

Ex-servicemen, Britain, and the Idea of “Europe” Between the Wars

I.

As numerous commentators have observed, and one could scarcely fail to notice, the British relationship with Europe is highly ambiguous. Great Britain has remained at once an Atlantic power committed to the European Order, and a member of the European Union, but not its currency. Such contradictions, as William Wallace is not alone in noticing, have long plagued a nation unable to decide whether it primarily sees itself as Anglo-Saxon, or European.¹ Though indeed this question has been perennial, it is only in the years that follow the Second World War that commentators generally subject it to serious academic rigour. Most presumably reverse Dean Acheson’s famous phrase: before losing its Empire, Britain had no need to find a role. At the same time, Hitler, Mussolini and Franco provide similarly compelling reasons why engagement with Europe before 1939 was best conducted for the British at arm’s length. The English Channel appears thus longer than the twenty sum miles between Dover and Calais. The propensity of *le Perfide Albion* to turn a blind eye to European matters, particularly during this period, also serves to reinforce such stereotypes.

Nevertheless, it is arguably time to look beyond such historiographical totems as British aloofness from all things continental, and the lack of pan-European sentiment prior to Monet, Schumann and the post-1945 machinations. To do so, this paper proposes two key points. Firstly, we will survey Conservative attitudes to Europe between 1918 and 1939. Anyone familiar with British politics will note that party’s historical reluctance to commit itself to Europe – modern day politicians like Ken Clarke have had their leadership bids wrecked on the subject, whilst John Major presided over a Premiership perpetually split over the issue. To take the story back to the interwar period provides both the backdrop to modern day problems, and helps illuminate an age forever examined with a view to European disintegration: the outbreak of war in 1939. Secondly, we will draw a distinction between those Tory politicians who had seen combat in the First World War, and those who had not. This, I believe, is an underappreciated fault line. Those with active service who entered Westminster politics after 1918 could often espouse a more pan-European dialogue than one might imagine, and indeed more than their political elders were doing at the same time. This was no

doubt helped by the fact that many such men had worked in fields of inter-Allied wartime cooperation, such as intelligence.

Whilst then, we see the period between the wars as one of continual European tension, there are compelling reasons to moderate this stance a little: the flow of ideas, to some degree, offset the movement of troops. Indeed, whilst what follows is a tale of how political elites viewed the world, we should not ignore the growing popular fascination with things European. The BBC, for example, broadcast a series of radio programmes on European culture in 1935 and 1936. Essentially recording two journalists in front of microphone having a conversation, they were indicative of a curiosity concerning the way of life across the English Channel. Though couched in the language of ignorance, they in fact revealed a burgeoning knowledge, as a few snippets illustrate:

Turkey is still rather mysterious...Not that English people imagine Turkey is a country of veiled women and men with fezzes. We know that sort of thing's been swept away...For many people over here your bowler hats, your Latin script instead of Arabic, and your corporation buses have taken the glamour out of the country²

[...]

William Barker: Most English people are vague about Czechoslovakia. They're vague about your geographical position, about your language, about your race. One or two detailed things stand out, but they serve to emphasise the lack of detailed information...

Vladimir Cerny: But surely the English know other things about us. They know [the playwright] Karel Capek ...And then surely the English people know the great Czech musical composers, Dvorak and Smetana.³

Improvements in travel and communications had rendered the world a lot smaller. As Cerny teased his host, Czechoslovakia had recently defeated the English at their own game, association football.⁴ Within football indeed, British

managers like Herbert Chapman were beginning to learn the lessons of Hugo Meisl's Austrian *Wunderteam* and Vittorio Pozzo's slightly more pragmatic Italians.⁵ More notably, Britons began holidaying abroad *en masse* for the first time. The 1919 Peace Conference had necessitated the introduction of regular flights from London to Paris and, though taking over two hours with no toilet facilities, this route was not withdrawn after the conclusion of Versailles. Whilst successive governments did not attempt anything as grandiose as the Nazi's programme of Strength Through Joy (KDF), a National Tourist Board was created in 1929 to regulate the increasing movement of peoples in and out of Britain. This was rather after the horse had bolted however, for international travel had been steadily on the increase. From 480,165 European visas issued to Britons in 1921, to 834,846 in 1926, by 1930 almost 1 million were being issued – much higher, let it be noted, than levels of travel to Britain's imperial possessions.⁶ Cultural globalization was still a few decades away then, but the general democratization of British society – a spirit created by the war and enshrined through the 1918 Reform Act and subsequent unemployment legislation - had a knock-on effect for cultural norms. Its effect on Conservative MPs of the day and their attitudes to Europe, we may now chronicle. Though this paper's length prohibits as thorough an analysis as one might hope, a few choice examples will hopefully provide some illumination, and turn the tables on perceptions of uniform British hostility to all things European.

II.

Writing to that town's Mayor in 1947, Edward Louis Spears noted that '*il est... désirable [de ne jamais] oublier l'association de l'Armée Britannique avec Mons.*'⁷ Nor was he likely to, for Spears's purpose of writing was to secure a monument for the British soldiers who had served and died alongside him in the First World War (he had served as a liaison between British and French armies). Though the Mons Monument would be inaugurated in 1952, Spears had, like many of his generation, already given voice throughout his political career to another structure that could fittingly commemorate the dead: European Peace. That such notions would

eventually be torn apart by Adolf Hitler, should not blind us either to their existence, or their meaning.

The sheer volume of ex-servicemen Conservative politicians in Great Britain, I have chronicled elsewhere.⁸ Suffice to say, with over one hundred, by the 1930s two hundred, MPs fitting this description there was a potential vanguard for pan-European feeling in the House of Commons, should the British ex-serviceman feel this way. Spears aside, there are signs that war service had indeed created such a movement. Whilst the 1918 General Election was waged in an atmosphere of virulent anti-Germanism – newspapers listing atrocity after atrocity and even, as we will see, rather internationalist veterans bracketing the whole German nation with the deserving the fate of the Kaiser (by which most meant death) – it is remarkable how transient a phenomenon all this hot air actually was.⁹ Touring the United States after his appointment as Ambassador in 1920, Auckland Campbell Geddes (who had served in France) took the opportunity to denounce belligerence in all its forms. Other nations should be approached ‘not in a spirit of perhaps unconscious hostility or in a contemptuous frame of mind but realizing that they like ourselves are contributing to...civilization.’¹⁰ Crucially, even though he addressed an American audience, this was directed to Britain’s continental neighbours. Speaking two months later in North Carolina, he praised the scientific contributions to history of Pasteur, Schwann and Galzoni:

I have chosen a Frenchman, German and Italian...because I venture to urge that it is important for the people to realise that our western civilization is not the property or the product of the genius of one race or people. We who are Europeans by blood [have created civilization together].¹¹

This notion that reconciliation of European brothers was not only necessary pragmatically but fundamentally desirable was perhaps best articulated by the experience of Leo Amery – a wartime Intelligence Officer in the Balkans who we will turn to in greater detail later. Amery, holidaying with his wife in Italy in the summer of 1920, encountered an Austrian couple: ‘the first enemy, as it happened, I had met since the Armistice.’ After briefly surveying him, Amery recorded, ‘we shook hands and

agreed that one could forget the past on the mountains.¹² Though almost cinematic, Amery's experience was fitting: remarkably early after having seen their comrades and friends blown to pieces on the European continent, veterans turned Tory politicians were prepared, if not fully to let bygones be bygones, to look beyond the past.

One should be clear: old anti-European, little Englander, prejudices still abounded within British Conservatism – but generally not amongst those politicians who had served in the First World War. Neville Chamberlain, too old even in 1914-18 to fight, provides an interesting example here - particularly given his later attempts to preserve the peace. Reacting to Mussolini's invasion of Corfu in 1923, he noted in his diary that 'the Greeks are a low lot and deserve to be kicked.'¹³ Likewise, attending the Lausanne Conference almost a decade later, he declared it to have been

an education for me in the ways of the foreigner. He simply can't contemplate getting down to business without long preliminary sparring and skirmishing...

When therefore we, in our impatient blundering way, blurt out our intentions without any prologue, the foreigner can't believe that we could be so simple. He says Of course les Anglais must begin like that...¹⁴

Perhaps most intriguingly given later events, his greatest venom was reserved for Britain's neighbour across the North Sea. After a quasi-comic night in which Chamberlain had struggled to get to grips with the nuances of local pillows – tossing and turning he had accidentally flung one of them onto his bedside table, emptying a glass of water onto his bedside slippers as a result – he let forth in a tirade against the Germans he encountered on holiday in Titisee:

I can say confidently that though there are places in this country which are charming...and individuals who are likeable (as for instance our chauffeur) on the whole I loathe the Germans and detest all their habits and customs. To begin with they are a revoltingly ugly race. I have only seen one woman who was not positively repulsive and I think she...must have been a Swiss. As for the men with their great shining bald skulls, their little rolls of fat at the back

of the neck, and their great paunches, they are fit mates for their womenkind. I *have* seen one or two children who are quite adorable but either they must have been foreigners or else they were destined early to lose their beauty.¹⁵

In such a world view, signing away the Sudetenland in October 1938 was not the prelude to an ever expanding master race Hitler suggested, but merely the chance to perpetuate a backward, almost troglodyte, people. Hopefully, Chamberlain may have mused, the Czechs had at least taught them how to make comfortable pillows.

III.

The war generation, on the other hand, showed signs of moving beyond such prejudices. Though wider in its scope than merely the European continent, interactions with the League of Nations Union suggested an internationalism that would have positive ramifications for any pro-European movement. Having progressed from a position of 'sceptical benevolence' to a belief that 'either the League of Nations must triumph or there must be another war,' Alfred Duff Cooper (winner of the Distinguished Service Order in 1918) became a poster boy for Gilbert Murray's League of Nations Union (LNU) throughout the late 1920s.¹⁶ Between January 1928 and April 1929 alone he spoke at 19 LNU meetings, backed in his endeavours by fellow ex-servicemen MPs John Loder and Victor Cazalet, the first of whom sat on the organisation's committee, the second contributing financially to the cause.¹⁷ Duff Cooper's rhetoric on such occasions was at once passionate and practical. To the accusation that he did not really believe in the League, he replied

"Do you believe in the fire brigade? I disapprove of houses on fire and I know of no organisation for putting them out other than the fire brigade. It may be badly managed, it may be inefficient, but none the less if I could help it I would certainly do so. I also disapprove of war. I know of no mechanism that exists for preventing it other than the League of Nations. The League may fail...But so long as there is the faintest chance of its succeeding I believe that we should give it all the help we can."¹⁸

His war service or not, Duff Cooper clearly had a certain something. At one meeting in February 1928, his 'splendid contribution' contributed to an 'astonishingly successful' gathering: 'six hundred new members were roped in there and then.'¹⁹ For all the later pro-war rhetoric, let us not forget the earlier passionate pleas for peace. Internationalism, in this still just about Eurocentric world, still meant Europe. Geneva, rather than New York, was after all, still the port of internationalist call.

Edward Louis Spears - he of the Mons Monument - spoke for many in bemoaning the fact that Britain and France had forged so little common ground between the wars: 'although both nations were loyal to each other as allies in the last war, they never really understood each other.'²⁰ This notion that Britain's relations with Europe should not only be codified by the ink of a treaty or pact but some form of intellectual collaboration is an important one. That Alan Crosland Graham - elected as a MP after serving in France and Northern Russia during the war - could speak of Britain and France as 'the twin upholders of the temple of European Civilisation' in 1940 - echoing, of course, Churchill's calls for an Anglo-French Union - was indicative of the movements of intercultural exchange that had been occurring between prominent figures in both countries.²¹ Attempts had indeed been made to move beyond the types of misunderstandings Spears decried. In 1926 Sir Edmund Gosse had founded the Anglo-French Luncheon Club. Strictly a non-party organization, 'the object of the Club [was] to arrange periodical luncheons, if possible once a month, when a distinguished French guest will be invited to meet British guests of similar interests and standing.'²² Thus when prominent French politicians like Pierre Flandin were in London, they addressed club luncheons attended by prominent Conservative war veterans such as Philip Cunliffe-Lister (former President of the Board of Trade), Walter Elliot (later Minister of Health) and Spears himself.²³

The Luncheon Club was buttressed in 1935 by the creation of an Anglo-French Art and Travel Society. The activities of its sister organisation in Paris, *Art et Tourisme*, showed just elitist this new body was. Following an exhibition of Blake and Turner works in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and a concert by the London Philharmonic in 1937, 1938 saw a visit of boys from the prestigious public school of Eton.²⁴ This then, was no organisation for the proletariat. Yet if it was increasingly running short of funds for such expensive activities, the 900 members the Art and Travel Society managed to acquire by

1937 was suggestive that something of a pro-continental vanguard was beginning to form within British public life. As Spears put it in 1937:

*Une très grande difficulté surgit entre nous : c'est que le Français est toujours un peu choqué que l'Anglais ne réagisse pas comme lui en certaines circonstances, et l'Anglais ne comprend pas que le Français réagisse comme un Français et non pas comme un Anglais. Un effort de compréhension est donc nécessaire.*²⁵

What lay behind both the Art and Travel and Society, and the Luncheon Club then, was not mere tourism or chance for social interaction, but a genuine attempt at European cooperation from the younger generation. The French, it is true, often made greater efforts than the British in this regard. Aubrey Le Blond, Honorary Secretary of the Luncheon Club, wrote to Spears in 1932 pointing out that

certain leader writers and editors of world-renown in Paris had formed a group and had a scheme for explaining French policy to England and wanted opposite numbers here to do the same for English policy. You would know all these men by name. They felt that it was vital for civilization even that these two countries should permanently understand each other.²⁶

Spears, it was assumed, would fill such a role. Similarly, by late 1932 both parliaments were containing bodies relevant to the other: *le Groupe Parlementaire Franco-Britannique* and the Anglo-French Parliamentary Committee (AFPC). Here again, the French – even with the unstable nature of their government vis-a-vis Britain's National Administration – were more pro-active. Spears wrote to Sir Robert Horne in December 1932:

I have just heard from Flandin, who is very pleased with the Group he has constituted, which he says comprises 300 members of the Senate and the Chamber. He tells me he is very anxious to organise soon a meeting between the British and French groups...He says that the French are anxious that this first reunion should not merely be a social affair but should include a few

serious meetings for discussions on the respective French and British points of view in regard to economic and customs questions.²⁷

After a recruitment drive in the summer of 1939, 214 British MPs were members of their grouping. This was still well below the French level of 395, but, nevertheless an important fact in this era so often judged in narrow, national terms.²⁸ A brief glance at the Vice-Presidents of the AFPC also reveals that the impetus for this came, primarily, from the young Conservative ex-servicemen: Anthony Eden, Alfred Duff Cooper, Roger Keyes all lent their name. Labour Party veterans like Hugh Dalton and Frederick Petherick-Lawrence likewise.²⁹

IV.

The question was whether such Europhilia could be parlayed into anything more concrete. Certainly organisations such as the AFPC illustrated signs of a changing mentality, but did any common ground between the traditionally insular British and their continental neighbours actually exist? The most renowned pan-Europeanist of this era, the many-time French Prime Minister Aristide Briand, was a man much interested in this question. After his speech in the League of Nations in 1929 and work with the Pan-European Union – more of whom later – Briand was a confirmed and vocal believer in closer European Co-operation. The official British response to thus him is interesting, particularly given later hostility to De Gaulle, and the “Up Yours Delors” jingoism seen in the right wing press during the early 1990s.

Robert Vansittart, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, drafted a memorandum in 1930 that – perhaps surprisingly given the early relative hostility of Great Britain to attempts at such measures in the 1940s and 1950s – did not explicitly rule out some form of European federation. His response to Briand is worth quoting at length:

[Briand] wishes to strengthen international safeguards against European war, and for that purpose to increase European co-operation. Some of his colleagues are, no doubt, also actuated by the desire to restore the economic balance between Europe and America.

It is plain that this main purpose must receive the support of any British Government to-day. More than ever before peace is the first of British interests, and especially peace in Europe; while any diminution of the barriers to European international trade must help our exports to what still remains the greatest, as it is the nearest and most easily expansible, of our markets.

While...we must do nothing to hamper our freedom to develop our political and economic co-operation with the Dominions in any way...it is, I submit, our duty to assure Monsieur Briand that we are in full sympathy with...the policy of closer European co-operation for which he stands.³⁰

The European continent, very much including Great Britain, had thus common goals in this era: the avoidance of war and the preservation of its world position against the emergence of America. When Joseph Goebbels harped on about protecting European civilisation towards the beginning of the Third Reich's end in 1944-5, his words were not falling upon completely deaf ears. The epoch of Europe as a dominant world player, even in its post-1945 united form, was over. Yet because such words came from Nazi sources, we often assume they were merely the last desperate attempt at *levée en masse*, and do not take them seriously. Briand, Vansittart and others had however, throughout the 1930s, precisely attempted to avoid the fate of which Goebbels spoke.

Pan-Europeanism, in this epoch, was not necessitated - though anti-communist traditions were indeed something of a driving force - to ensure some form of nominal independence against power blocs both east and west, but a method to preserve global hegemony. Much to British taste in the interwar period, this meant Colonial cooperation. Whilst the EEC in its various manifestations would be a bastion of liberalism - both in political and economic terms - pan-Europeanists were by no means thinking in such terms before 1939, something which made the prospect rather attractive to the traditionally conservative British. Indeed, when the Anglo-French Parliamentary Committee and *le Groupe Parlementaire Franco-Britannique* met in London on 3 and 4 August 1939 they resolved to create a sub-committee, meeting regularly, to deal with 'the development of liaison between the Colonial Empires of the

two countries. It was thus 'decided to draw the attention of the two Governments to the importance of liaison between the colonial administrations,' something which did not go against the imperial concerns of Vansittart's memorandum some nine years earlier.³¹

V.

This idea that colonial cooperation was a route by which Britain could become a truly European power was perhaps best expressed in the correspondence between Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and Leo Amery, Great War veteran turned British Conservative Cabinet Minister. Coudenhove-Kalergi – half-Japanese, half-Austrian – was, Briand apart, interwar pan-Europeanist *par excellence*. Having founded the Pan-European Union in 1922, he organised the movement's first congress in Vienna in 1926. The organisation's members were both eclectic and notable: Albert Einstein, Siegmund Freud and Richard Strauss were joined by Hjalmar Schacht, the principal speaker at the first demonstration of the Pan-European Union in the German Reichstag.³² Pointing to the Reformation, the nationalism of France and Spain offering alternative governmental structures, and the decline of Islam removing the existence of a common enemy, the Pan-European Union believed the hour of continental reconciliation was again upon them.³³ That Coudenhove-Kalergi should choose Amery as his potential Trojan horse within British politics, much less that Amery would not demur from such an arrangement, is interesting.

Firstly, it reflects the potential Europeans of all nations saw from colonial cooperation. Crossland Graham for one saw that 'the vital task of Britain and France in the new post-war world will be really to develop their own Empires and in such a way that every citizen, even the poorest, shall feel that he too shares actively in the benefits of such a heritage.'³⁴ Coudenhove-Kalergi was not shy of this, indeed he would state to Amery that 'any cooperative Pan European Committee in England would have to show public opinion that a continental Pan European organisation is by no means constituting a danger for the politics of the British Empire.'³⁵ In part this represented Coudenhove-Kalergi's own roots – the son of a Habsburg diplomat, he believed the 'gentlemen' British represented 'the highest type in the modern world.'³⁶ Yet when forwarding the idea of a 'systematic organization of collaboration in colonial matters with a view to fitting colonial raw-materials and markets into the economic complex of Europe,' he

was, in Amery, preaching to the converted.³⁷ Though Coudenhove-Kalergi switched between the idea of the British Empire being allied to, but separate from, the European Federation and full blown British membership, Amery was always supportive. Writing of the proposed Pan-European Union, he noted that 'such a constructive group of the world ought not only to reduce enormously the friction surfaces but also to promote the ideas of peaceful settlement and cooperation.'³⁸ Writing to Robert Horne, he thought 'the Pan-Europe idea is an intrinsically sound one, and its development would certainly stimulate the idea of a closer union of our Commonwealth.'³⁹ Europe then, was not the replacement for a declining Empire, but a method of protecting it.

Secondly, it is important to highlight exactly how highly British politicians of Amery's type regarded Coudenhove-Kalergi. Not for them Hitler's angry claim that he was 'everybody's bastard,' indeed when his background was raised it was in gentle, if typically for the time, condescending tones: 'his mother was Japanese and he himself is rather like a young Buddha in appearance and in outlook. Some of his philosophical writing is really quite good.'⁴⁰ From the late 1920s Leo Amery, for one, was in constant contact with the young Buddha. Along with Robert Horne, Henry Wickham-Stead and Percy Molteno, Coudenhove-Kalergi seems to have viewed Amery – before 1914 known as a staunch imperialist rather than pan-Europeanist – as an ideal British convert to the European cause. This was indeed sage, and a long friendship would be formed. Progressing beyond formality to the point where they could refer to one another as 'Dicky' and 'Leo' by the late 1940s, Amery would by then 'certainly...think it a mistake on our part to stand in the way of Europe.'⁴¹ In 1940 Amery had even attempted to drum up a campaign for Coudenhove-Kalergi to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Writing to Harold Nicolson to try and elicit his support, he reflected both Coudenhove-Kalergi's own abilities, and the tragedy of appeasement:

I do so willingly, for I don't think that anybody has worked so single-mindedly for European peace, and his ideas are now receiving much wider recognition than ever before. After all, both Neville and Halifax have, consciously, or unconsciously, adopted his main under-lying ideas.⁴²

Neville Chamberlain, as we have seen, may have been miscast here as a “European,” but certainly his quest for peace bore the hallmarks of the type of reconciliation the pan-Europeans were urging.

Perhaps however, it was in Amery’s defence of his friend in the written word that their bond was best shown. Having written to him on 11 October 1939 asking for a re-write of the preface Amery had penned for his book *Europe Must Unite*, Amery hastily got to work in the light of the opening of hostilities. Comparing Coudenhove-Kalergi’s work to Hitler was perhaps an easy sell, but Amery was clearly passionate in his prose:

Fully to appreciate both the clarity, the balance, the broad sweep of its handling of a great argument, and the serene fervour of its conclusion, one should come to it fresh from a perusal of the endless turbid, unbalanced, hate-filled pages of *Mein Kampf*. I can conceive of no better practical illustration of the author’s summing up of nationalist chauvinism as “the world outlook of the half-educated.”⁴³

In his quickly penned postscript, Amery went even further. Moving beyond the traditional calls toward British freedom and honour, “Europe” was worth fighting for:

there is no time for laying down detailed conditions of peace which may bear no relation to the realities of tomorrow. But it is all the more necessary that we should, even now, begin to envisage and proclaim, to Europe and even to Germany, the practical ideal which inspires our efforts and our sacrifices. From that point of view nothing could be more timely than the appearance of this book.⁴⁴

This was a work, let us note, that described the death of Aristide Briand in an almost similar “fallen martyr” vein to the Nazi’s treatment of Horst Wessel, which denounced British rejection of Briand’s pan-European ideals in diplomatic, yet plainly furious terms, and called for a new Young Europe movement to rise up as in 1848.⁴⁵ Coudenhove-Kalergi was a radical, albeit one whose ideas have gained currency in the post-1945 world. Simply because they have done so however, we should not assume

that, like the Whig, history was always headed in this direction. It took the pre-1939 work of men like Amery to lead Britons to accept the feasibility of such notions.

VI.

It is in such an atmosphere that appeasement should be understood. Pan-Europeanism in Britain did not begin on 8 May 1945 but was a perennial feature of policy between the wars. Samuel Hoare is often regarded as one of the *Guilty Men* of British diplomacy: cow-towing to Hitler when active resistance was both a more honourable and potentially more effective policy.⁴⁶ Not only however was his resignation as Foreign Secretary – over the famous agreement with Pierre Laval to partition Abyssinia between Haile Selassie and Benito Mussolini – met with sorrow from those war veterans later to lauded as “anti-appeasers” (like Duff Cooper and Amery), but the diplomatist William Tyrell went even further.⁴⁷ Having listened to his resignation address from the public gallery in the House of Commons, Tyrell wrote to Hoare to tell him that ‘your speech of yesterday was that of a distinguished gentleman as well as a good European.’⁴⁸ This is key: even with Hitler, Mussolini, Horthy and others leading European nations, Europe was not somehow an “other” to British political thinkers. British interactions with the continent were not predicated just upon *realpolitik*, but a desire for some form of genuine cooperation. Chamberlain, as we have seen, was scarcely likely to have this as his motivation for Munich, yet the environment in which he operated was not as ignorant of European questions as one might think.

Chamberlain’s comment that the Czechs were a ‘faraway people of whom we know nothing’ has much to answer for in this regard. Yet appeasing Hitler was not the product of mere cold rationality. The Sudetenland was not handed over as a product of British ambivalence – in such a line, what did it matter if strange Germans or equally strange Czechs ruled it – but in a pro-active attempt to settle European matters. The Bolshevik hoards to the east were not only a threat to Europe territorially, but to her cultural norms.⁴⁹ In many ways this was predicated on a certain British romantic ideal of European civilization. As Amery had bemoaned during the first war, propagandistic appeals toward ‘an imaginary virtuous and pacific entity called Europe, in which we are included, [are] wholly mischievous.’⁵⁰ Yet in precisely such language did Eden appeal to the French in 1939: ‘*Nous avons, comme vous, une haine profonde de la guerre. Cette*

haine de la guerre ne peut en vérité qu'être partagée par tout homme civilisé. La guerre, c'est la destruction, la brutalité, la réaction.'⁵¹ To British war veterans then, Europe did not only mean the dictators but took on an almost allegorical form broadly associated with peace. The rhetoric of Auckland Geddes – that of a common civilisation – was thus extended, rightly or wrongly, when it came to diplomatic crunch. Hitler was not only alien to British traditions of fair play, but to European decency. For all the bombast seen during the war – A.J.P. Taylor, for one, writing of a particularly violent *Course of German History* – Germany still meant Goethe, Hegel and Beethoven as well as Kaiser Wilhelm, Adolf Hitler and Julius Streicher.⁵² Even the German *Fuhrer* was a member of the front generation – that common bond amongst Europeans of this era - and such men, as Eden attempted to outline in the first meeting of the two, 'should be the last to ever wish for another war.'⁵³

'Speak for England, Arthur,' would constitute Leo Amery's great public legacy: a sign of the growing anti-appeasement movement in the House of Commons and, by September 1939, the failure of Chamberlain's strategy. Yet for much of his career he, and his fellow Tory veterans, spoke for Europe. Though after 1945 every anti-Chamberlain utterance would be highlighted again and again by such men, these were clearly conflicted times. Conservative support for appeasement remained high, and even in his last stand Neville Chamberlain could call upon the backing of 68% of his parliamentary party contingent. This, no doubt, was a force partly motivated by the simple fear of war. But things were not simply so negative: the positive ideal of a pacific Europe was by no means divorced from such a process.

VII.

To conclude then, we must begin to shift our analytical radar a little. Whilst the structures of the post-1945 world were not available to the interwar pan-Europeans, the ideals and passions that would come to shape such bodies most certainly were. Though it does not always fit our perceived wisdoms of the euro-sceptic reluctant partner, one cannot ignore the British when analysing pan-Europeanism. Did the spark towards union emanate from Great Britain? Most certainly not: this was, after all, still an imperial age when American, Russian and Chinese influences had not yet overcome the European powers. Yet empire, as we have seen, is an interesting case in point. It was for

this very reason that Briandism could gain currency amongst British Conservatives. Realising the threat from east and west, there was already every reason for Britons of an imperial bent to look across the English Channel for potential partners. Unlike the at once haughty and desperate attempts of Harold Macmillan to lead Britain into Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, this had the potential to be a partnership of equality between Europeans.

This Europhilia was particularly well evidenced amongst Conservative MPs who had fought in the First World War. Though anti-Germanism abounded for a while, this was soon overcome by the pragmatic need to secure British hegemony through any means necessary. That so many brave young Britons were buried in the soil of Northern France and Belgium provided a connection to the continent that a thousand pre-war Oxbridge educations could not imbue. English insularity is sometimes overplayed: even Stanley Baldwin, Tory Prime Minister during the 1920s and quintessential Englishman had acquainted himself before the conflict with French, German and Italian. Yet the idea that warfare brought the British closer to the continent seems difficult to argue. On the one hand, soldiers had not fought simply to plunge the world back into another, even more brutal, holocaust a little over two decades later. On the other, it was – as Amery's meeting with his former Austrian enemy through to Eden shaking the hand of Hitler – a shared experience. The front generation may have faced each other, but in the broader sense they had shared the pain of losing friends, the boredom of trench life, and felt the same quasi-contemptuous feelings towards those who had stayed home. Even Hitler himself felt more in common with the average English soldier – who, after all, he praised in *Mein Kampf* – than those fellow Germans who had avoided combat, something even the seemingly genteel future British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan much agreed with.⁵⁴

Much has been written about the Great War veteran's post-traumatic stress and its later use. It has, Paul Fussell, Robert Wohl and others have shown, taken on an allegorical literary form that renders it hard to decipher.⁵⁵ At times, as George Mosse points out, one must be highly sceptical of its exponent's aims.⁵⁶ Yet pro-Europeanism does not seem to be one of these occasions. The British ex-serviceman – later Conservative hostility to the idea or not – seems to have been genuinely motivated in this direction, certainly compared to non-combatants like Neville Chamberlain. It would of course take the intervention of Hitler, and the emergence of a bipolar world excluding

Europe, to push Britain into the arms of their continental neighbours. Yet such a process had its roots in the interwar period. Even as Europe began to tear itself apart, reconciliation was in sight.

Richard Carr

PhD Candidate, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

Bibliography

Monograph and Journal Length Works

- J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds), *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929*, (London, 1980)
- R. Carr, *The Phoenix Generation: Great War Veterans Turned Tory MPs, Democratic Political Culture, and the Path of British Conservatism from the Armistice to the Welfare State*, (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, forthcoming 2010)
- Cato, *Guilty Men*, (London, 1940)
- R. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe Must Unite*, (London, 1940)
- *The Totalitarian State Against Man*, (London, 1938)
- A. Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, (London, 1953)
- A. Eden, *Freedom and Order*, (London, 1947)
- P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (London, 1975)
- H. Macmillan, *The Winds of Change 1914-39*, (London, 1966)
- G.L. Mosse, 'Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (1986), 491-513
- S. Page, *Tourism Management: Managing for Change*, (London, 2007)
- R.C. Self (ed), *Neville Chamberlain Diaries and Letters, Volume 2: The Reform Years 1921-1927*, (Aldershot, 2002)
- *Neville Chamberlain Diaries and Letters, Volume 3: The Heir Apparent 1928-1933*, (Aldershot, 2003)
- A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History*, (Oxford, 1945)
- W. Wallace, 'Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom,' *International Affairs*, 67 (1991), 65-80
- J. Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid: A History of Football Tactics*, (London, 2008)
- R. Wohl, *The Lost Generation*, (Cambridge, 1979)

Newspapers and Magazines

Hull News and the Daily Supplement; Liverpool Post and Mercury; The Listener

Papers Cited

Bodleian Library, Oxford: Gilbert Murray

Cambridge University Library: Lord Templewood

Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge: Leo Amery, Alfred Duff Cooper, Auckland

Campbell Geddes, Edward Louis Spears

King's College London: Edward Louis Spears

London School of Economics: Alan Crosland Graham

-
- ¹ W. Wallace, 'Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom,' *International Affairs*, 67 (1991), 65-80.
 - ² *The Listener*, 1 January 1936.
 - ³ *The Listener*, 24 December 1935.
 - ⁴ *The Listener*, 24 December 1935.
 - ⁵ J. Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid: A History of Football Tactics*, (London, 2008), 57-76.
 - ⁶ S. Page, *Tourism Management: Managing for Change*, (London, 2007), 50.
 - ⁷ Spears to Maistriau, 1 July 1947, Liddell Hart Centre, King's College London, SPEARS 7/2.
 - ⁸ R. Carr, *The Phoenix Generation: Great War Veterans Turned Tory MPs, Democratic Political Culture, and the Path of British Conservatism from the Armistice to the Welfare State*, (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, forthcoming 2010).
 - ⁹ See *Hull News and the Daily Supplement*, 7 and 14 December 1918; Jack Cohen in *Liverpool Post and Mercury*, 14 December 1918.
 - ¹⁰ Geddes Philadelphia Speech, 19 May 1920, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge (CAC), GEDD 8/1.
 - ¹¹ North Carolina Speech, 20 July 1920, *Ibid*.
 - ¹² Amery Original Diary, 23 August 1920, CAC, AMEL 7/15.
 - ¹³ R.C. Self (ed), *Neville Chamberlain Diaries and Letters, Volume 2: The Reform Years 1921-1927*, (Aldershot, 2002), 185 [29 September 1923].
 - ¹⁴ *Idem*, *Neville Chamberlain Diaries and Letters, Volume 3: The Heir Apparent 1928-1933*, (Aldershot, 2003), 331 [26 June 1932].
 - ¹⁵ *Ibid*, 206 [22 August 1930].
 - ¹⁶ A. Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, (London, 1953), 157.
 - ¹⁷ Duff Cooper, 162; Murray to Cazalet and Murray to Loder, 27 and 14 June 1936, Bodleian Library, Oxford (BOD), Murray Papers, c.225.
 - ¹⁸ Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, 157-8.
 - ¹⁹ Murray to Duff Cooper, 7 February 1928, CAC, DUFC 2/1.
 - ²⁰ Essay on France as Britain's Ally, 1940, CAC, SPRS 7/7.
 - ²¹ 'What Will and What Should Be the Post-War World?' 18 January 1940, London School of Economics (LSE), Crosland Graham Papers, COLL MISC 0771/3/2.
 - ²² Anglo-French Luncheon Club Rules, CAC, SPRS 1/9.
 - ²³ Aubrey Le Blond to Spears, 9 December 1932, CAC, SPRS 1/9.
 - ²⁴ *Art et Tourisme*, CAC, SPRS 1/9.
 - ²⁵ Spears in *Bulletin Mensuel des Relations Franco-Britanniques*, July-August 1937, CAC, SPRS 1/10.
 - ²⁶ Le Blond to Spears, 8 January 1932, CAC, SPRS 1/9.
 - ²⁷ Spears to Horne, 30 December 1932, CAC, SPRS 1/9.
 - ²⁸ Nicolson and Henderson Message, 27 July 1939, CAC, SPRS 1/10.
 - ²⁹ Untitled Note, CAC, SPRS 1/10.
 - ³⁰ Vansittart Memorandum, 23 June 1930, CAC, VNST 2/8.
 - ³¹ Untitled Spears Note, 3 and 4 August 1939, CAC, SPRS 1/10.
 - ³² R. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe Must Unite*, (London, 1940), 56.
 - ³³ *Ibid*, 90-1.
 - ³⁴ 'What Will and What Should Be the Post-War World?' LSE, COLL MISC 0771/3/2.
 - ³⁵ Coudenhove-Kalergi to Amery, 7 March 1931, CAC, AMEL 2/2/5/2.
 - ³⁶ R. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *The Totalitarian State Against Man*, (London, 1938), 129.
 - ³⁷ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe Must Unite*, 159.
 - ³⁸ Amery to Coudenhove-Kalergi, 29 July 1929, CAC, AMEL 2/1/18/1.
 - ³⁹ Amery to Horne, 29 July 1929, CAC, AMEL 2/1/18/1.
 - ⁴⁰ Amery to Lord Halifax, 26 February 1941, CAC, AMEL 2/2/5/2.
 - ⁴¹ Various Correspondence, 2 October 1948, 30 April 1949 and 3 January 1950, CAC, AMEL 2/2/5/1.
 - ⁴² Amery to Nicolson, 12 January 1940, CAC, AMEL 2/2/5/2.
 - ⁴³ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe Must Unite*, 11.
 - ⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 15.
 - ⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 64, 63, 83.
 - ⁴⁶ Cato, *Guilty Men*, (London, 1940), *passim*.

-
- ⁴⁷ Amery and Duff Cooper Letters, 19 December 1935, Cambridge University Library (CUL), XV/II/VIII/5a.
- ⁴⁸ Tyrell to Hoare, 20 December 1935, CUL, XV/II/VIII/5a.
- ⁴⁹ The Conservative 1922 Committee heard much on the importance of securing Europe (particularly Germany and Poland) against Communist advance at its meeting on 15 December 1930, BOD, 1922/2.
- ⁵⁰ J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds), *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929*, (London, 1980), 116 [26 May 1915].
- ⁵¹ A. Eden, *Freedom and Order*, (London, 1947), 23 [15 June 1939].
- ⁵² A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History*, (Oxford, 1945), passim.
- ⁵³ A. Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, (London, 1962), 64.
- ⁵⁴ H. Macmillan, *The Winds of Change 1914-39*, (London, 1966), 99.
- ⁵⁵ P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (London, 1975), passim; R. Wohl, *The Lost Generation*, (Cambridge, 1979), passim.
- ⁵⁶ G.L. Mosse, 'Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (1986), 491-513.