organisation). As a solicitor he successfully vindicated nonconformist claims under the Burials Laws Amendment Act of 1880 by winning the Llanfrothen burial case in 1888. This highly controversial case made his name widely known in North Wales as a radical nonconformist

champion, and was shortly followed by his selection as Liberal candidate for Caernarfon Boroughs.<sup>5</sup>

In these early years the main thrust of Lloyd George's radical activity was opposition to the privileged position of landowners and the Established Church, chiefly in a rural context such as his home area. But he also looked for the support of radicals in the large towns. Nonconformity was strong in many of these, and whereas questions of tithe, denominational education, and churchyard burials flourished more in a rural environment, disestablishment and temperance were at least as strong in the towns as in the country. Lloyd George could also hope to ally with urban reformers through an interest in the general question of social reform. In a speech of February 1890 he said of disestablishment, land and drink reform: 'however drastic and broad they may appear to be, they after all simply touch the fringe of that vast social question which must be dealt with in the near future'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, two months before his election to Parliament, he revealed his concern with alleviating the living and working conditions of society. Later, referring to his own birth in a major industrial city, he proclaimed himself 'a Lancashire lad' to audiences in his native county. However, the general reform of living and working conditions was probably not among his major concerns before he entered government in 1905.

Lloyd George's attachment to radicalism was not questioned before 1906 (when this article's main treatment ends), but thereafter it became in time subject to suspicion and doubt, especially when he took to proposing, and later joining and leading, coalition governments with the Conservatives. More knowledge about his personal life and beliefs might have produced earlier doubts about his loyalty to nonconformity. In public he always appeared as a sure and leading Dissenter, a sound and loyal product of the faith, and even perhaps the morality, which he had been taught. After his election to parliament this image was extended from Wales to England. In England he became a committee member of the fifty-year-old Liberation Society (Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control) and

the National Free Church Council founded in 1896 (representing a great many local Free Church councils, mostly commenced in the 1890s). He addressed the assemblies of the Congregational and Baptist Unions, and initiated the formation of the Nonconformist Parliamentary Council in 1898.<sup>7</sup> He always retained membership of his family chapel at Criccieth, and joined Baptist congregations in London (after 1890 he seems to have been generally regarded as a Baptist).

It appears, however, that beneath all this public religious commitment and activity he might not have had a consistent Christian faith. During his teenage years he had an extended period of doubt, leading him into strong sympathy with Positivism, though by the time he was twenty he had returned to Evangelicalism.<sup>8</sup> But he was restless, critical and individualistic in personality, and probably continued to speculate about his religion, perhaps having further periods of doubt – though he did not give posterity many clues about this matter. Some of his biographers, for example Ffion Hague, have suggested that he lost his faith as a youngster and did not get it back.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, one of his daughters, Lady Olwen Carey Evans, tended to present him as a consistent believer in adult life.<sup>10</sup> The matter might be more complex and variable than is suggested by either of these opinions. Perhaps another biographer in the family, his estranged elder son Richard, who succeeded him as Second Earl Lloyd-George but was cut out of his will, was accurate in saying that 'my father's religious beliefs fluctuated, and there were periods in his life when he lost faith'.<sup>11</sup> The Baptist Union Assembly was perhaps over-optimistic (and was not quite accurate in regard to his early denominational connection) in saying of him just after his death: 'They rejoice that in his days of power and in those of retirement he never renounced his early faith but remained loyal to the denomination in which he first heard and confessed it'.<sup>12</sup>

More clearly than over the uncertain matter of his beliefs, Lloyd George stood apart (in practice if not in theory) from nonconformist moral teaching. The problem here was his behaviour

**In these early years the main thrust of Lloyd George's radical activity was opposition to the privileged position of landowners and the Established Church, chiefly in a rural context such as his home area.**

in private life. The difficulty did not occur over drink, as the ardent young temperance campaigner seemed to retain his hatred of over-indulgence in alcohol for the rest of his life. This was one of the reasons for his strained relations with his son Richard, who in his view became too fond of drink. He denounced in trenchant evangelical terms the Unionists' mild Licensing Bill of 1904 (which eased financially the situation of publicans), saying that 'the arm of the Most High is uplifted against it'.<sup>13</sup> He also commented in a letter home on one of Asquith's (when Prime Minister) occasionally rather inebriated entries to the House of Commons: 'The Prime Minister came to the House last night in a very drunken state [to attend a debate on the Protestant succession to the throne]. The Tories behaved very honourably ... Lord Hugh Cecil said privately to Churchill, "I do rather object to settling the fate of the Protestant Succession with the aid of a drunken Christian and two sober Jews [Herbert Samuel and Rufus Isaacs]"'.<sup>14</sup>

Rather, the division between Lloyd George's conduct and the moral injunctions he received in youth occurred over his signal failure to fulfil the role of a model husband and family man which was expected of a leading nonconformist. He was genuinely attached to his first wife, Margaret Owen, to whom he was married for fifty-three years until she died in 1941, and with whom he had five children from 1889 to 1902. But theirs seemed a marriage of opposites. David was restless, gregarious and adventurous, probably happier with a varied metropolitan kind of life (and with continental holidays with a fellow-MP from the Welsh party) than with a domesticated existence in rural Wales. Margaret was comparatively passive and home-loving, seemingly much more interested in life in Criccieth than life in London. Consequently they lived apart for long periods. Margaret spent much of her time in Criccieth while David was absorbed in his parliamentary life in London. In these circumstances it was not altogether surprising that he became involved in a series of amorous relationships in the capital.

But his tendency to do this began in Wales, not in London.

## The division between Lloyd George's conduct and the moral injunctions he received in youth occurred over his signal failure to fulfil the role of a model husband and family man which was expected of a leading nonconformist.

Almost immediately after his marriage in 1888 he was seeking social companionship elsewhere, and soon became involved with 'Mrs J', a young widow living in Caernarfon who was attached to his political and social circles. In 1889 she gave birth to a son, rumoured to be Lloyd George's.<sup>15</sup> If David was to keep the parliamentary candidacy for Caernarfon Boroughs for which he had been selected the previous year, it was essential to prevent any proof of the rumour from coming out. Another pressing necessity was that no word about the rumour should reach his recently married wife. Fortunately, 'Mrs J' had David's political and family interests at heart. She agreed, in return for an annuity, that no documentary or photographic evidence of her son's existence should ever reach the public eye. David's marriage and parliamentary candidacy were both saved. Probably no other entry of a future Prime Minister to parliament was preceded by such fraught circumstances.

The rumours about Lloyd George's fatherhood could not end at this point, however. 'Mrs J's' son was born within a few months of David's eldest legitimate child, Richard, and as time went on it could not fail to be noticed that there was a strong physical resemblance between them. The Lloyd George children apparently came to believe that they had a half-brother living in Caernarfon, and Richard (no doubt David too) was anxious in later years that he and his half-brother should not appear together in public and exhibit the resemblance.<sup>16</sup>

Margaret Lloyd George seems eventually to have become resigned to her husband's repeated infidelities, but his behaviour caused fractious relations with his children, notably with Richard and later with Megan (his youngest child). These relations worsened after he took a permanent mistress, Frances Stevenson, in 1913. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Lloyd George was disregarding in private the nonconformity, indeed the Christianity, which he upheld in public. Perhaps in regard to faith, and certainly in regard to morality, the most prominent and powerful Dissenter since Oliver Cromwell (in terms of political influence) was a weak and wavering Christian.

The concern over his candidacy created by the 'Mrs J' affair having been surmounted, Lloyd George stood for Caernarfon Boroughs in a by-election in April 1890. Some local nonconformist ministers were prominent among his supporters. He defeated his Conservative opponent by only eighteen votes, but held the seat for fifty-five years without a break, until he was made an Earl a few months before his death in 1945.

There was a long, largely frustrating period before Lloyd George gained a handsome reward for much striving and struggle as a backbencher by the conferment of a Cabinet post when the Liberals took office in December 1905. During this period his radical objectives – whether they had a strong nonconformist tinge or not – had little chance of success. He had to contend with a Conservative government until 1892; a shaky Liberal government from 1892 to 1895, possessing a majority of only forty which was dependent on keeping the support of the Irish Home Rule party; and, for ten years thereafter, a strong Conservative and Liberal Unionist coalition which came into office with an overall majority of 152 in 1895.

These were clearly unfavourable conditions for the passage of radical legislation, and Lloyd George saw little success for his efforts in parliament. Some of the Conservatives' reforms, notably the introduction of compulsory elementary education in 1891 and the passage of a Workmen's Compensation Bill in 1897, appealed to radicals. So too did two measures passed by the Liberal government of 1892–95 – a bill of 1894 establishing additional elected local government councils and Sir William Harcourt's budget of that year introducing death duties. But Irish home rule was defeated in 1893 by the House of Lords, and hopes for the passage of Welsh disestablishment in the two succeeding years came to nothing.<sup>17</sup> The Liberals had one success in opposing Unionist bills – their defeat of an ill-supported Elementary Education Bill of 1896, which sought to strengthen the funding of denominational schools (which were mostly Anglican or Roman Catholic). As well as the resistance of Liberals, there was considerable Unionist opposition to this bill. The government was forced to

withdraw it, and a diluted substitute was passed the following year.<sup>18</sup>

This was a tale of considerable frustration for Lloyd George. He had no success, moreover, in his efforts to give more weight to Welsh radical claims, by making Welsh Liberal MPs more independent of the other Liberal members and supporting a Welsh home rule campaign. In 1894, claiming that a statement by Harcourt, leader of the House of Commons, that a Welsh disestablishment bill would be introduced that session was not a definite pledge, Lloyd George began to talk of the need for more independent action by the Welsh radical MPs. They should 'stand on the ground of independency and tell the Government that they would not receive Welsh support to break their pledges to Wales'. Two other Welsh MPs (Frank Edwards and D. A. Thomas) supported Lloyd George, followed by a third (Herbert Lewis), but no more. The majority of Welsh Liberal MPs isolated them by remaining loyal to the party whips, and Lloyd George's effort was known somewhat pityingly as 'the Revolt of the Four'. It was clearly not an adequate foundation for an independent Welsh party, similar to the Irish Home Rulers, which Lloyd George had said he wanted to create before the next general election.

The Revolt of the Four did inspire a recently-formed Welsh Home Rule League, *Cymru Fydd* (Young Wales).<sup>19</sup> This was originally inspired by Tom Ellis, MP for Merioneth, but Lloyd George led it after Ellis became a Liberal whip. The league broke down at a meeting at Newport, Monmouthshire, in January 1896, through friction between North and South Wales delegates. The South Wales Liberal Federation, not wanting to damage its region's increasingly valuable economic links with England, refused to join the North Wales Liberal Federation in a national home rule organisation; and, in consequence, *Cymru Fydd* collapsed. Yet a third disappointment for Lloyd George in his quest for an independent party for Wales came in 1899, when he failed to persuade the Welsh Liberal MPs to declare themselves an autonomous branch of the Liberal Party.

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for Welsh radical issues, including home rule, but had achieved nothing. He had become known as 'the MP for Wales' on account of all his efforts for his country; and he might have continued in this role for the rest of his life, had not his political involvements and prospects rather dramatically broadened at the beginning of the new century. On the other hand, had home rule for Wales been obtained he might have become First Minister in a Welsh Government, and the wider Britain would have been deprived of his services as outstanding social and democratic reformer, war leader, Prime Minister and world statesman.

Lloyd George's aims might have achieved little in the 1890s, but he had spoken and campaigned widely and the vigour of his comparative youth was seen as a desirable asset. In 1901 Dr Joseph Parker, Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, said in relation to a current need to strengthen the Liberation Society: 'a strong infusion of Lloyd Georgeism would do us a world of good, and by Lloyd Georgeism I simply mean high spirit, hopeful courage and invincible determination'.<sup>20</sup> 'A strong infusion of Lloyd Georgeism' in the form of Lloyd George himself was what Liberalism was about to get. He shortly made a mark in two episodes – in the first he had a dramatic experience outside parliament which brought him to widespread notice, in the second he engaged in persistent parliamentary debating on a controversial issue which considerably raised expectations of him.

The first episode was the Boer War, which caused bitter divisions amongst Liberals, including nonconformists.<sup>21</sup> Lloyd George opposed the war, one of a small minority in his party. The second episode was a long parliamentary conflict over the Education Bill of 1902, which he also opposed. He succeeded in neither policy. The Boer War continued to be waged regardless of his opposition. The Education Bill got through in spite of his emphatic condemnation, and in spite of very wide admiration of his parliamentary performance (if not of his arguments) among MPs. Though defeated, he was a much better known and a more effective politician after these episodes than before, and after 1902 he was

coming to be seen as a potential candidate for high office.

The Boer War brought Lloyd George a valuable increase in fame at the price of much unpopularity and violent onslaughts on him. He was physically attacked at meetings in Glasgow, Liskeard (Cornwall), Birmingham, and even at Bangor in his own constituency. The Birmingham affray, in December 1901, brought him the most notoriety. A crowd of at least 30,000 tried to storm the building where he had come to address a meeting. Inside the hall missiles were thrown at him on the platform; two deaths occurred in the rioting, and Lloyd George might have been a third mortality if he had not been smuggled out of the hall disguised as a policeman.<sup>22</sup> It was a traumatic baptism of fire for the future premier.

A few months after this, Lloyd George's new fame was reinforced by intense and protracted disputes over education policy. The Unionist government, having been foiled in its attempt to pass a substantial bill in 1896, and having consolidated its rule by another decisive election victory in 1900, revived its effort in the session of 1902 to carry a major education measure. Their bill, applying to England and Wales, sought to ease the financial position of denominational schools by allowing (later, after an amendment, compelling) the education committees of local councils – to which local authority for education would be transferred – to give aid from the local rates to those schools without requiring that they control them (apart from some supervision of their secular teaching). Lloyd George was initially rather ambivalent in his view of the bill, and approved of its proposed administrative arrangements. But the fact that the bill considerably reinforced the influence of clergy over education caused him to take his familiar line of strong opposition to such a policy. One of his sentences in the parliamentary debates on the question showed both anti-Ritualism – though he was happy to welcome the anti-erastianism which was present in the current Ritualist trend in the Anglican Church – and fears for national security at a time of increased foreign hostility to Britain on account of the Boer War. At such a time especially, he indicated, he could only deplore the bill's



proposal to advance the influence of the parson and the priest by means of public aid to church schools: 'For the sake of teaching dogmas to children who cannot understand them, we in the midst of our difficulties and the rocks that surround us propose to put the chaplain on the bridge ... It is a mad proposal'.<sup>23</sup>

In the Commons he was the leading opponent of Arthur Balfour, who was in charge of the bill. In marathon debates at the committee stage, which lasted for over five months (from June to December 1902), Lloyd George spoke 160 times, and his relentless bulldog determination won an unexpected tribute from Balfour: though his views were unacceptable, he was undoubtedly 'an eminent parliamentarian'.<sup>24</sup>

Never before, indeed, had Lloyd George so impressed himself on parliament, despite the failure of his attack on the bill, which moved rapidly through its later stages and became law on 18 December. The education dispute rumbled on for many years. Straight after the bill's passage, local councils containing nonconformist majorities (most of them were in Wales) began to refuse to meet their new obligation to support denominational schools out of the rates. The government countered this 'Welsh Revolt' by passing a Default Bill in 1904, providing for reduction of the state grant to councils which refused to pay their due to denominational schools. But 'passive resistance' – refusal by individuals to pay their rates – continued as a protest against the 1902 measure. In 1904–05 a remarkably strong, though brief, religious revival in Wales (led by the examiner Evan Roberts, with whom Lloyd George became acquainted) added 82,000 members to nonconformist chapels there – strengthening, as long as it lasted, the will to resist the new education policy as well as lending new force to the cause of disestablishment.<sup>25</sup>

It was not only in Wales that the disestablishment cause was currently enjoying some revival. The struggle over educational reform, wrote Guinness Rogers, a leading Congregational minister in London, 'has really gathered round the central idea of a State Church. The practical issue of the government policy has been not only to grant a new endowment to the State

Church, but also to give a fresh legislative sanction to the State Church principle.' Nonconformists were 'resisting the establishment of a State Church School as an annexe to the existing State Church'.<sup>26</sup>

The controversy over education in 1902–04 greatly helped to reunify the Liberals after their divisions over the Boer War. This made them a much more effective threat to the Unionists when the latter began, in 1903, to be weakened by their own divisions over tariff reform (a new protectionist policy which the Liberals opposed in defence of free trade). The Unionist coalition was driven to resign in December 1905, and Campbell-Bannerman undertook the formation of a Liberal government. Lloyd George then reaped the fruits of his impressive political activities since his first return to parliament in 1890, and especially those of the last few years, by being advanced to the Cabinet. He reached this position not directly through his opposition to the 1902 Education Bill – which the Liberal minority in the Commons united in trying to reject but which the Unionist majority successfully passed – but through his opposition to tariff reform, which the united Liberals successfully resisted because the Unionists were divided over it.

However, his performance in relation to the Education Bill of 1902 and its aftermath was of pivotal significance in Lloyd George's career, for the bill was of direct importance to England as well as Wales. He emerged from the education dispute in a more prominent political position. Thereafter, on account of the Liberals' return to office in December 1905 and their decisive election victory in the following month, he was able to build on this position to demonstrate his striking abilities through a variety of outstanding achievements in subsequent years.

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- 1 There is an extensive literature on these developments, including G.I.T. Machin, *The Rise of Democracy in Britain, 1830–1918* (Basingstoke, 2001); G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1832 to 1868* (Oxford, 1977) and *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869 to 1921* (Oxford, 1987); D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: chapel and politics, 1870–1914* (London, 1982); K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868–1922* (Cardiff, 1963, and later editions); S. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (London, 1975); M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. II: *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford, 1995); J. Munson, *The Nonconformists: in search of a lost culture* (London, 1991); G.I.T. Machin, 'Disestablishment and Democracy, c.1840–1930', in E.F. Biagini, ed., *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 120–47.
- 2 K.O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Welsh Liberalism', in Judith Loades, ed., *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor, 1991), pp. 2–4; G.I.T. Machin, 'Lloyd George and Nonconformity', *ibid.*, p. 35; W.R.P. George, *The Making of Lloyd George* (London, 1976), pp. 17–20, 26–27, 75–76; P. Rowland, *Lloyd George* (London, 1976), pp. 14–15.
- 3 K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868–1922* (2nd ed., Cardiff, 1970), pp. 1–119. Fifty years after its first edition in 1963, this book remains the fullest and most authoritative treatment of its subject.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 119.
- 5 On the Llanfrothen case see R. Hattersley, *David Lloyd George, the great outsider* (London, 2010), pp. 40–42.
- 6 W.R.P. George, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
- 7 W.R.P. George, *Lloyd George, Backbencher* (Llandysul, 1983), pp. 128–30; D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience* (London, 1982), p. 75.
- 8 G.I.T. Machin, 'Lloyd George and Nonconformity', in Judith Loades, ed., *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor, 1991), p. 36; W.R.P. George, *The Making of Lloyd George*, p. 104ff.; William George, *My Brother and I* (London, 1958), pp. 75–79, 271–72.

*concluded on page 74*

# LLOYD GEORGE'S COALITION AND PRE-WAR

'England does not love coalitions'. Disraeli's famous comment on the 1852 Aberdeen Coalition was not one of his most perceptive. It is more accurate to say that many politicians do not love coalitions but that many voters do appreciate attempts by the parties to settle major issues by agreement and compromise. At all events, since 1852 Britain has had twelve coalition governments, not to mention several abortive attempts at coalition conducted through private negotiations and inter-party conferences.<sup>1</sup> **Martin Pugh** examines Lloyd George's coalition proposal of 1910.



# COALITION PROPOSAL OF 1910 FOR LIBERALISM

**T**HERE HAVE ALSO been periods of close understanding between two parties, such as between Gladstone and the Irish in 1886 and the Liberals and Labour in 1906–14, that fell short of coalition. To this extent coalitionism has been a formative element in British political history, though national mythology has it that, unlike the Italians and the Germans, we don't really do coalitions.

In this context the initiative taken by Lloyd George to launch a coalition in the summer and autumn of 1910 was not as eccentric as it appears at first sight. The previous coalition had ended as recently as 1905 and the next one was to begin in 1915. Yet it has always seemed an odd episode both for Lloyd George himself and for the Edwardian Liberal Party. As a result of the controversy generated by Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' of 1909 and the early general election fought in January 1910 to overrule the peers' rejection of it, politics had become unusually polarised and party passions were inflamed to such an extent that the prospect of the leaders getting together looked highly improbable at least to those outside the Westminster elite. Some of the leading politicians genuinely held each other in contempt; even in the crisis of wartime Walter Long commented: 'I loathe the very idea of our good fellows sitting with these double-dyed traitors [the Liberals]'.<sup>2</sup>

However, even at the height of the controversies others felt the attraction of collaboration, including Lloyd George,

Churchill and even the Chief Whip, Alexander Murray, among the Liberals, partly due to their more detached view of their own colleagues. Privately Lloyd George complained about the 'glorified grocers' on the Liberal benches as much as the 'backwoodsmen' among the Tories.<sup>3</sup> And leading Edwardian Unionists such as F. E. Smith, Austen Chamberlain and even the party leader, Arthur Balfour, felt content to collaborate with their opponents if the terms were right. Contemporaries noticed that personal relations between the controversialists were surprisingly warm. 'On the whole the Opposition are very fond of [Lloyd] George', commented Lucy Masterman. 'He amuses Arthur Balfour by his quickness and acuteness'. But she also described Lloyd George as 'absolutely hypnotised by Arthur Balfour, by his charm, his quickness, and his undeniably very clever intellect'.<sup>4</sup>

However, the personalities were only part of the explanation. The attempts at coalition in 1910 can be understood at two levels: short-term manoeuvring for advantage in the aftermath of the January election, and the underlying critique about the failure of British government and party politics to arrest national decline. The events of 1910 only make sense when placed in the context of the debates that had preceded them around the turn of the century and what followed during the First World War.

The immediate context for the initiatives of 1910 lay in the deadlock that developed in the

aftermath of the election in January. Among Liberals it had been widely assumed that if they won the election not only would the Budget – rejected by the peers by 350 votes to 75 – be passed, but the Cabinet would also proceed with legislation to curtail the powers of the House of Lords; Asquith had declared he would not hold office without 'safeguards' to ensure the passage of legislation. However, it transpired that this was not quite true for the King, Edward VII, was reluctant to create the five hundred new Liberal peers required to force a House of Lords reform bill through parliament without a second general election. Though ready to accept the advice of his elected government, he was well aware that the Liberals had emerged from the election with just 275 seats to 272 for the Conservatives, so that a working majority rested on the 40 Labour and 82 Irish members, the latter being distinctly unreliable. As a result the government did not enjoy a very emphatic mandate.

In any case the Cabinet had not actually decided what precisely to do by way of reforming the upper chamber, whether to reduce its powers, change its composition, impose joint sittings or even opt for abolition. The vague references in the King's Speech in February exposed this embarrassing situation. In April the government reached agreement with the Irish to ensure the passage of the Budget and passed resolutions dealing with restrictions on the peers' powers over money bills and ordinary

Left:  
Lloyd George  
and Winston  
Churchill in 1910

legislation; attention then focused on the constitutional issue. It was in these circumstances that politicians began casting around for ways out of the impasse.

Then in May the King suddenly died, thereby thrusting his successor, George V, into a major political crisis. Several initiatives quickly emerged. Lord Curzon had already floated the idea of a two-party conference under the Speaker's chairmanship. Another, inspired by J. L. Garvin, editor of the *Observer*, and his circle, took the form of an appeal for a 'Truce of God', in effect a meeting of the party leaders with a view to defusing the crisis. But Murray, the Liberal Chief Whip, also argued that politicians should avoid putting pressure on the new King by devising a compromise among themselves. As a result a five-month political truce began during which a constitutional conference took place including Asquith, Lloyd George, Lord Crewe and Augustine Birrell for the Liberals, and Balfour, Chamberlain, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Cawdor for the Unionists. At the meetings Lloyd George apparently acted as the guardian of party interests, adopting the aggressive approach that was his trademark, so much so that he nearly broke up the conference by the end of July.<sup>5</sup>

In fact the twenty-one meetings simply left him frustrated and bored. As a result, by August his fertile mind was casting around for an alternative means of bypassing the deadlock. He had earlier spoken to some colleagues about an alliance of Radical Liberals, Labour and the Irish, and to others about a government of progressive businessmen. At home in North Wales he composed the 'Criccieth memorandum', a more sweeping proposal designed not to resolve the controversy over the House of Lords but to create a coalition government as a way of circumventing the party controversies that were holding things up. Consequently, the summer of 1910 saw two related but separate developments: formal negotiations about the House of Lords issue and informal talks about a wider agenda to be implemented by a coalition.

It was thus not entirely clear what was going on. As both party leaders felt apprehensive about the reactions of their followers they

kept the talks as private as possible. The Irish were less than happy about the conference because they believed that they – and thus home rule – were being sidelined at a moment when they held the balance of power in parliament. Many leading Liberals found their reliance on Irish votes an irritation, and saw that the removal of the peers' veto would force home rule to the top of the agenda once again. Lloyd George himself was lukewarm about home rule in that, though sympathetic in principle, he did not regard it as a priority, rather as a complication for other Liberal reforms. By promoting a coalition he implicitly sought to evade the commitment so that the Irish could be 'left to stew in their own juice'. Certainly, if the Tory leaders were to be recruited to his scheme they had to have some reassurance about Ireland. Under a coalition home rule might be embodied in a wider reorganisation of the empire, much favoured by some Tory imperialists, and gain a parliament along with Scotland and Wales, a solution widely known as 'home rule all round'. Privately the Tory leaders recognised that the Union was a lost cause and were therefore ready to cooperate with the government 'if they [are] prepared to defy the Irish and their own extremists'.<sup>6</sup>

However, Birrell, the Liberal Chief Secretary for Ireland, reassured the Irish MPs that he 'attaches no importance to the conference. It will be informal and above all not binding'.<sup>7</sup> This is corroborated by Asquith's view of the situation. A secret Cabinet memorandum referring to 'the most cogent of all reasons' explained that the Liberals needed time before facing another general election.<sup>8</sup> Asquith accepted that he could not reasonably demand guarantees from the King in the current parliament. Moreover, by postponing the decision for a time the government would be seen to be magnanimous in sparing an inexperienced King from a major controversy. As for Balfour, he had already taken risks by trying to persuade the old King to defy his Liberal ministers and appoint them to office, a dangerously unconstitutional idea that would have thrust the monarchy into party controversy. For both sides it was wiser to pull back from the brink.

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Such were the immediate motives and calculations. But much of the momentum behind the talks during the summer and autumn of 1910 reflected a more profound reaction against party government that had been brewing since the 1890s and had reached a climax during the South African War in 1899–1902. The impact of the military disasters had been complemented by revelations about the poor health and education of the men who had volunteered and led to a wider critique of British parliamentary government. Critics argued that the Salisbury Cabinet was stuffed with the Prime Minister's relatives; parliament attracted nimble speakers and skilled tacticians who were incompetent in matters of administration; at both national and local level the demands of party politics marginalised the experts and professionals in favour of amateurs and wirepullers. From these complaints there emerged a demand for promoting 'National Efficiency'. This involved increasing the role of experts, bringing successful businessmen into government and dispensing with narrow party rule in favour of some form of national government drawn from the best men in all parties and in none. In the crisis of the Boer War it seemed briefly possible that such an administration might emerge led, perhaps, by Lord Rosebery, a former Liberal Prime Minister but one whose support for imperial expansion and scepticism about home rule made him appealing to some Tories.

Although the mood soon gave way to normal party warfare, especially the controversies over the 1902 Education Bill and free trade versus tariff reform, the idea of National Efficiency proved to be potent and, indeed, has resurfaced periodically in British politics ever since. In particular, the attainment of National Efficiency through a coalition was promoted by J. L. Garvin and a circle of acolytes including Lord Milner, F. S. Oliver and L. S. Amery. Inspired by the ideas of Joseph Chamberlain, they sought some form of imperial federation backed by a tariff and a coherent defence policy; they accepted the need for state intervention in social affairs; and they saw the resolution of the Irish Question in a home-rule-all-round strategy.

However, as Rosebery was by now a marginal figure, an alternative Liberal exponent of National Efficiency seemed essential. Lloyd George was the outstanding candidate. His term at the Board of Trade (1905–08) had surprised and impressed his political opponents for his ability to 'command the confidence of men of business' and to draw vested interests into compromises.<sup>9</sup> Though they recognised that Lloyd George was publicly committed to free trade, they interpreted his actions in safeguarding British commercial interests as those of a protectionist. Nor did they see him as anti-imperial or anti-military despite his record during the Boer War. He had objected to that particular war, but, in the words of Lord Esher, 'he is plucky and an imperialist at heart, if he is anything'.<sup>10</sup> This seemed to be corroborated by his record at the Exchequer where, despite some stiff arguments with successive First Lords of the Admiralty about the cost of building Dreadnoughts, he 'does not care a bit for economy' and invariably found the money required for naval building. In effect the Conservatives increasingly believed that in Lloyd George they had found a second Joseph Chamberlain, a politician who started as a partisan radical nonconformist Liberal who would evolve into a national statesman, promoting imperial development and class collaboration. For his part Lloyd George evidently believed that the situation in 1910 was similar to that prevailing during the Boer War. He contemplated an alternative government incorporating such figures as Alfred Mond and Sir Christopher Furness, who were Liberal MPs and successful entrepreneurs.<sup>11</sup> He himself would fill the Chamberlain/Rosebery role by leading the national administration.

Many historians, while recognising Lloyd George's detachment from regular party politics, have considered the interpretation of him as a social imperialist as an exaggeration or even misrepresentation. Yet the expectations of the Edwardian National Efficiency advocates were not entirely lacking an empirical basis. As a young man in the 1880s Lloyd George had felt the attraction of Chamberlain's politics: a combination of domestic radicalism and a

patriotic-imperialist external strategy; but his position in Wales, one of the most Gladstonian parts of Britain, had helped him to resist the temptation to join Chamberlain and later the Liberal Unionists.

It is possible to infer a good deal about Lloyd George's motives and intentions from the memorandum he produced, dated 17 August 1910, which spelt out a programme for a coalition government, and from the way he handled it. Initially he told Churchill, a natural enthusiast for coalition, and Murray, who was sympathetic, but kept Asquith in the dark until October when Crewe, Birrell, Sir Edward Grey and Richard Haldane were also informed. Among the Tories he first invited F. E. Smith to talk it over at Downing Street before holding a private dinner with Balfour whom he assured that their meeting would be confidential: 'The servants are Welsh and could not follow the conversation'.<sup>12</sup> By agreement Balfour then consulted his three colleagues who sat on the conference as well as Andrew Bonar Law with whom Lloyd George had enjoyed a good relationship since his time at the Board of Trade. Meanwhile Garvin agreed to give the idea favourable publicity in the newspapers.

The second half of the memorandum was devoted to proposals blatantly designed to tempt the Conservatives. He dropped a broad hint about a compromise on free trade, to be attained through an enquiry guided by 'intelligent and judicial impartiality'. He made a bid for the imperial federationist support by advocating uniting the empire by 'concentrating its resources for defence as for commerce'. And he appealed to those Tories who favoured state interventionism by suggesting raising the school-leaving age to enable Britain's labour force to compete with Germany and the United States and promoting more efficient large-scale farming with state subsidies. All these questions, Lloyd George claimed, could be resolved much more easily by a non-party approach which would carry greater weight than any normal government. Similarly, the Irish question would be susceptible to non-party treatment, as the government could deal with it 'without being subject to the

embarrassing dictation of extreme partisans, whether from Nationalists or Orangemen'.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps most surprisingly he offered a more efficient policy for national defence through the adoption of compulsory military training designed to raise an extra 500,000 men to support the regular army. There is no doubt that the Conservatives were surprised, even shocked, by these suggestions. 'We were astonished at George's concessions', admitted Chamberlain. 'What will his people say of him?'<sup>14</sup> But the memorandum gained credibility in their eyes because it went a long way to confirming the impression some of them had already formed of about his politics.

On the other hand, in the first half of the memorandum Lloyd George set out the ideas more likely to attract Liberals. 'It is a clever document but a strange one', Crewe told the Prime Minister.<sup>15</sup> It included improved housing, tackling the problem of alcoholic drink, introducing insurance against ill-health and unemployment and reforming the Poor Law. It is this list that throws most light on Lloyd George's constructive approach to politics. Though not an intellectual, he was always attracted by novel ideas, as was Churchill, and almost invariably became impatient about finding immediate solutions to pressing problems. This attitude was reflected in his unorthodox working methods, his refusal to be restrained by civil service caution, his fondness for talking through policies and schemes with friends, his habit of bypassing official channels and seeking his own sources of information and ideas. In 1910 the problem that had begun to absorb him was the preparation of a compulsory scheme of national insurance for both health – or infirmity as it was then known – and unemployment. This topic occupied more space than any other in his memorandum and it seems probable that in composing his coalition proposals it was the resolution of national insurance reform that most moved him. For the attempt to legislate for the introduction of insurance stirred up angry nests of vested interests, notably the medical profession, the private insurance companies, and the trade unions who resented the imposition of extra compulsory contributions

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on their members. Conscious that it was comparatively easy to enact such a reform in Germany, he complained: 'but here one would have to encounter the bitter hostility of powerful organisations like the Prudential, the Liver, the Royal Victoria, the Pearl, and similar organisations, with an army numbering scores, if not hundreds of thousands, of agents and collectors who make a living out of collecting a few pence a week from millions of households'.<sup>16</sup>

He felt strongly that the current system of private insurance 'ought to be terminated at the earliest possible moment'. The costs of administration of the private schemes absorbed half of the total receipts; some companies were so badly run that they faced bankruptcy; the agents sometimes sold their books to make a profit for themselves at the expense of the contributors; and the typical 'death benefit' was of little help to the widows and children left behind by the loss of their breadwinner. Lloyd George here articulated the modern Liberal view that the state could perform such essential functions more efficiently and effectively than a multitude of private, profit-making bodies. But he anticipated that such legislation was likely to be a major electoral liability because of the reactions of the vested interests, especially the collectors who visited homes on a weekly basis. After a meeting with the representatives of the insurance companies in August he felt convinced that their hostility would prove fatal. In this context national insurance epitomised the case for coalition government as a means of circumventing and defeating the sectional interests that so often frustrated reforms that were necessary in the national interest.

By October, with the constitutional conference reaching deadlock, Lloyd George pushed hard for the coalition alternative by talking separately to the two sides. While the Conservatives were intrigued and excited, the Liberals required more reassurance which he provided by extemporising; to Crewe, for example, he explained that Liberal nonconformists would have to have guarantees on education and church disestablishment – topics that had not actually been mentioned in the memorandum. He even composed a second

memorandum towards the end of October designed to be seen by Liberals only.<sup>17</sup> In fact, several senior Liberals, including Grey and Crewe who were rather defeatist and lacked the impetus to tackle radical reforms at this stage, seem to have welcomed the prospect of a deal with their opponents.<sup>18</sup> However, this is not true of Asquith who was an altogether tougher politician. It seems almost certain that Asquith never realised how far Lloyd George was going in his talks with the Tories, sketching out the membership of a coalition, suggesting Balfour as Leader of the Commons, elevating himself as Prime Minister – and despatching Asquith to the House of Lords.

The negotiations reached a climax on 2 November, when Balfour and Lloyd George met privately. At that stage the Tory leader understood that he was being asked to concede home rule all round in return for a measure of tariff reform, compulsory military service and naval expansion; but he felt unable to accept and the effort was abandoned. Balfour was doubtless influenced by the lack of progress made at the constitutional conference which also collapsed a few days later, though this was not made known until 10 November.

Why did the initiative to form a coalition fail? With hindsight it is tempting to assume that Lloyd George's proposals for a coalition programme were simply unrealistic because he had incorporated so many major measures into his document. On the other hand, there was some logic in this. Deadlock between the parties was sometimes resolved by being ambitious rather than cautious. In 1884–85, for example, the Liberals' limited proposals to extend the vote had been blocked by the peers but were later enacted when they agreed to include a scheme to redistribute the constituencies; the same thing occurred in 1917–18 with even more comprehensive proposals to reform the male and female franchise, redraw constituency boundaries and make many other changes to the electoral system. When the parties disagreed it proved easier to go for a sweeping measure of reform in which everyone gained something they wanted and consequently swallowed things they disliked.

The obvious explanation for failure is that Lloyd George evidently thought it feasible to use the methods he had employed successfully at the Board of Trade in talking separately to the two sides with a view to finding the common ground. But in 1910 the participants were more sceptical. And rightly so because he was telling a different story to the two parties. If the parties had been able to resolve their differences over House of Lords reform there would have been some logic in going on to the coalition as the threat of an election would have been lifted, but Lloyd George had nothing new to offer on that subject, only a plea to circumvent it altogether.

For his part Asquith seems to have regarded the whole coalition proposal with detachment, even amusement, from the outset. A more orthodox party politician, he appreciated the damage to Liberal morale that would result from reneging on traditional commitments on free trade and voluntary recruitment; this view was corroborated from the other side by F. E. Smith, who believed a coalition agreement would have smashed the Liberal organisation for a decade. In any case, any deal that compromised home rule threatened to disrupt the electoral alliance with the Irish and even Labour that had sustained the Liberals through elections in 1906 and January 1910; this was indeed to be the eventual result of the formation of the wartime coalition with the Conservatives in 1915. Asquith's main object in talking to the opposition had always been to buy some time and to show George V that he had done his best to find a way out of the Lords' controversy; once this was seen to have failed the King was left with little option but to acquiesce in his government's desire for the creation of new peers. By the autumn the party was preparing for a further battle with the Tories and to back down unexpectedly would have been very damaging to morale.

The other key reason for failure lay in Lloyd George's inability to win the complete confidence and cooperation of Balfour. With hindsight Lloyd George claimed that he had enjoyed the support of the leading Conservatives in 1910 but was thwarted by the reactionaries such as Lord Londonderry and

**By October, with the constitutional conference reaching deadlock, Lloyd George pushed hard for the coalition alternative by talking separately to the two sides. While the Conservatives were intrigued and excited, the Liberals required more reassurance.**

'the less capable and therefore more narrowly partisan members of his party'.<sup>19</sup> However, these remarks reflected his post-war experience in being rejected by rank-and-file Tories in 1922 while retaining the backing of Smith, Balfour and Chamberlain. In 1910 only a handful of Conservatives were actually consulted and Balfour was suspicious because Lloyd George used F. E. Smith, a highly opportunistic, freewheeling figure, as his intermediary. Nor did Balfour appreciate until later in October how many concessions Lloyd George required from the Tories. Moreover, although Balfour's attitude towards his own party was lordly and detached, he could not take liberties with his followers on such issues as Ireland. 'I cannot become another Robert Peel in my party', he explained.<sup>20</sup> As a result of the controversy over tariff reform launched in 1903 by Joseph Chamberlain the Conservatives had become very divided and neither faction regarded Balfour as reliable. He had been promptly denounced by Leo Maxse of the *National Review* for even talking to the Liberals: 'Those who begin negotiating with Mr Asquith will find themselves sold to the Molly Maguires before the end of the chapter.'<sup>21</sup> Admittedly Lloyd George hoped to bring Balfour round on Ireland by offering a federal or home-rule-all-round solution. But Garvin failed to convince the Tory leader that this could be done without splitting the party, and the federalists had not thought through such a major scheme sufficiently. In effect, while Lloyd George wanted the Tories to accept the idea of coalition and sort out the details later, Balfour preferred to have the details first.

Yet although it proved to be a failure the coalition initiative of 1910 was not without some significance. Among Liberal opinion the demise of the conference came as a relief. 'There are people who talk glibly of the existing parties having done their work and seen their day, and dream of a great "national party"', scoffed the [Liberal] *Westminster Gazette*. 'This idea will never prevail as long as there is life and strength in parliamentary institutions and a wholesome interest in public affairs among the mass of the people.'<sup>22</sup> The immediate consequences were that the Liberal

Party remained united, a second general election became inevitable and Asquith played his ace: the royal guarantee of new peers. The victory in December's poll resulted in the enactment of the Parliament Act in 1911 and the lasting curtailment of the House of Lords' role in government and in British politics generally.

Lloyd George promptly reverted to type by throwing himself into the election, which became almost a referendum on the upper chamber; he mocked the peers as descendants of 'French filibusters' and 'the ennobled indiscretions of kings'. But he found himself forced back into the trying negotiations over the National Insurance Bill. Although it was passed in 1911 he was frustrated by not being able to include widows' pensions as he had intended. As he had foreseen, the Bill offered easy targets for the Tories and as a result several Liberal seats were lost in by-elections during 1912-13. But the episode also damaged him in the wider party as reports of his scheme leaked out, leaving him a more isolated figure by 1914; his natural allies in the Cabinet had already concluded that he had crossed sides on defence and foreign policy.

On the other hand, Balfour, who had kept his party firmly in mind in backing away from coalition, earned himself little gratitude. Supporters of coalition saw his conduct as typically indecisive. But critics from the 'Radical Right' like Leo Maxse also condemned him for engaging in talks as proof that he could not be relied on to uphold Tory principles. When he lost the December election, his third consecutive defeat, the critics launched a vituperative 'Balfour Must Go' campaign which resulted in his resignation in 1911.

The 1910 negotiations also had considerable longer-term significance in that for Lloyd George they provided a virtual dress rehearsal for his wartime government. Despite his failure in 1910 he saw that the leading Conservatives took his ideas seriously and, given the right circumstances, would be prepared to take risks with the party. Of course his path was made easier by Asquith's decision to form a coalition in 1915. But the Lloyd George coalition that followed it in December 1916 was qualitatively different

**The 1910 negotiations also had considerable longer-term significance in that for Lloyd George they provided a virtual dress rehearsal for his wartime government.**

in translating into concrete form the ideas of the National Efficiency school. It diluted the party element in government by incorporating businessmen and experts, sidelined the old Cabinet by a five-man War Cabinet, instituted a cabinet secretariat to promote efficiency, and employed the Milnerites in the Prime Minister's personal secretariat. Even in the reaction against Lloyd George's style of government in the 1920s some of this apparatus survived, and the ideal of a non-party or national government continued to resurface at intervals in British politics.

Lloyd George may have been the first 'Presidential' Prime Minister but he was not the last. Churchill carried forward both the ideas of the Edwardian era and a marked habit for working with more than one party. Mrs Thatcher, who frankly admitted she would have preferred to be president, was very sceptical about many members of her own party and attracted by outsiders with business experience. Tony Blair, equally detached from his own party, was positively Lloyd Georgean in his habit for appointing men from outside the party to provide alternative advice to that offered by his official ministers.

*Martin Pugh's latest book, Britain: Unification and Disintegration, is available from Authors-OnLine and through Amazon in paperback and as an e-book. See [www.martinpughhistorian.com](http://www.martinpughhistorian.com).*

- 1 Admittedly there is some room for argument about how, say, the National Government is counted, but by my count there were coalitions in 1852-55; 1855-58; 1859-65; 1895-1905, 1915-16; 1916-18; 1918-22; 1931-35; 1935-37; 1937-40; 1940-45; 2010-.
- 2 Walter Long to Edward Carson, 25 May 1915, quoted in Ian Colvin, *The Life of Lord Carson* (1936), vol III, pp. 50-51.
- 3 Lucy Masterman, C. F. G. *Masterman: A Biography* (1939), p. 200.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp.142, 164.
- 5 John D. Fair, *British Interparty Conferences* (1980), pp. 88-89.
- 6 A.J.Balfour to Austen Chamberlain, 24 October 1910, Balfour papers Add. Mss. 49736.
- 7 Denis Gwynne, *The Life of John Redmond* (1932), pp. 179-80.

*concluded on page 74*

# LLOYD GEORGE'S WAR

Lloyd George's reputation as a master rhetorician is well deserved. Never keen on writing, the spoken word was his perfect medium.<sup>1</sup> When he was at the height of his powers, he was as effective in winning over opponents face to face in private as he was at making emotive, populist appeals to large crowds and at winning over MPs in the House of Commons. **Richard Toye** demonstrates the importance of Lloyd George's rhetorical skills during the First World War, and analyses how his speeches combined *ethos* (character), *pathos* (emotion), and *logos* (logic or discourse). Toye concludes by calling for a more systematic study of the origins, delivery and reception of the rhetoric of a brilliant war leader.



**D**URING THE FIRST World War, Lloyd George's rhetorical skills were important for a variety of reasons. They helped him justify the war to the British public and to international audiences; they helped establish his own reputation as a dynamic war leader, paving the way for his entry to 10 Downing Street; they helped

maintain him as Prime Minister at times of political vulnerability; and they helped secure his massive victory in the general election of 1918. They were, furthermore, an important component of the 'prime ministerial' or 'semi-presidential' form of government which he pioneered, in contrast to earlier, more collective styles of Cabinet government.<sup>2</sup>



# RHETORIC, 1914 – 1918

Surprisingly, though, Lloyd George's war rhetoric has received rather little scholarly attention, certainly by comparison with Churchill's during the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> Of course, his many biographers have written about his speechmaking, often to excellent effect, and there is plenty of other literature that touches upon it, at least in passing. His pre-war and post-war rhetoric has been discussed in a useful way by Iain McLean.<sup>4</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan's recent lecture on Lloyd George as a parliamentarian contains many important insights into his rhetorical skills.<sup>5</sup> However, in spite of valuable contributions by L. Brooks Hill and David R. Woodward, we lack a systematic account of his rhetoric throughout the 1914–18 period as a whole.<sup>6</sup> That is a much larger task than can be attempted in an article of this length. It is, however, possible to examine some key developments and episodes which cast light on broader themes. In examining these, it is helpful to bear in mind the three Classical rhetorical appeals: to *ethos* (character), to *pathos* (emotion, or the emotional character of the audience), and to *logos* (logic or discourse). Considering how Lloyd George's speeches made use of varying combinations of these appeals helps us to understand his undoubted rhetorical success.

By the time that war broke out, Lloyd George was, of course, an extremely experienced orator, with nearly twenty-five years in parliament behind him. Much of what he knew about public speaking came from the nonconformist chapel tradition. Although he was no conventional Christian, his unselfconscious use of religiously infused language was an asset for a radical politician who wanted to establish a reputation for high-minded moral fervour, and his war speeches too had an evangelical flavour.<sup>7</sup> But he was also influenced

by the culture of the music hall, hence his ability – noted by Morgan – to move swiftly between moral injunction and knockabout humour.<sup>8</sup>

When he became an MP, in 1890, Gladstone was still Liberal leader. In old age, he recalled: 'I learned from Gladstone that to be effective in attack you must confine yourself to one subject on a narrow front.'<sup>9</sup> And, for a long time, it was attack that he was best at. This was true, of course, of his eloquent denunciations of the Boer War. It was also true of his subsequent peacetime career as a Cabinet minister. Peel had used the technique of 'government in Opposition' – the responsible pose of the would-be Prime Minister. Lloyd George and his fellow Liberal Winston Churchill instead performed 'Opposition in government', launching scathing attacks on the landed elite in order to whip up support for radical social policies. It was the former, arguably, who was the more effective of the two. Robert Roberts, chronicler of working-class life in Salford, recalled how his father and a friend idolised Lloyd George but thought little of Churchill: 'Unlike their hero, the orator supreme, they considered him a shifty and mediocre speaker with a poor delivery.'<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Lloyd George's brilliant efforts, which contained elements of improvisation, were thought to lack the literary quality needed to read well in the papers the next day.<sup>11</sup> Reputedly, it was his *eminence grise*, *News of the World* proprietor Lord Riddell, who persuaded him to reserve his most important speeches for Saturdays to ensure that they would receive coverage in the Saturday evening papers, the Sunday papers, and the Monday ones too:

When newspaper reporters appealed to L.G. that if the speeches were made in the

afternoon they would clash with the foot-ball news L.G. said 'when would you like them – 11 o'clock in the morning?' On their saying 'yes' he did his best to ensure that he should speak in some conference or at the laying of some memorial stone or in some great factory at that hour on Saturday; furthermore, he undertook to provide them with a draft of his speech the previous day, subject only to the variation which new events or new inspiration might bring forth.<sup>12</sup>

Lloyd George's rhetorical methods generated much suspicion, of course. His famous speech in the Limehouse district of East London in defence of his tax-raising Budget of 1909 was seen by opponents as an effort to stir up class warfare; 'Limehousing' became a byword for rabble-rousing and demagoguery. During the war, however, the sense that he was authentically in touch with the mood of the people gave him a public *ethos* that many other politicians lacked. Similarly, as a former pro-Boer (although never actually a pacifist) Lloyd George was in some ways an unlikely advocate of war. This could also be turned into a strength, though. Having consistently opposed large-scale arms spending before 1914, and having been converted to British intervention on the Continent only at the very last minute, no one could reasonably accuse him of being a warmonger. Nor, in fact, was it easy to accuse him of hypocrisy. His famous warning to Germany at the time of the Agadir crisis in 1911 stood as a marker of his willingness to defend the European balance of power and the British national interest. His brand of Liberalism was also associated with the defence of the rights of small nations, which the German invasion of Belgium seemed to violate spectacularly.

Left:  
Lloyd George during the First World War (Photograph by kind permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/The National Library of Wales.)

In the first autumn of the war, then, Lloyd George's carefully cultivated public character was almost perfectly pitched. He could be seen as someone who had pursued peace up to the final moment, but who had reluctantly concluded that participation in the war was necessary, in line with his known commitment to use force, *in extremis*, to protect Britain's honour. Who better, then, to win over waverers, for if even he supported the war, who else could possibly object? And there was, perhaps, more of a need to convert doubters than has traditionally been allowed. The standard picture of August 1914 is of widespread war enthusiasm, with men rushing mindlessly to join up before it was all over. Catriona Pennell has recently shown, however, that things were much more complex, with people often taking weeks to mull over what they knew were momentous, life-changing decisions.<sup>13</sup> This means that, in the early weeks, leading public figures had a potential role to play in cementing public attitudes.

His speech at the Queen's Hall in the West End on 19 September 1914 was a landmark. It was printed and circulated widely and was received with great enthusiasm by the press. The audience consisted primarily of the London Welsh and the purpose was recruitment. Lloyd George was able to deploy *ethos* by playing on his own Welsh background, which also served another purpose. As Bentley Gilbert has pointed out, he was in the midst of a battle to persuade Kitchener, the War Secretary, to allow the creation of a specifically Welsh army corps: 'A strong response to his call for men would be proof that an appeal for Welsh recruits could be made on a national basis.'<sup>14</sup> The speech was an attempt to demonstrate that the war was being fought on behalf of Liberal values, including the rights of the 'little nations', specifically Belgium and Serbia, but also, by implication, Wales. Lloyd George also sought to show that the war could not have been avoided 'without national dishonour'. This could be seen, superficially as a purely emotive appeal; but he also used *logos* in order to argue that national honour was fundamental to the proper working of international relations, notwithstanding the fact that many crimes had been committed in its

name. Britain's treaty commitment to Belgium represented a solemn duty. The alternative to fulfilling it was to adopt the German view of treaties as mere scraps of paper that could be violated if they conflicted with national interest. The *Times* report shows how he used a combination of humour and rhetorical questions to work up his audience to fever pitch:

The whole house burst into laughter when Mr. Lloyd George asked: 'Have you any £5 notes about you; or any of those neat little Treasury £1 notes?' But the mood changed when he went on to exclaim: '- If you have burn them; they are only scraps of paper!' And there were fierce cheers in response to his telling questions and answers: '- 'What are they made of? – Rags. What are they worth? – The whole credit of the British Empire.'<sup>15</sup>

The speech's peroration was dominated by *pathos*. It centred on a metaphor from his Welsh boyhood. He had, he said, known a beautiful valley between the mountains and the sea, 'sheltered by the mountains from all the bitter blasts' of the wind, and therefore snug and comfortable, but 'very enervating'. The British people had, he said, 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 everlasting things that matter for a nation – the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the towering 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 mighty peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war.<sup>16</sup>

As John Grigg has pointed out, Lloyd George's claim that he envied young people their 'opportunity'

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to fight sat uncomfortably with his private desire to keep his own sons out of harm's way. He used his influence to get them positions as aides-de-camp to generals (although they both later undertook more dangerous service).<sup>17</sup> Had this become known at the time it would have seriously damaged his *ethos* – as indeed would the knowledge that his secretary Frances Stevenson was also his mistress.

That, of course, was a closely guarded secret at the time, although Stevenson's name did gain some public prominence as the editor (or 'arranger') of a volume of Lloyd George's speeches published in 1915. By the time the book came out, he was well established in his new position as Minister of Munitions. That post had been created in May that year as part of the political shake-up triggered partly by the shortage of shells and partly by Churchill's problems at the Admiralty. With a coalition government now in place, Lloyd George's role in increasing production augmented his reputation as a man of drive and determination – but without his speeches his administrative ability might have counted for less with the public. One contemporary commentator described Lloyd George's lifetime technique – applicable in both war and peace – as follows:

Provide a cry which is, or can be made, popular.

Promote a popular movement for its effective prosecution.

Inspire that movement with enthusiasm by a great platform campaign.<sup>18</sup>

The contrast with the Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith, was striking. Asquith did not merely appear (perhaps somewhat unfairly) as a weak hand on the tiller and an advocate of 'wait and see'; he also failed to articulate as clearly as Lloyd George the moral case for war. Lloyd George's speeches in favour of conscription in the winter of 1915–6 accentuated the differences between the two men (although it should also be noted that his address to munitions workers on Clydeside on Christmas Day met such hostility that he attempted to suppress news of what had happened).<sup>19</sup> In

a famous Commons speech he said that the words 'too late' were 'two fatal words of this War':

Too late in moving here. Too late in arriving there. Too late in coming to this decision. Too late in starting with enterprises. Too late in preparing. In this War the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of 'Too Late'; and unless we quicken our movements damnation will fall on the sacred cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed. I beg employers and workmen not to have 'Too Late' inscribed upon the portals of their workshops: that is my appeal.<sup>20</sup>

Although couched as an injunction to both sides of industry, this passage could also be seen as an oblique attack on Asquith's laid-back leadership style. Had Asquith himself been a more effective rhetorician of war he might have been less vulnerable to the Westminster intrigues that eventually drove him out of Downing Street.

As Prime Minister for the final two years of the war, Lloyd George needed his rhetorical skills as much as ever. As the head of a new coalition, he was dependent on the Conservatives for a majority; and, with disgruntled Asquithians waiting to pounce on any mis-step, he was always potentially vulnerable to any new crisis that might emerge. Lloyd George was helped by Asquith's seeming unwillingness – or inability – to strike effectively in debate. He recalled: 'When Asquith used to attack me on a wide front, I knew I was well away, and just sat back and waited my time. Later, I picked out what subjects suited me, dealt with them at great length and apologised for not dealing with the rest because of lack of time.'<sup>21</sup> He was also subject to assault from the left, which may have seemed particularly threatening at a time when Russia was in the throes of revolutionary turmoil. In November 1917, he made a speech in Paris 'of perhaps brutal frankness', as he put it himself. He said that the creation of the new Allied War Council had been delayed by 'national prejudice' and considerations of prestige among the Allies.<sup>22</sup> Although this was seen by many at the time as refreshingly honest, the Labour

press in Britain did not disguise its contempt. According to the *Labour Leader*:

Mr. Lloyd George may soon find it convenient to resign his present position of responsibility for one of greater freedom, in which he will tell the world how he could have achieved victory if he had been allowed to direct the whole world according to his plans. But he cannot relieve himself of responsibility. He has been a Minister during the whole war, and he became Prime Minister a year ago with practically the powers of a Dictator, under a promise to reorganise the conduct of the war for victory. He may say that he undertook an impossible task, but he cannot transfer his responsibility to others.<sup>23</sup>

Although he would ultimately be hailed as 'The Man Who Won the War', during the conflict itself he was often subject to heavy criticism, which often focused on his 'dictatorial' ways. This was a charge which resulted in part from his neglect of parliament. *Hansard* records him as having spoken there on only twelve days in 1917, which was massively less active than Asquith had been as Prime Minister the previous year.

However, Lloyd George could still put on a stellar performance there when the occasion demanded. From the point of view of his political survival, probably the most dangerous moment of his premiership was the famous 'Maurice debate' of May 1918. He had been publicly accused of misleading parliament about troop levels in France prior to the Ludendorff offensive that began in March. Asquith demanded a Select Committee investigation, but made his case in a narrow, legalistic way. In his reply, Lloyd George made use of statistical evidence that was arguably dubious; at the very least he was highly selective about what he chose to present.<sup>24</sup> Regardless of whether or not the numbers were right, his speech was ostensibly based heavily on *logos*, with much discussion of which officials knew what when, and whether or not a Select Committee was the right place to judge such a question. But the comment of William Pringle, the hostile

Liberal MP who spoke next, is interesting: 'The right hon. Gentleman has stated his case with all his accustomed dexterity, and he has made an appeal to the *emotions* of the House, an appeal which no man is able to make with greater skill and greater irrelevance than himself.'<sup>25</sup> Lloyd George did indeed use *pathos* when he argued that the controversy was undermining national unity and impeding the war effort: 'I really beg and implore, for our common country, the fate of which is in the balance now and in the next few weeks, that there should be an end of this sniping.'<sup>26</sup> He also used *ethos*, both when he presented himself as a busy man being forced to deal with a dangerous distraction, and when he assaulted the character of Sir Frederick Maurice, the dissident General who had breached military discipline by taking his allegations to the press. He pointed out, devastatingly, that the disputed figures had been provided by Maurice's own department. The combination of techniques was highly effective, and the government won the vote by a big majority. Cecil Harmsworth, an MP who was a member of Lloyd George's personal secretariat, noted in his diary: 'L.G. in first-rate fighting trim, reduces the Opposition to speechlessness.' Harmsworth added presciently: 'One unhappy result may be the definite splitting of the Liberal Party.'<sup>27</sup>

It is usual to regard war rhetoric from the point of view of domestic political management and of maintaining the morale of the citizenry. Yet speeches had another function too, that of international diplomacy. This was not only a question of appealing to allies and neutrals for support. Public rhetoric was a way of speaking to the enemy, either in an effort to intimidate them psychologically, or to put out peace feelers. The latter had to be done in such a way as to avoid showing weakness, given that speeches were ripe for propaganda exploitation by the other side. Lloyd George's efforts to carry out this balancing act can be seen in his War Aims speech of 5 January 1918. The context for this was provided by the peace negotiations between the Bolsheviks and the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. Count Czernin, Austria-Hungary's foreign minister and spokesman for the Central

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Powers, had suggested that they would be prepared to make 'a general peace without compulsory annexations and without contributions' (i.e. indemnities). This type of language was acceptable to the Bolsheviks, but Czernin's condition was that Russia's allies also agreed.<sup>28</sup> Even though it did not appear to be a bona fide peace offer, it was not a statement that the British could allow to pass without comment. As Lloyd George put it shortly before his speech:

We ought to take advantage of it to issue such a declaration of our own war aims as would maintain our own public opinion, and, if possible, lower that of the enemy. In fact, the view to which the War Cabinet inclined was to issue a declaration of our war aims which went to the extreme limit of concession, and which would show to our own people and to our Allies, as well as to the peoples of Austria, Turkey, and even Germany, that our object was not to destroy the enemy nations.<sup>29</sup>

Woodward has suggested that Lloyd George appeared to at least entertain 'the idea of a compromise peace with the enemy based on the sacrifice of Russia', although this 'did not dominate his thoughts during this period'.<sup>30</sup> This is plausible but, overall, the speech should be seen more as a public relations gambit than a genuine effort at peace. Lloyd George did not believe that the Germans could accept terms of the kind that the British were bound to insist upon. His statement, then, 'should be regarded rather as a war move than as a peace move'.<sup>31</sup> To his confidants, he said afterwards 'I went as near peace as I could', explaining that the speech 'was a counter-offensive against the German peace terms with a view to appealing to the German people and detaching the Austrians'.<sup>32</sup>

The speech was made to trade union delegates at Central Hall, Westminster. This choice of audience allowed Lloyd George to reach out to his left-wing critics, including those who were demanding progressive peace aims, by appearing to take them into his confidence. In terms of *ethos*, he presented himself as the leader of a united nation, who had secured

the agreement of both Asquith and former Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey for his initiative. He claimed to be 'speaking not merely the mind of the Government but of the nation and of the Empire as a whole'. There was also much use of *logos*, in the form of detailed argument about what kinds of terms would be acceptable. But there was, of course, also *pathos*, with justifications for Britain's past and present actions being wrapped up in emotive language. The Germans, at the outset, had 'violated public law' and 'ruthlessly trampled' on treaty obligations. 'We had to join the struggle or stand aside and see Europe go under and brute force triumph over public right and international justice.'<sup>33</sup> As Lloyd George had predicted, the Germans viewed his proposed terms as unacceptable. They seem to have found the support of Labour's Arthur Henderson for the speech to be a particularly bitter blow.<sup>34</sup> But as Lloyd George must have hoped, his approach was warmly received in America. Although he spoke a few days before President Woodrow Wilson revealed his celebrated 'Fourteen Points', the broad outlines of Wilson's approach to the peace were already known. Some unnamed US officials quoted by the *New York Times* 'noted that even President Wilson's ideas were developed more sharply [by Lloyd George] than he himself had expressed them'.<sup>35</sup>

Immediately after the war's end, Lloyd George faced the challenge of a general election. The future treatment of Germany and the extent to which the Allies might extract reparations were key issues in the campaign. As Kenneth O. Morgan has argued, Lloyd George cannot be convicted of pure and sustained rabble-rousing jingoism.<sup>36</sup> During a speech at Bristol on 11 December 1918, for example, he said that 'Germany must pay to the utmost limit of her capacity', but also – using *logos* – stressed that there were limits to that capacity and it was unlikely in practice that Britain could expect to receive every penny. His *ethos* as he presented it here was that of a man who throughout the whole war had 'never misled the public' and who did not want to raise false hopes. But however hard he worked to establish this, it is clear that the crowds were most affected

by his appeals to *pathos*, as when he said that those who had started the war 'must pay to the uttermost farthing, and we shall search their pockets for it (laughter and cheers)'. The reservations faded into the background.<sup>37</sup> Churchill's later verdict was that 'In the hot squalid rush of the event he [Lloyd George] endeavoured to give satisfaction to mob-feeling and press chorus by using language which was in harmony with the prevailing sentiment, but which contained in every passage some guarding phrase, some qualification, which afterwards would leave statesmanship unchained'.<sup>38</sup> This aspect of the campaign, then, represented an unsuccessful effort at expectations management that would have serious repercussions during the Versailles conference and after. The seeds of disillusion were sown at the moment of Lloyd George's greatest triumph.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to draw some comparisons with Churchill in the Second World War. None of Lloyd George's war speeches have entered popular memory, unlike Churchill's great orations of 1940. In part, this may simply because we lack recordings that can be repeated over and over again on documentaries. This fact reminds us that Lloyd George was operating in a more primitive technological environment. If he had been able to broadcast to the masses he might well have done so successfully, but in practice he was always addressing the bulk of the British population – and international opinion – indirectly, via the press. This may have required a different rhetorical approach. It is certainly true that Churchill's speeches have a literary quality that Lloyd George's lack, but we should not therefore rush to the conclusion that their political utility was superior. As Morgan puts it, 'Churchill spoke to history; Lloyd George spoke to his listeners'.<sup>39</sup> Nor should we put Churchill's speeches on a pedestal and assume that – as legend would have it – practically everyone who heard them was thrilled and inspired. In fact, they were the subject of more criticism and dissent than is generally believed.<sup>40</sup> And if Churchill had more conspicuous triumphs than Lloyd George, he also had more flops and failures. Lloyd George made no equivalent

Some unnamed US officials quoted by the *New York Times* 'noted that even President Wilson's ideas were developed more sharply [by Lloyd George] than he himself had expressed them'.

of the 1945 'Gestapo' broadcast; unlike Churchill, he won his general election.

We do not, however, have the same type of survey evidence for the First World War as for the Second; therefore popular reactions to Lloyd George are harder to judge. Nonetheless, it seems fair to say that, even if they have not gained the plaudits of posterity, Lloyd George's speeches served their immediate purposes in a way that many politicians would envy. It is to be hoped that this article may serve as a call for a more systematic study of the origins, delivery and reception of the rhetoric of an undeniably brilliant war leader.

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**Even if they have not gained the plaudits of posterity, Lloyd George's speeches served their immediate purposes in a way that many politicians would envy.**

- 1 In a letter to President Woodrow Wilson of 22 February 1917, US ambassador Walter H. Page wrote that Lloyd George 'has been called the illiterate Prime Minister, "because he never reads or writes."' This was obviously an extreme comment, or a joke, which no one can have imagined to be literally true, but Lloyd George did prefer conversation to reading as means of obtaining information, and was quite reluctant to put pen to paper. B. J. Hendrick, *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, Vol. III (Heinemann 1925), p. 371.
- 2 Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Premiership: A Study in "Prime Ministerial Government"', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Mar., 1970), pp. 130–57.
- 3 See especially: Manfred Weidhorn, *Churchill's Rhetoric and Political Discourse* (University Press of America, 1987); David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (Penguin, 2003), Chapter 4; Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Palgrave, 2005), Chapter 2; and Peter Clarke, *Mr Churchill's Profession: Statesman, Orator, Writer* (Bloomsbury, 2012).
- 4 Iain Mclean, *Rational Choice and British Politics: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Manipulation from Peel to Blair* (Oxford

- University Press, 2001), Chapters 6 & 7.
- 5 Lord Morgan, 'Lloyd George', lecture of 11 Jan. 2011, in Philip Norton (ed.), *Eminent Parliamentarians: The Speaker's Lectures* (Biteback, 2012).
- 6 L. Brooks Hill, 'David Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions: A Study of His Speaking Tour of Industrial Centers', *Southern Speech Journal*, Vol. 36, Issue 4 (1971), pp. 312–23; David R. Woodward, 'The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George's January 5 War Aims Speech', *The Historian*, 34 (1971), pp. 22–39.
- 7 Hill, 'David Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions', p. 322.
- 8 Morgan, 'Lloyd George'.
- 9 Colin Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: The Diary of A.J. Sylvester 1931–45* (Macmillan, 1975), p. 213 (entry for 26 July 1938).
- 10 Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling* (Flamingo, 1984), p. 52.
- 11 Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 55.
- 12 Frank Owen to Thomas Blackburn, 6 Aug. 1952, Thomas Blackburn Papers, University of Exeter. Owen – who was writing a biography of Lloyd George – was reporting information from Frank Whittaker, who had worked with Riddell after the First World War.
- 13 Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2012).
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- 15 'British Honour: Stirring Speech By Mr. Lloyd George', *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1914.
- 16 The speech is reproduced in Frances Stevenson (ed.), *Through Terror to Triumph: Speeches and Pronouncements of the Right Hon. David Lloyd George, MP, Since the Beginning of the War* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), pp. 1–15.
- 17 John Grigg, *Lloyd George: From Peace to War, 1912–1916* (Penguin, 2002), p. 171.
- 18 Beriah G. Evans, 'Mr. Lloyd George as Minister of Democracy', *Fortnightly Review*, Nov. 1915, pp. 884–96, at 896; Hill, 'David Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions', p. 313.
- 19 Gilbert, *David Lloyd George*, pp. 246–50.
- 20 Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol. 77 20 Dec. 1915, col. 121.
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- 26 Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol. 105, 9 May 1918, col. 2374.
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- 31 War Cabinet minutes, 3 Jan. 1918, 5 p.m., CAB 23/5, TNA.
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- 39 Morgan, 'Lloyd George'.
- 40 This is one of the themes of my forthcoming book *The Roar of the Lion: The Making of Churchill's World War II Speeches*.

# 'IF I HAD TO GO TO DAVID LLOYD GEORGE AND THE REVIL



In 1923, Charles Hardinge, the recently retired British ambassador in Paris and former permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, told David Lloyd George that the 1919 Treaties of Versailles and St Germain with Germany and Austria ‘contained provisions which anybody with any knowledge of foreign politics or of European affairs would

have realised as being opposed to every principle of national life and existence’. Hardinge offered the angry former Prime Minister some unspecified examples of their impracticalities. ‘He said nothing for about ten minutes and then remarked in a friendly way, “If I had to go to Paris again I would conclude quite a different treaty.”’<sup>1</sup> By **Alan Sharp**.

# PARIS AGAIN ...'

## REVISION OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

**L**LOYD GEORGE HAD thus joined the already considerable ranks of those critical of the First World War settlement. Even before the conference ended there was much disquiet amongst participants that the treaty with Germany was too harsh – as Lord Robert Cecil remarked on 30 May 1919 during the Anglo-American meeting which laid the foundations for the Royal Institute of International Affairs and its American counterpart, the Council on Foreign Relations, ‘There is not a single person in this room who is not disappointed with the terms we have drafted.’ Six months after the treaty was signed, John Maynard Keynes, the British Treasury official who had left Paris in disgust in early June, reinforced that disquiet by publishing *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, a polemical attack on the peacemakers and all their works, which gave Britain a bad conscience and which has shaped much of the subsequent debate on the settlement.<sup>2</sup>

Others thought the treaty too lenient. Marshal Foch, the French commander of Allied forces on the Western Front, predicted, ‘This is not Peace. It is an Armistice for twenty years.’ He was proved wrong – by sixty-seven days – but many later commentators have shared his view that the inadequacies of Versailles created the conditions that made a second world war inevitable and hence also bear some of the responsibility for its consequences and subsequent international turmoil. As more governments opened their archives after the 1960s some, though certainly not all, historians have become

more sympathetic to the enormous task facing the peacemakers after the most devastating war to that date. The settlement remains highly controversial and, as one of its principal authors – something which he could later conveniently forget – the idea of Lloyd George creating an alternative treaty is intriguing.<sup>3</sup>

Setting to one side the obvious objections that he could neither remake the treaty without the acquiescence of his allies, nor could he alter the German perception that they were undefeated and hence that any settlement based on the premise of Allied victory would be unacceptable, there are various clues to the shape of his ideal peace. These suggest that he sought a stable Europe in which Germany, reconciled to its defeat and recognising the essential fairness of the settlement, would play a positive and beneficial role, retaking its place as a major British trading partner. Britain could then revert to what contemporaries saw as its traditional imperial and colonial themes, leaving Europe to fend for itself – such indeed was the advice offered by both his private secretary, Philip Kerr, and Jan Smuts, the South African defence minister and member of the Imperial War Cabinet. An additional but more remote aspiration would be the reintegration of a reformed Russia into European politics.<sup>4</sup>

Lloyd George’s Fontainebleau memorandum of 25 March 1919, drafted after a weekend’s consultation with close advisers as deadlock threatened the conference, outlined ‘the kind of treaty to which alone we were prepared to append

our signature’. He warned: ‘You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force, and her navy to that of a fifth-rate Power ... [but] if she feels she has been unjustly treated ... she will find means of extracting retribution from her conquerors.’ Yet, as he boasted to his friend Sir George Riddell, the press magnate, on 30 March: ‘The truth is that we have got our way ... The German Navy has been handed over; the German mercantile shipping has been handed over, and the German colonies have been given up.’ The sub-text to French premier Georges Clemenceau’s rejoinder to the memorandum asked what Britain would sacrifice of its own aims (rather than those of others) to convince Germany that the treaty was just, but he provoked no response.<sup>5</sup>

What might the possible alleviations have been? Lloyd George was deeply disappointed when, during his absence from Paris in early April 1919, the American president, Woodrow Wilson, pressured by Clemenceau, conceded a fifteen-year Allied occupation of Western Germany, much longer than he considered necessary or desirable. Later, in the 1930s, the return of Germany’s colonies became part of an appeasement agenda, but in 1919 this crossed no one’s mind – certainly not that of Smuts, fierce critic of the treaty that he was, who had no intention of relinquishing the former German South-West Africa. Five principal areas, however, stand out: reparations; disarmament; the territorial settlement and Germany’s new frontiers; the so-called ‘shame clauses’ of the treaty, relating to the indictment

Left:  
The British  
Empire  
delegation in  
June 1919; Lloyd  
George behind  
desk, centre-left

of the Kaiser and members of the German military and political elite, together with Article 231, the 'war guilt' clause; and finally, Britain's relationship with France, linked to the treaty that Lloyd George made but did not implement.

### Reparations

One candidate for revision is pre-eminent: 'The subject of reparations' declared Thomas Lamont, the American banker acting as an expert in Paris, 'caused more trouble, contention, hard feeling, and delay at the Paris Peace Conference than any other point of the Treaty.'<sup>6</sup> Resolving Germany's responsibility to compensate Allied war-time losses then held centre stage at numerous Anglo-French, inter-Allied and international conferences in the early years of treaty execution, sowing discord amongst the victors and offering Germany an opportunity to steal the moral high ground. Everyone, including the Germans, accepted that there was a bill to pay, but the bases of that reckoning, the amounts to be paid and the distribution of the receipts amongst the Allies, were all beset by controversy.

Traditionally losers offset victors' costs – after 1870–71 France paid Germany 5,000 million gold francs – but in 1918 Lloyd George and Wilson ruled out war costs, demanding only that Germany restore the invaded territories.<sup>7</sup> The restoration of such civilian damage may conveniently be defined as reparations and any additional demand for full or partial war costs as an indemnity. Germany's request for an armistice in October 1918, seeking to make Wilson's 1918 speeches the basis of the eventual peace, necessitated their precise definition. Lloyd George took great pains with this section of the Allied response, sent on 5 November by the American Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, which formed the pre-Armistice agreement with Germany. Restoration meant 'that compensation will be made by Germany for all the damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air'. His final touch changed the original wording of 'invasion' to 'aggression' to safeguard British and imperial claims. This clearly

**'The subject of reparations' declared Thomas Lamont, the American banker acting as an expert in Paris, 'caused more trouble, contention, hard feeling, and delay at the Paris Peace Conference than any other point of the Treaty'.**

ruled out an indemnity, as Lloyd George acknowledged, though Professor Antony Lentin suggests that, from the beginning, he had no intention of foregoing war costs and that the wording was a mere *ruse de guerre*.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1918 election, facing an unknown electorate and seeking to revitalise a lacklustre campaign, Lloyd George played to the popular gallery in Newcastle on 29 November, declaring that 'Germany must pay the costs of the war'. He included an escape clause – 'up to the limit of her capacity' – but in Bristol on 11 December he stated, 'We propose to demand the whole cost of the war', and hinted that Germany's capacity was substantial. He won the election – though dependent upon a massive Tory majority. Public and parliamentarians heard what they wanted to hear and expected him to deliver.<sup>9</sup>

It is easy to see why. The British Treasury estimated that victory cost the Allies £24,000 million in 1914 gold values. Great swathes of Belgium and France lay ravaged by four years of industrialised warfare and required restoration. Additionally the Allies had borrowed heavily from the United States, which expected repayment. Meanwhile Germany, suffering only minimal damage to its industrial base and with no foreign war debts, posed the threat of future trade competition, unimpeded by the costs faced by the Allies. The alternative, that Allied taxpayers must foot the bill, made it almost mandatory for British or French politicians to promise the maximum payments possible from Germany. Lloyd George's problem was that he had already contracted not to do so.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, in Paris, he and Clemenceau claimed their full war costs from Germany. Wilson resisted vigorously. The ensuing crisis was 'solved' by Article 231, which asserted Germany's moral responsibility to cover all Allied war expenditure but, did not, as the Germans chose to believe, assign sole responsibility for the war to Germany. It was mitigated by Article 232, limiting actual compensation to Allied civilian damage. Lloyd George then persuaded Smuts to convince Wilson that pensions paid to injured soldiers or their widows and orphans constituted a legitimate claim because

soldiers were merely civilians in uniform. Accepting this was not logical, Wilson conceded because he believed the Allies would compromise on a fixed sum – not the complete bill but an amount to discharge all Germany's liabilities. Hence his decision would not affect what Germany paid but could allow Britain, which had suffered little physical destruction, to receive greater compensation. No final sum was agreed; on 5 April 1919 the decision was postponed for a Reparation Commission to determine in 1921.<sup>11</sup>

In his Fontainebleau memorandum Lloyd George suggested that reparations should disappear with the generation that waged war. Yet he refused to specify any time limit on German payments or name a total sum. He claimed he was thwarted by the excessive demands of his financial advisers, Lords Cunliffe and Sumner, respectively a former governor of the Bank of England and a Lord of Appeal – irreverently dubbed the 'Heavenly Twins' by British delegation colleagues because they were always together and sought astronomical sums from Germany. Cunliffe maintained that £24,000 million was a realistic prospect. Lloyd George dismissed this as 'a wild and fantastic chimera' and mocked Cunliffe's 'strange lapse into megalomania', suggesting that Sumner 'himself caught the infection'.<sup>12</sup> These two men, he implied, prevented a reasonable settlement. Lentin argues such was not the case; instead, Lloyd George insisted on maintaining the maximum demands, yet blamed the Twins so persuasively that even Keynes believed him.<sup>13</sup>

Further opportunities for revision arose when, on 30 May and 1 June 1919, the British Empire delegation, including additional British ministers, discussed the draft treaty and favoured making concessions to Germany. Smuts, the most vociferous critic of the terms, proposed a fixed sum, possibly £5,000 million. Some ministers supported him, others favoured £11,000 million. Lloyd George thought the answer might lie somewhere between but rejected as inadequate a recent German offer to pay £5,000 million (admittedly based on unacceptable conditions). The delegation authorised him to specify a fixed sum in



the treaty. When he returned to the Council of Four, however, he resisted Wilson's attempt to do so and, according to Robert Cecil, was 'curiously reluctant to make any changes' to the reparations clauses.<sup>14</sup>

For the next three years Lloyd George portrayed himself as seeking a workable settlement rather than an attractive, but impossibly inflated, bill. Yet his words have to be set against the figures for the various proposals. Once the prime mover to establish a Reparation Commission, he now attempted to circumvent it, believing that the absence of the intended American chairman would leave Britain permanently outvoted in a Commission of four members, in which he expected France and Belgium to make maximum demands. Even if Britain persuaded Italy to oppose them, the casting vote lay with the French chairman – the first was the implacable Lorrainer and former President of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré. Lloyd George instead tackled reparations in direct negotiations with various French prime ministers at inter-Allied conferences held in 1920 and early 1921. In July 1920, at Boulogne, Anglo-French ministers considered a settlement based on German annuities spread over forty-two years, totalling £13,450 million. In January 1921 in Paris they debated a proposal for forty-two annuities totalling £11,300 million together with a variable annuity amounting to 12 per cent of Germany's exports. Lloyd George was trying to coax France and coerce Germany to accept the Paris plan when he learned that, contrary to expectations, the Reparation Commission's bill would be much lower. He reversed course and awaited its report.<sup>15</sup>

In May 1921 the Commission established Germany's liability at £6,600 million, of which pensions and other allowances represented nearly half. Under the terms of the A, B and C bonds Germany was to deliver, payment beyond £2,500 million was never anticipated. Most experts agreed that this represented Germany's capacity to pay but accepted that this would need to be disguised to meet Anglo-French public expectations. Hence the C bonds, worth £4,000 million, were 'phoney money', designed

to artificially inflate the bill – as Belgian premier Georges Theunis joked, they could be stuck 'in a drawer without bothering to lock up, for no thief would be tempted to steal them'.<sup>16</sup> At the ensuing London conference Lloyd George claimed a triumph: the Commission, rather than he or Aristide Briand, the French premier, had reduced Germany's bill, thus disarming disappointed Anglo-French die-hards; Germany accepted the payments schedule; and he had forestalled the French from occupying the Ruhr basin – their preferred method to enforce the treaty or punish transgressions.

The respite proved temporary; the following year Germany sought a payments moratorium. Meanwhile the complicating factor of inter-Allied debts became urgent as the Americans pressed for repayment, over twenty-five years at 4.5 per cent interest, of the £800 million that Britain had borrowed to finance the Allied war effort. Britain was owed twice this amount by its allies, and Austen Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, consistently advocated the unilateral renunciation of Britain's European debts, but Lloyd George and others were reluctant to forego either the potential, however unlikely, of repayment, or of whatever political leverage the debts might offer. America resisted the Anglo-French contention that its loans constituted part of an inter-Allied war effort to which some had contributed money and others blood. President Calvin Coolidge's dismissal of their proposal of all-round cancellation was typically succinct: 'They hired the money, didn't they?'

Lloyd George might have fixed Germany's liability in the treaty and waived Britain's European debts. There is little indication that either course appealed to him. The Americans would have compromised on a final sum around £6,000 million; French estimates of an acceptable figure tended to be higher, but, at their lower end, not significantly so, and the Germans did offer (with contentious provisos) £5,000 million.<sup>17</sup> Lloyd George suggested in June 1919 that something between £5,000 million and £11,000 million would be reasonable, but his earlier reaction to the £6,000 million proposed by an

unofficial committee of experts and politicians was significant – Louis Loucheur, French minister for the devastated regions, observed 'Lloyd George protests at these low figures'. He clearly expected more and preferred to postpone the issue.<sup>18</sup>

He later castigated French ministers for deceiving their public about Germany's capacity to pay, yet he was never willing to disabuse the British people. Apart from the obvious political risk involved, he was perhaps unsure himself of what would constitute a fair settlement. Historians sympathetic to Lloyd George suggest that the 1918 election promises, his association with Cunliffe and Sumner, and the inclusion of pensions, were aberrations, disguising his real aim of a reasonable settlement, and they praise his success in negotiating the 1921 London schedule of payments. Others question whether his moderation always came second to his wish to achieve the best outcome for Britain by whatever means, however dubious, and ask whether his refusal to recognise the need for radical revision of all war debts, in the interests of wider European recovery, missed the broader picture. It would also be wise not to discount Lloyd George's moral conscience, idiosyncratic as it might be, which suggested a need for retribution as well as forgiveness. 'It was not vengeance but justice ... whether we ought not to consider lashing her [Germany] as she had lashed France', he told his Cabinet colleagues, adding on another occasion, 'Those who ought to pay were those who caused the loss.'<sup>19</sup>

#### **Disarmament**

Lloyd George's political ideology also played an important role in German disarmament, another subject that dominated Anglo-French discussions in the early post-1919 years. The Allied military advisers in Paris disagreed on the size and recruitment of Germany's post-war army – Foch, for France, recommended 100,000 men, with long-term volunteer officers and non-commissioned officers, and other ranks conscripted for one year; Haig, for Britain, believed Germany needed 200,000 or 250,000 men for internal order and international defence; Bliss, for the United States, suggested 400,000.

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## 'IF I HAD TO GO TO PARIS AGAIN ...' DAVID LLOYD GEORGE AND THE REVISION OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

They compromised on an army of 200,000, with volunteer officers and conscripted other ranks.<sup>20</sup>

Lloyd George believed that peacetime conscription institutionalised militarism. It was, he declared in October 1920, 'the basic cause of the late war'. He agreed with Sir Edward Grey, Britain's Foreign Secretary in 1914, that 'great armaments lead inevitably to war'. Hence he championed German disarmament as the prelude to wider international armaments reduction, but, at the same time, he did not wish to leave Germany so weak that it succumbed to Bolshevism. Nor, though this could not be so openly professed, did he wish to leave France unchallenged on the continent. His counter-proposal in Paris was for a volunteer army of 200,000. Clemenceau, warning that the Germans would use such a professional army as a cadre for a much larger force (as indeed they did), conceded the voluntary principle but insisted on a limit of 100,000, which Lloyd George accepted. Germany had to reach this target by April 1920 and disband its general staff. Its air force was banned and its once formidable navy, stripped of dreadnoughts and submarines, reduced to 15,000 men. Equipment and manufacturing resources surplus to the requirements of these curtailed forces were to be destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

Unsurprisingly the German government was not an eager participant in dismantling its military might and did its best to obstruct or obfuscate but, by 1922, most of its air and naval equipment had been destroyed or surrendered. Reducing its land forces and dismantling its weapons industry were more problematic. The British War Office thought Germany needed an army of 150,000 to 200,000 to ensure internal security and defend its frontiers and was more prepared than the French to tolerate various German paramilitary forces, totalling some 600,000, which it did not consider an international threat but thought important to preserving order. Lloyd George did negotiate extra time for German force reduction but here, as elsewhere, the question of whether Germany could not, or would not execute the treaty divided Britain from France. Britain tended to see inability, France a lack of will.

By January 1921 the War Office considered that most weapons, apart from those held by the paramilitaries, were being destroyed, that the German army, manned by volunteers, had reached treaty levels and that 'Germany has ceased to be a military danger to the Allies for a considerable period of time'. The French continued to stress legal uncertainties about recruitment, the inadequate disarmament of civilians and paramilitaries, and concluded that the 'German Government ... has put itself in opposition both to the spirit and letter of the Treaty.' This was a typical divergence of views: the British concentrated on the destruction of war material and the reduction of forces and the French pursued the less tangible objectives of breaking Germany's 'military spirit' and achieving 'moral disarmament'.<sup>22</sup> Lloyd George perhaps regretted not achieving a larger army for Germany but, beyond that, it is difficult to see where, or why, he would have sought major changes. Although more sympathetic to German difficulties, he was equally as committed as the French to unilateral German disarmament as a first step to the wider international armaments limitation he deemed essential for peace.

### National self-determination

If Lloyd George blamed militarism for the last war, he believed denial of national self-determination – a phrase he used before Wilson – could cause the next. In 1871 Germany seized the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, creating a lingering grievance in European international relations, righted only by their return in 1918. Throughout the conference Lloyd George warned of the dangers of creating Alsace-Lorraines in reverse: 'I cannot conceive,' he wrote, 'of any greater cause of future war than that the German people ... should be surrounded by a number of small States ... each of them containing large numbers of Germans clamouring for reunion with their native land.' He fought very hard to prevent this, whether on Germany's western borders in the Rhineland, or, more particularly, in the east, where the new frontiers with Poland were especially contentious.<sup>23</sup>

To encourage Clemenceau to abandon plans to increase French security by detaching the Rhineland from Germany he offered, with apparent sincerity, a British guarantee of assistance in the event of future German aggression, and the promise of a Channel tunnel to speed British troops to France's aid. In the east he used all his wiles to persuade Wilson that making Danzig a free city, rather than consigning its German population to Poland, was the President's own idea. More directly he challenged a reluctant Wilson to agree that the plebiscite on the fate of Upper Silesia, on which Lloyd George insisted, was simply putting the President's principles into practice. He may have regretted this success because Britain's military forces became overstretched and, embarrassingly, had to be withdrawn from plebiscitary protection duties, occasioning further inter-Allied dissension when Britain accused French troops of favouring the Polish cause. The interpretation of the 1921 plebiscite results then led to bitter Anglo-French disagreement which could only be resolved by involving the League.<sup>24</sup>

Lloyd George supported an independent Poland but fiercely opposed what he deemed its excessive territorial demands, telling the Unionist leader, Andrew Bonar Law, 'I have never cared for the handing over of two or three million Germans to Polish rule ... The Germans would never accept permanently this transference.' His successful amendment of the original Polish Commission's recommendations achieved plebiscites resulting in Germany's retention of Marienwerder, Allenstein and a substantial part of Upper Silesia. Germans still regarded the loss of territory to the Poles as unacceptable, terming their new border 'the bleeding frontier', but it is hard to see what further concessions Lloyd George might have won.<sup>25</sup>

In the west he was perhaps too easily persuaded that Germany should forfeit the Saar region to compensate France for the coal production lost by German sabotage of its mines. This may well have involved an element of double jeopardy, since Germany was also required to make other reparation coal deliveries to France, but, in general, his record on national

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self-determination was good. As a Welshman he was sympathetic to the aspirations of small nations, though he tempered this with careful pragmatism. He sought borders that would alienate as few people as possible and, by providing minority rights for unfortunate populations finding themselves on the wrong side of revised frontiers, he hoped to minimise their resentment. Given the constraints under which the conference operated, particularly in the east, it is very difficult to envisage what different territorial settlement in Europe he might have negotiated.<sup>26</sup>

### **War crimes**

Articles 227 to 231 of the Treaty, the so-called 'shame clauses', caused deep offence to Germany. In June 1919 the hastily assembled German government unsuccessfully tried to make their omission a condition of its signature of the treaty, whilst later attempts to implement them threatened the survival of the Weimar regime. Although it was conventional, as in Article 228, to indict persons accused of breaching 'the laws and customs of war', it became clear that the intention went beyond the prosecution of operational crimes, requiring Germany to surrender unspecified political and military leaders for trial. Lloyd George was strongly committed to this idea, particularly where it concerned the former emperor, Wilhelm II. During the British election campaign there were calls to hang Wilhelm and, although Lloyd George did not endorse this popular idea, he did privately suggest shooting him, publicly calling for his indictment to deter future leaders from waging war. It required all his remarkable powers of persuasion to convince his Cabinet and international colleagues to abandon their strongly held objections to trying a head of state. Article 227 arraigned Wilhelm 'for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties', to be tried by an international criminal court of five Allied judges.

Perhaps fortunately for the Allies, and certainly for Wilhelm, the Netherlands, to which he fled, refused to surrender him – though Lloyd George was still pursuing this as late as March 1920 – but the

**Lloyd George proposed a major economic and political conference at Genoa in April 1922. The plan was characteristic of Lloyd George both in the breath-taking scope of its vision and the inadequacy of its detailed preparation.**

emotive issue of trying other German leaders remained. The initial Allied lists named over 3,000 potential defendants, including the former Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, Admiral von Tirpitz, Field Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff. Even when this was reduced to 835 men and one woman, Lloyd George, despite his earlier commitment, stated that, placed in a parallel situation, Britain and France would not comply. He now advised seeking 'the surrender of the most important offenders and let[ting] the rest go'. Finally, when Germany tried forty-five people, none prominent, and the Leipzig court produced acquittals or lenient sentences, he turned a blind eye. With hindsight he may have regretted his passionate and enduring belief in prosecuting Germany's leaders, but these clauses, and the parallel provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres with the Ottomans, established an important precedent for the post-Second World War trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo and the establishment, in 2002, of the International Criminal Court.<sup>27</sup>

### **Rebuilding Europe**

In his last major initiative to revise the treaties, re-energise the European economies and revive the flagging fortunes of his coalition government, Lloyd George proposed a major economic and political conference at Genoa in April 1922. The plan was characteristic of Lloyd George both in the breath-taking scope of its vision and the inadequacy of its detailed preparation. He believed that if Russia was opened to world trade and offered lucrative reconstruction contracts, this would enable Germany to prosper and pay reparations to Britain and France, who could then repay their American debts. Germany's reconciliation to the new order would abate France's security fears, thus relieving Britain of its most pressing European responsibilities. Bolshevism would wither as Russian prosperity increased and Russia could be restored to the European comity of nations, filling the void left by its absence at the peace conference. Unemployment in Britain would fall and the coalition would triumph at the next election.

In an ideal world, he suggested to Louis Barthou, the French justice minister, America would forego its claims on Britain and Europe; Britain would cancel all debts owed by its European allies and, together with France, abandon its pension claims against Germany. France would recoup only the costs of restoring its devastated regions. With typical insouciance Lloyd George admitted Keynes's contention that the pension claim was fraudulent, stating, 'If this plan were adopted, the position would be that ... the claims against Germany would be confined to reparation.' Unfortunately America refused to participate, 'If she had,' he reflected in 1934, '... we stood a good chance of clearing up all our difficulties – War Debts, Reparations, Armaments ...'. Poincaré, who had replaced Briand as premier in January 1922, would brook no discussion of reparations. When the conference met, the two pariahs of Europe, Germany and the Soviet Union, signed a separate treaty at Rapallo which effectively scuppered proceedings, even though the talks continued into May.<sup>28</sup>

Faced with the failure of his grand plan Lloyd George set Arthur Balfour, acting as Foreign Secretary during George Curzon's illness, to explain Britain's situation to its European debtors. Blaming America for requiring reimbursement from Britain, the note regretted seeking repayments from Europe, which would be limited to covering the American debts. Despite serious misgivings from senior colleagues, the Balfour Note, which Lloyd George claimed as his own, was despatched on 1 August 1922. Although excellently drafted and with obvious political attractions, it was an international disaster. Pillorying the Americans left them little room for manoeuvre over the debts; any reduction in German reparations meant French taxpayers contributing more to discharge their British debts; it wrecked any slim chance of a successful reparations conference in London that month. The implications for Britain's prestige were alarming. Sir Edward Grigg, Lloyd George's private secretary, was aghast: 'How can we demean ourselves so much as to range ourselves with the pitiful European bankrupts and to declare our credit dependent on

theirs?' Two months later the Tory rank and file revolted, the coalition collapsed and Lloyd George left office for ever.<sup>29</sup>

### **The art of the possible**

Politics, international or domestic, is the art of the possible. Lloyd George had to make peace as part of two victorious coalitions, whose constituents both limited his freedom. He was the most sympathetic of the peacemakers to reaching an agreement with Russia, even if that meant dealing with the Bolsheviks, but Clemenceau in Paris, and the Tory die-hards, abetted by his Liberal colleague Winston Churchill at Westminster, precluded anything but the most tentative of approaches to Lenin and his comrades. Lloyd George's later attempts to engage with the Bolsheviks produced, despite deep mutual suspicion, an Anglo-Soviet trade treaty, but his more ambitious plans for Genoa were again thwarted by a combination of international and domestic reluctance.<sup>30</sup>

Clemenceau had witnessed two German invasions of France and was determined to avert a third. His policies – the detachment of the Rhineland and Saar from Germany, the over-generous transfer of territory to Poland, and the over-zealous prosecution of minor issues – often clashed with Lloyd George's vision. France was also an imperial competitor, and the settlement reflected the need for compromises, not just in Europe but worldwide. There were the added complications of the aspirations of the Japanese and the Italians, which were often at variance with the interests of the other great powers and with Wilson's philosophy.

In Paris Wilson was a considerable presence, contributing to a treaty very different to one that the European powers might have created. Wilson's high-minded aspirations made it easy for those seeking hypocrisy to discover it in the inevitable compromises reached after principles met realities or unshakeable positions, but like Clemenceau's commitment to French security, Italian and Japanese expansionist ambitions, and the demands of his Dominion partners, they were facts of Lloyd George's life. America's subsequent abnegation of its international

**The key question, however, is whether any adjustments to the treaty that Lloyd George might have made, even had he wished and been able to do so, would have substantially altered Germany's attitude to a settlement that it believed had been imposed by trickery and false pretences. Probably not ...**

responsibilities for enforcing the treaty was greeted with ambivalence by British ministers. They were disappointed to lose a potential partner in moderating the settlement, but not sorry to see this retreat beyond the Atlantic of a rival hegemon.<sup>31</sup>

America's withdrawal highlighted the centrality of the Anglo-French relationship to the new international order. In Paris Lloyd George had carefully made his guarantee offer to France dependent on America honouring its parallel obligation. When America reneged, Britain was left with only a moral commitment, and had to decide whether, and on what terms, to provide a substitute. The question divided the British establishment. Advocates of a pact suggested that a greater sense of security would encourage French generosity in their treatment of Germany. Opponents argued that, confident of British support, France would be more, not less, intransigent. Most of the Cabinet were undecided, sharing Curzon's sentiment: 'I earnestly hope', he wrote in December 1921, 'it will not be proposed to give the guarantee for nothing'. Yet, in the same paper, he admitted 'As a result of the war there remain only two really great powers in Europe – France and ourselves ... a definite and publicly announced agreement between the two countries to stand by one another in case either were attacked would offer a guarantee of peace of the strongest kind.'<sup>32</sup>

It is here that Lloyd George needed to rethink his policies. An Anglo-French consensus was essential to either executing or amending the Versailles settlement. When they worked together, as at the Spa conference in June 1920, Germany complied, but, too often, was able to play the victors against each other. There were various moments when an Anglo-French alliance seemed possible, but both suggested that the pact was of greater value to the other and hence each sought the maximum price for its support. For Britain some points were negotiable – an alliance rather than a unilateral guarantee, the duration of the pact – while others, like the extension of the treaty to cover eastern Europe, where the French believed the first German assaults on the treaty boundaries would occur, were not. In the end there

was no agreement, just a reluctant recognition that they were bound in a rather sad partnership where each did just enough to thwart the other's policies.<sup>33</sup>

Lloyd George might have promoted a stronger Anglo-French relationship, had he chosen to do so, but he could have had little influence on Wilson's ill-health and political ineptitude, the consequences of which caused America to withdraw from treaty enforcement. The key question, however, is whether any adjustments to the treaty that Lloyd George might have made, even had he wished and been able to do so, would have substantially altered Germany's attitude to a settlement that it believed had been imposed by trickery and false pretences. Probably not: naming £6,000 million as the reparations bill; allowing Germany to retain conscription and a larger army and navy; further minor alterations to the Polish frontier; the retention of the Saar and a shorter occupation of the Rhineland; the abandonment of the 'shame clauses'; even the return of some of its colonies, would still mean, in German perceptions, a treaty predicated on an unacceptable Allied presumption of German defeat. Such a premise would be fundamental to any treaty negotiated in 1919. So, even if he had gone to Paris again ...

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- 2 Cecil quoted by Antony Lentin, *Lloyd George and the Lost Peace: From Versailles to Hitler* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 69; See also Lentin, 'The Worm in the Bud: "Appeasement" at the Peace Conference' *ibid.*, pp. 67–88. John Maynard Keynes, *The*

## 'IF I HAD TO GO TO PARIS AGAIN ...' DAVID LLOYD GEORGE AND THE REVISION OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

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- 9 Coalition Unionists won 335 seats, Lloyd George's Coalition Liberals 133. David Butler and Jennie Freeman *British Political Facts 1900–1967* (second ed., Papermac, 1968), p. 141. Walter Long, the Tory First Lord of the Admiralty, remarked, 'George thinks he won the election. Well, he didn't. It was the Tories that won the election, and he will soon begin to find that out.' Diary entry 5.3.19., F. Stevenson, *Lloyd George: A Diary* (ed. A. J. P. Taylor) (Hutchinson, 1971), p. 169. See John Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and tenth Earl of Balcarres 1871–1940 during the years 1892 to 1940* (Manchester, 1984), entry for 28.12.18, p. 399. Speeches reported in *The Times* on 30.11.18 and 12.12.18. The Treasury suggested Germany could pay £3,000 million; a committee headed by the Australian premier, William Hughes, estimated, on grounds that its members admitted to be hazy, £24,000 million. Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking after the First World War, 1918–1923* (Palgrave Macmillan, second ed., 2008), p. 86.
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- 11 Sharp, *Versailles Settlement* pp. 90–98.
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# LLOYD GEORGE

## APPEASEMENT OF

Few studies of Lloyd George have focused on the period after his fall from office in the autumn of 1922, yet he remained very active in politics almost until his death in 1945, engaging in fierce debate on important questions, especially those involving Europe. He himself made clear his intention to remain in the forefront of politics. 'The burden is off my shoulders', he declared after being forced to resign, but 'my sword is in my hand'.<sup>1</sup> Although he never returned to high office, at times it seemed possible that he would and, as John Campbell points out in a rare appraisal devoted to some of Lloyd George's later years, he was still thought – usually with dismay by his successors – to be capable of shaping both public and political opinion.<sup>2</sup> **Stella Rudman** examines the role Lloyd George played in the appeasement of Germany after 1922, and his fascination with Adolf Hitler.



# LLOYD GEORGE AND THE GERMANY, 1922 – 1945

ONE PARTICULAR REASON why Lloyd George's later career is worthy of more attention is his link with the Versailles Treaty, whose enforcement and revision were at the heart of Britain's European policy in the inter-war years. The treaty underpinned relations with Germany and fertilised the ground in which appeasement was to thrive, and as one of its co-authors, Lloyd George had the means to speak more authoritatively on the subject than almost anyone in the country.

As Sir Martin Gilbert has argued, during the inter-war years the word 'appeasement' meant different things to different people at different times.<sup>3</sup> For most of the period, as a European policy, appeasement was taken for granted as being a good thing. It was accepted as the selfless wish to arbitrate fairly in the interests of all and to remove the causes of future wars. Politicians proclaiming a desire to achieve an appeasement regarding almost any diplomatic issue – including those involving Germany – were unlikely to be criticised. By the mid-1930s however, with the rise of the Nazis and Hitler's growing stridency, attitudes had begun to turn negative. Appeasement now seemed to a growing number of people to be about robbing the weak and friendly to pay the strong and hostile.

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Despite having been 'the man who won the war', once the fighting was

over Lloyd George soon became a determined appeaser of Germany. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, while taking a strong line on reparations, he argued against stripping Germany of territory and placing ethnic Germans under foreign rule, which, he believed, would be the kind of penalty most likely to make her vengeful. After the conference, when Germany seemed set to defy the peace settlement, there were still times when he argued for harshness, not only on reparations but also on German disarmament. Towards the end of his time as Prime Minister, however, economic depression and the advent to the French premiership of Raymond Poincaré – whom he regarded as the archetypal French chauvinist, aiming to establish French hegemony in Europe – inclined him to become more appeasing, even on reparations. Increasingly suspicious of French ambitions, he became more sympathetic to Germany's situation and more complacent about her treaty violations.

After his premiership came to an end Lloyd George's advocacy of appeasement grew even stronger – and more public. By now he ardently believed that, despite Germany's continued failures to fulfil the terms of the Peace Treaty, it was in Britain's interests to stop pestering her. He saw British unemployment, which was high and growing, as the equivalent of the damage done to France by the German army. British trade, he kept repeating, was Britain's 'devastated area',

and he became more concerned with the state of the British economy than with collecting money from Germany. His wish for Germany to return to her pre-war role as chief consumer of British goods and his belief that a more even Franco-German power balance would foster stability in Europe meant that he wanted to see a German economic revival, which huge reparations payments would inhibit. He now accepted Germany's argument that the amounts being sought were beyond her capacity. He was probably encouraged in this view by the growing influence, first on intellectuals and then on the general public attitude, of John Maynard Keynes's book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. The book, published in late 1919, was a highly articulate and stinging attack on the peace settlement in which Keynes argued that attempting to extract the huge sums being demanded from Germany would dislocate the European economic and financial system and cause Germany's collapse. For these reasons Lloyd George became increasingly insistent that reparations payments should be seriously reduced.

When, in early 1923, France led an incursion into the industrial Ruhr basin to try to wrest reparations from Germany, Lloyd George portrayed Germany as the near-innocent victim of French aggression and attacked the Conservative government's policy of 'benevolent neutrality' as being much too benevolent to France. Forgetting

Left: Hitler welcoming Lloyd George to the Berghof, Berchtesgaden on 4 September 1936. To Lloyd George's left is Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's roving ambassador, and between Lloyd George and Hitler is Professor T. P. Conwell-Evans, secretary of the Anglo-German Fellowship. (Photograph by kind permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/The National Library of Wales.)

## LLOYD GEORGE AND THE APPEASEMENT OF GERMANY, 1922–1945

his own earlier confrontations with unyielding German leaders at a succession of conferences, he now spoke of Germany as the embodiment of co-operation and contrition, implying that the occupation was the sole cause of resurgent German militarism:

The national spirit of Germany which for four years I saw humbled, broken, its great statesmen coming and saying, 'What would you like us to do?' – that spirit which was humiliated is for the first time since the Armistice aroused by this action.<sup>4</sup>

He liked to think that the Ruhr crisis would never have come about if he had still been Prime Minister. He told his friend Lord Riddell, the proprietor of *The News of The World*, that 'he [L.G.] had managed to keep the French from going into the Ruhr; and that if B.L. [Bonar Law] had adopted the same tactics, he might have done the same'.<sup>5</sup> Yet, actually, he had contributed significantly to the development of the crisis in the first place, as many commentators pointed out. At the Peace Conference he had greatly swelled the reparations account by the addition of servicemen's allowances and war-widows' and orphans' pensions, to boost Britain's share. He had then become the leading critic of France for trying to 'make Germany pay'. He had alienated France by constantly sniping at her, by his evasion of an Anglo-French military alliance promised at the Peace Conference, and by refusing to consider effective controls on German finances to secure reparations payments. France's fears for her safety had grown as Lloyd George's sympathy with them had declined, and this had only increased her determination to prolong her position of superior strength over Germany. More immediately, because of his strident support for a German request for a reparations moratorium during 1922, Lloyd George had encouraged Germany to cry poverty and continue to evade her treaty obligations.

On a more positive note, during the crisis Lloyd George played an active part in luring the United States back into European affairs. The Americans had been a leading party to the peace settlement, but

had then quickly retreated into isolation. This, and their failure to join the League of Nations, had added greatly to the difficulties of executing the Versailles Treaty. Their determination to hold their European allies to account on war debts greatly compounded the problem. As Lloyd George said, 'they have the gold of the world locked in their chests, and they are suffering from indigestion ... They have a moral responsibility. They helped to create the situation.'<sup>6</sup>

He did, however, have a special reason for trying to entice the Americans back into Europe. He wanted French influence to be diluted in disputes over reparations, to Germany's benefit. He hoped that American bankers would agree with him that German economic recovery was more important to the bigger economic picture than the restoration of France's devastated areas. To help them to come to this view, during a highly successful tour of North America in the autumn of 1923, he portrayed French reparations policy as vindictive and short-sighted and argued the German case with gusto. At the end of his visit President Calvin Coolidge declared a willingness for America to get involved in reparations negotiations. The British, and even the French, accepted the offer, and the result was the Dawes Plan, which – as Lloyd George had hoped – allowed Germany's reparations burden to be greatly reduced.

In the second half of the 1920s Lloyd George's appeasing tendencies grew. He was increasingly convinced that France's European policy had created the need for appeasement in the first place. In early 1925 the Germans, fearing (wrongly) that an Anglo-French security pact was imminent, produced an alternative proposal for a Rhineland Pact in which Germany would honour her existing western boundaries and sign arbitration treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia. Lloyd George was very enthusiastic, calling it a 'very remarkable proposal' representing 'an invaluable offer'.<sup>7</sup> During negotiations for the agreements Britain and France made important concessions to Germany. For instance, British troops occupying the Cologne zone of the Rhineland in accordance with the peace treaty were to be withdrawn without waiting for the completion of

German disarmament. Nevertheless, once the treaties were finalised – at Locarno in October 1925 – Lloyd George emphatically endorsed a statement by the Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, that they should mark the beginning, not the end, of appeasement. Unhappy that the European military balance had swung heavily against Germany, he began calling for speedy progress on universal disarmament, without which, he insisted, Locarno would simply be 'a slobbering melodrama'. He claimed that the Allies, particularly France, had broken a 'solemn pledge' to Germany because they had not disarmed in accordance with the wording of the peace settlement, which said that Germany's disarmament would be the precursor to a general arms reduction.

It was a reduction in French arms that he most wished to see. 'It is no use having pacts and securities and arbitration', he declared, 'as long as nations are building submarines to sink our ships, and aerodromes are being planted on the shores of the English Channel'.<sup>8</sup> He also championed Germany's demand for the early evacuation of the remaining Allied troops from the Rhineland, despite warnings from the Allied military experts in Berlin that she was still not complying with the peace treaty's disarmament clauses and press reports of collaboration on arms manufacture between the Soviet and German armies. That Germany was becoming more demanding despite recent concessions did not dampen his enthusiasm. His twin desires of conciliating Germany and scuppering French designs strengthened his support for universal disarmament and his impatience with the British government. Indeed, his criticism of the government was sharpest when he thought he detected British deference to French policy. He dismissed Austen Chamberlain, whose deep affection for France and long-standing suspicions of German sincerity made him a most unsatisfactory appeaser, as 'an elegant ditto to Monsieur Briand'.<sup>9</sup>

Whether appeasement was the right policy depended on whether Germany could be satisfied peacefully and harmoniously. From the mid-1920s, despite Locarno, evidence suggested that she could not. Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, one of the Weimar Republic's

**He dismissed Austen Chamberlain, whose deep affection for France and long-standing suspicions of German sincerity made him a most unsatisfactory appeaser, as 'an elegant ditto to Monsieur Briand'.**



bitterest enemies, was elected as its president in April 1925. Meanwhile, the composition of the Reichstag was growing more extreme, and the voices of Republicanism more muted. Although Germany's appeasement was still generally seen as a noble aspiration in Britain, the level of appeasement that Lloyd George advocated was becoming a dangerous gamble, because it would assist Germany's rise to dominance in Europe. A dominant Germany was unlikely to be friendly to those who had gained territory from her. But would she, at least, be friendly to Britain, who had helped her regain her strength? Her hostility to the peace settlement and the bad grace with which she usually received its ameliorations, suggested that she would see all her old adversaries, including Britain, in the same light as before. Lloyd George seemed blind to these considerations, being stubbornly fixed on two main themes. One was that France should be prevented from dominating Europe. The other was that Germany had just grievances which needed to be addressed.

By 1932, although Britain had received little from Germany in reparations, most Britons shared Lloyd George's relief when, at an international conference in Lausanne, it was agreed that payments could cease provided Germany paid one final sum. There was also general support for disarmament despite growing German militarism and the evacuation of the remaining Allied troops from the Rhineland in 1930. What distinguished Lloyd George from the majority was his unflagging support for Germany's standpoint. With the Nazis gaining ground rapidly in German elections, Churchill was arguing against pressing France, whose defensive position had been seriously weakened by the Rhineland evacuation, to reduce her arms. 'We must not forget', he warned, 'that ... the contingent of youth arriving at military age each year [in Germany] is at the present moment double that of France.' A strong French army would be 'a stabilising factor, and one of the strongest, apart from the general hatred of war.'<sup>10</sup> Leading Labour figures were also losing sympathy for Germany. Lloyd George, however, was still focusing on meeting Germany's demands

**The appointment of Hitler as German Chancellor did not make Lloyd George more cautious. He blamed the British government's incompetence and French intransigence for rising German nationalism.**

and repeating his point about the Allies having broken a solemn pledge to her. The treaty stated that following Germany's disarmament the Allies would reduce their own arms 'to the lowest point consistent with national safety'; but with the Rhineland evacuation most of Germany's neighbours felt that that point had already been reached. Neither were they convinced that Germany was as disarmed as Lloyd George liked to think.

When British leaders prevaricated and back-tracked on international disarmament he rightly took them to task for their duplicity. Yet he did not criticise their failure to tackle French security, even though he must have known that France would not consent to a significant reduction in her army – or those of her eastern allies – until she was assured that Britain would come to her aid if attacked.

The appointment of Hitler as German Chancellor did not make Lloyd George more cautious. He blamed the British government's incompetence and French intransigence for rising German nationalism. Although he acknowledged 'the abominable treatment of Jews in Germany', he was more concerned to stress the 'abominable treatment of Germany by the Allies' regarding universal disarmament: 'It is ill provoking a brave people by the imposition of a flagrant wrong ... First we drive them to frenzy by an injustice and then we make that the excuse for not redressing the wrong. That is not British fair play.'<sup>11</sup>

Ironically, his strident support for Germany only made her appeasement more unattainable, because it encouraged the German people to think that they were being unfairly treated and that Hitler was right to defy the peace treaty. Hitler understood this and ensured that they were aware of Lloyd George's views. Film clips of speeches in which he stated that there could be 'no peace until the pledge to disarm is redeemed' were shown in German cinemas, and posters quoting his sympathetic pronouncements appeared on the streets, concluding with such statements as: 'Any German is a blackguard who does not demand what an Englishman concedes to be his right.'<sup>12</sup> Lloyd George's attacks on France also damaged the appeasement cause,

because they helped to fuel Anglo-French rivalry, which made France all the more determined to stick to her guns.

By 1934 it was known that Germany was rearming, and scepticism about appeasement was growing in Britain. Lloyd George's tone now changed slightly. He accepted that Britain should not be reducing her defences 'to a limit where we should be powerless against attacks', and that Germany's air force was a potential danger to Britain. He nevertheless argued that there was 'no need for precipitate action', because Germany was arming for defence and had no heavy guns. Despite admitting that, with the Nazi government working up a bad press against itself, it was becoming difficult to put the German case, he managed to do it:

For fourteen years they waited for a redemption. They had a succession of the most pacific ministers in the world ... They entreated the great Powers to begin redeeming their bond. They were mocked by a succession of pacts. ... meanwhile every country except Britain increased its armaments ... . Can you wonder that at last they were driven into revolution against ... the chronic deception of the great countries?

He then predicted that soon, because of their fear of communism, 'Conservative elements' in Britain would be 'welcoming Germany as our friend'.<sup>13</sup> This, at least, was a perceptive comment. While Labourites and Liberals were gradually losing faith in appeasement, the Conservatives were soon to embrace it more unequivocally.

Lloyd George's appeasing stance was reserved almost exclusively for Germany. During the mid-1930s he began attacking the government for its complacent attitude towards the belligerent adventures of other dictators. He argued that Britain should take a tough line against aggression, support its victims, and provide a strong lead in the League of Nations. During the Abyssinian crisis, although British leaders spoke of their commitment to League principles and of standing up to Mussolini, their actions said otherwise; and there were covert Anglo-French attempts

to buy Mussolini off at Abyssinia's expense. Lloyd George rightly attacked the government for its hypocrisy and lack of support for a fellow-League member, insisting that Britain was 'under an obligation to enter with other countries into a combined effort to prevent this danger'.<sup>14</sup>

When, with Mussolini's victory, the government announced that, since Abyssinia no longer existed, the (belated and ineffective) League sanctions might as well be lifted, an enraged Lloyd George responded with a dazzling speech – which was described by Churchill as 'one of the greatest Parliamentary performances of all time'. He lambasted the government for trying to pin the blame on the League for Mussolini's victory, when it had been Britain's and France's lack of leadership and double-dealing that had been at fault. He ended by referring to a recent proclamation on Abyssinia that Neville Chamberlain had made. Chamberlain had said:

The choice before us is whether we shall make a last effort at Geneva for peace and security or whether by a cowardly surrender we shall break all the promises we have made, and hold ourselves up to the shame of our children and our children's children.

'Tonight', declared Lloyd George to a packed and hysterical chamber, 'we have had the cowardly surrender, and there', he cried, flinging out an arm to the government front bench, 'are the cowards!'<sup>15</sup> As so often, Lloyd George had articulated the sentiments of fellow-minded politicians more brilliantly than they could themselves. Government leaders were 'cowed before his onslaught'.<sup>16</sup>

When it came to Germany, however, Lloyd George got things hopelessly wrong. He saw Hitler as one who, let down by the western democracies, had been reluctantly induced to seek friends elsewhere. As he wrote to T. P. Conwell-Evans, secretary of the Anglo-German Fellowship, in late 1937:

I have never doubted the fundamental greatness of Herr Hitler as a man, even in moments of profound disagreement with his policy ... It looks as if the Führer has committed himself

**When Hitler praised him as 'one of the very few people in England today who has shown any real appreciation of my task', a delighted and emotional Lloyd George reciprocated by calling his host 'the greatest German of the age'.**

to Mussolini – that adds enormously to the obstacles in the path of a friendly accommodation of the troubles of Europe. Mussolini is temperamentally an aggressor. I have never thought that Herr Hitler was ...'<sup>17</sup>

He continued making excuses for Hitler's actions. Even though two of the severest treaty provisions – the Rhineland occupation and reparations – had been prematurely swept away, he maintained that 'the harshest conditions of the peace treaty had been enforced', while the more equitable provisions had been 'trampled upon'.<sup>18</sup> Hence, when German troops marched into the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland in early 1936 he was not unduly concerned. Like the government and the press, he preferred to focus on the peace proposals that Hitler announced at the same time. He argued against supporting France in her bid to expel the German troops, and tried to assure MPs that the situation was very different from that in 1914:

Germany small; Germany with no allies; Germany with France, Russia, part of Austria against her. The air force that could be brought in would overwhelm anything which Germany could produce. That is why when they offer a twenty-five years' guarantee of security I believe them ...

He would not question who was to blame for the invasion, he said, as if this were a matter of dispute. But he did not think that 'France was in a position to point a finger of scorn at Germany on the ground of treaty breaking'.<sup>19</sup> He also objected to the Anglo-French military talks that Britain offered to France in compensation for refusing to act against Germany.

There were a few cautionary voices in Parliament. Sir Edward Spears reported that on the Continent they were saying that, having taken the Rhineland and offered twenty-five years of peace, Germany would take Austria and offer fifty. Next would be Memel and seventy-five years. We could then look forward to eternal peace once France and England had disappeared. Harold Nicolson recalled that in 1918 there had been opposition to sending food to starving

German women and children. Yet now, 'we fall on our knees, we bow our foreheads in the dust, and we say "Heil Hitler"'.<sup>20</sup> Austen Chamberlain and Churchill also prophesied worse to come. But on this crucial issue British opinion was generally in tune with Lloyd George. Both failed to grasp that Hitler's coup had done enormous damage to Anglo-French security. The fact that he had not invaded a foreign country, as Mussolini had, obscured the dangerousness of his action.

Six months later Lloyd George went to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden. He thought that, as Hitler was reputed to hold him in high regard, he could bring an Anglo-German accord a little closer. Conwell-Evans, an intimate of Ribbentrop, acted as an intermediary in organising the trip, and Thomas Jones, the Deputy Cabinet Secretary – who had been urging Baldwin to meet Hitler and had recently done so himself – was also of the party. During the visit Lloyd George encountered much talk of 'the Bolshevik menace' and heard many complaints about Czechoslovakia, which was, according to Hitler, 'a positive danger on account of her alliance with Russia'. His enthusiasm to prove his friendship for Germany predominated, leading him to speak unwisely and indiscreetly. When Ribbentrop complained that the Czech government was seriously oppressing its German population in the Sudetenland, Lloyd George replied that he 'did not trust Beneš [the Czech President] in his sight, let alone out of it'. Although he tried to persuade Hitler to remain neutral regarding the Spanish Civil War, which had begun two months earlier, and told Ribbentrop that Britain would not join in an anti-Bolshevik front, he was highly critical of a British cabinet minister (Alfred Duff Cooper, the War Secretary) for having recently spoken of the urgent need for Anglo-French co-operation. He also sympathised with Hitler over the Rhineland invasion; and by agreeing that a new Locarno pact, which the British government was naively hoping for, should be limited to the West, he encouraged the idea that Britain had little interest in Eastern Europe.

When Hitler praised him as 'one of the very few people in England today who has shown

any real appreciation of my task', a delighted and emotional Lloyd George reciprocated by calling his host 'the greatest German of the age'. So besotted was he that he convinced himself that this extreme right-wing nationalist dictator, leading a party steeped in the paraphernalia of militarism and turning his country into a fighting machine, had a repugnance for war. He told his private secretary, A. J. Sylvester, that Hitler was 'not in favour either of rearmament or conscription'. He was more interested in 'roads, agriculture and productive measures generally'.<sup>21</sup>

On his return home he argued that Germany was arming purely for defence:

The idea of a Germany intimidating Europe with a threat that its irresistible army might march across frontiers forms no part of the new vision ... the establishment of a German hegemony in Europe, which was the aim and dream of the old militarism, is not even on the horizon of Nazism.<sup>22</sup>

Soon, however, Hitler's involvement in the Spanish Civil War was giving him cause for second thoughts. Once he realised that Hitler had no intention of remaining neutral, despite having entered into a non-intervention agreement with Britain and France, the scales appeared to fall from his eyes. Although he still regarded Mussolini, who gave the greatest support to Franco, as trouble-maker-in-chief, in a rare moment of humility he admitted in Parliament that he might have been wrong about Hitler:

... when I was Prime Minister, and afterwards when I was a private member of this House, I always pleaded for fair treatment for Germany ... But I am bound to say that the difficulties which used to come from France in the way of any scheme which appeared to promise appeasement, which gave justice and fair treatment to Germany – those difficulties now are made by Germany herself.

There was 'a lack of straightforwardness in the whole business', he conceded, which 'I frankly would not have expected from the present

head of the German Government'.<sup>23</sup> He denounced non-intervention as 'a tragic mockery', rightly accusing the government of tacitly supporting the Nationalists by their strict adherence to it while Italy and Germany supported Franco. He also warned of the security risk of a Fascist victory, which could prevent British naval access to the Mediterranean.

The appointment of Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister also contributed to Lloyd George's change in attitude. The two men disliked each other intensely. During the Great War Lloyd George had dismissed Chamberlain as Director of National Service. He had then criticised him in his *War Memoirs*. This unfriendly treatment rankled with Chamberlain and, once the tables were turned in the 1930s, he made a point of blocking any opportunity of Lloyd George's taking office.<sup>24</sup> Chamberlain's dedication to appeasement was in itself a strong incentive for Lloyd George to find fault with it.

When British seamen began losing their lives off the Spanish coast as a result of Italian and German attacks, Chamberlain's government did next to nothing about it. Lloyd George was disgusted. The Cabinet were 'behaving like a bevy of maiden aunts who have fallen among buccaneers'.<sup>25</sup> The government's 'twittering little protests' were becoming 'the joke of the world'.<sup>26</sup>

He even started expressing sympathy for France. This was surely evidence of a shift in perspective! Whereas Britain leaned towards Franco, France favoured the Spanish government, for whom non-intervention was seriously detrimental. 'I am sorry for the position that France has been put into', he declared. 'France with her noble tradition of always going to the help of nations fighting for liberty, for right and for independence. The French people have made great sacrifices for that. No country in Europe has made greater'.<sup>27</sup> This rare tribute was made as if from one who had been an unequivocal champion of France all along. Having denounced her for forging a mutual assistance pact with Russia in 1936, he now talked about joining forces with them both:

If the great Powers – France and Russia that are acting with

us, and ourselves – talked quite frankly, brutally if you like ... these three great Powers together have such a force that there is no-one in Europe that could stand up against them.<sup>28</sup>

He appeared to appreciate that a Fascist victory, and Britain's obvious lack of concern for its victims, had made a European war more likely. Yet he was quite unperturbed when, in March 1938, Nazi troops marched into Vienna and overthrew the Austrian government. It was, he believed, 'a natural sequence of events'. Even when he realised that the so-called *Anschluss* had been a brutal take-over, he managed to blame Mussolini more than Hitler – for having stood aside and allowed Hitler to have his way. He disapproved of Hitler's methods, but his judgement remained clouded by his belief that Germany's ambitions were reasonable.

He was not so sanguine regarding the Czech crisis, however. Although his belief that Czechoslovakia was a mistaken creation, coupled with his low opinion of Beneš, caused him to sympathise with the Sudetenlanders – as German minorities living under foreign sovereignty – on the eve of the Munich conference he wrote to the South Wales Liberal Federation:

We can hardly abandon the Czechs, who acted upon our counsel – not without dishonour to ourselves ... If war is to be avoided, what is required is a clear statement by the British Government that the Czechs have, in their opinion, gone to the limit of reasonable concession ... and that if there is any attempt to crush the Czech Republic by force the British Government would side with France and other countries to resist aggression.<sup>29</sup>

He had not abandoned appeasement – only what he regarded as Chamberlain's 'cringing' kind – but he was now worried about Britain's weakening position relative to Germany's, and saw that it should only be tried from a position of superior strength, which meant forming an alliance with France and Russia – which Stalin was soon to offer. This had the support of Liberal and Labour leaders,

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but the Conservatives were, with a few exceptions, unsurprisingly the most reluctant to embrace communist Russia. Knowing Chamberlain was averse to cooperation with Stalin, Lloyd George, who had long favoured dealing positively with Soviet Russia, now began a vigorous pro-Russian campaign. Russia had the world's strongest army, he argued, and the only one that could get to Poland, which everyone knew Hitler had in his sights. When, in parliament, an MP reminded him of Stalin's purge of officers he merely replied: 'It's news to me that getting rid of Generals is always a bad thing for an army'.<sup>30</sup> Two months later, with no sign of a rapprochement he declared: 'The supreme diplomatic imbecility of snubbing Russia ought to be repaired without loss of time. The peril is great and it is imminent.'<sup>31</sup>

When German troops marched into Bohemia in March 1939, Hitler's claim that he wished only to recover what was legitimately Germany's was exposed as a lie. With public opinion having already turned against appeasement, Chamberlain announced a guarantee to Poland. Lloyd George thought this madness without first securing support from Russia, especially as no obvious preparations were being made to honour it. He now urged the government to introduce conscription.<sup>32</sup> Although Chamberlain eventually agreed to negotiations with Russia it was clear he did not want them to succeed. Lloyd George was rightly incensed:

Mr Chamberlain negotiated directly with Hitler. He went to Germany to see him. He and Lord Halifax ... went to Rome, drank Mussolini's health, shook his hand, and told him what a fine fellow he was. But whom have they sent to Russia? ... a clerk in the Foreign Office ... It was an insult.<sup>33</sup>

When negotiations broke down in mid-August the Russians signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. Germany attacked Poland on 1 September, and two days later Britain was at war.

At first Lloyd George was optimistic. He pinned his hopes on Poland holding out until help arrived. He expected the help to be forthcoming, but he soon became

sceptical: 'So far, we do not seem to have done anything on land or in the air except scatter a few million unconvincing tracts on German soil'.<sup>34</sup> Once Russia invaded Poland he began to think the war was unwinnable, and his attitude changed dramatically. He started denigrating Polish leaders and talking about making peace with Hitler – 'if only for the purposes of gaining time'. He reverted to his earlier view of Hitler as a reasonable man and even talked of a further revision of the Versailles Treaty, including 'the very important question of the colonies'. 'You have to settle all the problems that are menacing the peace of the world, including the claims of Italy', he said.<sup>35</sup> Most MPs disagreed. So did Chamberlain.

Lloyd George did, however, also continue to argue for a more active war strategy. 'Why aren't we attacking?' he kept asking. 'Germany is producing far more arms than we. Delay only widens the gap'.<sup>36</sup> This was a perfectly reasonable criticism. Having given a guarantee to Poland, Britain had declared war on Germany, but had then done little else.

By May 1940 growing dissatisfaction with Chamberlain's leadership led to rumours that Lloyd George might succeed him, although he himself hinted that he wished to wait until the peril grew, presumably thinking he could step in to salvage something after the government had failed. In Parliament on 8 May Chamberlain appealed for sacrifice. Lloyd George responded: 'I say solemnly that the Prime Minister should give an example of sacrifice, because there is nothing which can contribute more to victory than that he should sacrifice the seals of office'.<sup>37</sup> Two days later Chamberlain was replaced by Churchill.

Relieved, Lloyd George appeared to shake off his defeatism – but not for long. He was soon talking of returning Germany's colonies.<sup>38</sup> Peeved because his advice was not sought, he even began grumbling about Churchill's leadership. Churchill, it seemed, preferred to surround himself with 'duds and mutts' rather than 'men with understanding minds' like himself. When eventually Churchill offered him a Cabinet post, he said he preferred to 'wait until

Winston is bust', again implying a wish to step in and settle with Hitler when all else failed.<sup>39</sup>

On 7 May 1941 when Lloyd George bemoaned government 'blunders' in parliament, Churchill likened his attitude to that of Marshal Pétain.<sup>40</sup> Yet, it must be said that, although talking pessimistically, Lloyd George was still arguing that Britain should be fighting much more aggressively. 'Here we are in the fourth year of war', he said at the beginning of 1943, 'and we have hardly tackled our main enemy, Germany, at all'. Later, he accused the government, quite reasonably, of delaying an invasion of Europe, leaving Russia to do most of the fighting. He only admitted feeling confident of victory when he heard about the D-Day landings on 6 June 1944. By then he had been diagnosed as suffering from cancer. He died on 26 March 1945.

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During the inter-war period the merits of pursuing an appeasement strategy changed with the ever-changing circumstances. In the early years, with the Kaiser's militarist regime having been replaced by a democratic republic, there were good reasons for helping Germany, whose fighting capacity had been greatly reduced, to thrive and demonstrate a commitment to peace. The appeasement of later years was another matter. By the time Hitler had started to rearm and take the law into his own hands, appeasement had become a dangerous gamble. It had also become immoral because, once reparations claims were dropped, there were few concessions that Britain could make that were not at the expense of others. Lloyd George paid little attention to these facts.

Martin Pugh argues that, because of his visit to Hitler in 1936, Lloyd George has been 'somewhat misrepresented', and that he was 'a resolute opponent of fascism and appeasement'.<sup>41</sup> This is not true. He was certainly a strong opponent of Mussolini and Franco, but he continued to favour Germany's appeasement even after Hitler's rise. After the Great War he quickly adopted – and never really abandoned – the view that Germany had justifiable grievances which partly excused her behaviour,

blaming Britain and France for the rise of Nazism. Although he hardened towards Germany during the Spanish Civil War and later championed an anti-German alliance with Russia, he failed to appreciate the enormous damage to Anglo-French security inflicted by the Rhineland coup and the *Anschluss*. It was only after Munich that he really began to lament Britain's weakening strategic position relative to Germany's. While he was prejudiced against France – because he thought she was wrong about Germany – he admired Hitler's 'guts' and was eager to excuse German transgressions. This meant that he tended to overlook the damage done to Anglo-French security by Hitler's early adventures. Once the Second World War began, these traits led him to underestimate what others envisaged would be the disastrous consequences of a Nazi-dominated Europe. Even in 1940 he was talking of appeasing Hitler. On 13 March he told Benjamin Sumner Welles, Roosevelt's emissary, that there was no reason 'why Germany should not unite under one government the Germanic peoples of Central Europe, or why Germany should not obtain and enjoy a special economic position in Central Europe, and at least in part, in South-eastern Europe'.<sup>42</sup>

Then there is the view that Lloyd George was an appeaser in the inter-war years, but that this stemmed 'partly out of a strong fear of communism as a greater danger'.<sup>43</sup> This is not true either. When he warned, in 1934, that British Conservatives would soon look to Germany as a bulwark against communism, this was not a reflection of his own fears. He did, after all, argue strongly for an Anglo-Soviet alliance.

Like other appeasers at the time, Lloyd George was preoccupied with Germany and her grievances. This led to a tendency to diminish the fears and claims of smaller nations such as Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and to see France as a nuisance who provoked Germany by her unreasonable determination to enforce the peace settlement. This view was, however, largely based on an error of judgement about the relative potential power and military ambitions of France and Germany. While underestimating Germany's inherent strengths and expansionist drive, Lloyd George portrayed the

**While underestimating Germany's inherent strengths and expansionist drive, Lloyd George portrayed the French, who were simply terrified of a resurgent Germany, as aggressive and militaristic.**

French, who were simply terrified of a resurgent Germany, as aggressive and militaristic. It is possible that this was less the result of objective miscalculations – Lloyd George knew the facts and figures as well as anyone – than the workings of a troubled mind. A. J. P. Taylor actually argues that guilty conscience was the main reason for appeasement's appeal in the inter-war years.<sup>44</sup> Lloyd George's brother William was convinced that the slaughter of the Great War – followed by the unsatisfactory peace – had a deep effect on Lloyd George, who clearly came to believe that Britain, if not he himself, had cause to feel guilty about Germany.<sup>45</sup> His misconceptions regarding France and Germany seem to reflect a subconscious wish to tip the scales in Germany's favour in an attempt to atone for what he came to see as the injustices inflicted on Germany after the war.

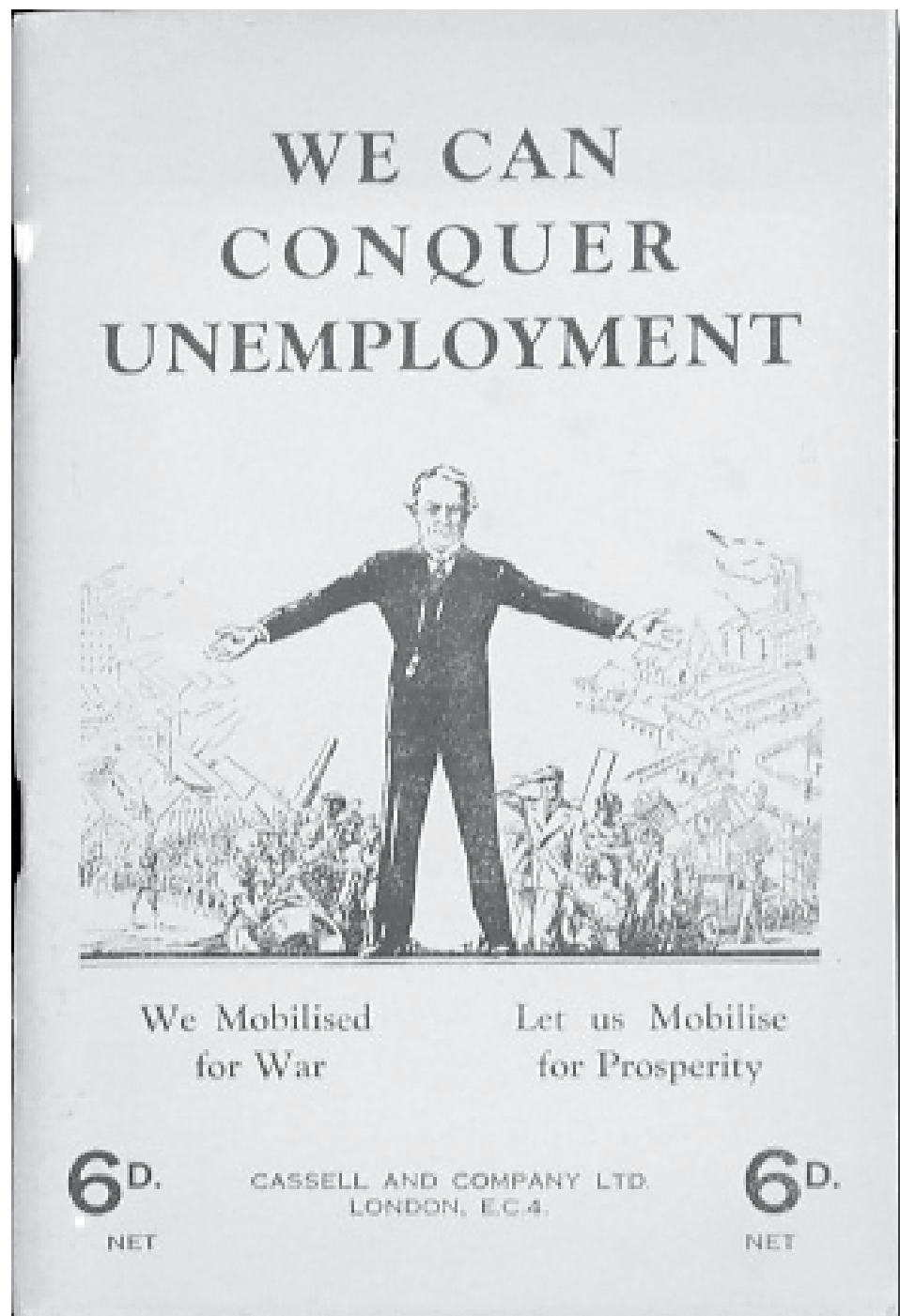
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When Winston Churchill, speaking in the House of Commons as Prime Minister of the wartime coalition government, paid his well-wrought tribute on Lloyd George's death in March 1945, he did not simply hail a fellow war leader. Instead he singled out the significance of his old colleague's career in opening up a social and economic dimension for Liberal politics. 'The stamps we lick, the roads we travel, the system of progressive taxation, the principal remedies that have so far been used against unemployment – all these to a very great extent were part not only of the mission but of the actual achievement of Lloyd George,' so it was claimed. And claimed with good reason. It is natural, then, that Lloyd George's name should be linked with an agenda for twentieth-century politics that we now customarily describe as 'Keynesian'. **Peter Clarke** examines the relationship between David Lloyd George and John Maynard Keynes.

# 'WE CAN CONQUER LLOYD GEORGE



# UNDER UNEMPLOYMENT' LLOYD GEORGE AND KEYNES

**T**HE LINKAGE BETWEEN Lloyd Georges and Keynesian ideas was never more important than in the Liberal campaign promising to 'conquer unemployment' in the general election of 1929: an episode in Lloyd George's later career that is clearly worth closer examination. 'His long life was, almost from the beginning to almost the end, spent in political strife and controversy', Churchill went on to acknowledge in his obituary speech. 'He aroused intense and sometimes needless antagonisms.'<sup>1</sup> Here, too, the general comment has a particular pertinence to the complex relationship that developed, over the course of a couple of decades, between David Lloyd George and John Maynard Keynes.

It was indeed political controversy that first linked their names in the popular consciousness. The publication at the end of 1919 of Keynes's polemical tract, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, made its author a public figure. Still under forty, he emerged at a bound from his academic background as an economist at Cambridge into the spotlight of international political attention, and was determined to stay there. A crucial transition, of course, was his wartime service as a civil servant in the Treasury, a role which, at the end of the war, provided his ticket for a front-row seat at the peace conference in Paris.

Keynes had joined the Treasury in January 1915. His initial appointment was at a junior level, while Lloyd George was still Chancellor of the Exchequer; but there had been little significant interaction between them in the months before the formation of the First Coalition in May, which took Lloyd George

to the Ministry of Munitions. Instead, Keynes's rise to a position of influence within the Treasury came under Reginald McKenna, like himself a Liberal who naturally gravitated towards Asquith. McKenna upheld the traditional Treasury orthodoxies, established in Gladstone's day: balanced budgets, free trade, the Gold Standard and as little interference as possible in the market. Moreover, he had no more ardent supporter than Keynes, at the time more of a Treasury insider than he always cared to admit.

The young man's wartime captivity by the atmosphere of the Treasury was as much cultural as it was purely intellectual. He reacted with the sensibility of a connoisseur to his surroundings. He regarded the traditional Treasury ethos with some awe and quickly developed an appreciation of its austere charms. 'Things could only be done in a certain way, and that made a great many things impossible, which was the object aimed at', he wrote after the war. 'And supported by these various elements, it became an institution which came to possess attributes of institutions like a college or City company, or the Church of England.' Passages like this remind us that, although Keynes's family background was rooted in nonconformity, he was himself the product of a privileged education at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, where he had become a Fellow, imbued with what could be called ingrained common-room loyalties. Little wonder that Lloyd George, with his totally different Welsh background, felt so little affinity – social, academic, traditional or whatever – for this milieu, and, as Keynes

put it, 'had no aesthetic sense for the formalisms, and no feelings for its institutional aspects'.<sup>2</sup> Lloyd George was simply not a man to be put down by what he saw as the condescension of an alien elite.

In 1915–16 the Treasury was inevitably at the heart of an intense conflict over what sort of war to fight, how to fight it, and how to pay for it. In a total war, as Keynes was later to argue from a position of great influence during the Second World War, the whole resources of the nation could and should be mobilised towards a single end. After 1940, he thus helped redefine the question of how to pay for the war within a command economy that temporarily departed from the norms of peacetime finance. Currency controls became an integral part of this system.

But in the First World War, as he saw in retrospect, exchange control 'was so much against the spirit of the age that I doubt if it ever occurred to any of us that it was possible'. The Gold Standard set 'the rules of the game' for a fixed exchange rate, and the Treasury unblinkingly supported the Bank of England's commitment to back it. 'They had been brought up', Keynes wrote, as though admiring officers who dutifully went over the top in the trenches, 'in the doctrine that in a run one must pay out one's gold reserve to the last bean.'<sup>3</sup> So Britain did not formally go off gold until 1919 and meanwhile clung to a sort of shadow Gold Standard, financing its military effort by loans from the United States within the parameters of market imperatives. This meant satisfying Wall Street that all the bills could be met on the due dates.

Left:  
Cover of *We Can Conquer Unemployment*, the booklet published by Lloyd George in March 1929.

## 'WE CAN CONQUER UNEMPLOYMENT': LLOYD GEORGE AND KEYNES

McKenna sternly defended this view, which Lloyd George derided at the time and later mocked in his *War Memoirs*. His account there of the arguments in the autumn of 1915 identifies Keynes as 'more alarming and much more jargonish' than even the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, the austere Sir John Bradbury. Their case, that it was only just possible to struggle on until the end of the financial year, 31 March 1916, did not impress Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions, nor subsequently as Prime Minister. In his *War Memoirs*, he invoked Churchill's satirical rendering of the Treasury position: 'Put the British Empire at one end of the scale and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March at the other, and the latter would win every time', he jested. 'That was Mr McKenna's view.' Naturally Lloyd George felt vindicated when 'the hour of indicated doom struck' in 1916 and the British economy survived.<sup>4</sup> Though McKenna faced political exile in December 1916, once the Second Coalition was formed under Lloyd George, Keynes stayed at the Treasury, as gloomy as ever in his forecasts. On 31 March 1917, the hour of doom struck again, and Britain again survived (this time with the aid of the German U-boat campaign that brought the United States into the war).

To Keynes, this seemed like sheer uncovenanted good luck. He continued to think that his own caution had been justified at the time. His view of Lloyd George was inevitably coloured by the Treasury spectacles through which he had looked at such issues, defining them rather narrowly as those in which canons of financial prudence should prevail – the strain of small-c conservatism in Keynes's complex make-up. Personally he got on surprisingly well with the two Unionists who subsequently served as Chancellor under Lloyd George: first Bonar Law and later Austen Chamberlain. Keynes thus went to Paris in January 1919 as Chamberlain's principal assistant, and was himself to resign in June – and in disillusionment.

### Bamboozled?

Keynes's time in Paris had given him a privileged vantage point on the process of peace-making: on the economics, of course, but also

**As one old-fashioned Liberal put it, Lloyd George's willingness to rethink party policies had 'undoubtedly interested, occupied, propitiated – dare I add, bamboozled? – a large number of able Liberals who liked neither his record nor his ways.'**

on the politics. What he subsequently wrote distilled his views on both. As his book's title sufficiently proclaimed, it was the *economic* consequences of imposing heavy reparations on Germany that primarily concerned him. As an economist, he could see that making Germany responsible for the costs of the war was easier said than done. For this was not just a financial transaction, still less a simple question of shaking the money out of German pockets, or squeezing the Germans till the pips squeaked, or finding some stash of German gold that could handily be shipped to the Allies. In all the subsequent controversies about Versailles, although there have always been some writers who stoutly maintain that Germany had a greater capacity to pay than the tender-minded Keynes alleged, the central thrust of his original case has never been successfully refuted. For this was that the rhetoric of 'making Germany pay' lacked a grasp of the processes of the real economy, in which all transfers are ultimately made in the form of flows of goods and services, not merely through the book-keeping of financial transactions.

It was not the exposition of this economic logic, however, that made *The Economic Consequences* into a bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic. Instead, it was the human interest of its third chapter, which, in fewer than twenty pages, depicted the machinations of the Big Four at the Paris conference. And whatever the reaction in France to Keynes's half-admiring aphorisms about the world-weary cynicism of Clemenceau, or the offence created in the United States by the author's feline characterisation of Woodrow Wilson as a naïve Presbyterian preacher, the main impact on British public opinion came through what the book said about Lloyd George's role. It suggested that 'the poor President would be playing blind man's buff in that party. Never could a man have stepped into the parlour a more perfect and predestined victim to the finished accomplishments of the Prime Minister.' With mordant disdain, Keynes thus went on to attribute the puncturing of Wilson's idealistic New World innocence to the Old World wiles that ensnared him. So that in the end, when Lloyd George made a belated pitch for 'all the moderation he dared', he found

it 'harder to de-bamboozle this old Presbyterian than it had been to bamboozle him' over the previous long weeks of the conference.<sup>5</sup>

These were phrases with a deadly sting. They were often repeated and long remembered by readers who never struggled through the seventy-page chapter on reparations. And in the book's indictment of the iniquity and folly of the treaty, Wilson could be seen as victim as much as perpetrator, Clemenceau could likewise be largely excused as a loveable rogue from Central Casting, but Lloyd George was revealed as the truly culpable figure. All this, of course, played to the stereotypes of the progressive left in Britain, whether Asquithian or Labour, equally susceptible to this nicely updated dose of Gladstonian moralising. Keynes's rise to fame thus came at the expense of a Prime Minister whose own wickedness had naturally led him into coalition with the Conservatives. In blighting relations between them, all that was lacking – for the time being – was the publication of Keynes's draft of an even more biting personal sketch of Lloyd George, omitted from *The Economic Consequences* in 1919 on the prudent advice of the author's mother.

True, the sequel that Keynes published in 1922, *A Revision of the Treaty*, tartly acknowledged that the 'revisionists' now included the British Prime Minister. 'The deeper and the fouler the bogs into which Mr Lloyd George leads us, the more credit is his for getting us out.'<sup>6</sup> This background helps in understanding some of the difficulties that beset later dealings between Lloyd George and Keynes. It is the reason why there were so many raised eyebrows when the two men joined forces in the mid-1920s in making unemployment into a salient political issue. To partisan contemporaries, we must remember, it seemed remarkable that the author of *The Economic Consequences* should now indulge in his own peacemaking with a man whom he had recently excoriated. As one old-fashioned Liberal put it, Lloyd George's willingness to rethink party policies had 'undoubtedly interested, occupied, propitiated – dare I add, bamboozled? – a large number of able Liberals who liked neither his record nor his ways.'<sup>7</sup> So there were some sharp questions that Keynes could



not avoid during the 1929 general election campaign. 'The difference between me and some other people,' he responded, 'is that I oppose Mr Lloyd George when he is wrong and support him when he is right.'<sup>8</sup>

### **'A drastic remedy for unemployment'**

This personal détente was a significant development, not only in giving Lloyd George momentum in his leadership of a reunited Liberal Party but in prompting Keynes to formulate his economic ideas. There have been many attempts to explain Keynes's own sudden concern with the problem of unemployment at this juncture. It has often seemed intellectually plausible to point to his opposition to Britain's return to the Gold Standard in April 1925, since the effect of an over-priced pound was indeed to make British exports (like coal) too expensive abroad, thus making workers in the export trade (like miners) unemployed. Keynes repeatedly made such links himself – but only subsequently. For the fact is that it was not in 1925, but instead fully a year *before* the return to gold, that Keynes first broached his characteristic arguments about the need for an economic stimulus. He did it in an article in the Liberal weekly paper, the *Nation*, under the title: 'Does unemployment need drastic remedy?' He was prompted to do so, moreover, in response to an initiative by Lloyd George in April 1924, thus inaugurating their period of cooperation.

Why, then, had Keynes decided in 1924 that Lloyd George was now on the right track? It was not because either of them, at the time, had worked out detailed proposals for job creation. Nor was it because of any sudden surge in the level of British unemployment. This was actually falling rather than rising at the time, though it was admittedly stuck around 10 per cent of the registered labour force, as compared with a norm of about half that before the war. Yet both men now agreed that unemployment needed 'a drastic remedy', even though they were floundering when they tried to say exactly what this might comprise, as Keynes's own contribution to the discussion revealed. In particular he got into trouble for hinting that the Chancellor of the

Exchequer might find a role for the Sinking Fund in 'replacing unproductive debt by productive debt'.<sup>9</sup> As Keynes quickly recognised, such talk excited alarm among believers in the traditional axioms of sound public finance – so this time he had the moral force of the Gladstonian tradition against him.

Keynes retreated on this particular issue but failed to clarify exactly what he proposed. Since he was usually such a master of lucid exposition, the best explanation is that he was not really quite sure himself – or not yet sure. As an economist, it should be remembered, he was still writing with a strong sense of his intellectual inheritance from the great Alfred Marshall. In the Marshallian system, there were certainly many allowances for imperfections in the workings of the economy, but its tendency towards an equilibrium, with full employment of all factors of production, was a basic assumption.

It was in *A Tract on Monetary Reform* (1923) that Keynes had uttered one of his most famous phrases, endlessly repeated and misrepresented ever since. Yes, he conceded, there were indeed self-righting forces in the economy, provided that market forces were allowed free play – and allowed also enough time to do their job. 'But this *long run* is a misleading guide to current affairs', Keynes suggested. '*In the long run* we are all dead.'<sup>10</sup> The moral is, of course, not that (irresponsible) short-term policies should prevail but that the true irresponsibility is to abstain, on doctrinal grounds, from remedial action that can do good. In principle, Keynes thus declared himself a pragmatist, refusing to rule out government intervention where the case could be made for its social benefits. Yet at this point, as regards unemployment, he was not in a position to offer Lloyd George either practical blueprints or theoretical cover for the 'drastic remedy' that each considered necessary.

Theirs was essentially a temperamental affinity in favour of action, rather than timid quietism or doctrinaire inertia. Like Franklin Roosevelt when he later launched his 'New Deal', an instinctive belief that there was nothing to fear but fear itself can be seen as the defining political ingredient in policies

that were in some respects incoherent. As with Roosevelt in the mid-1930s, so with Lloyd George in the mid-1920s, Keynes was equally ready to take a cue from a political leader whose extraordinary powers he recognised. It was the benign aspect of the non-rational gifts, already reluctantly acknowledged in the portrait printed in *The Economic Consequences*, which had observed 'the British Prime Minister watching the company, with six or seven senses not available to ordinary men'.<sup>11</sup> Keynes was himself never a prisoner to formal logic, instead prizing intuition and creativity in his own trade of economics, and *a fortiori* in the field of politics.

Chancing his arm in 1924, Keynes already outlined an approach to policy-making that retains its cogency. Admittedly, we can find loose ends and inconsistencies in the economic detail. But we also find propositions that were to become central to his agenda, not only in economic policy but in theory too. He had not yet come up with a formal analysis that we would recognise as Keynesian in the sense of his *General Theory*, not published until 1936. Instead, we see his policy hunches outrunning his theoretical thinking, leading him to conclusions that he could only later justify with the requisite academic rigour.

We can see this in his 1924 response to Lloyd George, urging the 'drastic remedy'. What is central to Keynes's approach is 'the principle that *prosperity is cumulative*', and he reiterates it as the merest common sense. 'There are many examples of cumulative prosperity, both in recent and in earlier experience,' he says, citing alike the nineteenth-century British railway expansion and the French post-war reconstruction programme and the current American boom in the motor industry. The problem is thus to supply the initial impetus. 'We have stuck in a rut', he says. 'We need an impulse, a jolt, an acceleration.' Now we should not jog Keynes's elbow by supplying his later theoretical concept of the 'multiplier' to define and specify the dynamic effects; but the line of thinking is suggestive in a pragmatic vein. It is thus common sense to see that there are 'stimulating medicines which are wholesome', and to recognise

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## 'WE CAN CONQUER UNEMPLOYMENT': LLOYD GEORGE AND KEYNES

that 'there is no way in the world of achieving these better alternatives but by confidence and courage in those who set enterprise in motion.'

Public investment, in short, must come to the rescue when the market fails to do so. Keynes accordingly proposes that the Treasury should promote expenditure of the order of £100 million a year – about 2.5 per cent of current GDP – for 'the construction of capital works at home, enlisting in various ways the aid of private genius, temperament, and skill'. Then, confronting the obvious question of where the money is to be found, he goes out on a limb: 'Current savings are already available on a sufficient scale – savings which from lack of an outlet at home, are now drifting abroad to destinations from which we as a society shall gain the least possible advantage.' The priority is currently for 'capital developments at home'. Such a programme, Keynes asserts, 'will inspire confidence', thus reinforcing 'the stimulus which shall initiate a cumulative prosperity'.<sup>12</sup> The circular nature of the argument is thus its strength – once the political courage has been shown to provide the stimulus.

The discussion to which Keynes contributed in 1924 was published in the Liberal weekly, the *Nation*, and some of the themes were then developed through the Liberal Summer Schools. Both of these served as institutional means through which Lloyd George was to become reconciled with many Liberal intellectuals in the mid-1920s, with Keynes playing a prominent role in each forum, as he did subsequently in the Liberal Industrial Inquiry. The Inquiry's eventual report, *Britain's Industrial Future* (1928), became known as the 'Yellow Book'. It articulated, albeit at ponderous length, the rationale for the ambitious policy that Lloyd George, now Liberal leader, made the basis of his own big push for power.

Lloyd George succeeded to the extent of determining the agenda in the general election of 1929. The publication of his manifesto, *We Can Conquer Unemployment*, made a great impact. Drawing upon the Yellow Book, it seems to have been drafted mainly by the businessman and philanthropist Seebomh Rowntree, then working at Liberal headquarters and today remembered

chiefly for his ground-breaking studies of poverty. Keynes wrote none of it himself but offered immediate polemical support in March 1929, contesting the 'Treasury View' that no large-scale stimulus of the economy was possible. In May, three weeks before polling day, Keynes and his colleague Hubert Henderson published their own pamphlet, *Can Lloyd George Do It?* Their answer was a resounding Yes. The answer of the electorate, however, was a faltering No, with only 59 Liberal seats to show for a vote of 23.6 per cent. There was to be no return to office by Lloyd George, no British New Deal, no bold experiment with a Keynesian agenda.

### Can we conquer unemployment?

Was it ever reasonable to suppose that Lloyd George could 'do it'? The pledge that he gave in 1929 was to put in hand an ambitious programme of public works which would, within a year, reduce unemployment to the level normal before the First World War. What was then considered normal was a level of about 5 per cent, whereas the unemployment figures in 1929 (before the world slump hit Britain) stood at about 10 per cent. So was it possible to create nearly 600,000 jobs?

Modern estimates of what was feasible, of course, enjoy the benefit of applying the Keynesian 'multiplier'. They differ mainly over the value specified for the multiplier, that is, over how much an initial investment would increase final income. Keynesians were once hopeful – too hopeful – that the multiplier might be 2 or higher; modern scepticism suggests a range between 1.25 and 1.75. The statistics that emerge from such analysis are fairly clear and consistent. With a floating exchange rate, like sterling today, the upper estimate of new jobs might be as high as 744,000; but not even Keynes was contemplating leaving the pound to float in 1929, and it was not until 1931 that Britain was forced off the Gold Standard. With a fixed exchange rate, then, the number of jobs likely to be created by a programme on the scale proposed by the Liberals in 1929–30 would have been in the range 346,000 to 484,000.<sup>13</sup> So, even if elected, Lloyd George could not have done it.

This is the econometric answer. But another sort of answer is more relative, more disputable, more contentious, more temperamental, and more political than simply economic. If as many as 600,000 new jobs proved impossible, how about 400,000 or so? Supposing Lloyd George was more than half right about what could be achieved – and maybe three-quarters right – was it still worth doing something rather than nothing? Keynes's own answer had been laid out at the start of this argument, back in 1924, when he had concluded his initial plea for a drastic remedy for unemployment: 'Let us experiment with boldness on such lines – even though some of the schemes may turn out to be failures, which is very likely.'<sup>14</sup>

The nub of the argument, in many ways, was not about the impact of public works on job creation but about where the money was to come from in financing such a programme. Some of it might come from abroad, by somehow diverting the net outward flow of British investment, which only created new British jobs 'in the long run'. So this was one possible short-term expedient. Nobody at this time talked of simply running a budget deficit. Despite his subsequent reputation, Keynes believed in the principle of balancing the budget, certainly in good times when it was proper that all current government expenditure should be covered by current taxation. In bad times, however, a loan might be necessary to finance public works; so the question was whether such a loan could indeed be raised and whether the net effect upon the economy of the new investment would be positive.

The Conservative claim was essentially the traditional Treasury View: that any new spending on public works could only be found at the expense of private enterprise elsewhere in the economy. This model postulated a zero-sum game, which robbed prudent Peter in order to pay profligate Paul. Its force was essentially as a moral argument masquerading as an economic law.

*We Can Conquer Unemployment* offered the Liberal riposte, denying that all resources were at present being utilised for investment, and instead talking about the 'frozen savings' that accumulated in a

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depression. The most prominent advocate of this view was actually Reginald McKenna, now chairman of the Midland Bank (and an unlikely recruit to Lloyd George's cause). He was concerned about the idle deposits in bank accounts. But this encouraged the notion that there were piles of money lying in the vaults that could, with some juggling of the balance sheet, 'pay' for public works – a sort of economic fallacy all too like the simple arguments for German reparations.

Keynes's own argument was different. Admittedly, he tried to minimise any differences with his Liberal allies for tactical reasons, once he was directly drawn into the partisan debate, but he never used the term 'frozen savings'. Instead he reframed the whole argument about where the money was to come from by pointing, with increasing confidence, to the fallacious nature of the Treasury View itself. And he first developed this analysis not in his theoretical writings but on the hustings.

Keynes's newspaper article entitled 'Mr Lloyd George's Pledge' appeared in the *Evening Standard* on 19 March 1929. 'The orthodox theory assumes that everyone is employed', Keynes contended. 'If this were so, a stimulus in one direction would be at the expense of production in others. But when there is a large surplus of *unused* productive resources, as at present, the case is totally different.' Here was his knock-down argument against the Treasury View, as he put it a couple of months later, that it 'would be correct *if everyone were employed already*, but is only correct on that assumption'.<sup>15</sup>

Thus we see a fully reciprocal process, in which Lloyd George's political campaign did not simply draw upon Keynes's economic ideas but actually stimulated their gestation in significant respects. For in 1929 Keynes, amid the day-to-day pressures of an election campaign, clearly identified the central flaw in the argument that government spending always displaces equivalent private resources. Moreover, in 1924 he had already developed his view that, since prosperity is cumulative, an initial stimulus can produce a dynamic impact upon the economy. Put these two concepts together and the implications are surely significant, with a force that

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has not diminished some eighty years later. For, on this analysis, the real priorities are hardly just financial. If the economy fails to produce its full potential, there will indeed be shortfalls, not only in production and in employment but in government revenue too.

#### **'Intense and sometimes needless antagonisms'?**

The period in office of Ramsay MacDonald's minority Labour government from 1929 to 1931 was to prove frustrating. Lloyd George persistently explored opportunities for policy initiatives on which he thought Labour and Liberals had common ground; Keynes exploited his status as an economist to channel economic advice to government, through both the Macmillan Committee on Finance and Industry and the Economic Advisory Council. But the inherent weakness of the government made it into an all too compliant victim of the mounting world depression that overtook it.

It was in this context that the Conservatives climbed back to power. Taking office in 1931, they lured not only MacDonald but also most of the Liberals into a coalition government. Its ostensible rationale was to serve the national interest amid a great crisis that demanded stern financial rectitude and unpopular policies. Its tenure of office more obviously served the interest of the Conservative Party itself. Neither Lloyd George nor Keynes was numbered among the supporters of the National Government from 1931; but their own moment of common sympathy and activity was now to close – quite soon and quite abruptly.

In March 1933 a new book by Keynes appeared: no economic treatise but his much more popular *Essays in Biography*. Many of these piquant essays had been previously published, including that on the 'Council of Four', taken from his *Economic Consequences*. But Keynes then exhumed the half-dozen pages that he had originally composed on Lloyd George, cut from the original edition. Admittedly, Keynes still refrained from publishing a comment from the 1919 draft, referring to 'those methods of untruthful, indeed shameless, intrigue which must lead to ultimate ruin of any

cause entrusted to him; his incapacity for loyal leadership and control of the instrument of government itself . . .'. But the rest of the 1919 draft was now published as 'a fragment', with a footnote explaining that, although the author still felt 'some compunction' over what had been written 'in the heat of the moment', he now took a different view about publication – 'These matters belong now to history.'<sup>16</sup>

Lloyd George initially took a similarly lofty view. Keynes's book had hit the headlines in such papers as the *Daily Mail*, naturally sensing a partisan opportunity to stoke the quarrels of two prominent Liberals. Lloyd George at first scornfully told a reporter that all this had been written in 1919; but then he evidently read the new version in print. The phrase that the press seized on was the image of 'this syren', with its dictionary derivation from Greek and Latin myth as one who 'charms, allures or deceives', which was hardly likely to inspire political trust. 'Lloyd George is rooted in nothing; he is void and without content', Keynes's fragment continued, in a vein that was damaging, not because such things had not been said often before, but mainly because they now came from an ostensible supporter.

The real offence lay elsewhere. Keynes's development of his image – 'this goat-footed bard, this half-human visitor to our age from the hag-ridden magic and enchanted woods of Celtic antiquity' – had the timbre not of any classical allusion so much as an ethnic slur. There followed other phrases, identifying 'that flavour of final purposelessness, inner irresponsibility' and his 'cunning, remorselessness, love of power', that were more politically charged. But it was surely Lloyd George's alleged 'existence outside or away from our Saxon good and evil' that again slyly reverted to the stereotype of a Welsh outsider, conveyed with a sneer of over-educated English condescension.<sup>17</sup> It was the culture clash of the wartime Treasury arguments all over again.

How could Keynes not have foreseen the public impact of such words? He found out soon enough when, in October 1933, the relevant volume of Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* was published. His dispute with the Treasury over war finance was inevitably discussed. Lloyd

George did not minimise the role of Keynes, who had been 'for the first time lifted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer into the rocking chair of a pundit', but had proved 'much too mercurial and impulsive a counsellor for a great emergency'. Lloyd George made the most of his privileged opportunity to quote a 1915 memorandum by 'the volatile soothsayer who was responsible for this presage of misfortune'.<sup>18</sup> He duly mocked Keynes's prophecies of doom. True, the fact that Keynes was officially forbidden to quote from the same memorandum led him to complain in *The Times* of sharp practice; but Lloyd George was surely entitled to defend his own record and his own honour, as Keynes conceded in publicly acknowledging their exchanges as 'perhaps as inexcusable on the one side as on the other'.<sup>19</sup>

Yet a highly significant point was missed in these personal polemics. For the real reason why Lloyd George had been proved right by events in supposing that Britain could survive the strains imposed on it in 1915–17 was surely that the full capacity of the economy had been crucially under-estimated by the Treasury mandarins. They had supposed too readily and dogmatically that the limits on domestic production had been reached, without realising that the cumulative force of expansion itself created further resources by taking up the slack in the economy. Why else did the raising of great conscript armies still allow the economy to expand by ten per cent? In short, what was needed to comprehend this process was a Keynesian multiplier effect – a concept of which, in the days when he was McKenna's rocking-chair pundit, Keynes himself was oblivious.

In this perspective, some of the gratuitous gibes in Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* read very ironically. Keynes is described as 'an entertaining economist whose bright but shallow dissertations on finance and political economy, when not taken too seriously, always provide a source of merriment for his readers'. This dart was thrown at just the moment when Keynes had specifically formulated the concept of the multiplier, in arguments that supported key aspects of Roosevelt's New Deal. Lloyd George concluded his indictment

**As Keynes pithily asserted in a radio broadcast in January 1933: 'Look after the unemployment, and the budget will look after itself.'**

of Keynes: 'It seems rather absurd when now not even his friends – least of all his friends – have any longer the slightest faith in his judgments on finance.'<sup>20</sup> Thus Lloyd George scored his point against Keynes in 1933 by implicitly siding with financial orthodoxy.

Consciously or not, each had reversed his earlier position. It was Lloyd George who had first intuitively grasped the fact that real resources are what matters; it was Keynes who had come to abandon the classical doctrines in which he had been schooled. The affinities between the outlook of Keynes and Lloyd George were thus often eclipsed in their own era by immediate, and often transient, political developments. Each coined memorable phrases about the other, with a mutual talent for polemics that we can all relish. It would be a pity, however, if such gibes were all that is remembered of their relationship, which was unusually fruitful in generating a policy agenda that surely still has relevance today.

By 1933, as his new pamphlet, *The Means to Prosperity*, shows, Keynes had a confident grasp of the analysis that was formally elaborated three years later in his *General Theory*. Since investment is the motor of the economy, he saw that an initial stimulus could create the necessary savings to finance it. The new resources are precisely those that are not being used so long as unemployment persists. As a remedy for unemployment, drastic cuts in government spending are thus counter-productive – not because deficits are a good thing but because economic growth is the way to cure them. As Keynes pithily asserted in a radio broadcast in January 1933: 'Look after the unemployment, and the budget will look after itself.'<sup>21</sup> The real deficits that should worry us may thus be those created by self-fulfilling processes of financial stringency, which can drag the economy into a downward spiral, with little promise of early respite. And under such conditions, it may be prudent rather than irresponsible to remember that in the long run we are all dead.

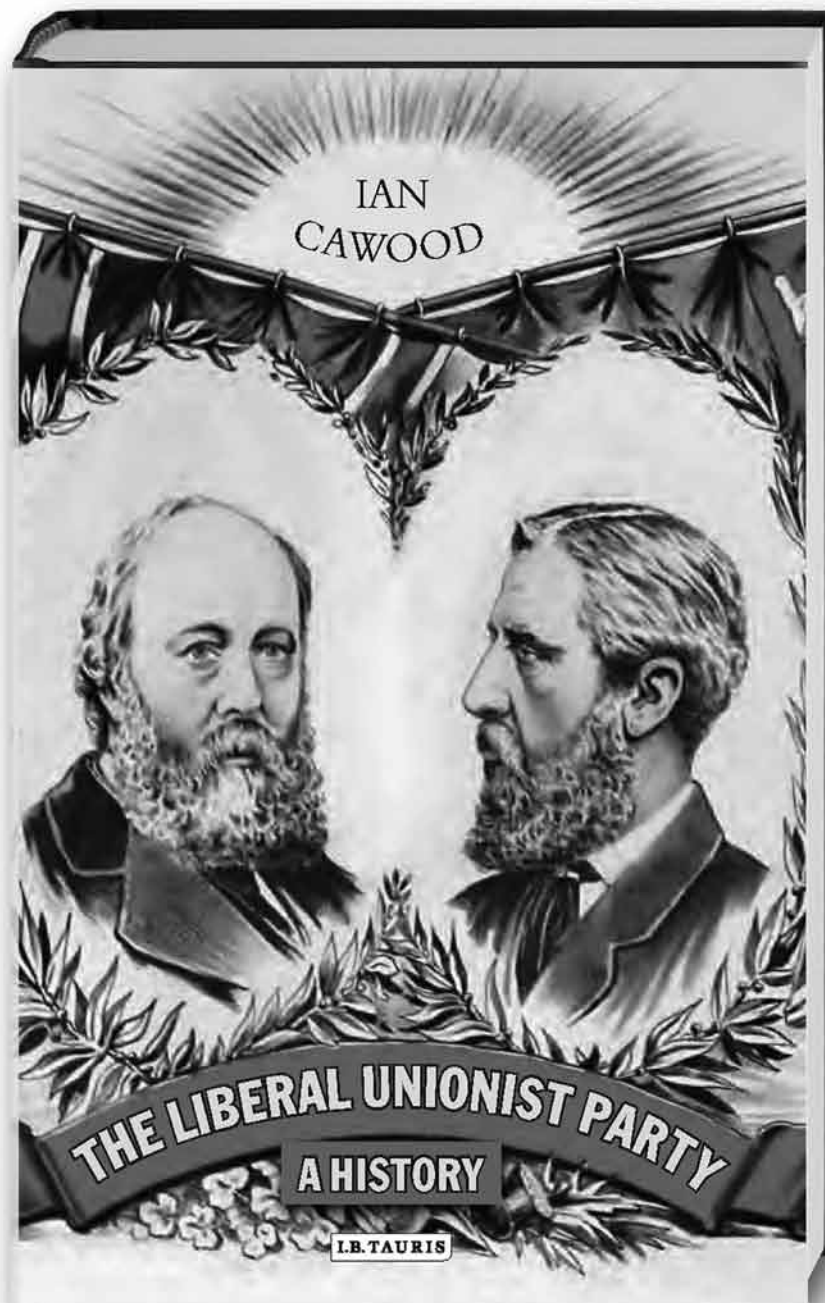
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*The Keynesian Revolution in the Making, 1924–36 (Oxford University Press, 1987), Keynes: the twentieth century's most influential economist (Bloomsbury, 2009) and Mr Churchill's Profession: statesman, orator, writer (Bloomsbury, 2012).*

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- 4 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, popular edition, 2 vols. (London: Odhams Press, 1938), vol. i, pp. 409–10.
- 5 JMK, vol. ii, pp. 26, 34.
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- 9 JMK, xix, p. 222.
- 10 JMK, iv, p. 65.
- 11 JMK, ii, p. 26.
- 12 JMK, xix, pp. 219–223.
- 13 See Roger Middleton, *Government versus the Market* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996) p. 388.
- 14 JMK, xix, p. 223.
- 15 JMK, xix, pp. 807, 823.
- 16 JMK, x, pp. 20–21 n.; and see n. 5 above.
- 17 JMK, x, pp. 23–4; and see R. F. Harrod, *The Life of John Maynard Keynes* (London: Macmillan, 1951) pp. 440–41.
- 18 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. i, pp. 409–10.
- 19 JMK, xxx, pp. 18–19.
- 20 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. i, p. 410.
- 21 JMK, xxi, p. 150.

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# THE WONDERFUL LLOYD GEORGE

David Lloyd George enjoyed an unusually long political afterlife following his ejection from the premiership in October 1922.<sup>1</sup> Only 59 years old when he left Downing Street, he remained a member of the House of Commons for twenty-two years before accepting a peerage in the autumn of 1944. In the history of the twentieth-century premiership only Arthur Balfour exceeded Lloyd George's experience, resigning as Prime Minister in December 1905, but remaining active in politics until shortly before his death in 1930. **David Dutton** tells the story of Lloyd George's last years.



# WIZARD AS WAS E, 1931 – 1945

**B**ALFOUR'S LATER CAREER included a ministerial reincarnation. Appointed Foreign Secretary at the formation of Lloyd George's own government in December 1916, he also filled a number of non-departmental posts in the Conservative governments of the 1920s. By contrast, Lloyd George's career after leaving Downing Street was spent entirely in the ranks of opposition.

In October 1922 few informed observers would have foreseen this outcome. While some said he would be back in office in six months, others in two years, Lloyd George himself suggested that the Tories would now be in power for twenty years.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding two brief interludes of Labour government, it proved to be a remarkably accurate prediction. But if Lloyd George never returned to power, he was at least a major player in the political game over the following decade. Unable to overcome the political handicap, which had begun in 1916, of not having behind him a political party – or at least one large enough to return him to office by conventional means – Lloyd George benefitted from the peculiar electoral and parliamentary circumstances that characterised the 1920s. For a brief period of transition Britain experienced a genuine three-party system, very different from the duopoly which existed during the rest of the century. Such a situation encouraged calculations of political movement and realignment which left the Liberals a significant factor in the country's electoral

Left: Lloyd George at his farm at Bron-y-de, Churt, during the 1930s

arithmetic, despite their relegation to third-party status in 1922. Indeed, on two occasions, following the general elections of 1923 and 1929, the Liberal Party held the balance of power in the House of Commons. And there was always the possibility that electoral reform might further entrench its position as a crucial force in national politics. Some historians have even written the political history of these years with Lloyd George at the very centre of the stage, while other leaders, with larger party forces behind them but lacking the Welshman's dynamism and intellectual energy, worked out how best to keep him consigned to the political wilderness. According to Kenneth Morgan, 'it is clear that the politics of the 1920s were in large measure a reaction against Lloyd George, a reaction in which the Conservative and Labour parties made common cause'.<sup>3</sup>

The situation after 1931, however, was completely different. That year witnessed a dramatic change in Lloyd George's personal fortunes. In the spring he appeared still to be the arbiter of national politics, on the verge of an astonishing comeback into government. Though the surviving documentary record is fragmentary, it appears that Lloyd George was in secret negotiations with Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government, which might have led to his appointment as Leader of the Commons and Foreign Secretary or Chancellor in a Lib-Lab coalition.<sup>4</sup> But Lloyd George's sudden illness in the summer left him

a largely helpless observer of the events which led to the formation of the National Government in August, a government from which it would have been almost impossible to exclude him had he been fit. Had Lloyd George been in a position to lead the Liberal Party in the inter-party negotiations, it seems probable that he would have driven a harder, and for Liberals more advantageous, bargain than proved to be the case, including perhaps the introduction of the Alternative Vote. It is even possible that he would have shown the flexibility to negotiate a compromise agreement with the Conservatives on tariffs.<sup>5</sup> As it was, even the marginalised Lloyd George seemed to rank among the political heavyweights. MacDonald wrote to express his dismay at Lloyd George's indisposition and came to Churt to seek his endorsement. Herbert Samuel, the acting Liberal leader, and Lord Reading, Liberal leader in the Lords, also made their way to the Welshman's country home, ostensibly to ensure that they were in step with his wishes. Less benignly, the Conservative backbencher, Cuthbert Headlam, judged it imperative that the government should go to the country under MacDonald's leadership. Otherwise it would be said that the Tories had broken the National Government, and 'LG and his friends would once again get away with it – and anything might happen. What an unmitigated curse to the country LG is'.<sup>6</sup>

The National Government's decision to follow Headlam's wishes and fight an election in

October transformed Lloyd George's position. He recognised that the likely Conservative majority would not only lead to the introduction of tariffs, but also destroy the residual power which he and the Liberal Party enjoyed in a hung parliament. He was particularly opposed to the idea of a deal with the Conservatives – 'he would sooner have half the present number of Liberal MPs than have an arrangement with the Tories'<sup>7</sup> – and never forgave Samuel and his colleagues for giving in to Conservative pressure. Lloyd George used a radio broadcast during the election campaign to complain that 'under the guise of a patriotic appeal a Tory majority is to be engineered. Patriotism is everywhere exploited for purely party purposes.'<sup>8</sup> His worst forebodings proved justified. The election produced a Conservative majority unmatched in the entire twentieth century. Sixty-eight Liberal MPs were swamped by the massed Tory ranks and in any case teetered on the verge of a decisive split between the followers of Herbert Samuel and those of John Simon. Meanwhile, Lloyd George stood at the head of a tiny band of just four MPs – himself, his children, Megan and Gwilym, and Gwilym's brother-in-law, Goronwy Owen. He was understandably bitter:

When I was stricken down ... we had complete control of the Parliamentary situation ... We had over 5,000,000 of electors. Where are they now? I have never seen a case of more complete disaster following promptly on fatuous and pusillanimous leadership.<sup>9</sup>

If Lloyd George had now taken the opportunity to turn his back on the whole political scene, no one could have blamed him. He had, after all, achieved everything in terms of personal ambition to which a politician could reasonably aspire. One of his many biographers has described the 1920s as a period in which Lloyd George was 'genuinely seeking work'.<sup>10</sup> In the following decade, however, was this any longer the case?

At all events, it would be difficult to describe the Lloyd George of the 1930s as a full-time politician. On occasions he seemed more like a

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full-time writer. His main task was to produce his long-anticipated *War Memoirs*, but before that he completed what was originally intended to be a long memorandum for submission to the international conference on reparations at Lausanne. In fact, it developed into a short book, *The Truth about Reparations and War Debts*, which was published at the end of March 1932. Thereafter his attention turned to his magnum opus. Progress was rapid. Two volumes covering Asquith's wartime government in just over 1,000 pages were published in September and October 1933. A further two of 1,500 pages, dealing with 1917, followed in September and October 1934, with a final two volumes of comparable length detailing the last year of the war appearing in 1936. It was hardly surprising, then, to find Lloyd George in September 1932 writing of his wish to be 'free to get on with my work' and not wanting to 'throw myself into active politics before 1934'.<sup>11</sup>

Once the *War Memoirs* were out of the way, Lloyd George turned almost immediately to his account of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, published in two substantial volumes in 1938 as *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*. It amounted in total to an astonishing literary output on the part of a man now in his eighth decade. Nor was Lloyd George's involvement in the project purely nominal. The books were not ghost-written. Though his staff were employed to collect, sort and assemble the massive body of documentation upon which they were based, the writing itself bore Lloyd George's own unmistakable imprint. As Frances Stevenson recalled, 'the work went on apace ... He could never do anything except with the whole of his energy, and we were hard put to it to keep pace with his output.'<sup>12</sup>

Lloyd George's writing about the past was symptomatic of a deeper characteristic of the man at this time. The diaries of his two indispensable secretaries, Frances Stevenson and A. J. Sylvester – though their services to Lloyd George were inevitably very different – reveal someone with a strong disposition to live in the past.<sup>13</sup> Lloyd George often seemed happier to reminisce about his struggles with Field Marshal Haig or his roots in the politics and religion of

North Wales than he was to engage with the contemporary political scene. Thomas Jones, accompanying him on his notorious trip to Germany in 1936, noted him 'fighting the campaigns of the Great War all over again with great animation'.<sup>14</sup> Almost subconsciously, Lloyd George seemed to be laying the foundations of a later myth about his own career, that the politics of the 1930s were all about those lesser men, scarcely worthy of attention, who had excluded him from office but who could not stand comparison with the figures of an earlier, nobler era when Lloyd George himself had been at the peak of his powers.

It was also striking that Lloyd George began in the 1930s to take extended holidays in such distant locations as Ceylon and Jamaica. Rather like French governments in the dying years of the Third Republic, he developed something of a reputation for not being in place at moments of political crisis. His absence abroad was not unconnected with his literary preoccupations. Lloyd George increasingly found it necessary to remove himself physically from the distractions of British politics in order to give his full attention to his writing.

Frustration with the domestic political scene also encouraged a growing interest in agriculture. There was a political dimension here. His interest in the land, and his belief that in it lay the solution to most of the nation's troubles, went back to the earliest days of his political career. 'He says he has the land in his bones', noted Frances Stevenson in March 1934.<sup>15</sup> By that time there was some suggestion that he might be brought into the National Government as Minister of Agriculture, and a variation of the same idea resurfaced during the first months of the Second World War.<sup>16</sup> But Lloyd George's interest in the subject was also increasingly domestic and personal, focused on the experimental farm which he cultivated in Surrey. 'The farm itself was becoming to him more and more important and more and more of a solace against the bitterness of politics.'<sup>17</sup> He once remarked that he was infinitely more interested now in apples than he was in politics or even in his writing.<sup>18</sup> Even during his visit to Hitler in 1936, Sylvester received daily



telephone reports from Churt on the progress of Lloyd George's fruit farm – 'the weather, the yield of honey, the price got for fruit, sold at Harrods or Covent Garden, the takings of his shop in the village and so forth'.<sup>19</sup> At one level there was something admirably balanced about all this. But it also serves as a revealing barometer of the extent of Lloyd George's commitment to the British political scene.

These preoccupations and distractions must be noted. But politics were also deeply ingrained in Lloyd George's make-up. There was a side to him which bitterly resented his exclusion from the corridors of power and from the sheer excitement of political life. En route to the East at the end of 1931, he wrote to his old friend, Herbert Lewis: 'As you know, I have always found it difficult to keep out of a "scrap", more particularly so when I find causes in which I am interested being so inadequately and ineptly defended.'<sup>20</sup> Similar sentiments lay behind remarks recorded a year later by the diarist, Harold Nicolson. 'One is never well out of it', insisted Lloyd George. 'One is just out of it.'<sup>21</sup> Stevenson encouraged him to bide his time. 'Things are obviously going to get much worse', she predicted in December 1931, 'and they will want you then.'<sup>22</sup> But she and Lloyd George appear to have underestimated both the government's competence and its hold over public opinion. 'I am sure it will not be very long', she reiterated the following May, 'before the people discover that this Gov. is *not* going to get them out of the mess – then they will turn to someone or something else.'<sup>23</sup> At the time of the general election, Lloyd George had decided upon a strategy 'to support Labour, but not definitely and deliberately, but by speeches in the House which will make them come over to him, rather than him to them'.<sup>24</sup> Now, however, Labour itself was reduced to a rump of just 52 MPs, constituting the weakest parliamentary opposition of modern times. At the same time, Lloyd George seemed determined to cut his formal links with the Liberal Party. On 3 November 1931 he wrote to Samuel to let him know that he would not be attending the meeting at the start of the new parliamentary session and declining to hold any further offices in the party's ranks.<sup>25</sup>

Returning from a winter trip to Ceylon, Lloyd George made his first appearance in the new House of Commons on 17 March 1932, but did not speak there for a further three months. He was still capable of a stinging thrust at the expense of his political opponents. 'The government', he concluded at the end of a wide-ranging survey of the political scene on 12 July, 'is the most abject picture I have ever seen of statesmanship in a funk.'<sup>26</sup> But there were obvious limits to what he could achieve in a chamber where the government held around 90 per cent of the seats. Those who until recently had feared his impact upon British politics could now afford to treat him with something approaching contempt. 'LG is fair game for almost anyone in these new days', noted Cuthbert Headlam. 'How odd it seems when one remembers his position ten years ago!'<sup>27</sup>

A chance meeting with Stanley Baldwin in March 1933 left Lloyd George with the impression that the Conservative leader would 'like to work with him'.<sup>28</sup> For the time being, however, nothing came of this. Indeed, a year later, by which time he believed that Lloyd George had taken 'the wrong track' as regards policy towards India, Baldwin told the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* that, although he liked the 'little man', he could not work with him. But the heart of the matter, as Baldwin conceded, was that 'he does not, of course, count for much in this present House of Commons'.<sup>29</sup> Despite her earlier encouragement, Frances Stevenson began to doubt whether Lloyd George would be glad of the offer of a place in the National Government and, more importantly, whether he could 'sustain physically a job ... which demands concentration and continual attention'.<sup>30</sup> Reading the recently published diary of Lord Esher, with its account of Lord Rosebery's troubled retirement, helped reconcile Lloyd George to his own, 'which is so much happier and so full of interest'. The young Conservative, Harold Macmillan, many of whose progressive ideas chimed with Lloyd George's own, sought an interview at Churt, but Lloyd George was 'not very interested'.<sup>31</sup> Nothing, he told Macmillan, would induce him to take office in the present government. He feared

that the Tories would simply make use of his name to bolster their own fortunes up to the next election. 'After the election they would throw him over, and his plans, and he would be left high and dry with no sort of political future whatever – much less than he has now.'<sup>32</sup>

Yet, after that election, the situation might be different. Anticipating a greatly reduced government majority, Lloyd George began to think about consolidating a small block of progressive opinion. Twenty or thirty MPs might be enough to have a decisive impact. Then Lloyd George, 'with his little party, would be all powerful and could dictate policy, which is just what he would like'.<sup>33</sup> The approach of the election, and mounting evidence that the government was not confident of victory, served to revive Lloyd George's appetite for the political fray. In the autumn of 1934 he set up a new economic enquiry to produce a plan for a wide-ranging reorganisation of the British economy, designed to eliminate unemployment, then still standing at more than two million. 'The whole scheme is a bit loose and vague at present', admitted Frances Stevenson, 'but I expect it will materialise before the Election.'<sup>34</sup>

But Lloyd George could never fully escape from the absence of party support. Conversations with his former ministerial colleague, Dr Addison, in November led to hopes of an electoral deal with Labour, but these were soon dashed when the Labour leader, George Lansbury, failed to persuade his party to come to a national agreement.<sup>35</sup> Briefly, a dramatic intervention in a Commons debate on defence later in the month restored Lloyd George to the political limelight. 'Some say that an entirely new political situation has been brought about', suggested Stevenson with forgivable exaggeration. 'They speak of a possible combination of S.B., Winston and D[avid]'.<sup>36</sup> But Baldwin knew that such a conjunction would result in 'the resignations of half the Cabinet on my hands'. Lloyd George was 'not a cohesive but a disintegrating force'.<sup>37</sup> As soon as the Conservative leader secured an overwhelming vote in favour of his Indian policy at a meeting of the Conservative Central Council on 4 December, any immediate need to go cap in hand to Lloyd George

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disappeared. ‘They’re safe now till ’36’, declared Lloyd George. ‘And that suits me.’<sup>38</sup> But in reality it didn’t. Time was against him. Lloyd George now approached his seventy-second birthday.

As he prepared to launch his British ‘New Deal’, his critics remained sceptical. After listening to this ‘tiresome little man’ in a debate on the Depressed Areas Bill, Cuthbert Headlam judged that his plan would be ‘very much on the old lines ... splash about as much as possible – spend money like water, etc., etc. ... He clearly anticipates a state of things after the next election of a similar character to 1929 and hopes to be in a position to be able to control the situation.’<sup>39</sup> Speaking in Bangor on his birthday, 17 January 1935, Lloyd George launched his proposals. Stressing that he now stood above party, he called for the creation of a national Development Council, with representatives from commerce, industry, finance, academia and the workforce, with the power, via a ‘Prosperity Loan’, to implement schemes of investment in housing, roads, the land and the regeneration of depressed industries. The government should be headed by a small cabinet of five ministers, mostly without departmental responsibilities and reminiscent of the War Cabinet he had created in 1916. Frances Stevenson was convinced that the speech marked a turning point in her master’s fortunes, with ‘much fluttering of the political dove-cotes as to D[avid]’s position, now and in the future’. There was no doubt, she insisted, that Lloyd George’s words had ‘caught on in the country. We are overwhelmed with approval from every quarter, and of every political complexion.’<sup>40</sup> Lloyd George himself was ‘staking everything on the results of the next few months. If he fails, he will devote himself to the farm and his writing for the rest of his life.’<sup>41</sup> Others, though, were less enthused. Much of what Lloyd George had said merely reiterated his proposals of the 1920s. One sceptic wrote dismissively of ‘the Yellow Book with Trimmings’.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, Lloyd George’s restoration to front-line politics was a live issue in the first months of 1935. There would be advantages for both sides. Lloyd George in office would have the opportunity

to implement at least some of his plans, while the Conservative-dominated government could help revive its credentials as a truly ‘National’ administration, while consolidating progressive opinion behind it in the run-up to the election. But there were dangers too. Lloyd George’s return to government would be bitterly opposed as an unnecessarily divisive step by a large number of Tories, not least the extremely influential Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, in his gloomier moments, Lloyd George feared that ‘they will immediately have an election and then, having been returned for five years with my assistance, they will politely tell me to go to Hell’.<sup>44</sup> After considerable debate – and disagreement – inside the government, Prime Minister MacDonald invited Lloyd George to submit his plans for the relief of unemployment to a high-powered cabinet committee, consisting of MacDonald himself, Baldwin, Chamberlain, John Simon, Lord Hailsham, J. H. Thomas, Walter Runciman, Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Walter Elliot, Ernest Brown, Kingsley Wood and Godfrey Collins. Six meetings were held with Lloyd George between 18 April and 15 May. ‘They have given D[avid] such a chance’, judged Stevenson, ‘that with his political flair he will have the situation at his feet.’<sup>45</sup> In mid-April the journalist, Collin Brooks, heard that Chamberlain was now reconciled to the idea of Lloyd George’s membership of the Cabinet and that Simon would have to be elevated to the Woolsack to make room for him.<sup>46</sup> Lloyd George himself got the impression that the government wanted to make terms with him, but that ‘of course they want as cheap terms as possible’.<sup>47</sup> In conversation with Thomas Jones, which he knew would be reported to Baldwin, he stressed that he was less concerned with office for himself – ‘I should find the day-to-day responsibilities of office rather irksome now’ – than with the adoption of his programme. But he was ready to play such cards as he held as skilfully as he could, making it clear that his political fund was in a healthy state and that, should his proposals be rejected, he would be in a position to field up to 300 candidates at the election. ‘The result

of that would be to help the return of Labour in many constituencies.’ Indeed, ‘he himself might secure a following sufficiently numerous to reduce the Conservative majority to so narrow a margin as to make the life of the next Parliament very arduous and uncertain’.<sup>48</sup>

In effect Baldwin, who succeeded the ailing MacDonald as Prime Minister on 7 June, called Lloyd George’s bluff. It became clear that negotiations with the cabinet committee would not lead to the Welshman’s return to government. The meetings were ‘studiously pleasant’, he noted, ‘but they knew in their hearts that they were going to knife me’. Ominously, he added: ‘What they did not know was that I too had a dagger in my sheath for them.’<sup>49</sup> Without waiting for the final meeting of the committee, Lloyd George issued a statement to the press, a ‘Call to Action’. Prompted by a ‘number of well-known Nonconformists’, he proposed a national campaign to ‘rouse public opinion on the issues of peace and unemployment’.<sup>50</sup> The result was a mass gathering of some 2,500 delegates at the Central Hall, Westminster, on 1 July. It was avowedly non-party, but in practice all-party, attracting the initial support of Conservatives such as Macmillan and Lord Cecil of Chelwood, Labour’s George Lansbury and Lloyd George’s old Liberal colleague, Lord Lothian. But, ever conscious of his own weakness in terms of organised party politics, Lloyd George also looked to the Free Churches as the best available vehicle to secure his political resurrection.<sup>51</sup> The convention voted to set up the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction to advance his proposals. In one sense the Council was innovative and forward-looking, anticipating the non-party political activism of more recent times. But in its emphasis upon the Free Churches, Lloyd George was relying on a force that was already in decline. It was clear, noted the government minister Leslie Hore-Belisha, that he was ‘assuming the existence of a “Nonconformist vote” of the old kind’.<sup>52</sup>

Seeking confirmation and encouragement from historical parallels – Gladstone at seventy had fifteen years of active political life ahead of him when he launched his Midlothian campaign – Lloyd George began to contemplate

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an unlikely return to power. No longer was it just a question of forcing his way into a reorganised National Government. Labour, he calculated, might win as many as 290 seats at the election and the Liberals 40, leading to the government's defeat:

Under those circumstances ... I would form a Government with Lansbury as nominal Prime Minister, but retaining the active leadership for myself. I would then proceed to formulate a devastating progressive programme, and go to the country again immediately upon it with a terrific campaign, and return with a majority of 150.<sup>53</sup>

In practice, contemporaries – Lloyd George and cabinet ministers included – greatly exaggerated the electoral perils confronting the National Government. A number of by-election setbacks created an atmosphere of near-panic in Conservative Central Office which was scarcely justified. Over no sustained period were these defeats on a scale to suggest the loss of the general election itself. Indeed, modern psephologists might have pointed out that the size of the government's victory in 1931 was such as to render most unlikely a complete reversal of fortunes over a single parliament. Furthermore, the 'National' label continued to count. The government was still able to attract much of the 'Liberal vote' won over in 1931, partly through its ongoing partnership with Simon's Liberal Nationals and partly as a result of the 'liberal' credentials of Baldwin's own centrist brand of Conservatism. In this situation, Lloyd George's hopes were never likely to be realised. Even Stevenson soon concluded that the Council of Action lacked the necessary roots of popular support.<sup>54</sup>

The nonconformist bandwagon failed to materialise. Many clerics, recognising that Lloyd George's actions were directed against the government and therefore politically motivated, soon withdrew their support. When the general election was called for November, Lloyd George was not ready for it. Drawing a parallel with the plight of Abyssinia in the face of Italian aggression, he claimed a rapport with the beleaguered Africans,

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'knowing that all the guns and ammunitions are with the other side – and the poison gas, too'.<sup>55</sup> Asked about the prospect of Council of Action or specifically Lloyd George candidates, Herbert Samuel thought there 'might be a few, but only a few'.<sup>56</sup> In the event, Lloyd George concentrated on sending out a questionnaire in an attempt to ascertain which candidates from all parties supported his proposals. The campaign did not go well for Lloyd George. Chamberlain ridiculed his pretensions, insisting that he represented only himself and could safely be ignored. Then the defection from the Council of Action of the Methodist leader, Dr Scott Lidgett, only days before polling, came as a bitter blow. Lidgett now urged his followers to support the National Government. Cuthbert Headlam, hesitating over whether to take any notice of the questionnaire, expected that Lloyd George was 'going to give us a lot of worry'.<sup>57</sup> His concern was largely unwarranted. Lloyd George had the capacity to irritate, but little more. The Conservatives had wanted to campaign on a proposal to put 100,000 men to work on the land over five years; Lloyd George talked in terms of a million. The Tories concluded that 'fantastic though [Lloyd George's] proposal is, it nevertheless seems to preclude us altogether from coming out now with a policy aimed at placing only 10 per cent of this number on the land during the next five years'.<sup>58</sup>

Out of a total of 1,348 candidates standing at the election, 362 received Council of Action endorsement and of these 67 were victorious at the polls – 11 Conservatives, 21 Liberals, 34 Labour and one Independent. It was a meagre return for the £400,000 Lloyd George was said to have spent from his political fund. Furthermore, neither at the election nor in the resulting parliament did these MPs constitute a political grouping. Just as importantly, the election confirmed the National Government in power. Granted the scale of the 1931 landslide, some loss of ground to Labour was inevitable. But, with an overall majority in the new House of Commons of almost 250, its position remained secure. It was difficult to see how Lloyd George could make any further progress. With the election he and his family group

rejoined the mainstream Liberal Party. But Lloyd George showed no interest in resuming the leadership of what was now a relatively unimportant parliamentary rump.

In the wake of the election Stevenson found him 'very cheerful' and intent on carrying on with the Council of Action. It was possible, she claimed, that in two years time he would have become a political force again. Yet her remarks also suggested an element of make-believe. The Council gave him 'a semblance of activity and so long as he has this he will be happy'.<sup>59</sup> The crisis over the Hoare-Laval Pact at the end of the year left him fulminating against Baldwin as 'a fraud and a humbug' who had deceived 'hundreds of thousands of decent Liberals'.<sup>60</sup> Objectively, however, it was difficult to escape the conclusion that the Prime Minister, whose position now seemed unassailable, had outwitted his old rival. An ill-judged telegram sent by Lloyd George to the Duke of Windsor at the end of the Abdication Crisis caused Headlam to seethe with contempt:

Always supposed to be a political wizard, he has proved himself quite incapable of playing his cards correctly. An old man in a hurry to regain power, he found himself up against a much more astute politician in the man whom he so foolishly underrated and despised – Mr B has beaten him to a frazzle.<sup>61</sup>

In the autumn of 1936 Lloyd George made his infamous visit to Germany where he met Hitler at the Berghof. This strange episode is discussed in detail elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal*.<sup>62</sup> Many at the time thought the trip ill-judged, and it appears more so with the passage of the years. Lloyd George emerged from the meeting in a state of elation, convinced that the Führer was a man of destiny. True, it was Hitler's domestic achievements which prompted Lloyd George's admiration rather than his ideology. But more perceptive observers understood the impossibility of assessing the German leader without reference to the sort of regime which he had created. The visit seemed to justify Robert Boothby's statement to the Commons a few months earlier

that, however admirable his contributions to Britain's social services, Lloyd George had been a calamity as an international statesman.<sup>63</sup> In the present context it is worth noting that Lloyd George's performance in Germany was only likely to alienate many of those progressive young politicians who might otherwise have been inclined to rally to his standard.

In the last years of the decade Lloyd George's attendance at Westminster became 'a positive chore'.<sup>64</sup> When he made the effort, he could still put in a commanding performance. An attack on the government in June 1936 for abandoning sanctions against Italy prompted Churchill to speak of 'one of the greatest Parliamentary performances of all time', while a visibly shaken Baldwin was obliged to congratulate the Member for Caernarfon Boroughs on a speech which showed that he had 'not lost the least atom of vigour' compared with thirty years before.<sup>65</sup> Three years later, convinced that Neville Chamberlain's post-Prague foreign policy made no strategic sense, he told the Commons that without a Russian alliance the government's guarantees – or as he put it, 'the demented pledges' – to Poland, Romania and Greece represented 'the most reckless commitment that any country has ever entered into'.<sup>66</sup> But more commonly, Lloyd George tended to duck out of making promised speeches and no longer seemed capable of delivering the rapier-like responses in parliamentary debate that had once been his trademark. 'My summing up of LG's feelings these days', concluded Sylvester, 'is one of helplessness'.<sup>67</sup> At times he even seemed to have lost his nerve. He decided against attending the debate on the Munich settlement in October 1938, possibly because he was reluctant to reveal his broad support for the deal which Chamberlain had brought back from Germany, and he backed out of a debate on foreign affairs in July 1939, spending the day instead playing with Jennifer, his presumed daughter by Frances Stevenson.<sup>68</sup>

Such interventions as Lloyd George did make appeared to be motivated by an increasingly negative mindset, especially once his arch-enemy, Chamberlain, became Prime Minister in May 1937. He was moved by little more than an

**'Personally, I believe LG is fast on the downhill grade ... He acts the part of a virile, strong man when he is in the House. He walks quickly on purpose to create an impression. But put him at a difficulty, face him with an important situation and a speech: he funks it. He is full to the brim with an inferiority complex.'**

unthinking conviction that matters had been better handled when he was in charge. A pointed passage in Chamberlain's speech during a debate on conscription in April 1939 got to the heart of the matter:

It is a fixed part of the practice of the Right Honourable Gentleman to belittle or pour contempt on everything that this Government does. The further in time the Government gets from the period when he himself was Prime Minister, the worse it gets in his estimation. I do not know whether he is going to speak in this debate. If so, it will be interesting to know whether he is in favour of a larger measure of conscription, or against conscription altogether. I am sure that he is agin the Government whatever they propose.<sup>69</sup>

Lloyd George made no response. He was by this time perhaps privately aware that his own powers were failing. In July 1936, when he was seventy-three, he told his future biographer, Malcolm Thomson, that 'executive Ministers' should not be much over sixty.<sup>70</sup> Headlam, disgusted by Lloyd George's attacks on Chamberlain and convinced that this 'horrid little man' was already in his dotage, wished that he could be 'removed to another world, where he could go on telling all and sundry how much abler, and wiser, and braver he had been on earth than other men'.<sup>71</sup> A. J. Sylvester was naturally more sympathetic, but his assessment was not entirely different:

Personally, I believe LG is fast on the downhill grade ... He acts the part of a virile, strong man when he is in the House. He walks quickly on purpose to create an impression. But put him at a difficulty, face him with an important situation and a speech: he funks it. He is full to the brim with an inferiority complex.<sup>72</sup>

Ageing and isolated, Lloyd George was trapped in a state of political irrelevance. Only a crisis of monumental proportions could possibly restore him to power. That crisis, of course, arrived with Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 and Britain's declaration of

war two days later. Chamberlain tried, but failed, to construct an all-party coalition. In conversation with the former Cabinet Secretary, Maurice Hankey, he even discussed the possibility of including the war leader of 1916–18 in his administration.<sup>73</sup> In the event no offer was made. In all probability it was one which Lloyd George would have declined, even though he was disappointed not to receive it. With the outbreak of hostilities, Lloyd George offered the government one of his infrequent gestures of support. The government, he argued,

could do no other than what they have done. I am one out of tens of millions in this country who will back any government that is in power in fighting this struggle through, in however humble a capacity we may be called upon to render service to our country.<sup>74</sup>

Before long, however, he reverted to his more typical stance. 'I would be happier', noted Sylvester, 'if I could see some drive in him, some fixity of purpose, some definite policy. His [attitude to the government] is merely guerrilla warfare with no application'.<sup>75</sup> Hostility towards Chamberlain seemed to blind him to the perils facing the country. 'What he really wants', judged Sylvester, 'is to bring this Government rolling down in the muck'.<sup>76</sup> By October he was trying to tap into the significant, but still minority, opinion in the country in favour of an early peace. While Chamberlain was making it clear that there could be no further negotiations with Hitler, Lloyd George staged a meeting of the Council of Action at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, where he suggested that Hitler should be invited to state his peace terms, a move which prompted a stinging rebuke from the *Sunday Pictorial*.<sup>77</sup> The reaction caused him to tone down a speech to his constituents on the same theme and thereafter his emphasis turned to maximising food production from domestic agriculture. In private, however, he remained convinced that the basis of a satisfactory settlement with Germany could still be found, as was apparent in an interview with Sumner Welles, the American Under-Secretary of State, in March 1940.<sup>78</sup>

At a meeting in December 1939 with Churchill, now restored to office as First Lord of the Admiralty, Lloyd George got the impression that he might be brought into government when ministerial changes were made. Privately, however, he was deeply pessimistic about Britain's prospects in the war. A peace move in 1942 or 1943 might be the only alternative to military defeat:

People call me defeatist, but what I say to them is this: Tell me how we can win! Can we win in the air? Can we win at sea, when the effect of our naval blockade is wiped out by Germany's connections with Russia? How can we win on the land?<sup>79</sup>

Logic may have been on his side, but things did not work out in the way Lloyd George envisaged. Nonetheless, the relative inactivity of the so-called Phoney War gave rise to increasing feelings that the war effort was not being effectively conducted and some critics looked to the dynamic leader of earlier years to provide an alternative, not least because he seemed the best placed figure to bring the Labour Party into a genuinely National Government. But Lloyd George himself remained cautious. 'It would have to be made perfectly clear', he advised Sylvester, 'that I could not bring about a decisive victory, as I did last time. We have made so many mistakes that we are not in nearly as good a position.'<sup>80</sup>

As the ill-fated expedition to Norway hastened the crisis of Chamberlain's premiership, the usually well-informed National Labour MP, Harold Nicolson, noted that people 'are talking of Lloyd George as a possible P.M. Eden is out of it. Churchill is undermined by the Conservative caucus.'<sup>81</sup> A lunch with J. L. Garvin of the *Observer* and the Tory MP, Nancy Astor, was designed, as the latter put it, to test Lloyd George's 'fitness to return to the helm of the ship of state'. But Thomas Jones got the impression that his former boss 'preferred to await his country's summons a little longer, but ... expected to receive it as the peril grew'.<sup>82</sup> In reality, the politics of the situation demanded that any replacement for Chamberlain should come from the Conservative Party as still the overwhelmingly

strongest force in the House of Commons. But the crisis did at least afford Lloyd George the opportunity to deliver his last great parliamentary performance. He was at first uncertain whether or not to speak in the debate but, prompted by his daughter Megan, Boothby and the independent Liberal MP, Clement Davies, amongst others, Lloyd George returned to the Commons chamber to deliver a very pointed *coup de grace*. In a speech which, as one observer put it, lasted only ten minutes but contained the accumulated hostility of twenty-five years, he called upon the Prime Minister to make the ultimate sacrifice and give up the seals of office.<sup>83</sup> His parliamentary majority in the subsequent vote reduced to 81, Chamberlain resigned on 10 May, to be succeeded not by Lloyd George but by Winston Churchill.

There was no place for Lloyd George in Churchill's War Cabinet. Hopes that he might be put in charge of food production also came to nothing, not least because Lloyd George let it be known that he would want to retain the right to criticise the overall war effort – a virtually impossible condition for the new premier to accept. Lloyd George claimed not to be disappointed, making the composition of Churchill's government, in which Chamberlain retained high office as Lord President and virtually prime minister of the Home Front, his explanation. 'I would simply be there fretting and fuming and having no real authority ... Neville would have infinitely more authority than I would have, and he would oppose everything I proposed.'<sup>84</sup> When, at the end of May, Churchill did offer him a position in the War Cabinet, subject to Chamberlain's agreement, Lloyd George again took offence. Even when Chamberlain's agreement appeared to have been obtained, Lloyd George still declined to serve in a government in which the former Prime Minister was a senior member. By the time that illness forced Chamberlain's own resignation in October, Lloyd George had decided that he would prefer to 'wait until Winston is bust' before taking office.<sup>85</sup>

The historical parallel he drew now was with Georges Clemenceau, who had only taken office

at the end of 1917 after a string of lesser politicians had tried and failed to bring France to victory in the First World War. Yet a more accurate comparison was perhaps with Marshal Pétain, with Lloyd George playing the role of the realist who would step in to secure the best possible terms for his country once it was recognised that victory was unattainable. 'He is very conscious of his achievements in the last war', noted the newspaper proprietor, Cecil King, after meeting Lloyd George on 6 June, 'and considers he will inevitably be called on sooner or later in this one, even if it is only to sign the treaty of surrender to Germany.'<sup>86</sup> Stevenson and Sylvester both continued to encourage Lloyd George. 'Keep yourself fit', wrote the former on 26 September, 'for the time when it becomes quite clear that you will have to take a hand in things – which time is not so far off, I feel sure.'<sup>87</sup> But with hindsight she concluded that he had never intended to take part in the wartime government.<sup>88</sup> Somewhat sooner, Sylvester realised that Lloyd George was never going to act: 'he is just putting off, putting off. It used to be because Neville was in; now he is waiting, still waiting. Tactics, tactics, tactics.'<sup>89</sup>

The somewhat unedifying spectacle of Churchill trying to coax Lloyd George back into office came to an end when the latter, ostensibly on his doctor's advice, declined the offer of the Washington embassy after the sudden death of Lord Lothian in December 1940. A final line was drawn with a bitter exchange between the two men in the Commons the following May. A characteristically defeatist contribution from Lloyd George was greeted by the Prime Minister's suggestion that it was 'the sort of speech with which, I imagine, the illustrious and venerable Marshal Pétain might well have enlivened the closing days of M. Reynaud's Cabinet.'<sup>90</sup> Coming from his oldest political associate, indeed friend, these words were meant to hurt Lloyd George; almost certainly they did.

Lloyd George died on 26 March 1945.<sup>91</sup> The cancer which killed him had probably been weakening his constitution for some time. 'He faltered a lot in his conversation', reported Cecil King as early as October 1941, 'lost the thread of

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his remarks, fumbled for the right word, and spoke very slowly.<sup>92</sup> Until January 1945 he had remained a constituency MP, albeit an increasingly detached one, for the Caernarfon Boroughs seat which he had represented since 1890. But in his later years Lloyd George's appearances in his constituency became increasingly rare. Sylvester noted discontent in the autumn of 1938 that he had not addressed a political meeting there since the election campaign of 1935.<sup>93</sup> Some of his parliamentary performances, such as his vote in support of conscription in 1939, did not go down well among radical Welsh non-conformists.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, the fear that Lloyd George, even if fit enough to campaign, might be unable to hold his seat in a post-war general election was a factor in his decision to accept a peerage to guarantee a new platform for his opinions on the coming peace settlement.

In political terms the last decade and a half of his life had proved relatively barren. Yet there were still times, particularly in the mid-1930s, when his return to high office seemed a distinct possibility. More generally, his influence lay largely in the minds of others – the impact he could still exert on policy, the mischief he could still create – a legacy of little more than memories of the supreme power he had once exercised. The lack of a strong party base, important since 1916, became an ever greater handicap. Only exceptional circumstances offered any chance to overcome this. In 1931 a stricken Lloyd George was the victim of sheer bad luck. In the exceptional circumstances of the Second World War, however, he miscalculated. His pessimism was in many ways justified. He did not foresee, and few could have confidently predicted, events such as the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which transformed Britain's strategic outlook. But Lloyd George's willingness publicly to contemplate defeat, or at least a disadvantageous peace, has served to tarnish his long-term historical reputation. It was a sad end to a distinguished career.

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- 1 The phrase 'the wonderful wizard as was' was coined by William Barkley in the *Daily Express*, 9 May 1940.
- 2 M. Thomson, *David Lloyd George: The Official Biography* (London, 1948), p. 23.
- 3 K. Morgan, *Lloyd George* (London, 1974), p. 170. See also J. Campbell, *Lloyd George: The Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), *passim*.
- 4 F. Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George His Life and Times* (London, 1954), p. 717; Thomson, *Lloyd George*, pp. 405–06; Campbell, *Goat*, pp. 293–94.
- 5 For an imaginative, but thoughtful, assessment of what might have happened had Lloyd George not been indisposed, see J. Reynolds, 'What if Lloyd George had done a deal with the Tories in 1931' in D. Brack and I. Dale (eds), *Prime Minister Boris and other things that never happened* (London, 2011), pp. 27–46.
- 6 S. Ball (ed.), *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Baldwin and MacDonald: The Headlam Diaries 1923–1935* (London, 1992), p. 217.
- 7 C. Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: The Diary of A.J. Sylvester 1931–45* (London, 1975), p. 39.
- 8 Campbell, *Goat*, p. 302.
- 9 Lloyd George to Herbert Lewis 31 December 1931, cited in P. Rowland, *Lloyd George* (London, 1975), p. 695.
- 10 Rowland, *Lloyd George*.
- 11 Lloyd George to Frances Stevenson 23 September 1932, cited in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *My Darling Pussy: The Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson 1913–41* (London, 1975), p. 189.
- 12 Thomson, *Lloyd George*, p. 25.
- 13 In later years Stevenson and Sylvester (supported by their respective families) disputed their relative importance to Lloyd George. See, for example, 'Diary of a Principal Private Secretary', BBC Radio 4, 25 September 1984 and subsequent letter from Muriel Stevenson to the *Radio Times*. In support of Sylvester's importance as a witness to Lloyd George's political life, it may be noted that, as an award-winning practitioner of shorthand, he was well-placed to record his master's words. See also, J. G. Jones, 'Life with Lloyd George', *Journal of Liberal History*, 55 (2007), pp. 28–36.
- 14 T. Jones, *A Diary with Letters 1931–1950* (London, 1954), p. 247.
- 15 A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson* (London, 1971), p. 262.
- 16 Jones, *Diary with Letters*, p. 123.
- 17 F. Stevenson, *The Years That Are Past* (London, 1967), p. 253.
- 18 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, pp. 99–100.
- 19 Jones, *Diary with Letters*, p. 255.
- 20 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, p. 722.
- 21 N. Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters 1930–1939* (London, 1966), p. 123.
- 22 Stevenson to Lloyd George 16 December 1931, Taylor (ed.), *Darling Pussy*, p. 166.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 19 May 1932, Taylor (ed.), *Darling Pussy*, p. 180.
- 24 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 41.
- 25 Rowland, *Lloyd George*, p. 693.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 698.
- 27 Ball (ed.), *Headlam Diaries 1923–1935*, p. 233.
- 28 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 93.
- 29 A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record: W.P. Crozier Political Interviews 1931–1943* (London, 1973), pp. 26–27.
- 30 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, pp. 254–55.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 279.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- 35 The approach to Addison was somewhat quixotic granted their apparently irreparable dispute over housing policy in 1921.
- 36 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, pp. 293–94.
- 37 Jones, *Diary with Letters*, pp. 138–39.
- 38 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 294.
- 39 Ball (ed.), *Headlam Diaries 1923–1935*, p. 317.
- 40 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, pp. 299–300.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 298.
- 42 A. J. Cummings, cited in R. Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness* (London, 2007), p. 307.
- 43 Animosity between Lloyd George and Chamberlain went back to the latter's unhappy tenure of the post of Director-General of National Service in Lloyd George's wartime government, 1916–17.
- 44 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 118.
- 45 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 302.
- 46 N. J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet Street, Press Barons and Politics: The Journals of Colin Brooks, 1932–1940* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 101.
- 47 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 307.
- 48 Jones, *Diary with Letters*, pp. 146–47.
- 49 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 310; Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, p. 729.

- 50 *The Times*, 5 June 1935.
- 51 S. Koss, 'Lloyd George and Nonconformity: the Last Rally', *English Historical Review*, LXXXIX (1974), p. 91.
- 52 Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record*, p. 49.
- 53 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 312.
- 54 Stevenson to F. Brett Young 7 August 1935, cited in Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 311.
- 55 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 318; Thomson, *Lloyd George*, p. 27.
- 56 Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record*, p. 50.
- 57 Ball (ed.), *Headlam Diaries 1923–1935*, p. 343.
- 58 Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive, CRD 1/64/12, report of Sub-committee B, July 1935. I am grateful to Chris Cooper for this reference.
- 59 Taylor (ed.), *Stevenson Diary*, p. 320.
- 60 Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George 18 December 1935, K. Morgan (ed.), *Lloyd George: Family Letters 1885–1936* (London, 1973), p. 211.
- 61 S. Ball (ed.), *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Attlee: The Headlam Diaries 1935–1951* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 105.
- 62 See also A. Lentin, *Lloyd George and the Lost Peace: From Versailles to Hitler 1919–1940* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 89–105.
- 63 House of Commons Debates, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, vol. 310, col. 1542.
- 64 Rowland, *Lloyd George*, p. 746.
- 65 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, pp. 732–33.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 743.
- 67 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 219.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 227.
- 70 Thomson, *Lloyd George*, p. 437.
- 71 Ball (ed.), *Headlam Diaries 1935–1951*, p. 148.
- 72 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 201.
- 73 S. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets 1931–1963* (London, 1974), p. 413.
- 74 House of Commons Debates, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, vol. 351, cols 299–300.
- 75 Sylvester to wife, 20 September 1939, cited in Lentin, *Lost Peace*, p. 113.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 4 October 1939, cited in Lentin, *Lost Peace*, p. 115.
- 77 C. King, *With Malice Toward None: A War Diary* (London, 1970), p. 7.
- 78 K. O. Morgan, *The Age of Lloyd George: The Liberal Party and British Politics 1890–1929* (London, 1971), pp. 222–24.
- 79 King, *With Malice*, p. 13.
- 80 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 256.
- 81 N. Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters 1939–45* (London, 1967), p. 75.
- 82 Jones, *Diary with Letters*, p. 457.
- 83 D. Foot in *The Observer*, 29 October 1967.
- 84 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 261.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 281.
- 86 King, *With Malice*, p. 52.
- 87 Stevenson to Lloyd George 26 September 1940, Taylor (ed.), *Darling Pussy*, p. 234.
- 88 Stevenson, *Years That Are Past*, p. 261.
- 89 A. J. Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George* (London, 1947), p. 275.
- 90 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, p. 753.
- 91 Many aspects of Lloyd George's final years have been considered by J. Graham Jones. See, *inter alia*, 'Keeper of Secrets', *Journal of Liberal History*, 44 (2004), pp. 24–29, and 'David and Frances: Lloyd George's Second Marriage', *ibid.*, 74 (2012), pp. 30–39.
- 92 King, *With Malice*, p. 142.
- 93 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 220.
- 94 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

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# THE BEAVERBROOK LIBRARY, A. J. P. TAYLOR AND THE RISE OF LLOYD GEORGE STUDIES

by Chris Wrigley

A J.P. TAYLOR (1906–90) played a major role in the reassessment of David Lloyd George that took place in the 1960s and after. He did so through his own writings and through his encouragement of other people's research at the Beaverbrook Library between 1967 and 1976.

When Taylor's 1959 and 1961 lectures, 'Politics in the First World War' and 'Lloyd George: Rise and Fall' were given, the history of Liberal politics in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by accounts highly sympathetic to H. H. Asquith and his independent Liberals of 1916–23.<sup>1</sup> Not only had Asquith published his memoirs and reflections first but also, after his death, his papers were available in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, before those of Lloyd George became generally available with the opening of the Beaverbrook Library in May 1967.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor's essays on Lloyd George and the politics of 1914–22 were harbingers of change. In the early and mid 1960s it was normal to depict Lloyd George detrimentally when considered with Asquith. Perhaps the nadir of Lloyd George denigration was marked in 1963 by Donald McCormick's *The Mask of Merlin*, a biography which usually took the worst view of its subject. That Lloyd George was a villain, at least in 1916, even if not of the dimensions of Shakespeare's Richard III, was taken for granted in David Thomson's 1965 Penguin history, *England in the Twentieth Century*, where the author wrote without qualification that Lloyd George ousted Asquith with 'ruthless skill' by a 'complex intrigue'.<sup>3</sup> While views

differ as to Lloyd George's activities in December 1916, the details of the 'complex intrigue' have so far eluded later historians.<sup>4</sup> Trevor Wilson's far more significant study published in 1966, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party*, painted a tawdry picture of Lloyd George's manoeuvres within the Liberal Party, drawing often on the hostile comments in the correspondence between Asquith's ardent followers. Wilson balanced this towards the end of the book by paying tribute to Lloyd George's dynamism and daring, as a radical and as a war leader: 'Time and again Lloyd George proved himself to be the necessary man.' Nevertheless, otherwise Lloyd George does not come out well. He was a man of 'sharp practice' and was 'often unscrupulous and disloyal', with his plotting in December 1916 still assumed.<sup>5</sup> From 1960, Roy Jenkins used Asquith's papers and also Asquith's letters to Venetia Stanley for his 1964 biography of Herbert Henry Asquith, in which a chapter is headed with Asquith's illustrious sobriquet, 'The Last of the Romans', presumably indicating nobility in politics before the advent of the barbarians. Jenkins' biographer John Campbell shrewdly observed that Jenkins' portrait of Asquith presented him 'as calm, rational, unhurried and superior' and 'his magisterial view of politics prevails over all'. This was very much a contrast with Lloyd George. Jenkins was critical of Asquith, but later biographers of Asquith were more so.<sup>6</sup>

Alan Taylor came to reassess Lloyd George as part of his early work for his Oxford History of England volume on the period

1914–1945, published in November 1965.<sup>7</sup> He had taken on writing the volume in 1957. He later recalled of his wide reading for the book that it resulted in 'two spin-offs: the Raleigh lecture to the British Academy on *Politics in the First World War* and the Leslie Stephen lecture at Cambridge on *Lloyd George: Rise and Fall*'.<sup>8</sup> Neither lecture drew on archival research but both were based on printed diaries and autobiographies, *Hansard* (House of Commons Debates) and secondary sources. Both dealt with Lloyd George. The lecture on wartime politics was a dazzling study of Lloyd George's ascent to the premiership and the political circumstances that kept him there, giving attention to the role of backbenchers and also the press. He rightly judged it 'the best lecture I have ever given, in form and content'.<sup>9</sup> The distinguished American historian Alfred Gollin commented that it 'is a contribution of vital consequence ... it opens up the entire subject in a way that has not been done by anyone else'.<sup>10</sup>

Taylor's most substantial reassessment of Lloyd George was made in his 1961 Leslie Stephen lecture, which complements the earlier lecture. In his autobiography he wrote that: 'I am assured, [it] launched Lloyd George studies on a new, more rewarding course, which was not my intention though I am glad of it.' In this he referred, among others, to Stephen Koss, who had written that the lecture was a 'tour de force that captured Lloyd George's incandescent sparkle, his restlessness, and, not least of all, his predicament as a permanent outsider in British politics'.<sup>11</sup>

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In his 1961 Lloyd George essay Taylor, when referring to his accession to the premiership in 1916, commented that ‘even the incomparable dissection by Lord Beaverbrook, which will be read as long as men are interested in political tactics, leaves much unsaid.’ Beaverbrook had published *Politicians and the War 1914–16*, two volumes, in 1928 and 1932, and *Men and Power, 1917–18*, in 1956. Alan Taylor reviewed *Men and Power* in *The Observer* on 26 October 1956. He praised it as ‘equally exciting and equally entertaining’ as the earlier two volumes but wisely added, ‘He may sometimes exaggerate the part that he has played in events’. While Beaverbrook also emphasised, and even exaggerated, the role of his political mentor, Andrew Bonar Law, his three books on First World War politics also shone a bright light on Lloyd George, as did his later book *The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George* (1963). Taylor tackled the wartime politics and the role of Lloyd George in these two lectures of 1959 and 1961 primarily because he was working on the early chapters of *English History 1914–1945* but also in selecting these themes he was consciously following in the footsteps of Beaverbrook, now a friend and even patron in terms of newspaper opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

Alan Taylor’s history of 1914–1945 has David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill as its heroes, though the book is marked by reappraisals of many leading politicians. His verdict on the Liberal divide of 1916 was: ‘Asquith in fact, not Lloyd George, pursued a personal vendetta. He split the Liberal Party and riveted on his adherents, however unwillingly, the appearance of opposing a government that was fighting the war.’<sup>13</sup> Taylor wrote his Oxford history ahead of the release of the British government archives under the then fifty-year rule of closure. As a result he could not check many assumptions. He was often brilliantly right in his surmises as to what occurred, but sometimes was not.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, nearly fifty years on, the book remains influential in its judgements of politics and politicians of its period, not least on Lloyd George and Churchill.

Taylor further contributed to the study of Lloyd George by editing the records of Frances Stevenson, his long-term mistress and

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eventual second wife. Taylor visited her and was impressed, ‘seeing flashes of the Frances who had charmed Lloyd George and other men also’.<sup>15</sup> Frances Stevenson’s diaries are a notably useful source for Lloyd George both ‘as a man as well as a statesman’, giving Lloyd George’s versions of events as told to an admiring much younger woman. The diaries’ value is vitiating to some extent by sizeable gaps in entries for some crucial periods.<sup>16</sup> Much the same applies to the edited correspondence between Lloyd George and Stevenson, which illuminates Lloyd George in love as well as throwing some light on politics.<sup>17</sup>

Alan Taylor’s innovatory lectures on Lloyd George were not the only important fresh work on Lloyd George before his papers became available. There was much written from 1960 on Lloyd George’s Welsh political context by Kenneth O. Morgan. In 1963 Morgan marked the centenary of Lloyd George’s birth with a superb short booklet (eighty pages of text) in which he explored ‘the place of Lloyd George in the history of modern Wales’ and ‘the importance of his Welsh background in his general career in British and world politics’.<sup>18</sup> This re-evaluation of Lloyd George complemented Morgan’s seminal work on Welsh modern political history, *Wales In British Politics 1868–1922*. This thoroughly researched book, written before either the London or Aberystwyth sets of Lloyd George’s papers were available, provided a rich, detailed study of his Welsh political context, something that needed doing since the enthusiastic, even eulogistic, biographies written before the First World War and after.<sup>19</sup> Alongside these books, Kenneth Morgan published from 1960 a great many articles and essays on Lloyd George and the Welsh politics of his time, twenty-six of which were later collected together in a large volume which is also essential reading for Lloyd George’s career.<sup>20</sup> Morgan also provided much fresh primary material for those interested in Lloyd George’s career and first marriage by editing Lloyd George’s letters to his wife, Margaret, with some additional family material.<sup>21</sup>

The combination of the opening of the Beaverbrook Library on 25 May 1967 eighty-eight years to

the day after Beaverbrook’s birth) and the amendment of the Public Records Act 1958 in 1967 so that most government records became available after thirty, not fifty, years (so in January 1968, papers of 1937, not 1917, were the latest for public inspection) gave a great boost to the study of Lloyd George’s career. Beaverbrook had bought collections of early twentieth-century political papers much as lesser mortals buy rare postage stamps. He had secured Frank Owen, a journalist and former Liberal MP, to write a biography of Lloyd George (with inputs from himself and Lloyd George’s widow, the former Frances Stevenson). He also gave the historian Robert Blake access to the Bonar Law Papers for a biography of Andrew Bonar Law. Beaverbrook gave both authors access to his own papers and to those of the subjects of their biographies, while Blake in addition had access to Lloyd George’s papers.<sup>22</sup> Thereafter, Beaverbrook and his assistants quarried his archive up to his death on 9 June 1964. A select few authors were allowed to see the Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Beaverbrook Papers either at Beaverbrook’s home, Cherkley Court, near Leatherhead, Surrey, or to see selections at the *Express* offices in London. These included Alfred Gollin, John Grigg (politician and biographer of Lloyd George), Arthur Marder (the distinguished naval historian) and Alan Taylor (after Beaverbrook’s death).

The main Beaverbrook Library collections (Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Beaverbrook) were so important that they inevitably led to major work on British political history of the first four decades of the twentieth century. Taylor’s involvement did not greatly affect this basic point. Nevertheless, the research was fostered by Alan Taylor as Honorary Director of the Library. His presence added to its attraction. He was punctilious in his relationship with readers at the archive. He enquired eagerly after the research of both the established academics and the newest of post-graduates. The Library was very modern, air-conditioned, with attractive display cases for cartoons, letters and other documents, framed David Low cartoons on the walls, Beaverbrook’s own early twentieth-century political history books on shelves below wooden

counters around the circumference of the readers' part of the room, modern wooden tables to work on and even Walter Sickert's portrait of Beaverbrook within the entrance to this big room located above a store for huge reels of newsprint.

The number of researchers at any one time was limited usually to between six and eight. When I worked there regularly in 1968–71 the others present included the politicians Richard Law and Dingle Foot; the North American historians Louis Bisceglia, Peter Cline, Michael Fry, Bentley B. Gilbert, Alfred Gollin, Stephen Koss, W. Roger Louis, Chuck Bullitt Lowry and Jon Sumida; older British historians Maurice Cowling, David Dilks, Michael Dockrill, Roy Douglas, John Grigg, Peter Lowe, Kenneth O. Morgan, Charles Loch Mowat, Henry Pelling, Keith Robbins, Peter Rowland and Stephen Roskill; Australian scholars such as David Cuthbert and Cameron Hazlehurst; and younger researchers such as Paul Addison, Michael Bentley, John Campbell, Martin Ceadel, Chris Cook, Patricia Jalland, Gillian Peele, Martin Pugh, John Ramsden, Alan Sked, John Spiers and John Turner. As a result of the presence of such an array of distinguished scholars, for young researchers there was a sense of occasion being there and a feeling of the desirability of upping one's game in writing history. The Library and the seminar were also important for networking, with valuable contacts and friendships made. For young British historians the contacts with North American historians were especially valuable.

Alan Taylor made the Beaverbrook Library more of a research centre than just an archive by running a research seminar during university vacations from December 1968 until its closure in April 1975. The quality level of the papers at the seminar was high. Alan Taylor sat through the papers like a bird resting with its head lowered on one side. Any notion that he had fallen asleep went swiftly at the end when he made usually very acute comments on the papers. He also made impish comments which contained shrewdness. After a paper by Roy Douglas, Alan Taylor commented, 'Whilst the

Liberal Party declined, the leading figures did nothing to stop it, even helped it. However, they saw to it that the whole process was well documented!<sup>23</sup> He continued to chair early twentieth-century research papers, including some on Lloyd George, when, along with John Ramsden, Martin Ceadel and Kathy Burk, he ran a seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, London University, from 1977 to 1985. Many of the regular attendees of the Beaverbrook Library seminar attended the seminars at the Institute, along with a fresh cohort of younger researchers such as Josie Howie, Helen Jones and Duncan Tanner. His contributions after seminar papers continued to be stimulating. For instance, after a paper by John Ramsden on the National Governments of the 1930s, he observed waspishly of the National Liberal Party that:

It was one episode from 1922 to the present day in the long search for Liberal voters ... [T]he differences between the Samuelites and Simonites were very thin. Samuel, despite his air of Liberal rectitude, was less radical than the younger Simonites. The Samuelites were a decaying cause, whereas the Simonites did attract young people. By the late 1930s the National pretence did not help the Tories but it did enable the Liberals to survive. The Samuelites could return, nearly as high, to office in the Grand Coalition of the Second World War.<sup>24</sup>

Even before the first pair of seminars in December 1968 he was planning a book of essays on Lloyd George, based on research undertaken in large part at the Beaverbrook Library. He wrote to his publisher, Roger Machell of Hamish Hamilton, on 14 October 1968: 'I have had something like 150 researchers here during the last eighteen months and should like to see something of their researches. Between a dozen and twenty of them are willing to contribute an article (I suppose 10,000 words) to a Lloyd George volume.' At that stage he was predicting essays on Lloyd George and the 1909 budget, housing, Ireland and Hitler.<sup>25</sup> He may have had in mind Bruce Murray, Frank Honigsbaum, George

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Boyce and Paul Addison. However, the contents were different, though George Boyce and Paul Addison did contribute to the resulting volume, *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (Hamish Hamilton, 1973). Taylor included most of the best Lloyd George papers given to his seminar between the first one by Michael Dockrill on 12 December 1968 and one given by George Boyce on 1 January 1970. He had hopes of editing a second volume of Lloyd George essays on foreign policy after 1914, but this never happened. As it was, the one volume added to the seminar in disseminating research on Lloyd George.

The period in which the Lloyd George Papers were in the Beaverbrook Library (1967–75), between being located in the former cinema room at Cherkley and, since 1975, in the House of Lords Record Office, was a notably fruitful time for Lloyd George research (with the resulting work often published later). Among very notable work by overseas established scholars, Bentley B. Gilbert carried out research on his detailed biography of Lloyd George (two volumes). Michael Fry worked on Lloyd George and foreign policy (two volumes). Bruce Murray researched 'The People's Budget' and R. Q. Adams wrote on Lloyd George and munitions.<sup>26</sup> Of well-established British scholars, Kenneth O. Morgan continued to publish outstanding work on Lloyd George, notably on the post-war coalition government, Maurice Cowling's major work crossed Lloyd George's political career, and Michael Dockrill produced important work on aspects of foreign policy.<sup>27</sup> After the publication of two volumes on the Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith Liberal governments, Peter Rowland researched the archives for his large one-volume biography of Lloyd George.<sup>28</sup> Among the postgraduates who researched aspects of Lloyd George's career in the Beaverbrook Library were John Campbell, whose subsequent book provided the best account of Lloyd George between 1922 and 1929, Chris Cook, who analysed Liberal decline from 1922 to 1929, John Turner, who examined Lloyd George's 'Garden Suburb', and the current author, who investigated Lloyd George's relationship with labour.<sup>29</sup>

Alan Taylor played a substantial role in the re-evaluation of Lloyd George's career. His publications were very significant in moving away from the denigration of Lloyd George that was common well in to the 1960s. He played a further role at the Beaverbrook Library. The collections of papers themselves were the major impetus to fresh views, but Taylor added to this by his presence, by his editing of the Frances Stevenson material and the Lloyd George research essays, and by running a greatly appreciated research seminar.

However, the new evaluations of Lloyd George's career were driven primarily by the availability of private papers, not only those of Lloyd George and Bonar Law but also of other Welsh, English, Scottish and Irish politicians, as well as the very abundant public records available at the Public Record Office (now the National Archive). Frances Stevenson played a major role from 1912 – the year she started work as Lloyd George's secretary – in ensuring that the main collection of Lloyd George's papers is voluminous. Lloyd George himself played a big role in the expansion of Cabinet and related records when he altered the administration of the Cabinet in December 1916, with Sir Maurice Hankey and Thomas Jones executing these changes.

By the 1980s Lloyd George's career was more fully understood than it had been twenty years earlier. He was not liable to be seen as some mysterious being, a view immortalised by the economist J. M. Keynes who wrote after the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, 'Lloyd George is rooted in nothing; he is void and without content; he lives and feeds on his immediate surroundings ...'.<sup>30</sup> Sixty years later, the considerable research that had been undertaken for two decades in the Welsh context from which he stemmed made it very clear that he was rooted in something – Welsh radical politics – and that there were key issues, such as land reform, which mattered to him throughout his career. The research undertaken in the era of the Beaverbrook Library, both there and elsewhere, moved assessments of Lloyd George on from such attitudes towards him as 'the boulder from Wales' to more sympathetic and more complex views.<sup>31</sup>

**By the 1980s Lloyd George's career was more fully understood than it had been twenty years earlier. He was not liable to be seen as some mysterious being ...**

Chris Wrigley was Professor of Modern British History at Nottingham University, 1991–2012, and is now Emeritus Professor. He earlier taught at Queen's University, Belfast and Loughborough University. As well as books on Lloyd George, his other books include biographies of Arthur Henderson, Winston Churchill and A.J.P. Taylor and others on labour and economic history. He was President of the Historical Association, 1996–99, and was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of East Anglia in 1998.

- 1 A. J. P. Taylor, 'Politics in the First World War', Raleigh Lecture on History, 4 February 1959, British Academy/Oxford University Press, 1959, and *Lloyd George: Rise and Fall*, Leslie Stephen Lecture, 21 April 1961, Cambridge University Press, 1961 (both reprinted in A. J. P. Taylor, *From the Boer War to the Cold War*, Hamish Hamilton, pp.197–249). For an example of an earlier hostile biography see Sir Charles Mallet, *Mr Lloyd George: A Study* (Benn, 1930), pp. 309–13. For Kenneth O. Morgan's 1972 survey of writing on Lloyd George, see his collected Welsh history essays, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1995, pp. 380–99.
- 2 Asquith's papers were given to Balliol College in 1941 and made over to the Bodleian Library in 1964. Further papers were deposited in 1980, and given to the Bodleian in 1982.
- 3 David Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, Penguin, 1965, p.47
- 4 Cameron Hazlehurst, 'The Conspiracy Myth' in Martin Gilbert, ed., *Lloyd George*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1968, pp.148–57.
- 5 Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935* (Collins, 1966, pp. 91, 95 and 387–88).
- 6 Roy Jenkins, *Asquith*, Collins, 1964, second edition, 1978. Jenkins deemed it his best book. Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 134–35. John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Biography*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983, pp.45–46. For a more critical reassessment, see Stephen Koss, *Asquith*, Allen Lane, 1976.
- 7 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–1945*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965.
- 8 A. J. P. Taylor, *A Personal History*, Hamish Hamilton, 1983, p. 233.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 A.F. Gollin to author (CJW), 4 February 1977; quoted in Chris Wrigley, A. J. P. Taylor: *A Complete Bibliography*, Hassocks, Harvester

- Press, 1980, p. 50.
- 11 Ibid., p. 233. Stephen Koss, 'Asquith versus Lloyd George: The Last Phase and Beyond' in Alan Sked and Chris Cook, eds., *Crisis and Controversy: Essays in Honour of A. J. P. Taylor*, Macmillan, 1976, pp. 66–89 (quotation at p. 69).
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- 13 Taylor, *English History*, p. 70.
- 14 After the public records were opened under a new thirty-year rule in 1967, Taylor spoke of correcting his book, but he never did (though there were minor corrections and an updated bibliography in 1975). The current author (CJW) corrected many errors, added a further updated bibliography and an introduction to the Folio Society edition in 2000.
- 15 Wrigley, *Taylor: Radical Historian*, p. 314.
- 16 A. J. P. Taylor, ed., *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson*, Hutchinson, 1971, p. ix.
- 17 A.J.P. Taylor, ed., *My Darling Pussy: The Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson 1913–41*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975.
- 18 Kenneth O. Morgan, *David Lloyd George: Welsh Radical as World Statesman*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1963, p. 3. He later wrote an outstanding short biography, *Lloyd George*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974, in a series edited by A. J. P. Taylor.
- 19 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868–1922*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1970 (with later editions in 1970 and 1992). This was supplemented by his *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880–1980*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981, volume 6 of the Oxford History of Wales. Examples of enthusiastic early biographies include two four-volume works by H. Du Parq (1912–13) and J. Hugh Edwards (1913) and one-volume books by J. T. Davies in Welsh (1910) and Beriah Evans (1916). Perhaps the best of the pre-Second World War biographies on Lloyd George's career before the First World War was by W. Watkin Davies (1939).
- 20 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People*, Cardiff,

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- 24 15 March 1978; author's notes.
- 25 Hamish Hamilton Papers, Bristol University Library; quoted in Chris Wrigley, 'Introduction' to second edition of A. J. P. Taylor, *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays*, Aldershot, Gregg Revivals, 1993.
- 26 Bentley B. Gilbert, *David Lloyd George: The Architect of Change 1863–1912*, Batsford, 1987, and *David Lloyd George: Organiser of Victory 1912–1916*, Batsford, 1972. Michael G. Fry, *Lloyd George and Foreign Policy: the Education of a Statesman 1890–1916*, Montreal, McGill-Queens University Press, 1977, and *And Fortune Fleed: David Lloyd George, the First Democratic Statesman, 1916–1922*, New York, Peter Lang, 2011. R. Q. Adams, *Arms and the Wizard: Lloyd George and the Ministry of Munitions*, London, Cassell, 1978.
- 27 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: the Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918–1922*, Oxford University Press, 1979. Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour*, Cambridge University Press, 1971, and *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy 1933–1940*, Cambridge University Press, 1975. Michael Dockrill and J. D. Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the peace conferences 1919–1923*, Batsford, 1981.
- 28 Peter Rowland, *Lloyd George*, Barrie and Jenkins, 1975.
- 29 John Campbell, *Lloyd George: the Goat in the Wilderness*, Jonathan Cape, 1977. Chris Cook, *The Age of Alignment: Electoral Politics in Britain 1922–1929*, Macmillan, 1975. John Turner, *Lloyd George's Secretariat*, Cambridge University Press, 1980 and *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict 1915–1918*, Yale University Press, 1992. Chris Wrigley, *David Lloyd George and the British Labour Movement: Peace and War*, Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1976, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: Post-war Coalition 1918–22*, Brighton, Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1990, and 'Lloyd George and the Labour Party after 1922' in Judith Loades, ed., *Life and Times of David Lloyd George*, Bangor, Headstart Publications, 1991, pp. 49–69.
- 30 John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Biography*, Macmillan, 1933, p.36.
- 31 This sneer was used (without approval) by Don Cregier for the title of his study, *Bounder from Wales: Lloyd George's career before the First World War*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1976.

# LLOYD GEORGE ARCHIVES

by J. Graham Jones

## Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords

At his death in March 1945, Lloyd George bequeathed to his second wife Frances, Countess Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, a substantial archive of both political and personal papers, primarily the former. She then sold the entire archive in 1949 to Lord Beaverbrook. The papers are still owned by the Beaverbrook Foundation, but since 1975 they have been deposited at the House of Lords Record Office (now called the Parliamentary Archive). Substantial numbers of official papers survive among the Lloyd George Papers at the House of Lords.

The archive runs to no fewer than 1041 boxes. They have been listed, divided into nine series, each distinguished by a letter of the alphabet; the first seven series correspond to the main divisions in Lloyd George's political career:

### Political Papers

- Class A Member of Parliament, 1890–1905 (13 boxes)  
 Class B President of the Board of Trade, 1905–08 (5 boxes)  
 Class C Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908–15 (36 boxes)  
 Class D Minister of Munitions, 1915–16 (27 boxes)

- Class E Secretary of State for War, June – December 1916 (10 boxes)  
 Class F Prime Minister, 1916–22 (254 boxes)  
 Class G 1922–45 (264 boxes)  
 Class H Press cuttings (390 boxes)

### Personal Papers

- Class I Personal correspondence and papers (42 boxes)

Also deposited at the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords is a substantial group of the papers of Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's secretary, mistress and eventually

his second wife. Many of these relate to Lloyd George. These papers include many photographs, some personal correspondence, and a draft of Frances's autobiography (published as *The Years that are Past* (Hutchinson, 1967)). There is also Frances's correspondence with Lloyd George (extracts published as A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *My Darling Pussy: the Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson, 1913-41* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975)), and her diaries for the years 1914 to 1944 (extracts published as A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: a Diary by Frances Stevenson* (Hutchinson, 1971)).

**National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth**

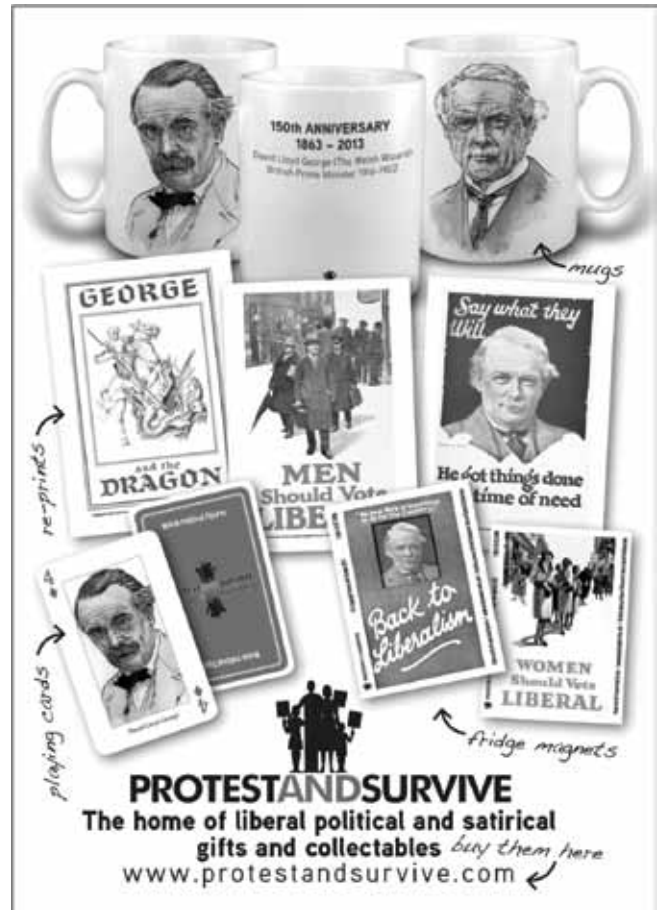
*Brynawelon group (NLW MSS 20,403-93)*  
The first major Lloyd George archive to be purchased by the National Library of Wales (in 1969) was the substantial group of correspondence and papers, running to almost 3,500 items, which had been assembled at the family home at Brynawelon, Criccieth. By far the most important part of the archive is the long series of just over 2,000 letters or notes from Lloyd George to Dame Margaret, beginning in 1886, just before their marriage, and continuing until 1936. These have been catalogued as NLW MSS 20,403-42. Until about 1917 Lloyd George spent long and frequent periods away from his family, and wrote home almost daily, occasionally more than once a day. This magnificent sequence of letters casts light on Lloyd George's personality and viewpoint in a number of ways. They are especially full (over 1,000 letters) from the time of his first election to Westminster in April 1890 until the period of the Boer War. From about 1902 onwards they become notably more episodic in character. But the diary-like quality of the early letters is perhaps some recompense for the realisation that most of the later epistles

are disappointingly brief and much less informative.

Other items of interest in this group include NLW MS 20,443A, a stray diary kept intermittently by Lloyd George between January and November 1887 when he was already taking a keen interest in political life. NLW MS 20,444A is a diary containing only two entries for January 1889. NLW MSS 20,444A-52A, and 20,454-55E are mainly notebooks and bound volumes of speech notes prepared between 1885 and the 1930s. The great majority of these are in the hand of David Lloyd George. NLW MS 20,451A is a notebook kept by Dame Margaret Lloyd George and contains fairly detailed notes of a family tour on the Continent during August and September 1929. NLW MS 20,455E comprises a miscellaneous group of political papers, a few concerning the Irish question, 1916-22 (including Asquith's notes for a speech in the House of Commons during 1916), and some deriving from the general election of October 1922.

NLW MSS 20,462-63C comprise a miscellaneous group of 160 letters addressed to Lloyd George, mainly from politicians and other prominent individuals. Many of these correspondents are represented by only a single letter. These volumes also include a small number of drafts and copies of letters penned by Lloyd George, and a handful of letters which simply refer to him, perhaps originally enclosures. NLW MSS 20,469-71C comprise three volumes of more than 300 letters to Dame Margaret, mostly relating to her social and public life. The numerous correspondents include a wide range of figures in English and Welsh public life. NLW MSS 20,475C and 20,482C are bound volumes of letters to Lady Megan Lloyd George. The former includes several letters from both her parents and, among others, Clement Attlee, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, Lord Dawson of Penn and Dingle Foot.

**Sales advertisement**



*Earl Lloyd-George Papers (NLW MSS 21,787-92, 22,514-37 and NLW ex 1069)*  
The Library was able to purchase in 1982 and 1987 two groups of correspondence and papers from the third Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor which he, in turn, had inherited from his father, Richard Lloyd George, the second earl. Richard had presumably collected these papers during the course of his lifetime. The material acquired in 1982 now forms NLW MSS 21,787-90E, 21,791C and 21,792E. There are some 200 letters and papers, most of these addressed to Lloyd George, together with a few notes in his hand. The bulk of the correspondence concerns Welsh affairs, mainly the Disestablishment and Disendowment question, and the highly contentious Welsh Church Commission of 1906-07. Some of the letters also refer to educational matters, the investiture of Prince

Edward as Prince of Wales at Caernarfon Castle in 1911, and the First World War.  
*William George Papers*  
The largest and perhaps the most significant of all the Lloyd George archives in the possession of the National Library became available for purchase in September 1989 – the magnificent collection of correspondence and papers accumulated by Lloyd George's only brother William George (1865-1967). Quite apart from the immensely rich runs of correspondence, the William George Papers include ten pocket diaries kept by the young Lloyd George between 1878 (when he was only fifteen years of age) and 1888, together with a stray volume bearing but very brief notes for the year 1892. The very informative pocket diary for 1885 was acquired some years later.  
The backbone of the William George Papers is the long series of 3,292 letters

## LLOYD GEORGE ARCHIVES

from Lloyd George to William, spanning the years 1886 to 1943, but containing only a tiny handful of letters after 1917. Many of the early letters to William George discuss legal cases in some detail and the affairs of the family-run legal firm Lloyd George & George more generally. Again the key turning points in Lloyd George's political career are graphically illustrated in these letters. Subsequent letters refer to the course of the Boer War and the campaign against Balfour's Education Act of 1902. The long sequence of letters also abounds with references to contemporaries, notably fellow Liberal politicians.

The William George Papers 3302–458 comprise letters, 1887–1916, from Lloyd George to his uncle Richard Lloyd, again containing an interesting intermingling of local and domestic news and political comment. The William George Papers 3302–458 comprise letters, 1887–1916, from Lloyd George to Richard Lloyd, again containing an interesting intermingling of local and domestic news and political comment. There are also many interesting letters penned by Dame Margaret to, in turn, Richard Lloyd, Lloyd George and William George, together with a substantial group of letters, 1887–1926, from William George to his brother (numbers 5138–556).

*Olwen Carey-Evans Papers* (including NLW MSS 22823–27) Olwen Carey-Evans (1892–1990) was the third child of David Lloyd George. This collection, purchased in 1990, includes many miscellaneous items relating to Lloyd George, 1898–1970, among them a large number of invitations to, and souvenirs of, national events, while among the correspondents to Lady Carey-Evans herself are Clough Williams Ellis, Dingle Foot, Michael Foot and Andrew Bonar Law. NLW MS 22,823C comprises letters written by Lloyd George, mainly to Dame Margaret, 1894–1942, filling some of the gaps in the Brynawelon group of letters.

The letters, 1890–1942, to Lloyd George within NLW MS 22,824C are not generally of great political significance.

### *A. J. Sylvester Papers*

In November 1990, the National Library purchased a substantial group of the papers of Albert James Sylvester (1889–1989), who had served as principal private secretary to Lloyd George from 1923 until his death in March 1945. Class A in the Sylvester Papers comprises typescript drafts of his diaries running from 1924 until 1945. There are several copies of some of the diaries. These are much fuller than the published version *Life with Lloyd George* which appeared in 1975, edited by Colin Cross. Class B consists of eighty-two subject files, spanning the period from 1914 until 1948. Class C comprises correspondence, including a long series of letters between A. J. Sylvester and his wife Evelyn, 1914–58. There are further family letters, and a substantial group from various members of the Lloyd George family.

### *Viscount Tenby Papers (NLW MSS 23657–71 and NLW ex 1972)*

The most recent major acquisition of Lloyd George material was purchased from the third Viscount Tenby in 1996. Apart from correspondence and papers concerning Lloyd George himself, there are papers relating to Gwilym Lloyd-George, first Viscount Tenby (1894–1967), and to his brother-in-law Sir Goronwy Owen (1881–1963), Liberal MP for Caernarfonshire, 1923–45. These have been designated NLW MSS 23,657–71 and NLW ex 1972.

### *Frances Stevenson Family Papers*

In January 2000 the National Library purchased what must be the final Lloyd George family archive which had hitherto remained in private hands: a small residue of the papers of Frances Stevenson, the Dowager Countess Lloyd-George of Dwyfor (1888–1972). The papers had been inherited by Jennifer Longford, Frances's daughter (born in 1929), upon her death in 1972.

### *Other archives of Lloyd George interest at the National Library of Wales*

Many other archives held within the Library include correspondence and papers relating to David Lloyd George. This is especially true of the personal archives of the politicians and associates who were his comrades-in-arms in the *Cymru Fydd* movement between 1886 and 1896, among them D. R. Daniel, Thomas Edward Ellis, Sir John Herbert Lewis, Stuart Rendel, A. C. Humphreys-Owen, Glansevern, and Sir Samel T. Evans.

For the later period of Lloyd George's life and career, by far the most important archive in the custody of the National Library is the Dr Thomas Jones CH Papers. Thomas Jones was the highly distinguished deputy secretary to the Cabinet from 1916 until 1930.

There are further letters from Lloyd George, papers relating to him and references to him in many other collections in the custody of the National Library, among them the papers of Clement Davies, George M. Ll. Davies, W. Watkin Davies, Sir Ellis

Jones Ellis-Griffith, W. J. Gruffydd, E. T. John, Lord Morris of Borth y Gest and A. J. Williams, as well as in several items in the general series of NLW Manuscripts, including the Thomas Gee Papers and the W. J. Parry Papers. The National Library also holds a large number of photographs and cartoons, many of which have never been published. The Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, also located at the National Library, has among its extensive holdings many memorabilia and recordings of sound and television broadcasts concerning Lloyd George.

### Other sources

The extensive holdings of the National Archive at Kew include a vast amount of material relating to Lloyd George's political career. The National Register of Archives has references to sixty archives which include correspondence and papers relating to David Lloyd George. There is an interesting miscellany of papers, photographs and memorabilia at the Lloyd George Museum at Llanystumdwy, Gwynedd, while the Caernarfon Area Record Office holds some material relating to Lloyd George, including speech notes, a small group of correspondence, 1912–16, sound interviews of some of his speeches, and interviews with Lady Olwen Carey-Evans.

*Dr J. Graham Jones is Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.*

## Wanted! Journal of Liberal History Assistant Editor

The *Journal* needs a new Assistant Editor, to:

- Proof and edit (on-screen) all the material published in each issue of the *Journal*.
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Proof-reading and editing skills are essential, as is an understanding of Microsoft Word's paragraph styles. Knowledge of Liberal history would be a distinct advantage. Experience of website inputting would be helpful, but is not essential – the website is easy to load material to.

Like all the *Journal's* posts, the Assistant Editor post is voluntary; but a small honorarium is payable. If you are interested, please email the Editor on [journal@liberalhistory.org.uk](mailto:journal@liberalhistory.org.uk).

# REVIEWS

## Hattersley on Lloyd George

Roy Hattersley, *The Great Outsider: David Lloyd George*

(Little, Brown, 2010)

Reviewed by **Ian Packer**

**B**IOGRAPHIES OF LLOYD George all face the same difficulty: there is simply too much information. This is partly because Lloyd George left behind an enormous mound of papers (now mainly held at the Parliamentary Archives and the National Library of Wales). But it is also because his career stretched from the late-Victorian era through to the Second World War, with Lloyd George playing a central political role in British politics at least from the Boer War to the Great Depression.

Recent writers on Lloyd George have tended to tackle this issue in one of three ways: either they have written short books that concentrate on particular themes in Lloyd George's career, for instance Martin Pugh's biography of 1988, and Chris Wrigley's of 1992; or they have chronicled Lloyd George's private life, as in John Campbell's *If Love Were All* (2006) and Ffion Hague's *The Pain and the Privilege* (2008); or they have embarked on multi-volume studies, like those of John Grigg (1973–2002) or Bentley Gilbert (1987–92). Roy Hattersley is the first biographer, since the 872 pages of Peter Rowlands's *Lloyd George* (1975) stretched the book-binder's art to its limits, who has attempted to pack a comprehensive study of the 'Welsh Wizard' into one volume. Moreover, like Rowlands, Hattersley has aimed to write a book that will have a wide appeal, rather than just interest scholars. The scale of this task is truly intimidating.

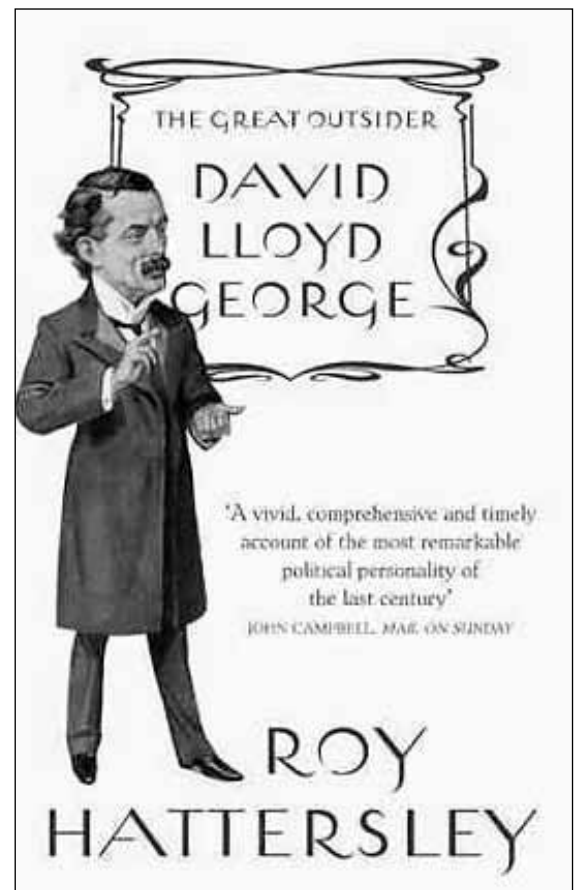
Hattersley's approach also presents further difficulties. Lloyd George's early life has been written about at length, as in his nephew, W. R. P. George's, *The Making of Lloyd George* (1976) and *Lloyd George: Backbencher* (1983); and after Lloyd George became a central figure in British life, how can a biography of him avoid just being a narrative of

well-known political events? How can it say anything new? Just looking at politics from a Lloyd Georgian perspective will not solve this problem, as there have already been over twenty biographies of the Welshman. One way is to delve for new information in the archives. But, while Hattersley has done some quarrying in the mountain of Lloyd George papers, it is difficult to spot anything that he has found to add to previous works. This absence is probably due to lack of time as much as anything else. Hattersley has a prodigious work-rate, but even by his standards he left himself little time for his book on Lloyd George. After finishing *Borrowed Time*, his history of the inter-war years, in 2007, he published another book while working on *The Great Outsider – In Search of England* (2009) – before announcing in 2010, even before his book on Lloyd George was published, that he had embarked on his next big project – a history of the Dukes of Devonshire, which will appear in 2013.

The alternative way of saying something new about Lloyd George is to furnish a different interpretation of his life, and the 'Acknowledgements' hold out a tantalising prospect in this direction. Hattersley states that 'It was Roy Jenkins who, many years ago, suggested that I write a biography of David Lloyd George – a politician he disliked so heartily that he could not contemplate writing the book himself' (p. ix). In some ways this was not a surprising suggestion. The urbane Jenkins may seem to have had little in common with Hattersley, who has always burnished his image as a bluff Yorkshireman. But they actually share a great deal: both were the only children of leading figures in local Labour movements (Arthur Jenkins, MP for Pontypool, and Enid

Hattersley, Mayor of Sheffield, respectively); after grammar school and university educations, both became right-wing Labour MPs for Birmingham constituencies; and both were disappointed in their highest hopes for political office, while pursuing respected careers as writers on politics and history. The crucial political distinction between the two men is that Jenkins became a founder of the Social Democratic Party in 1981, while Hattersley remained with Labour.

But there is a further layer of interest to Jenkins's suggestion that Hattersley should work on Lloyd George. Jenkins wrote a very fine, and admiring, biography, *Asquith* (1964), which remains the best study of Lloyd George's great Liberal rival. It is a book shot through with insight, which at least partly derives from Jenkins's identification with his subject and his worldview. It might almost be seen as an indication of Jenkins's future political direction. In taking up Jenkins's suggestion to write Lloyd George's life, Hattersley had the opportunity to write a response to Jenkins's *Asquith*, which would not only illuminate Lloyd George's point of view, but would also offer



a contrasting interpretation of late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century Liberal politics, from the perspective of a staunchly Labour historian.

However, Hattersley has declined this intriguing opportunity. He does not offer any overarching interpretation of Lloyd George's career. The absence of an Introduction and conclusion are clear indications of his determination to concentrate on a narrative of Lloyd George's life, which begins with the Welshman's birth on page 1 and ends with his funeral on page 640. This narrative is very well done, though the size of the book remains a little daunting. Hattersley's writing is clear and vigorous throughout, as one would expect from such a stylish journalist and author (this is his nineteenth book). There are few factual errors – a situation that Hattersley is happy to acknowledge is partly attributable to the book's proof-reading by Lord Morgan and Professor Anthony King; and a number of complicated political tangles, like Lloyd George's replacement of Asquith in December 1916, are

deftly handled. There is plenty here that patient non-specialist readers will find enjoyable, especially as Hattersley varies the diet of politics with details of Lloyd George's complicated and controversial love life. However, there are times when Hattersley's lack of familiarity with the latest scholarship on Lloyd George leads him astray, as in his treatment of Lloyd George's schemes to 'Conquer Unemployment' in 1926–31.

But, above all, the book lacks the perceptiveness and sense of commitment of Jenkins's *Asquith. The Great Outsider* does not give the impression that Hattersley is really interested in Lloyd George. That he has written such a detailed treatment of his subject is a truly remarkable testament to the energy and prolific writing powers of a senior statesman who is now nearly eighty years old.

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whose name will forever be associated with appeasement. One could, therefore, be forgiven for placing Lloyd George in the 'anti-appeaser' camp along with Winston Churchill, his former Liberal colleague. Yet, Rudman argues that Lloyd George 'was the first and one of the most determined appeasers of Germany' (p. 264).

Rudman joins those historians who root appeasement long before Neville Chamberlain's premiership. Although Lloyd George attempted to get the best deal possible for Britain at the Paris Peace Conferences, his pro-German sympathies were already apparent. After blocking a French attempt to annex the Rhineland, Lloyd George duplicitously undermined Britain's guarantee of French security by making it dependent upon American ratification. This never materialised and France was left without a defensive frontier on the Rhine or a security pact. This did nothing to calm French fears of a German resurgence. Lloyd George also agreed that a preamble should be added to the peace treaty's military clauses which maintained that Germany was disarmed 'to render possible the initiation of the general limitation of the armaments of all nations'. When the world's powers failed to craft a disarmament convention, this provided Hitler's Germany with a ready-made pretext for rearmament.

Lloyd George's compassionate approach developed into a failure to implement the treaty that he had helped shape. Rudman clearly explains his apparently contradictory, but considered, rationale. The Prime Minister's 'deep-seated faith in the German nation as a general force for good' reasserted itself (pp. 82–83). He wanted Germany to be able to pay reparations, resist a Bolshevik revolution, restore the European balance of power, and help revive international trade. So-called 'appeasement', at this stage, reflected a pursuit of what Lloyd George perceived were Britain's national interests. When considering reparations, for example, 'he took a generally consistent, anti-appeasing line' (p. 48). His Fontainebleau memorandum of 1919 was lenient in warning about the perils of placing Germans under foreign sovereignty but it also called for heavy German payment.

## Lloyd George and appeasement

Stella Rudman, *Lloyd George and the Appeasement of Germany 1919–1945* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011)  
Reviewed by **Chris Cooper**

**A**LTHOUGH LLOYD GEORGE was absent from power after 1922, he 'continued to wield enormous influence in British politics' into the 1940s (p. 161). The Welshman is best remembered as the architect of Britain's victory in the First World War and for his role in splitting the Liberal Party after 1916. Dr Stella Rudman's converted doctoral thesis charts Lloyd George's interventions in foreign policy after the conclusion of the First World War, and the development of Britain's ultimately unsuccessful appeasement of Germany. Although Lloyd George has been the subject of numerous biographical studies, monographs and journal articles, this work focuses on a comparatively neglected aspect of his career. By untying the

contradictions behind his multifaceted outlook and detecting a line of continuity in the Welshman's thinking, Rudman, through the prism of 'appeasement', explains how the enemy of the Kaiser became an admirer of Hitler without any fundamental change in outlook.

As peacetime Prime Minister, Lloyd George helped draw up the arguably punitive peace terms imposed upon Germany. He was seen at his 'anti-appeasing best' as he championed the League of Nations when Italy attacked Abyssinia in 1935 (p. 214). Then, during the celebrated 'Norway Debate' of May 1940, he delivered an indictment of Neville Chamberlain's wartime ministry. The debate led to the downfall of Chamberlain,



Lloyd George's peacetime premiership was also marked by his growing antipathy towards France. His conviction that the French desired continental hegemony encouraged further leniency towards Germany. Lloyd George began the process whereby Britain's position changed from an ally of France against Germany to that of a mediator between them.

After the collapse of his premiership in 1922, Lloyd George's pro-German outlook became more pronounced. During the deliberations over the future of Upper Silesia he wanted to construct a strong Germany rather than an enlarged Poland. This, he hoped, would help Germany pay reparations. During the remainder of the 1920s he advocated arbitration treaties so that Germany's territorial demands could be met. He believed that Germany could be satisfied and that any agreements would be honoured. Giving Germany the benefit of the doubt while a democratic structure existed was perhaps understandable, but the rise of Hitler's Nazis 'did not make Lloyd George more cautious' (p. 207). Although the appeasement of Germany began to threaten Britain's interests, not least the balance of power that Lloyd George had sponsored, he did not modify his stance. When Hitler ordered the remilitarisation

of the Rhineland in March 1936 the Welshman opposed retributive action. Five months later the 73-year-old travelled to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The two men got on 'like a house on fire'. The 'spellbound' Lloyd George returned to London believing the Fuhrer was 'the greatest living German' and dismissing suggestions that Hitler planned large-scale conquests (pp. 224–27).

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) marked a defining moment in Lloyd George's outlook. The shift in the Welshman's thinking related to France. After over a decade of suspicion, he now applauded the French for assisting the Spanish government. Nonetheless, he did not oppose Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938, and his response to the Munich Agreement was ambivalent. His newfound faith in France, however, allowed him to advocate an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance to resist acts of aggression. In April 1939 he criticised the British guarantee for Poland, claiming that it was useless without Soviet involvement. Nevertheless, Lloyd George still believed that a peaceful settlement with Germany was possible. After the outbreak of war he criticised Chamberlain's administration and was sceptical of the prospects of a British victory, favouring a negotiated peace. He was not alone in his pessimism, but one gasps when reading that he refused office in Churchill's reconstructed government preferring to 'wait until Winston is bust', so that he could arrange peace with Hitler (pp. 257–58).

Rudman's account is readable and generally well-reasoned. Her discussion of the Hitler years, 1933–45, is the most original part of the study but it draws upon an increasingly narrow source base and occupies seventy pages, only a quarter of the book. Lloyd George's important intervention in the 'Norway Debate' is afforded just one paragraph. Rudman also offers a number of debatable conclusions. Few allowances are made for Britain's policy during disarmament negotiations or in the Abyssinian crisis. In the latter instance it is not immediately obvious from Lloyd George's remarks or Rudman's coverage what alternative course – short of provoking an unpopular and

risky war with Italy – would have stopped Mussolini or prevented a strengthening of the German-Italian axis.

Sympathy is also expressed for Lloyd George's 'Grand Alliance'. Rudman claims that this was 'more realistic' than Neville Chamberlain's approach. R. A. C. Parker's conclusion, that an anti-Nazi system embracing the Soviet Union should have been forged, is reaffirmed (p. 241). Yet, this is a complex issue. Stalin harboured suspicions of capitalist Britain and France, the Soviet Union had recently purged its General Staff and its military limitations outside its own frontiers were readily exposed during the Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939–40. After the Prague coup, it was a simple geographic fact that a 'Grand Alliance' to restrict German expansionism depended upon Polish concurrence, and the Poles would not accept Soviet aid. Rudman uses Lloyd George's advocacy to suggest that there was a better alternative to Chamberlain's policy. On balance, the evidence suggests that there probably wasn't.

The study provides a mass of evidence which shows that Lloyd George 'had a blind spot where Germany, and especially Hitler, were concerned' (p. 261). In September 1939, after the partition of Poland, Lloyd George still thought the Fuhrer had 'limited ambitions and was a man of his word' and, even in 1940, he 'still believed that Hitler could be appeased' (pp. 252, 255). It is, therefore, surprising that Rudman sustains the argument of Anthony Lentin, her PhD supervisor, that if Hitler had offered peace terms Lloyd George could have made a lasting peace with the Fuhrer. If negotiations began, Rudman holds that Lloyd George 'might well have been the best man for the job' (p. 263). The evidence in this study, however, implies that the deluded 77-year-old negotiating with Hitler would have been a frightening prospect. The terms of such an agreement would surely have been intolerable and Lloyd George's previous experience of negotiating a peace treaty had not been a resounding success. At this stage Lloyd George was living in a fantasy world. It is a pity that Rudman does not say so.



## REVIEWS

Although the ex-Prime Minister's influence is difficult to assess, this study shows that Lloyd George's support for Hitler's disregard for existing agreements did nothing to halt the Fuhrer's progress or reduce the likelihood of war. Lloyd George was an appeaser, not because he was compelled by Britain's dwindling resources combined with the multitude of threats facing the British Empire, but through a misplaced faith in German intentions, whoever held power in Berlin. While some of

Rudman's conclusions may be challenged, her thought-provoking study identifies more motives for appeasement and is a welcome addition to the historiography.

*Dr Chris Cooper was recently awarded his PhD at the University of Liverpool. His doctoral thesis analysed the political career of Douglas Hogg, 1st Viscount Hailsham (1872–1950). He has published a number of journal articles on different aspects of modern British history and he teaches history at university.*

### Lloyd George and Leadership

*Continued from page 11*

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- 28 Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones: Whitehall Diary*, Vol. III (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 60 (27 April 1921).
- 29 Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1994), pp. 178–80. For Wilson, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1994), pp. 11–14.
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- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Lord Riddell, *Intimate Diary*, p. 226 (24 July 1920).
- 33 William D. Jones, *Wales in America* (University of Wales Press, 1976), pp. 184ff. There is a file on this visit in the Lloyd George of Dwyfor Papers (Parliamentary Archives, House of Lords, G/165).
- 34 Text of speech, Lloyd George of Dwyford Papers, G/165.
- 35 *The Times*, 31 Oct. 1923.
- 36 Text of speech in Lloyd George of Dwyfor Papers, G/165.
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- 38 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: the Life* (HarperCollins, London, 2007), p. 9.
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### Lloyd George's Coalition Proposal of 1910

*Continued from page 23*

- 8 'Cabinet Memorandum: secret', 31 May 1910, Asquith papers, 23.
- 9 *The Times*, 13 April 1908.
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- 11 Masterman, C. F. G. Masterman, p. 160.
- 12 Lloyd George to Balfour, 11
- October 1910, Balfour papers Add Mss.49692.
- 13 'The Criccieth Memorandum', 17 August 1910, in K. O. Morgan, *The Age of Lloyd George* (1971), pp. 150–55.
- 14 Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside* (1936), p. 293.
- 15 Crewe to Asquith, 22 October

### David Lloyd George, Nonconformity and Radicalism

*Continued from page 17*

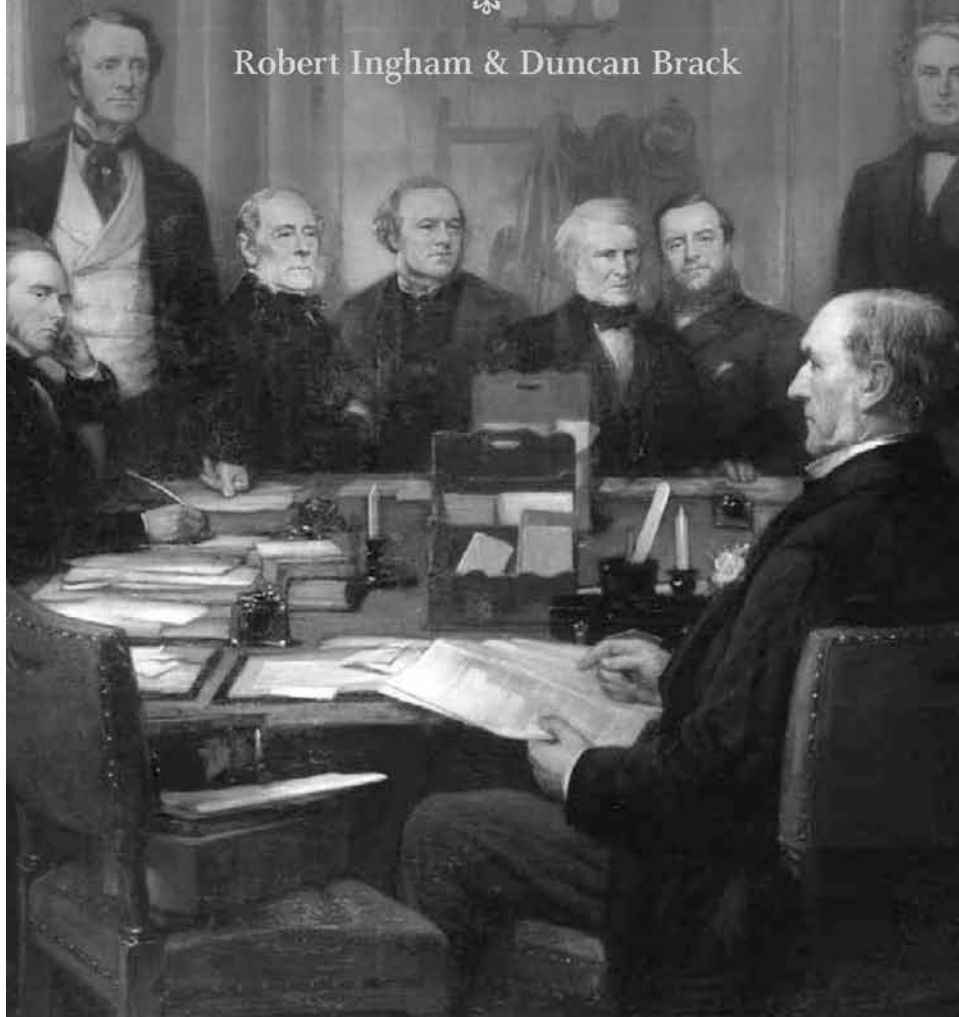
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- 13 J. Grigg, *Lloyd George, the people's champion, 1902–11* (London, 1978), p. 71.
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- Lloyd George to his wife, 3 May 1894 (Lloyd George Papers, National Library of Wales 20412C, fo.425); K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics* (second ed., Cardiff, 1970), p. 140ff.; P. Rowland, *Lloyd George*, pp. 102–11; J. Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George* (London, 1973), pp. 146–49.
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# THE PROGRESSIVE COALITION THAT NEVER WAS LESSONS FROM THE ASHDOWN–BLAIR ‘PROJECT’

Between 1994 and 1999, Paddy Ashdown and Tony Blair led a process of collaboration between the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party, with the aim not merely of defeating the Conservatives but of establishing clear common ground between the progressive parties in British politics.

Some of the outcomes of this process – ‘the project’, in Ashdown’s phrase – were public, such as the programme of agreed constitutional reforms drawn up by Robin Cook and Robert Maclennan. Far more were secret: covert electoral collaboration in marginal seats during the 1997 election, attempts to agree a programme for government, talks about coalition – and hints of a more permanent alliance.

In the end, the size of Labour’s majority in 1997 destroyed the case for coalition, and the main outcome was a Joint Cabinet Committee between the two parties. What it achieved is not clear, and it was abandoned by Ashdown’s successor Charles Kennedy.

Now, in a period of cooperation between political parties very different from that envisaged by Ashdown and Blair, what can we learn from ‘the project’? What did it achieve? What could it have achieved under different circumstances? And what can it tell us about the desirability and achievability of collaboration between progressive forces?

Speakers:

- **Paddy Ashdown**, Rt Hon Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon GCMG KBE, Leader of the Liberal Democrats 1988–99
- **Roger Liddle**, Lord Liddle, special adviser to Bill Rodgers 1976–81; member of the SDP and then Liberal Democrats 1981–94; member of the Lib Dem Federal Policy Committee; special adviser to Tony Blair 1997–2004
- Rt Hon **Pat McFadden MP**, adviser to Donald Dewar 1988–93, to John Smith 1993–94 and to Tony Blair 1994–2005

Chair: **Steve Richards**, Chief Political Commentator, *The Independent*

**7.00pm Tuesday 22 January 2013**

Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, House of Commons, SW1A 2LW (*allow 10–15 minutes to pass security*)

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