

8. PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN POLICY, 1910-39

Problems of Empire, and especially of Anglo-Dominion relations, were intimately linked with problems of foreign policy. On the one hand, Imperial relations were increasingly becoming a variant of international relations, and were closely affected by changes in Britain's international position. On the other, Britain's international position was itself affected by changes in the Empire, and particularly by the extent to which the Empire could be made to provide the resources to translate the idea of "world power" into reality. As Dove wrote in 1928, "foreign affairs have become an increasingly important, one might say all-important, part of the Imperial question".¹

Imperial Foreign Policy

The war and its aftermath wrought changes in Britain no less than in the international situation and in the Dominions. The enormous cost of the war altered for all time Britain's economic and financial position. From being the world's greatest creditor nation she had become one of the largest debtors. Overseas investments had been liquidated at an alarming rate. Overseas markets had been lost. Industrial investment and productivity were sluggish. The imperative need to "balance books", yet also to respond to domestic pressures for an increased share of government expenditure, enforced stringent economies in defence. Even so, the disparity in defence expenditure between Britain and the Dominions remained stubborn, as the *Round Table* pointed out.

¹ Dove to Hichens, 5 Dec 1928, Lothian Papers 243, fols 590-94.

Estimated per capita defence expenditure, 1922-23¹

	Total*	Naval
Great Britain	11 - 18 - 7	1 - 6 - 8
Canada	3 - 11 - 11	0 - 1 - 4
Australia	5 - 18 - 0	0 - 8 - 2
New Zealand	5 - 13 - 0	0 - 4 - 7
South Africa	2 - 3 - 6	0

* includes war pensions and service of war debt

Before the war, those who constituted the London Moot believed that the British Empire could not survive unless the Dominions contributed to its support. In the aftermath of war, the belief was stronger than ever. As the Moot argued in December 1920, naval predominance was "no longer within the unaided resources of the British Isles".²

Britain's essential weakness impressed itself in connection with India and the dependencies, as Curtis made clear:

"The discharge of a task so gigantic accumulates on Great Britain resentment, discredit and hatred throughout the world. Mistakes are inevitable and are always multiplied where strength is inadequate to the tasks imposed. A few Dyers might precipitate world-wide disaster".³

In 1928 Kerr proposed the creation of an "Imperial Council" or "Councils" for the dependencies, including representatives of the Dominions as well as "people who have lived long in the Colonies or Dependencies concerned".

¹ [Kerr,] "The Imperial Conference", *RT*, Sept 1923, p 700.

² "Draft Circular to the Dominion Groups", 22 Dec 1920, Lothian Papers 17 (fols 16-29), fol 21.

³ [Curtis,] "Preliminary Note on the Questions to be Raised", Jan 1921, Brand Papers, box 41.

Kerr saw his proposal as the first step towards transferring the dependencies from Britain's control to that of the Imperial Conference.¹ Nevertheless, the task of co-opting the Dominions into supporting Britain's rôle in India and the dependencies was one which, for all Kerr's and Curtis's prompting, the Moot appears wisely to have abandoned.

The task of co-opting the Dominions into supporting Imperial defence and foreign policy was not abandoned. It was, in the Round Table view, essential that the Empire should remain a single "personality" in world affairs. Despite the more extreme manifestations of Dominion nationalism, Round Tablers believed that here, at least, they were on common ground. "Unity in international affairs of the British Empire . . . is no less a part of the new orthodoxy than the recognition of the equality inter se of the members of it." The problem, as Malcolm put it, was "how to make the partnership work".²

The League of Nations transformed the context both of British foreign policy and of the Anglo-Dominion relationship. The Moot subscribed to Milner's view (originally "a simple formula for the Yank") that the Empire/Commonwealth was both a "prototype" and a "pillar" of the League. Commonwealth unity was therefore essential for the League's success.³ But the Dominions' separate representation added a new dimension to the problem of co-ordinating British and Dominion foreign policies. Writing in the

1 Kerr, "Memorandum for circulation to the Moot" (sent 11 Dec 1928), Lothian Papers 243, fols 580-88.

2 (Malcolm,) "The Meeting of the Imperial Cabinet", *RT*, June 1921 (pp 535-57), pp 552 and 542.

3 Milner's note attached to Grigg to Milner, 1 Aug 1919, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999. For an interesting critique of this argument, see J D B Miller, "The Commonwealth and World Order: the Zimmern Vision and After", *JICH*, Vol VIII (Oct 1979), pp 159-74. What Miller refers to as the "Zimmern vision" was common currency within the Moot.

Round Table, Kerr described Dominion representation as "a matter of form without political substance".¹ Von Haast of the New Zealand Round Table thought that it was "one of those political steps which was meant to please the Dominions without meaning anything and which on the other hand is going to endanger the whole fabric of the Empire".²

Von Haast's views were unusual. Generally, opinion in the Dominions regarded their representation at the League as a symbol of their "equality" with Great Britain, and proof of their "separate and independent" foreign policy rôle.³ League representation was an important factor in the development both of Dominion opinion on international affairs and of the machinery to put that opinion into practice. As Kerr came to realise, so long as Dominion policies ran on lines parallel to British policies there was little danger of disruption.

"Representatives of the nations of the English speaking world find they think differently from the other peoples. They have similar processes of comprehending a problem, and they are irresistibly impelled into sympathetic co-operative action in working it out".⁴

Indeed, as Hodson later argued, the League might provide a "co-ordinating factor" in Anglo-Dominion relations, and the collective system might furnish "an acceptable warp for the fabric of Commonwealth foreign

¹ [Kerr,] "The British Empire, the League of Nations, and the United States", *RT*, March 1920, p 239.

² H F von Haast to Curtis, 8 March 1920, Brand Papers, box 42.

³ See, eg, New South Wales resolution for the Melbourne conference of Australian Round Tablers, 20 Sept 1919, *RT Papers* c 802, fols 224-25.

⁴ Interview in *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 Nov 1922, *Lothian Papers* 19, fols 223-31.

policy".¹ Problems would arise, however, if British and Dominion policies began to diverge, or if the collective system itself came under strain.

In contrast to the prewar period, the London Round Tablers recognised that, despite the lack of adequate machinery for doing so, Imperial foreign policy would have to be framed with an eye on the Dominions. Grigg described this as "the imperative necessity, in spite of all difficulties, of keeping our policy in line with the opinion of the Dominions".² Dove put the question only slightly differently, when he wrote that "the real crux will always be, does the policy adopted commit us to a path which, from the nature of things, the Dominions themselves cannot in the long run be expected to follow".³ There were, of course, areas in which the Round Tablers believed that Dominion opinion was wrong, and should therefore be overridden or cajoled; nevertheless, the integrity of Imperial foreign policy remained an immensely important litmus-test which the Round Tablers applied throughout the 1920s and '30s.

A series of foreign policy decisions in the early 1920s made clear that successive British Governments failed this test. First there was the Chanak incident, when Lloyd George and Churchill attempted to rush the Dominions into supporting a fait accompli. A different British Government again expected the Dominions merely to endorse British decisions in connection with the Treaty of Lausanne. The *Round Table* pointed the moral that "if the Empire is to avoid the shocks which are inevitable under the present want of system, there must be continuous consultation between

¹ [Hodson,] "British Commonwealth Relations", *RT*, Dec 1933 (pp 42-61), pp 53 and 56.

² Grigg to Curtis, 11 April 1924, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1001.

³ Dove to Kerr, 16 Dec 1926, Lothian Papers 224, fols 349-56.

representatives of all parts before, and not merely after, a crisis has arisen".¹ In 1925, the Treaty of Locarno posed the most important threat so far to the unity of Imperial foreign policy, committing Britain to the balance of power in Europe, but leaving it open to the Dominions whether or not to follow. The *Round Table* initially supported Locarno, provoking a heated correspondence between Kerr and Loring Christie.

Christie argued that Locarno was "at variance with the *Round Table* line of the past 7 or 8 years". It illustrated the extent to which the League had become "Europeanised", and to which British foreign policy had followed suit. The Empire "could agree upon and pursue a common foreign policy only if all its members could refrain from implicating themselves in the security arrangements of special regions of the earth". The "Imperial co-operation project" had now broken down. The Empire could only be conceived "not as a unit but as a number of different members": there "cannot be a common policy".²

Christie was in effect arguing the Imperialist case against the British government. Kerr could only reply that Christie went too far in dividing the world into "water-tight compartments". European problems were in fact "world problems", and although he hoped that Britain "will increasingly draw out of" the League, the "only practical course is to carry on along the somewhat anomalous lines which prevail at present".³

1 [Kerr,] "Imperial Diplomacy", *RT*, Sept 1924, p 664.

2 [Christie,] "Notes based on discussion by Dominions and Foreign Policy group, BIIA", 8 Feb 1926, Lothian Papers 20, fols 333-50.

3 Kerr-Christie correspondence, Lothian Papers 20, fols 364-86 and 221, fols 72-99.

Kerr subsequently accepted some of Christie's points.¹ In many ways, Locarno was a turning-point for him: thereafter, he opposed all attempts to involve Britain in the "internal politics" of Europe.

If the major portion of blame for the breakdown of Imperial co-operation in foreign policy attached to British governments, the Round Table also held Dominion governments culpable. "The real reason for the absence of an effective control over foreign policy by the Dominions is that they are not for the moment interested".² The Dominions were "living in blinkers", lulled into a false sense of security by Britain's apparent ability to continue bearing the "lion's share" of defence expenditure.³

The Balfour Report and the Statute of Westminster did nothing to alter this situation. Writing in the *Round Table*, Harrison Moore emphasised that "the principle of a common allegiance and the principle of differentiation of function are in every way as important as the principle of equality of status".⁴ But public opinion in Britain and the Dominions seemed largely impervious to such reasoning.

The changes of 1926-31, as Hodson commented, "evolved against the background of a world in which the collective system played the leading rôle in international affairs, and seemed likely to grow in strength".⁵ Within a few years the threats to the collective system became apparent: the need for greater Commonwealth integration became increasingly urgent. As Hodson, again, emphasised, "the British collective system of security is

1 [Kerr,] "The Imperial Complex", *RT*, Sept 1926, pp 673-89.

2 [Kerr,] "The New Imperial Problem", *RT*, June 1923, p 492.

3 [Kerr,] "The Next Imperial Conference", *RT*, March 1926, pp 231-33.

4 [Moore,] "The Crown and the Dominions", *RT*, Dec 1930, p 105.

5 [Hodson,] "British Commonwealth Relations", *RT*, Dec 1933, p 61.

still a reality, whatever may be the future of the world system".¹

In 1934 the *Round Table* identified two essential features of a Commonwealth foreign policy: first, the defence of the collective system, and secondly the maintenance of an alignment with the United States.² Increasingly, however, the *Round Table* (and Lothian in particular) saw a contradiction between these two features. "Appeasement" was thus born out of a retreat from Europe and into the "Oceanic" world of America and the Dominions. The *Round Table's* increasing desperation for a common Imperial foreign policy led it to grasp, if necessary, at "a foreign policy for the British Commonwealth, less one Dominion".³

Parallel with the *Round Table's* attempts to build a real Commonwealth foreign policy went an increasing emphasis on defence arrangements. As early as 1933, the *Round Table* was again floating the possibility of Dominion contributions to the Royal Navy.⁴ It was the possibility of a joint system of air power which the magazine found most attractive, however. The Dominions lagged far behind Britain in naval expenditure. They might therefore provide more than their fair share of air power, so that "the Commonwealth of British nations will accord in fact with its constitutional formulae".⁵

1 [Hodson,] "The Coordination of Defence", *RT*, June 1936, p 462.

2 [Lothian,] "The Empire, the League and Security", *RT*, March 1934, p 239.

3 [Hodson,] "The Imperial Conference", *RT*, Sept 1937, p 697.

4 [Hodson,] "British Commonwealth Relations", *RT*, Dec 1933, p 61.

5 [Gen Fuller,] "Air Power and Imperial Defence", *RT*, June 1934, pp 490-507.

America, the Commonwealth and the League

The extent of the shift in Round Table attitudes towards America which took place during the war can hardly be exaggerated. Members of the Moot recognised America's entry into the war to have been decisive, first in averting the financial collapse which threatened Britain's war effort in 1917, and secondly in providing the manpower which ensured that it was the Central Powers and not the Allies which succumbed in 1918.¹ After the war, the American axis remained central to the Round Tablers' strategic and political thinking: "It is not too much to say that if the British Commonwealth is to survive, and if the world is to be guided towards peace and unity, it is essential that the United States and the British Commonwealth should act in friendly co-operation".²

Kerr/Lothian was, of course, uniquely enthusiastic in calling for Anglo-American co-operation. He visited America frequently, on Rhodes Trust business which he often combined with more directly political interests. He claimed "to have something more than the impressions of the ordinary British globe-trotter".³ To a certain extent his claim was accepted in Britain. Lord Halifax later wrote of "the rare intuition which he displayed . . . in divining how Americans would act and feel if this or that line were taken by Great Britain".⁴

¹ For the first point, see Brand, *War and National Finance* (London, 1921), Introduction; for the second, see [Coupland,] "The Unity of Civilisation", *RT*, Sept 1918, pp 661-62.

² [Kerr,] "A Programme for the British Commonwealth", *RT*, March 1922 p 247.

³ Kerr to Austen Chamberlain, 24 Jan 1928, Lothian Papers 227, fol 109.

⁴ Halifax, "Preface" to Curtis (ed), *The American Speeches of Lord Lothian* (London, 1941), p viii.

America was Kerr/Lothian's "fad", as East Africa was Grigg's, or China Curtis's. Occasionally, he was driven to complain of his Round Table colleagues' refractoriness.¹ Far more often, he got his own way. Other Round Tablers were at times equally enthusiastic advocates of Anglo-American partnership. It was Curtis who provided the *Round Table's* most forceful argument for American colonial responsibility. And it was Brand who defined "strengthening the ties between the English speaking races" as one of the main objects of Round Table policy.²

The Round Tablers believed that friendly relations between Britain and America were a necessity if the Empire was to remain united. There was, of course, the peculiarly vulnerable position of Canada. More generally, the Dominions as a whole were believed to stand in an equivocal position between Britain and America.³ Cultural Americanisation was recognised even in that most "British" of Dominions, New Zealand.⁴ Political Americanisation was an acknowledged possibility. Grigg condemned Britain's obligations under the Straits Convention on the grounds that the Dominions would not follow, and that "if we ignore that feature in the sentiment of the overseas democracies, we shall find them over a course of years ranging themselves instinctively and inevitably, not behind us, but behind the United States".⁵

¹ See, eg, Lothian to Curtis, 27 Aug 1930, Lothian Papers 252, fols 633-34.

² [Curtis,] "Windows of Freedom", *RT*, Dec 1918, pp 1-47; [Brand,] "Memorandum" (late 1919), Brand Papers, box 42.

³ [Kerr,] "Anglo-American Relations", *RT*, Dec 1926, pp 1-2.

⁴ E ff W Lascelles to Moot, (circulated Dec 1928,) Lothian Papers 21, fols 457-74.

⁵ Grigg, Memorandum on the Straits Convention, [sent to Ramsay MacDonald 29 Feb 1924,] Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1001.

Another factor which impelled Britain towards friendly relations with the United States was the latter's naval power. Kerr claimed that the Washington Treaty of 1921 committed the two countries to "a steady attempt at co-operation" because it shared "the historic function of seapower between the two navies".¹ The rôle of the British Admiralty in reviving the naval arms race later in the decade was roundly condemned: "the United States can financially afford to build five ships to our one".² The revival of Anglo-American antagonism threw Kerr into another of his fits of blue funk: he even talked of Britain and America "drift[ing] into competition with its inevitable end, another world war".³

As well as the negative aim of avoiding conflict between the two countries, the Moot had a more positive conception of the rôle which Anglo-American co-operation might play in world affairs.

The proposal that America should take up the baton of colonial administration in the Middle East formed an important part of the *Round Table's* discussion of the terms of peace. In making it, Curtis also suggested that American rule should extend to Mexico and Liberia, and that America should take a forward rôle in "regenerating" the "unhappy people" of Russia.⁴ In fact, America was offered only Armenia, "where she could

¹ [Kerr,] "The British Commonwealth, the Protocol and the League", *RT*, Dec 1924, p 5.

² [Kerr,] "The Naval Conference", *RT*, Sept 1927, p 680; cf Dove to Kerr, 18 July 1927, Lothian Papers 231, fols 507-20: the Americans "have the whip-hand of us".

³ Kerr to Frank B Kellogg, 30 March 1928, Lothian Papers 228, fols 292-93.

⁴ [Curtis,] "Windows of Freedom", *RT*, Dec 1918, pp 20-34.

not profit and where she must of necessity spend large sums of money".¹ If Anglo-French greed was the immediate problem, a more fundamental problem was the attitude of Americans themselves. Kerr noted the prevalence of the belief that imperialism was immoral and undemocratic. This he characterised as a form of naïveté. Kerr himself was initially inclined to optimism: "the issues are comparatively simple, and the education of [American] public opinion could be rapid".²

"Education" was also the Round Table's characteristic solution to the problem of American reluctance to become involved in the framework of international security. America's rapid retreat into isolationism following Versailles was the cause of considerable disillusionment amongst the Round Tablers and their allies. Loring Christie reported the atmosphere in America in 1920 to be "horrible" - "100% American and to hell with the rest of the world".³ Even Kerr was driven to compare the American people to "children playing in a pleasant garden".⁴

The "education" of American opinion was a goal shared by the Council on Foreign Relations, which the Moot's intervention helped to catalyse into a more active existence in 1922.⁵ Prominent amongst the reformed Council's members were the Moot's contacts from J P Morgan and Co (the bank which

¹ [Ray Stannard Baker,] "The United States and the Old World", *RT*, June 1921, p 567.

² Kerr to Curtis, 15 Oct 1918, *RT Papers* c 810, fols 229-37. See also Zimmern to J W Daffoe, 28 May 1922, *Brand Papers*, box 70, hoping that America would eventually undertake "the main responsibility for the political education of Russia and China".

³ Christie to Kerr, 12 Jan 1920, *Lothian Papers* 207, fols 182-87.

⁴ Interview in *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 Nov 1922, *Lothian Papers* 19, fols 223-31.

⁵ See above, p 220.

handled British purchases in America before 1915) and from Wilson's delegation at Versailles: Shotwell, Coolidge, Lamont, John W Davis, Norman H Davis, Charles P Howland, Paul D Cravath and Isaiah Bowman. Whitney Shepardson, the *Round Table's* American correspondent, was the first secretary of the reformed Council. The Council's aim was defined as that of "developing a reasoned American foreign policy". Individual members were prominent in urging a more "constructive" and expansionist policy and a more sympathetic approach to Britain.¹

The Round Tablers' traffic with America was by no means all one-way, although their emphasis on the "education" of American opinion was apt to obscure the fact. Indeed, American attitudes and anticipated American reactions exercised a powerful influence on the Round Tablers' approach to a wide range of foreign policy issues.

Once it was clear that America would not join Britain in the League, the Round Table insisted on the necessity of revising Britain's commitments under Articles 10 and 16. "Americans are too fond of talking high ideals and leaving us to do all the work in attaining them", Grigg remarked to Nancy Astor.² Britain simply did not have the resources to carry out her obligations without American backing. It was more dangerous to make commitments which could not be implemented than not to make them in the first place: "those who need our support may interpret [them] more literally than we do ourselves".³ Moreover, the enforcement of sanctions by the League entailed the possibility of conflict between Britain and

¹ Laurence Shoup and William Mintner, *Imperial Brain Trust* (New York, 1977), p 16 and *passim*.

² Grigg to Nancy Astor, 21 Sept 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999.

³ [Kerr,] "The British Empire, the League of Nations, and the United States", *RT*, March 1920, pp 244 and ff.

America, particularly over the still unresolved question of belligerent versus neutral rights. (Kerr favoured re-defining the controversy by distinguishing between "public" and "private" wars. but this was problematical while America stood out of the only international body which could make such a distinction.¹) Another reason for disembarassing the League of automatic commitments was that such a course was believed to make it more likely that America would join.² Without American participation, Curtis believed the League to be largely "a sham", and an additional burden on Britain rather than an additional security.³

America's attitude was by no means immediately clear, of course: as Shepardson wrote, Harding won the 1920 election by "bringing together in his support men who believed in the League, men who believed in a League, and men who believed in no League at all".⁴ The Moot's contacts in the CFR were initially optimistic concerning American attitudes. The turning point appears to have been 1924, when John W Davis stood unsuccessfully as Democrat presidential candidate, on a programme which included a more "constructive" foreign policy. The following year, Shepardson made it clear that American isolationism was likely to stay, and that "the road towards political stability" was one which "Europe must travel alone".⁵

Most members of the Moot appear to have accepted that American participation in collective security should now be discounted. Kerr

1 [Kerr,] "The British Commonwealth, Freedom and the Seas", *RT*, March 1929, pp 243-48.

2 [Kerr,] "The British Commonwealth, the Protocol, and the League", *RT*, Dec 1924, p 20.

3 [Curtis,] "The World in Conference", *RT*, Sept 1920, p 750.

4 [Shepardson,] "The Passing of Woodrow Wilson", *RT*, Dec 1920, p 27.

5 [Shepardson,] "President and Senate", *RT*, June 1925, pp 457-71.

remained optimistic. While noting that Americans had "none of that sense of international reality and international responsibility which in Great Britain is axiomatic", he asserted that it was "only a question of time for the United States to play her full part in the international world".¹

The enormous hopes which Kerr attached to American participation in the framework of international security go a long way to explain the extraordinary attitude which he adopted towards the "outlawry of war" proposal which emerged from the Kellogg-Briand correspondence of 1927-28. Kerr welcomed the proposal in hyperbolic terms: "immensely important", the beginning of "a new era", "bring[ing] into being for the whole world a system fundamentally similar to . . . the British Commonwealth of Nations".² The reason was transparent: the proposal "puts the United States morally behind the treaty settlement, inasmuch as she would hardly be indifferent - having signed it - to an attempt by any Power to upset it by force of arms".³ The fundamental misjudgment inherent in such reasoning was exposed by Shotwell:

". . . the present proposal is not the outlawry proposal. The formula 'renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy' is the only one really suitable for American policy as things stand at present. The outlawry people do not seem to realize that, technically speaking, outlawry would call for the kind of sanction which they definitely find fault with".⁴

¹ [Kerr,] "Anglo-American Relations", *RT*, Dec 1926, pp 7 and 16.

² [Kerr,] "The Outlawry of War", *RT*, June 1928, pp 473-75. Dove thought Kerr's article "one of the best you have written": Dove to Kerr, 21.5.28, Lothian Papers 231, fol 551.

³ [Kerr,] "The Outlawry of War", p 466; cf [Kerr,] "The Peace Pact", *RT*, Sept 1928, pp 727-45.

⁴ James T Shotwell to Shepardson (copy), 23 June 1928, Lothian Papers 233, fol 701.

Outlawry reinforced rather than replaced America's confidence in its isolation. Kerr did not draw the obvious conclusion, however, that Britain should now look elsewhere for support. On the contrary, "if . . . Great Britain is forced to choose between association with a Europe drifting back to the balance of military power on the one hand, and with the United States on the other, she will inevitably choose the latter". The choice "will be forced upon her by the Dominions".¹

Europe in the 1920s: Commitment and Conciliation

The Round Table's reaction against the Treaty of Versailles began even before the ink was dry. Kerr had been the only member of the Moot who had approved of the mandate which Lloyd George took to Paris. Yet even he was disturbed by the course of the Allied negotiations, pointing out to Lloyd George "several times . . . that, while every exaction on Germany was justified on its merits, the accumulation of these will place Germany in an utterly impossible position".² Like Lloyd George, Kerr comforted himself with the thought that no treaty was permanent, and that the Covenant of the League provided explicitly for revision.³

Whatever the temporary situation, it was clear that Germany was "potentially still the most powerful state in Europe".⁴ It was therefore unrealistic to expect that Germany would "submit to her present position of

1 [Kerr,] "Towards Peace or War?", *RT*, June 1930, p 467.

2 Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (London, 1963), p 97.

3 Harold Nicholson, *Diaries and Letters, 1930-39* (London, 1966), p 82. See also A Lentin, *Guilt at Versailles* (London edn, 1985), pp 135 ff.

4 [Kerr,] "The Locarno Treaties", *RT*, Dec 1925, p 3.

subordination for ever".¹

The Round Tablers found particular fault with the reparations clauses. As Brand pointed out, not only were the sums claimed "fantastic", but they were also profoundly destabilising on all the economies involved.² In 1921 the *Round Table* suggested all-round cancellation of inter-Allied debts as the key to a more moderate settlement.³ Other aspects of the terms imposed on Germany which the *Round Table* criticised included those relating to the Saar Valley and the Rhineland, and the limitation of Germany's army. Germany's losses of Upper Silesia, Eupen and Malmédy were criticised on the grounds of national self-determination, as was the prohibition against union with Austria. Germany's other losses were on the whole believed to be justified.⁴

The peace settlement's legacy of unsolved problems was believed to be even more ominous in Eastern Europe. There the patchwork of ethnicities was a standing contradiction to the ideal of national self-determination. "Nobody believes that the frontiers of Eastern Europe to-day are stable": indeed, violent conflict was "certainly much more than a hypothesis".⁵

The Round Tablers' attitude to Europe was "benightedly insular", as

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- 1 [Kerr,] "Europe, the Covenant and the Protocol", *RT*, March 1925, p 231.
 - 2 [Brand,] "The Future of Reparations and Inter-Allied Debts", *RT*, March 1923, pp 273-86.
 - 3 [Headlam-Morley and Horsfall,] "The Aftermath of Victory", *RT*, Dec 1921, pp 112-13.
 - 4 [Headlam-Morley,] "Problems of Europe: the Paris Conference and After", *RT*, March 1920, pp 293-321; cf [Headlam-Morley et al,] "Problems of Europe", *RT*, Sept 1921, pp 848-67.
 - 5 [Kerr,] "The Security Pact", *RT*, Sept 1925, p 648; [*idem*,] "The Locarno Treaties", *RT*, Dec 1925, p 10.

Grigg candidly admitted.¹ They recognised few British interests in Europe, other than the security of North-West Europe and a general commitment to the restoration of stable economic conditions.²

Fundamentally, they believed that Britain was an Oceanic not a continental power. Her future lay with the Empire/Commonwealth and the United States rather than with Europe. The attempt to involve herself in European diplomacy would be "as ridiculous as a fish out of water".³

Detachment from Europe was exacerbated by the Round Tablers' reading of the long-term future. "Europe can only be stabilised in one of three ways - by the predominance of one group, by the balance of power, or by federation", Kerr declared in 1926. Of these three options, the first two were inherently unstable, and only the third offered a permanent solution.⁴ The *Round Table* welcomed Briand's pan-Europeanist diplomacy of the late 1920s, agreeing that Europe "must think continentally".⁵

The long-term trend in Europe was thus believed to be towards economic and political integration, with Britain and the Commonwealth forming a separate bloc. It followed that Britain could best help Europe by following her "ancient diplomatic tradition of limited entanglement" in the continent's "internal problems"⁶: or "leaving Europe to stew in its

1 Grigg to W Turner Perkins, 11 April 1924, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1001 (opposing plans for a Channel Tunnel).

2 [Kerr,] "Cologne, The Security Pact and the League", *RT*, June 1925, pp 431-56

3 [L Christie,] "A Basis for Imperial Foreign Policy", *RT*, March 1924, p 284.

4 [Kerr,] "The Crisis in World Affairs", *RT*, June 1926, pp 454-55.

5 [Harold Butler,] "Europe at the Cross-Roads", *RT*, June 1926, p 482; cf [Salter,] "The United States of Europe", *RT*, Dec 1929, pp 79-99.

6 [Kerr,] "The Crisis in World Affairs", *RT*, June 1926, p 463.

own juice", as Lord Davies later put it.¹ This also was the conclusion from an examination of the short-term prospects. "I wish the British Empire would keep as clear of Europe as possible", Grigg wrote to Bailey in 1924.

"There is not one chance in ten of preventing another great war within the next 20 or 30 years, and I think that we should try to keep as much aloof from all the preliminary trouble as possible. We are much more likely to be able to stop it ultimately if we stand aloof, like the US, than if we go messing about in European diplomacy and making ourselves a part of the European balance of power."²

The Round Tablers' reaction against Versailles was in large part a reaction against the policy of France. In March 1921, the *Round Table* reported "a real divergence between France and Britain on their views as to post-war Europe".³ An atmosphere of alarmism prevailed. Dove worried where Britain's League commitments would lead her if there were another war, and the "real offence", if not the technical aggression, came from France.⁴ Others in the Moot were equally disturbed. "We cannot allow Poincaré to ruin Europe. If we do then Germany and Russia must inevitably join up", Brand wrote, after meeting Dr Wirth.⁵ Grigg, as Lloyd George's secretary, was the recipient of numerous rumours, of French preparations for war, of French offers of support for America in case of an Anglo-American war, of French conspiracy with the Vatican for the domination of

1 Lord Davies, "'Round Table' or 'World Commonwealth'?", *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol CXVII (Jan 1935), p 47.

2 Grigg to Bailey, 8 May 1924, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1001.

3 [Headlam-Morley,] "The Paris Conference", *RT*, March 1921, p 274.

4 Dove to Grigg, 11 April 1922, Lothian Papers 18, fol 138.

5 Brand to Grigg, 20 April 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999.

Eastern Europe and for control of Constantinople.¹

France's occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 epitomised her policy in the immediate postwar period: disastrous for Germany and herself alike.

"France is to my mind directly responsible for the probable failure of the democratic experiment in Germany", Dove concluded, not for the first or last time. The *Round Table* found Britain's Conservative Government to be almost equally culpable. Its failure to stop France was "an abject surrender of the whole moral position of the British Commonwealth".²

Kerr/Lothian in particular has received criticism as a "Francophobe", a trait which is often ascribed to his apostasy. In fact, the religious element appears to have been quite superficial.³ Nor was Francophobia apparent before 1919, although an Anglocentric disdain for "Latin" behaviour sometimes was. Francophobia, if such it was, was the direct outcome of the years 1919-23. Kerr's views were common currency in the Koot. Grigg's maiden speech as an MP was devoted to an attack on French policy, and he was a persistent critic of British policy towards France throughout the decade. Brand even criticised Kerr in 1925 for taking a line too conciliatory to French concerns.⁴

1 This last from George Grahame, British Ambassador in Brussels, who wrote via Grigg because he believed the Foreign Office to be riddled with Roman Catholics: Grahame to Grigg, 7 Feb and 26 Sept 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1000.

2 Dove to Brand, 9 Oct 1923, Brand Papers, box 70. [Horsfall,] "The Problem of Europe", *RT*, Dec 1923, pp 22 ff.

3 Kerr suffered religious doubts in 1912-13, and finally converted from Roman Catholicism to Christian Science in 1922. Nevertheless, he claimed that the differences between the two religions were much less than was commonly supposed: Kerr to Lady Anne Kerr, 11 March 1922, Lothian Papers 467, fol 2.

4 *Hansard (Commons)*, 5th Series, Vol 162 (28 March 1923), cols 581-91. Brand to Curtis, 6 Feb 1925, Brand Papers, box 182.

The *Round Table* did not share the commonly accepted view that the "Locarno honeymoon" was a benevolent period of Franco-German rapprochement, facilitated by an impartial Austen Chamberlain. On the contrary, Chamberlain was accused of pursuing a policy "subordinate to the policy of France", and of "supporting . . . the French hegemony".¹ "Psychologically, of course, France lost the war and Germany won it", Kerr wrote to MacDonald in 1928.

"France to-day has no real belief in the possibility of European problems being settled peacefully, and is doing everything she can to get us into an entente which is really anti-German, though labelled 'Locarno'.²"

The Round Tablers were now profoundly more sensitive to the German point of view than to the French, and cut their cloth accordingly. "We must 'assist' Stresemann", Dove wrote in 1927. There were "people in Germany always hovering near the popular ear on the look out for a chance of getting back what they regard as their own by force". The factors working against democracy in Germany were so strong that it was "amazing" it had survived so long. "Disarmament is, of course, the burning question."³

For the first time since the fall of Lloyd George, the Round Tablers found an identity of purpose with the British government following the elections of May 1929. "We think pretty much on the same lines", as MacDonald had written to Kerr in 1928.⁴ Alas, the situation in 1932 was

1 [Kerr,] "A Plea for an Independent Foreign Policy", *RT*, Dec 1928, p 1.

2 Kerr to MacDonald, 16 Nov 1928, Lothian Papers 243, fols 561-62.

3 Letters from Dove to Brand, [Sept 1927], Lothian Papers 21 (fols 416-40), fols 419, 429, 432, 426.

4 MacDonald to Kerr, 19 Nov 1928, Lothian Papers 243, fol 563.

very different from that in 1928. The disarmament conference over which Henderson presided (despite resigning from the Foreign Office in the crisis of August 1931) found little common ground amongst the main protagonists. Even Britain contributed to its unsatisfactory dénouement, by "dissolving its substance in streams of tepid water".¹

Against a background in which the threat of authoritarianism in Germany was now a real rather than a speculative danger, the Round Tablers redoubled their efforts to gain acceptance for a negotiated end to the "artificial" balance created by the peace settlement. Treaty revision was now inevitable "either by consent or by force"; nothing should be excluded "except the Western frontiers of Europe".²

Global concerns: Russia and Japan

Like many of their contemporaries the Round Tablers were alarmist about the spread of Bolshevism in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. India was "a pretty likely field for Bolsheviks"³, and it was also "pretty clear that the peoples of South America, Africa and China, will be quite incapable of resisting [Bolshevism] . . . unless the Western Powers help them to do so".⁴ Nevertheless, the Round Tablers were dubious of the value of Allied intervention in Russia itself. Indeed, the Allies' support of the Whites "was probably the decisive factor in the triumph of

¹ [H Butler,] "Towards the World Conference", *RT*, Sept 1932, p 697.

² [Kerr,] "The Foundations for Disarmament", *RT*, Dec 1932, pp 1-20.

³ Dove to Brand, 24 April 1919, Lothian Papers 492, item 1.

⁴ Kerr to Curtis, 15 Oct 1918, *RT* Papers c 810, fols 229-37.

the Soviet regime", by associating the latter "with the cause of Russian nationalism".¹

Despite their hostility to Bolshevik ideas the Round Tablers advocated a cautious policy of economic appeasement in the early 1920s.² Lloyd George's attempt to carry out such a policy at Genoa in 1922 was, however, recognised to have been a failure. The fundamental cause was believed to be the publicity surrounding the conference, forcing the reiteration of propaganda on both sides at a time when Russia was "in retreat from Communism" and should be allowed to do so "as easily and quietly as possible".³

The view that Russia was in retreat from Communism made sense at a time when War Communism was being dismantled in favour of the New Economic Policy, although even so the "extreme adaptability" and the "will to power" of the Soviet leadership remained a worry.⁴ By the late 1920s, however, the flaws in such a view were apparent. While it was "almost impossible to get at the truth about Russia"⁵, it was nevertheless clear that the Soviet leadership was heading towards a confrontation with the market forces let loose by the NEP. The course of this confrontation was charted in a series of impressionistic articles by Maurice Hindus. The implications were

1 [A W A Leeper,] "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Russia", *RT*, March 1920, p 325.

2 *Ibid*, pp 342 ff. This line was dictated by the Moot: see Kerr to Leeper, 19 Jan 1920, Lothian Papers 214, fol 144.

3 Kerr to Grigg, 22 April 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1000. This view was supported by Herbert Hoover: See the "Note of a Conversation between Mr Hoover and Mr Kerr" attached.

4 [Sir William Peters,] "The Communist Experiment in Russia", *RT*, June 1922, pp 538-54.

5 Kerr to Dove, 1 Sept 1927, Lothian Papers 231, fols 536-37.

spelled out by Lothian: the Bolshevik leopard had not changed its spots, and the first five-year plan was "clearly . . . designed from a military standpoint".¹ Soviet Russia thus remained a standing menace to European peace. Whether the menace became a real threat depended entirely on the European situation.

The situation in the Far East was equally worrying. The Round Tablers (unlike their Australian colleagues) had been firm supporters of the pre-1914 Alliance with Japan. Nevertheless, the latter's opportunistic policy during the First World War introduced doubts. Weighing up the pros and cons of renewing the Alliance (due to expire in 1921), Kerr emphasised Japanese "chauvinism" and her desire for "exclusive privileges" in China as factors militating against renewal.² Equally important was the attitude of the United States, from where it was reported that "Britain's gains from such an alliance could certainly not balance her losses".³ Kerr therefore suggested an international conference at which the Alliance could be dropped, and Japan could be made to realise that "British, American, Dominion and Chinese interests really run together, and . . . that her only course was to keep on good terms with all of us".⁴ This was, indeed, the outcome of the Washington Conference of 1921.

The Far East presented "the most probable storm centre of any trouble in the immediate future", the *Round Table* declared at the time of the

¹ [Kerr,] "The Political Foundations for Disarmament", *RT*, Sept 1931, p 730.

² [Kerr,] "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance", *RT*, Dec 1920, pp 87-97.

³ [Ray Stannard Baker,] "The United States and the Old World", *RT*, June 1921, pp 573-74.

⁴ Kerr to Dove, 13 July 1920, Lothian Papers 209, fols 300-05; [Kerr,] "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance", *loc cit.*, pp 96-97.

Washington Conference.¹ Curtis, of course, became obsessed with China. The extent of his obsession caused considerable irritation within the Moot: Grigg, for instance, claimed that "Lionel has completely gone off the Empire".² Nevertheless, Curtis himself explained his interest largely in terms of Imperial concerns. Economically, the Empire stood to benefit enormously by the restoration of stable conditions in China.³ Politically, China was "the greatest field" wherein the principles for which the Commonwealth stood "are at issue with those of Marx".⁴ Finally, the Far Eastern crisis was a testing-ground for the theory of Imperial co-operation, and the means by which the "Dominions will . . . be carried on by the force of events to some form of really organic union".⁵

Curtis lobbied furiously for a more active British policy in China. Salter was roped in to advise the Nationalist Government on financial affairs, and Feetham to investigate the future of the Shanghai Settlement. (Feetham's report concluded that Shanghai was a model for the rest of China and that extra-territoriality should last "not years, but decades".⁶) Curtis's own activity culminated in the publication of *The Capital Question of China* in 1932. His conclusions were surprisingly modest: merely that the Western powers should transfer their diplomatic representatives to

1 [Kerr,] "The Washington Conference", *RT*, Dec 1921, pp 1-2.

2 Grigg to Hichens, 15 Dec 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

3 Curtis to Feetham, 27 Aug 1930, Curtis Papers 3, fols 176-79.

4 Curtis to the "aboriginal" Moot, 6 Aug 1930, Lothian Papers 252, fols 627-32.

5 Curtis, "Memorandum for Discussion at Blickling", 19 Sept 1932, Lothian Papers 268, fols 742-51.

6 Summarised in [Shanghai group: Sir Frederick Whyte et al,] "Shanghai", *RT*, Sept 1931, pp 738-68.

Nanking, and that Britain should send "a statesman" to advise the government in China and instruct the public at home.¹ It would be difficult to find a more striking illustration of the Imperialists' faith in "character".²

By the time Curtis's book was published, the Far Eastern situation had been transformed by Japan's invasion of Manchuria. At first, the *Round Table* appeared to favour Western intervention. A failure to restore Chinese sovereignty would "precipitate the fall of the Nanking Government" and "have very far-reaching results with regard to the attitude of the Chinese towards foreign interests generally".³ Gradually, however, the *Round Table's* line began to soften. It was realised that the Western powers had no stomach for a fight. Japan's "war-minded" determination was acknowledged. Finally, sufficient ambiguities were discovered to refute the argument that Manchuria was a "test-case".⁴ The Lytton Report - which blamed both sides even-handedly - was therefore accepted, as the best of a bad job.⁵

The Manchurian crisis had the effect of converting Round Table interest in the Far East into deep anxiety. From now on, there was the constant danger that Japan "will repeat on a far greater scale the power

1 Curtis, *The Capital Question of China* (London, 1932), pp 245 ff.

2 For which see Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character* (London, 1992).

3 [Whyte,] "China, Japan and Manchuria", *RT*, March 1932, pp 266-81.

4 See in particular, [Whyte,] "The Far East", *RT*, June 1932, pp 552-68; [Hubbard,] "The Shanghai Standpoint", *RT*, June 1932, pp 569-73, and [Chancellor,] "Manchukuo", *RT*, Sept 1932, pp 808-18.

5 [P Young,] "The Lytton Report", *RT*, Dec 1932, pp 64-89.

diplomacy which succeeded so well in Manchukuo".¹ This fear was reinforced by the Australian Round Tablers.² In Lothian's mind, the danger of an Anglo-American breach was equally important.³ He urged the Foreign Office to make a concerted effort to bring about an Anglo-American alliance to contain Japan, and he lobbied strenuously against the proposal (scouted by Neville Chamberlain, Simon and others) to revive the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.⁴

The Far Eastern situation exploded again in 1937. Guy Wint thought that Japan's moves were largely the result of accidents, but he was contradicted by Lothian, who asserted that Japan was aiming at the complete domination of eastern Asia.⁵ A further article by G E Hubbard was even more alarmist: the Pacific islands, Malaysia, Borneo, "even Australia" were now at risk.⁶ The Round Tablers would have welcomed a policy of confrontation, but they recognised that Britain was unable to act without the support of America.⁷ Events in the Far East thus provided an unwelcome diversion from the European crisis of the 1930s.

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- 1 [Lothian,] "Power Politics in the Pacific", *RT*, Dec 1934, p 18.
 - 2 [Piesse,] "Australia and Japan", *RT*, Dec 1933, pp 85-101; Leonie Foster, *High Hopes* (Melbourne, 1986), pp 100 ff.
 - 3 Lothian to Hodson, 29 Nov 1934, Lothian Papers 286, fol 614.
 - 4 Christopher Hall, *Britain, America and Arms Control, 1921-37* (London, 1987), pp 161-82.
 - 5 [Wint,] "Smoke and Fire in the Far East", *RT*, Sept 1937, pp 725-39; [Lothian,] "Power and Opinion in World Affairs", *RT*, Dec 1937, pp 1-8.
 - 6 [G E Hubbard,] "Japan's Challenge to the West", *RT*, March 1938, pp 230-45.
 - 7 [Lothian,] "The Commonwealth and the Dictatorships", *RT*, June 1938, pp 435-52.

The Commonwealth and the Dictatorships

Paul Kennedy has made an excellent case for arguing that "appeasement" constituted a persistent tradition in British foreign policy, from the late nineteenth century onwards.¹ "Appeasement" was also a policy to which the Round Tablers had frequent (although not uniform) recourse. The balance between conciliation and confrontation was, of course, constantly shifting, and varied from country to country. The determining factor was undoubtedly the nature and extent of any threat to British interests, weighed against the advantages accruing from a policy of compromise.

That power-political calculations provided the basis of the Round Tablers' views on foreign policy is best illustrated by their attitudes to Fascist Italy. Writing for the *Round Table*, G M Trevelyan emphasised that the destruction of liberties in Italy was "not an expedient . . . but an essential part of the Fascist programme". Nevertheless, he saw no direct connection between Mussolini's internal policies and the policy which the British government should pursue. On the contrary, he urged the government to "treat [Italy's leaders] . . . as equals and as friends".² Dove expressed sympathy for Mussolini's imperial ambitions, suggesting that Anatolia might be "a hopeful place". In 1933 he was still writing of Mussolini's Italy as "a friend".³

Mussolini's increasingly bellicose attitude towards Abyssinia failed

1 Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy* (London, 1983), pp 13-39.

2 [Trevelyan,] "Italy under Mussolini", *RT*, Sept 1923, pp 754-63.

3 Dove, "The Colonial Problem of Europe", 21 July 1926, Lothian Papers 20, fols 390-97; Dove, "Memorandum", 21 April 1933, Lothian Papers 268, fols 844-48.

to induce a change of heart. Indeed, the *Round Table's* initial reaction was one of sympathy.¹ Hodson complained that Lothian's attitude appeared to be that it was the condition of Abyssinia rather than the bellicosity of Italy which was the main danger to the world.²

The Moot's public attitude was transformed by Hoare's speech at the League of Nations in September 1935, declaring that Britain stood for collective sanctions against aggression. British prestige was now at stake: it would be "fatal" to let Mussolini "get away" with his plunder.³ Privately, however, attitudes were rather different. Brand wrote of "this damnable sanctions clause", and thought Hoare's action disastrous. "God knows what we should do."⁴ The subsequent débâcle proved that the League had failed in the one case where it might have been expected to succeed. The *Round Table* therefore redoubled its calls for the Covenant to be emasculated.⁵ On the question of Anglo-Italian relations, it was hoped that steps might be taken to re-establish "mutual respect" and friendship.⁶

The Moot's persistent desire for friendship with Fascist Italy prefigured closely its attitude towards Nazi Germany, which presented problems different in degree but not in kind, to the extent that both were

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- 1 [G Fitzgerald,] "The Last Partition of Africa?", *RT*, June 1935, pp 507-23.
 - 2 Hodson to Lothian, 16 Aug 1935, Lothian Papers 304, fols 764-66.
 - 3 [Lothian,] "The League in Crisis", *RT*, Dec 1935 (pp 1-16), pp 7 and 14.
 - 4 Brand to Dawson, 2 Sept 1935, Brand Papers, box 198.
 - 5 [Lothian,] "The World Crisis", *RT*, June 1936, pp 443-60; [Lothian,] "The Commonwealth and the League", *RT*, Sept 1936, pp 655-74.
 - 6 [C J S Sprigge,] "Britain and Italy: Past and Future", *RT*, Sept 1938, pp 708-22.

violent dictatorships with crude but possibly containable ambitions.

In the long-running debate over "appeasement", the Round Tablers have often been cast in a peculiarly conspiratorial rôle. This is especially true of Dawson and Lothian, both identified at the time by Claud Cockburn (and, through him, by Vansittart) as key members of a "Cliveden Set" intriguing to bring about British acquiescence in Hitler's foreign policy aims.¹ The failure of "appeasement" and the realisation of the utter barbarism of Hitler's régime resulted in an historiography characterised by recrimination and the apportioning of blame. The opprobrium cast on Dawson and Lothian reflected also on their colleagues: variously, "Milner's Kindergarten", "the Milner group", or the Round Table as a whole.²

The recent historiography of "appeasement" has been more discriminating. First, there has been a greater emphasis on the structural constraints on British policy, and a consequent downplaying of the rôle of individual personalities.³ Secondly, as Robert Holland has pointed out, "with Europe once more on the Mark Standard, the basic validity of . . . [the appeasers'] insights may be better appreciated than the artificial dogmas prevailing after 1939 usually allowed".⁴ Finally, the

1 For the "Cliveden Set", see Michael Astor, *Tribal Feeling* (London, 1963), pp 136-47; Patricia Cockburn, *The Years of The Week* (London, 1968), pp 227-46; Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth* (London, 1989), pp 37 ff.

2 See, eg, A L Rowse, *All Souls and Appeasement* (London, 1961); A J P Taylor, *English History, 1914-45* (London, 1965), p 418; and, more recently, Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character* (London, 1990), pp 271 ff.

3 The seminal work in this field is Gustav Schmidt, *The Politics and Economics of Appeasement* (Leamington Spa, 1986, English translation of *England in der Krise*, 1981). See also Wolfgang J Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker (eds), *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement* (London, 1983).

4 Robert Holland, *The Pursuit of Greatness* (London, 1991), p 150.

historiography of "appeasement" has begun to move away from the old, invented and rigid dichotomies. William Roger Louis, for instance, has delineated admirably the ambiguities and complexities in the views of one Milnerite who was generally regarded as an "anti-appeaser", Leo Amery.¹

If the old distinction between "appeasers" and "anti-appeasers" no longer seems adequate, it would perhaps be more appropriate to view British responses to Nazi Germany as a spectrum or continuum. Within such a spectrum it might be possible to identify five main types of response: "collaboration", by which is meant a fundamental agreement with Nazi aims and ideology; "acquiescence", meaning the willingness to accept Nazi demands as and when they arose; "conciliation", by which is meant the attempt to arrange more or less limited concessions by prior negotiation; "resistance", meaning a commitment to defending the status quo; and "anti-fascism", meaning a commitment to eradicating Nazism from Germany itself.

There is no evidence for suggesting that any of the Round Tablers favoured a policy of "collaboration", in the sense outlined above. None had any sympathy for Mosley's "Blackshirts". Nor did they view continental fascists as, in the contemporary phrase, "men of the future". A *Round Table* analysis of Mussolini's doctrines in 1927 concluded that fascism was an exercise in "political archaeology".² Nazism was, in Lothian's view, even more reactionary: a movement based on "racialism and violence", "far more devastating and devitalising to the soul of Germany . . . than the evils against which the Nazis protest".³ Dawson, famously, admitted

¹ Wm Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!* (London, 1992), pp 111 ff.

² [McClure,] "Fascist Rule after Five Years", *RT*, June 1927, pp 498-513.

³ [Lothian,] "The Recoil from Freedom", *RT*, June 1933, pp 489-90.

doctoring Ebbutt's dispatches to *The Times* in order to suppress information showing the true horrors of Nazism.¹ By contrast, Hodson altered an article by Powys Greenwood in 1935 because the latter "sees the Nazi régime through rather too rosy spectacles".²

The starting-point for all the Round Tablers was "conciliation": this was the policy which the *Round Table* advocated consistently throughout the 1920s. As early as December 1932 Horsfall and Butler expressed doubts about this policy, in the light of Germany's slide towards autocracy.³ Horsfall's doubts were strengthened by a trip to Germany which coincided with the first violent excesses of Nazi rule:

"I don't believe that anything which it would be possible to give Germany in the way of revision would satisfy it, rather the reverse, that every concession merely whets the appetite My own opinions are tending more and more to the view that . . . our influence would be far greater if we were felt to be indissoluble from France."⁴

Grigg visited Paris and Brussels at about the same time, and came back with similar impressions. It was "quite inconceivable that France should enter into a discussion of possible revisions of the Treaty with a Government of that kind", he wrote to Dawson.⁵

The doubts expressed by Butler, Horsfall and Grigg were the first indication that the question of policy towards Germany would become a

¹ *The History of The Times*, Vol IV, part 2 (London, 1952), p 734. Oliver Woods and James Bishop have pointed out that such practices are not unknown in the newspaper world, where the need to keep a correspondent in a country is often the overriding concern: *The Story of The Times* (London, 1983), p 294-96.

² Hodson to Lothian, 8 Feb 1935, Lothian Papers 295, fols 662-63.

³ Dove to Lothian, 9 Dec 1932, Lothian Papers 268, fols 836-37.

⁴ Horsfall to Dove, 27 March 1933, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

⁵ Grigg to Dawson, 20 March 1933, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

matter for contention within the Moot. Nevertheless, it would be problematic to describe them at this stage as advocates of "resistance", let alone "anti-fascism" (which, until 1939, was largely the preserve of the Communist Party). Doubts about "conciliation" did not necessarily translate into opposition to the policy. "Is every attempt at redress to be nothing more than a starting point for further demands?" Grigg asked in 1934. "Yet, if concessions are warranted, and if they can ensure peace, they must be made."¹

The case for persevering was put most forcefully by Dove and Lothian. Dove agreed that it was "repulsive" to concede to the Nazis what had not been conceded to Stresemann or Brüning.² He also agreed that, if push came to shove, "we shall have, for the same reasons as brought us into the war in 1914, to go to war again and save France".³ But it would take "four or five years" for Germany to re-arm; and in the meantime there was a "breathing space" which could be used to undermine Hitler by removing German grievances. Moreover, it was essential to be able to show that "we have done everything in our power to get the world onto a better plane" so the Dominions and (crucially) the United States would fall in line.⁴

Before looking at the concessions which the "conciliationists" expected to be made, it is necessary to make three points. First, they did not intend "conciliation" to be merely a series of ad hoc concessions, but

¹ *The Times*, 27 Feb 1934.

² Dove, Memorandum, 21 April 1933, Lothian Papers 268, fols 844-48.

³ Dove, "British Foreign Policy", 3 May 1933, Lothian Papers 276, fols 575-76.

⁴ Dove, "The Round Table: Note on British Policy", 7 April 1933, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

hoped instead for a one-off, all-round settlement: "a moderate revision . . . which would be accepted as final".¹ Secondly, "if there are to be concessions, it is essential that they should be made before they can be shown to have been exacted under German threats".² Thirdly, it was "by no means certain what Germany means by revision". The aim of "conciliating" Hitler was a gamble.³ Nevertheless, it was clear that, as Norman Ebbutt put it, the Treaty of Versailles was "the most valuable tool in the agitator's bag".⁴

There was no disagreement within the Moot over the inevitability of changes in Germany's military position. It was frequently asserted that German re-armament was only a matter of time. The same was true of the re-militarisation of the Rhineland. As early as April 1933, Lothian made clear that the majority of the Moot regarded the use of sanctions to enforce the demilitarised zone as both unjust and unworkable.⁵

There was equally little debate within the Moot on the question of maintaining economic links with Germany. The Round Tablers were committed to an all-round liberalisation of world trade. Brand (who in other respects was a sceptic regarding "conciliation") played a leading rôle in the "Joint Committee" of British creditors, which ensured that short-term credits to Germany were maintained throughout the 1930s. His over-riding concern, however, was to safeguard the interests of his own bank, which had

1 Lothian to Grigg, 26 April 1933, Lothian Papers 269, fols 850-53.

2 "German Foreign Policy", *RT*, Dec 1935, p 104.

3 [Lothian,] "The Future of the League?", *RT*, Dec 1933, p 6.

4 [Ebbutt,] "Nazi Germany", *RT*, June 1933, p 513.

5 Lothian to Grigg, 26 April 1933, Lothian Papers 269, fols 850-53.

invested heavily in Germany.¹ Lothian's advocacy of "a sort of Ottawa 'economic Mittleuropa'² was perhaps more controversial. Again, however, the proposal had its roots in economic liberalism. The bloc which Lothian envisaged was not intended to be highly protectionist, but a step towards a general tariff reduction.³ Amery also recognised special German economic interests in eastern Europe, although he inclined to a more protectionist solution.⁴

The territorial settlement of Versailles was, of course, criticised at the time by the *Round Table*. An article by Toynbee in June 1933 again protested against the Treaty's ban on Austro-German union, but was non-committal on other German claims.⁵ Privately, Lothian was prepared to go much further. As he wrote to J A Spender in April 1935, avowedly condensing his recent Burge Memorial lecture,

"I venture to prophesy that within a decade or two mankind will be organised in four or five great entities. The real question is whether that is going to be done by conquest and empire or by voluntary federation. Japan and Germany are going to set out along the road of empire, and Eastern Europe may utter a sigh of relief at being freed from the spectre of war even at the price of subjection".⁶

This was not an argument which Lothian was allowed to put in the *Round*

¹ Neil Forbes, "London Banks, the German Standstill Agreements and 'Economic Appeasement' in the 1930s", *EHR*, Vol XL (1987), pp 571-87.

² Lothian to Smuts, 16 March 1937, Lothian Papers 333, fol 880.

³ [Lothian,] "The Root of our Present Discontents", *RT*, March 1936, pp 229-38.

⁴ Louis, *op cit*, pp 113-16.

⁵ [Toynbee,] "Treaty Revision", *RT*, June 1933, pp 584-604.

⁶ Lothian to J A Spender, 30 April 1935, Lothian Papers 296, fols 728-29.

Table. Nevertheless, he was allowed to put forward his basic premise: that eastern Europe was, economically and politically, bound to fall increasingly under German influence, and that it was not in Britain's interests to try artificially to reverse the trend.¹

The Round Tablers were reluctant to see Britain making any concessions in the colonial sphere, other than by guaranteeing an "open door". Both Lloyd George and Neville Chamberlain appeared favourable to colonial restitution early in 1936, provoking a storm of Tory outrage (in which Amery was prominent). Writing in the *Round Table*, Lothian sided with his former Round Table colleague rather than with his former employer.² Another article by Hodson purported to show that the economic argument for restitution "simply does not hold water". The British Government was advised to give a "patient, straight-forward and unequivocal" no.³

The success of "conciliation" depended above all on a willingness to compromise: on the one hand, "some sacrifice on the part of the beneficiaries of the existing settlement", on the other a readiness to seek adjustments by "diplomacy or conference" rather than force.⁴ Hitler's unwillingness to compromise overwhelmed the policy of "conciliation", forcing its advocates to choose between "acquiescence" in increasingly extreme demands and "resistance" from a position substantially weaker than in 1933. The choice was difficult, especially so because (as Brand later

¹ [Lothian,] "The New World Situation", *RT*, Sept 1937, pp 717-18.

² [Lothian,] "The Root of our Present Discontents", *RT*, March 1936, pp 235-38.

³ [Hodson,] "From Agadir to Nuremburg", *RT*, Dec 1936, pp 106-09.

⁴ [Lothian,] "Power and Opinion in World Affairs", *RT*, Dec 1937, pp 15-16.

emphasised) it was almost impossible to know where to draw the line.¹

Hitler's first breach of the Treaty of Versailles, re-introducing conscription in 1935, appears to have caused little stir within the Moot. The re-militarisation of the Rhineland in March 1936 went much further towards undermining the policy of "conciliation". The reaction of Dawson and Lothian was to shift towards "acquiescence". Others in the Moot reacted by shifting the other way. Hodson now argued that it was "dangerous" to suggest that "important adjustments must be made before there can be stability".² Another Round Tabler who objected to Lothian's more forward line was Curtis. As yet, however, neither Hodson nor Curtis was prepared to support a policy of "resistance". Hodson's view was that collective security was "in the long-run necessary and right", but that, until the democratic powers had sufficient force to ensure compliance, it remained "off the map".³ Curtis urged, in effect, a policy of bluff. While Britain should not "say anything which could lead Germany . . . to infer that in no circumstances would we be drawn into war over eastern Europe", neither should Britain make any commitments.⁴ Even Grigg, described by Hodson as "the most forcible advocate" of collective sanctions⁵, was as yet unprepared to back what he described as a policy of "unlimited liability":

1 "Lord Brand on Geoffrey Dawson" [typescript of BBC interview, not broadcast, Feb 1962], Brand Papers, box 198.

2 Hodson to Lothian, 13 May 1936, Lothian Papers 323, fols 609-11.

3 Hodson to Curtis, 9 June 1937, RT Papers c 811, fols 116-119.

4 [Curtis,] Memorandum, Oct 1936, RT Papers c 811, fols 102-06.

5 Hodson to Lothian, 8 July 1935, Lothian Papers 304, fol 745.

"we have no right to endanger the security of the Empire for the sake of nations which do not belong to it A universal and unconditional guarantee of every existing State can lead to nothing but another awful conflagration".¹

One important effect of the Rhineland crisis was to re-inforce the Round Tablers' insistence on the necessity of Empire re-armament. Gustav Schmidt has argued that "appeasement" was adopted as a counter-strategy to German re-armament largely because the alternative, British re-armament, was found unacceptable.² In the case of the Round Tablers, however, a belief in the necessity of re-armament cut across differences on policy. From 1936 onwards, the Moot called for the immediate introduction of compulsory national service.³

The Round Tablers had long criticised the ban on Austro-German union as one of the most unacceptable aspects of the Versailles settlement. Nevertheless, the manner of its accomplishment was still shocking.⁴ While the *Round Table* still oscillated between "acquiescence" and "resistance", the balance was tipped decidedly in favour of the latter. Even Lothian deplored "the momentum and prestige that totalitarian power diplomacy has gained". The "paramount necessity" now was for "armed power" and a "defensive and political integration" of the Western democracies to prevent or defeat further unilateral acts of force.⁵

¹ Grigg, *The Faith of an Englishman* (London, 1936), pp 145-46.

² Schmidt, *op cit*, p 11 and *passim*.

³ [Hodson,] "The Army in Imperial Defence", *RT*, Dec 1936, pp 23-38.

⁴ Louis, *op cit*, p 116, sees this as the decisive moment in Amery's change of attitude to Germany.

⁵ [Lothian,] "The Commonwealth and the Dictatorships", *RT*, June 1938, pp 435-52. Cf Lothian to Sir Nevile Henderson, 14 March 1938, Lothian Papers 362, fols 394-95.

The Sudeten crisis confirmed the direction in which Round Table policy was heading. In May 1938 Lothian urged Halifax to make it clear that Britain would side with Czechoslovakia if Germany resorted to force.¹ At the time of Munich, he feared "another Hoare-Laval plan" which would "split the country and the democratic world".² Only Dawson still clung to the policy of "conciliation", primarily on Imperial grounds:

"No one who sat in this place, as I did during the autumn of '38, with almost daily visitations from eminent Canadians and Australians, could fail to realize that war with Germany at that time would have been misunderstood and resented from end to end of the Empire".³

Horsfall's post-mortem was gloomy. Chamberlain and Daladier were not only guilty of "naïveté in negotiation", they were also guilty of "administrative incapacity". Even now there was talk of further concessions, but this was "no moment for negotiating from weakness".⁴ Hodson surveyed the reactions to the crisis in America, India and the Dominions, and found overwhelming evidence of disillusionment and a loss of British prestige.⁵ In his last article for the *Round Table*, Lothian urged the Western democracies to form "a Grand Alliance against aggression" to ensure the ultimate triumph of liberal-democratic values.⁶

This examination of the Round Tablers' tortuous passage from

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- 1 Lothian to Halifax, 31 May 1938, Lothian Papers 362, fol 364.
 - 2 Lothian to Nancy Astor, 16 Sept 1938, quoted in Christopher Sykes, *Nancy: The Life of Nancy Astor* (London, 1972), p 393.
 - 3 Dawson to Neville Chamberlain, 8 Nov 1940, Dawson Papers 81, fol 48.
 - 4 [Horsfall,] "The Crisis and the Future", *RT*, Dec 1938, pp 1-12.
 - 5 [Hodson et al,] "Overseas Reactions to the Crisis", *RT*, Dec 1938, pp 28-57.
 - 6 [Lothian,] "The Grand Alliance against Aggression", *RT*, June 1939, pp 441-56.

"conciliation" to "resistance" points to a number of conclusions. Perhaps the most striking is the extent to which the labels "appeaser" and "anti-appeaser" confuse the issues involved. Of crucial importance here was the inability of the sceptics to formulate alternative strategies. This in turn reflected a basic agreement on assumptions. Two in particular stand out: that Britain had few interests in eastern Europe, and that her true interests lay in an "Oceanic" group centred on the Empire/Commonwealth and the United States.

Ritchie Ovendale, in his study of the "English-speaking world" and "Appeasement", concluded that the Dominions and the United States had little direct influence on the formulation of Chamberlain's policy, and that they were mainly used as an excuse to justify policies formulated for other reasons.¹ At first sight, this would appear to indicate a large difference between Chamberlain and the Round Tablers. The real situation was by no means as clear-cut. Some of the Dominion Round Tablers (such as Duncan) were keen supporters of a policy of "Oceanic" detachment. Others were not. The Toronto member J M Macdonnell, for instance, thought that "the condition of . . . keeping the Empire together is to be keen on and loyal to the League".² Nevertheless, the Round Tablers certainly believed that a policy of "conciliation" and detachment was supported by a majority in the Dominions. Even so, the relationship between Round Table and Dominion views was not entirely one-way. Lothian wrote to a number of Dominion leaders, urging them to take a more active rôle in lobbying the

¹ Ritchie Ovendale, *"Appeasement" and the English-speaking World, 1937-39* (Cardiff, 1975); cf Robert Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance, 1918-39* (London, 1981), pp 167-205.

² Macdonnell to Lothian, 20 July 1936, Lothian Papers 321, fols 460-61.

British government.'

The extent of the Round Tablers' influence is, of course, impossible to measure. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the *Round Table* was remarkably consistent in its advocacy of "conciliation" towards Germany from 1919 onwards. In the 1920s the Moot found itself in frequent opposition to Government policy. In the 1930s, no British government attempted the kind of one-off, all-round settlement which the Round Tablers thought essential. Ironically, just as Neville Chamberlain shifted British policy towards a more accommodating attitude to Germany, the Round Tablers themselves were moving firmly in the opposite direction. Although Lothian and the *Round Table* magazine perhaps helped to create the right atmosphere for Chamberlain's policies, the Round Table must be discounted as a direct influence on his Government.

Federalism Revived

The deteriorating international situation of the late 1930s gave force to the federal ideas which had inspired the Round Table's creation.

Curtis, of course, had never given up his federalism, although he was forced to admit that "we have . . . to think in longer periods of time than we did at the outset".² In the late 1920s he had started work on a third series of *Round Table Studies*, whose purpose was to "explain the British Commonwealth so far as to enable its citizens to see better how to

¹ See, eg, Lothian to Mackenzie King, 4 June 1936, Lothian Papers 321, fol 482; Lothian to Smuts, 8 July 1936, Lothian Papers 324, fols 700-03.

² Curtis, "Memorandum for Discussion at Blickling", 19 Sept 1932, Lothian Papers 268, fol 751.

discharge the duties which it lays upon them".¹ His work consisted largely of a heterodox and discursive sweep through history, tracing a conflict between the "Jewish" and "Graeco-Roman" ideals, and describing the emergence of "Commonwealth" from the latter. Professor George E Catlin was probably not alone in finding himself "unable entirely to comprehend [Curtis's] drift".² The Moot decided against sending Curtis's final volume to the Dominion groups³, and the Round Table connection was only briefly mentioned when the work was published, as *Civitas Dei*.

Although Curtis's volumes concluded with a plea for federation - if necessary, starting just with Britain, Australia and New Zealand - the leisurely manner of his producing them and the lack of a specific scheme are indications that even he, at this stage, realised that federation was not practical politics. The same was true of Lothian, despite his assertion in 1935 that events were "driving the issue to the front with tremendous speed".⁴

A debate on the Moot's attitude to Imperial federation was prompted by the impending twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Round Table*, towards the end of 1935. Brand and Grigg both argued strongly against any re-assertion of federalist belief by the Moot as such; Curtis and Lothian both argued equally strongly the other way, although Lothian cautioned against any explicit mention of Curtis or endorsement of his writings.⁵ After

¹ Curtis to Lord Chelmsford, 14 March 1928, Curtis Papers 3, fols 32-34.

² Catlin to Kerr, 5 June 1929, Lothian Papers 234, fol 52.

³ Minutes of RT meeting, 19 to 20 Oct 1935, RT (O) Papers.

⁴ Lothian, *Pacifism is Not Enough* (London, 1935), p 48.

⁵ Lothian to Hodson, 6 Aug 1935, Lothian Papers 304, fols 761-63; cf Curtis to Macadam, 26 April 1945, Curtis Papers 98, fol 73.

lengthy debate the federalist view prevailed, and it was therefore announced that

"the spirit and purpose of the review and of the groups of men responsible for it remain the same. The organic commonwealth of free peoples, as the only permanent foundation for liberty and peace, is still a vision, but it is a vision that has inspired twenty-five years of effort, and that will continue to inspire the renewal of that effort in the years to come".¹

Again the lack of urgency was clear, although so, too, was the absence of any idea that the Commonwealth had passed beyond the stage when federalism would be practical at all.

It was only in the last few months of peace that federalism once more became an issue capable of inspiring and mobilising significant numbers of activists. Both Lothian and Curtis set about lending their support and attempting to provide guidance. They were particularly excited by Clarence Streit's *Union Now*, published simultaneously in America and England in the spring of 1939, and urging a thoroughgoing union of all fifteen democracies. Lothian and Curtis thought Streit wrong in including economic union, omitting dependencies, and modelling his proposed constitution on the centralised American state. Nevertheless, Lothian especially realised America to be the key to a new system, and therefore welcomed Streit's book with fervour. He urged his American contacts to organise support for Streit, while Curtis set about recommending the book to all and sundry in England.² Hodson was pressed into writing two appreciative articles for

¹ [Hodson,] "Twenty Five Years", *RT*, Sept 1935, pp 653-59.

² See, eg, Lothian to Frank Aydelotte, 6 March 1939, Lothian Papers 369, fol 42; Curtis to Lionel Robbins, 6 June 1939, Curtis Papers 16, fols 174-75.

the *Round Table*.¹

Somewhat less enthusiasm was felt for "Federal Union", a purely British organisation launched in autumn 1938 by Patrick Ransome, Charles Kimber and Derek Rawnsley. Curtis initially suggested to Lothian that the two of them could "model our attitude towards these young men on the way in which Lord Milner treated us".² Curtis tried hard to convert the younger men to an Atlantic rather than European federation, and, when he failed, attempted to oust them. He soon found, however, that they were not to be overawed, and, indeed, that they had plenty of other potential Milners, including Lord Beveridge. Curtis and Lothian parted company with the Federal Unionists in some bitterness. As Kimber later put it, the Round Tablers had been "not helpful".³

1 "Union Now", *RT*, June 1939, pp 476-88, and "Union: Oceanic or Continental", *RT*, Sept 1939, pp 733-44.

2 Curtis to Lothian, 2 April 1939, Lothian Papers 386, fol 734.

3 Sir Charles Kimber, "Federal Union" in Peter Catterall and C J Morris (eds), *Britain and the Threat to Stability in Europe, 1918-45* (London, 1993), pp 107-09. See also Andrea Bosco, "Lothian, Curtis, Kimber and the Federal Union Movement", *J Contemp Hist*, vol 23, no 3 (July 1988), pp 465-502.

9. WAR AND ADJUSTMENT, 1939-49

Five months after the fall of Singapore, Duncan wrote gloomily from South Africa of a widespread belief that, even if the Allies won the war, "the British Empire will be gone beyond recovery".¹ Many historians would agree with this prognosis. The years 1939-49 saw a series of humiliating military defeats for Britain, a radical diminution of her economic and financial power, the first sterling crisis, the independence of Jordan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma and Israel, and the secession of Ireland. Above all, the war and its aftermath confirmed the emergence of two colossal "superpowers", increasingly antagonistic, but sharing a rhetorical attachment to anti-imperialism. As early as 1940, Britain and its Empire was financially and militarily dependent on American goodwill. As Sir Michael Howard famously wrote, "the British Empire had come to an end, almost as imperceptibly as it had begun".²

What is most striking in retrospect is the remarkable resilience of the Empire-Commonwealth before 1939, achieved by a judicious combination of concession and consolidation, and by skilful management and diplomacy.³ The Round Tablers themselves believed that still more could have been achieved, given the political will in Britain and the Dominions. Did they finally recognise the writing on the wall in 1940, 1945 or 1949? On any reckoning, the Empire/Commonwealth would have to change. But was it inevitable that it would be "gone beyond recovery"?

1 Duncan to Curtis, 28 July 1942, RT Papers c 813, fol 88.

2 Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment* (London, 1972), p 147.

3 John Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline?", *Hist Journal*, vol XXIII (1980), pp 657-79.

The London Moot and the Round Table Magazine

The war caused significant problems of organisation and commitment within the London Moot. Both older and younger members naturally made a priority of war service. Monthly meetings continued, but attendance was irregular. The Moot spent much of the war "living from hand to mouth".¹ A similar experience appears to have afflicted the Round Table groups in the Dominions. While these continued to send articles for the *Round Table* magazine, they too found it hard just "to carry on".²

The numerical preponderance of "aboriginal" London Round Tablers was broken by the time the war ended. Lionel Hitchens was killed by a German bomb, in October 1940. Two months later Lord Lothian died (perhaps unnecessarily).³ Sir Patrick Duncan died in July 1943, and Geoffrey Dawson in November 1944.

Other long-standing Round Tablers remained committed to the Moot, but in many cases war-related work made continuous and active participation difficult. Curtis was an energetic organiser of the Chatham House servicemen's study groups at Oxford. Brand spent much of the war in Washington, first as Chairman of the British Food Mission, then as Treasury representative. Grigg filled various junior ministerial posts in London before succeeding Lord Moyne as Minister Resident in the Middle East in 1944. Coupland spent the middle part of the war in India. Only Horsfall and Malcolm remained in London throughout.

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- 1 Dawson to Feetham, 31 March 1943, Dawson Papers 83, fols 77-80.
 - 2 T H Laby to Curtis, 23 March 1943, (Melbourne file,) RT (O) Papers.
 - 3 Lothian died of uraemia, after refusing treatment on religious grounds. Curtis survived a similar illness the following year.

Three of those recruited in the 1930s - Hodson, Macadam and Harlow - put their propaganda skills to good use in the Empire Division of the Ministry of Information. Hodson subsequently went to India in 1941-42 as the Viceroy's constitutional adviser; on his return, he again entered the service of the home government, in the Ministry of Production. Maud was busy with administrative work at the Ministries of Food and Reconstruction. Lord Hailey occupied a quasi-official position in the Colonial Office, reporting on *Native Administration and Political Development* in Africa, helping to keep the Belgian Congo within the Allied orbit, and propagandising the cause of Empire in the United States and Canada.

Keeping the *Round Table* magazine going was the main preoccupation of the Moot. Hodson resigned as editor in September 1939, and was succeeded by Coupland. The latter was also anxious to "pull my weight" in the war effort by working for the Ministry of Information, but he was dissuaded by Brand, who insisted that editing the *Round Table* was itself "an important war work".¹ Nevertheless, Coupland resigned after seeing the March 1941 issue off the press, in order to concentrate on his Indian work. The editor of *The Economist*, Geoffrey Crowther, was brought in to edit the June 1941 issue, before flying to the United States on Ministry of Information business. Crowther remained a member of the Moot until October 1944, but he was a relatively infrequent attender.

Curtis was anxious to persuade Dawson to edit the *Round Table* following his resignation from *The Times*, announced in July 1941. Nevertheless, Dawson suggested that the magazine needed "someone younger

¹ Coupland to Brand, 25 July 1940, and Brand to Coupland, 26 July 1940, Brand Papers, box 153.

and fresher".¹ Dawson himself found such a person in the form of Henry Brooke, MP, whom Dawson considered "to 'hold the right thought' about most things".² Brooke edited the next three issues, from September 1941 to June 1942, but found the strain of doing so increasingly difficult. Hailey persuaded Brooke to give up and Dawson to take on the job.³ Brooke remained an active member of the Moot until 1966.

Dawson's editorship lasted from September 1942 to November 1944. Macadam thought Dawson's first issue "much the best we have produced since the war".⁴ Sadly, Dawson's failing health necessitated first the assistance of Malcolm and then the search for another editor. Various candidates were considered, including Giles Alington and Rohan Butler. Eventually the position was offered to Dermot Morrah, an All Souls prize fellow and a leader-writer for *The Times* who had joined the Moot in 1943, on Dawson's recommendation. Morrah's position was at first insecure: he was appointed "acting" editor with a four-man advisory committee consisting of Malcolm, Hodson, Horsfall and Macadam. The editorship (now a part-time post paying £500 pa) was offered to Hodson in December 1945, but the latter insisted that "the general need for bringing the R.T. abreast of the times" required a full-time editor, and he was unwilling to consider the proposal of a merely part-time post.⁵ The offer was renewed early in 1946, but by then Hodson was settling into a new job at *The Sunday Times*. Morrah

1 Dawson to Curtis, 2 April 1941, RT Papers c 861, fol 11.

2 Dawson to Feetham, 31 March 1943, Dawson Papers 83, fols 77-80.

3 Hailey to Malcolm, Grigg, Horsfall and Macadam, 1 June 1942, RT Papers c 862, fol 59.

4 Macadam to Dawson, [Sept 1942,] RT Papers c 862, fol 104.

5 Hodson to Macadam, 13 Dec 1945, RT Papers c 863, fol 132.

remained editor of the *Round Table* (combining the position with leadership for *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*) until the end of 1965.

Morrah's editorship, despite its uncertain start, gave the *Round Table* a much-needed continuity. Morrah himself was

"a very individual and richly-flavoured personality . . . deeply attached to the Roman Catholic Church, the tridentine mass, the constitution, common law, all ritual both sacred and secular, heraldry (and) the medieval concepts of feudalism and status".¹

Morrah's somewhat anachronistic views were not prominently displayed in the magazine he edited. Undoubtedly a large part of the reason was that, like Dove, he saw himself as "the scribe who puts on paper the collective views of the Moot".² This attitude gave a renewed impetus to the *Round Table's* efforts to formulate a corporate policy.

The Moot was strengthened in the late 1940s by the recruitment of three new members, all of whom were to remain actively involved until the 1970s and later: Nicholas Mansergh, Denzil Marris and Sir Olaf Caroe.³ Mansergh, from an Irish Protestant family, was another wartime employee of the Ministry of Information, and later one of the foremost Commonwealth historians in post-war Britain. His views were fervently Anglophile but essentially pragmatic. Denzil Marris provided a double continuity, both with his father Sir William and with Lazard Brothers, of which he was Managing Director from 1947 to 1971. Wartime service with the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Washington embassy, and an important rôle at the

¹ Charles Monteith in Lord Blake and C S Nichols (eds), *Dictionary of National Biography, 1971-80* (1986), p 590.

² Morrah to Curtis, 16 Jan 1946, Curtis Papers 98, fol 92.

³ Lord Halifax agreed to join the Moot in 1946, but appears not to have attended any meetings. John Holt, a businessman with shipping interests, was briefly a member, from 1948 to 1950.

Marshall Plan and Washington conferences, gave political depth to his considerable economic and financial expertise. Caroe's interests were geopolitical and strategic. A former Indian Civil Servant and the last British Governor of the North-West Frontier Province (returning to England "with a sense of having been almost mortally wounded"¹), he wrote many *Round Table* articles on the Middle East and Asia.

Finance was less of a problem than it had been in the 1930s, largely because of a £1000 pa bequest from Abe Bailey, who died in 1940. The *Round Table* also received £250 pa from Sir Ernest Oppenheimer from 1939 to 1944.² A secondary factor was the lower rate of remuneration paid to editors after 1939. (Dawson refused to accept any payment at all.) The magazine account showed an excess of income over expenditure in 1944-45,³ although this proved a short-lived phenomenon. By 1949, the expenses of producing the magazine were £1340 more than the income from sales, and the *Round Table* was once again eating into its capital reserves.⁴

The war inevitably led to a reduction in *Round Table* sales, which fell from 3672 copies in June 1939 (with another 748 distributed free) to 2751 in June 1943 (and only 212 distributed free).⁵ The Moot considered halving the price of the magazine for the duration of the war, but decided

1 Caroe, "Lionel and O.C.", [Aug 1962,] RT Papers c 868, fols 101-05.

2 "The Round Table Ltd.: Report on Accounts", 19 April 1940, Brand Papers, box 153.

3 "Points for the Council's Report", [May 1945,] RT Papers c 863, fol 59.

4 "Annual Accounts 1949-50", Brand Papers, box 171.

5 Minutes of RT Meeting, 14 June 1945, RT (O) Papers. New Zealand was still the *Round Table's* best overseas market, taking more than twice as many copies as Australia, and more than Canada and the USA combined: Minutes of RT meeting, 2 July 1941, *ibid.*

against such a move "since it was thought that the influence of the Round Table would not be substantially increased by an increase in the number of subscribers and purchasers".¹ After the war, the *Round Table's* circulation revived, before resuming its slow but steady decline in the 1950s.

War Aims and the Federal Debate

In contrast to the First World War, there was considerable confusion over British war aims. This point was emphasised by Duncan in the early months of the war. For what, he asked, was the British Empire fighting? To liberate Poland? To vindicate the "principle of non-aggression"? To crush Hitlerism? In his view, the British Empire, "the most vulnerable of all the Great Powers", had stumbled into the war without any clear idea of its purpose.²

The crux of the problem was the future of Germany. The Moot agreed that there could not be another "peace to end peace". Any post-war settlement must be one which could "be negotiated with a liberal German Government".³ Yet the Moot harboured few illusions as to the state of German opinion. Indeed, it seemed clear that "most Germans . . . are far more devoted to Hitler than they ever were to the Kaiser".⁴

How, therefore, was peace to be secured? One suggestion - frequently referred to as the "French" solution - was to partition Germany and deprive

¹ Minutes of RT meeting, 24 Jan 1940, *ibid.*

² Duncan to Curtis, 14 Nov 1939, RT Papers c 813, fol 87.

³ [Coupland,] "War and Peace", *RT*, Dec 1939, p 21.

⁴ "Inside Germany", *RT*, March 1940, p 341; see also "Germany from Within", *RT*, March 1944, pp 115-20, describing Hitler as "genuinely popular".

her of her industrial base. Yet this would certainly not make Germany "liberal". An alternative solution was put forward by Sir Willam Marris. Germany should be subjected to a long period of "trusteeship": "a retelling, with variations, of the story with which we are familiar in the Colonies and India and South Africa".¹ Here again, however, the costs and the dangers were clear. Many in the Moot therefore despaired of formulating a set of war aims more comprehensive than "the negative fact that we cannot come to terms with Hitler".²

The Moot's reticence infuriated Curtis: "the *Round Table* in particular was founded to influence public opinion on those long-distance (and even middle-distance) problems which politicians, government servants and journalists combine to ignore". War aims - or, as Curtis preferred, "peace aims" - were the very thing the *Round Table* existed to discuss. That the magazine was not doing so was all the more lamentable in that, in Curtis's view, the *Round Table* did have a coherent "peace aim": federalism, as outlined in Hodson's *Round Table* articles of September 1935 and June and September 1939.³

Curtis claimed that the war had brought federalism into the realm of practical politics. There was some justification for this claim. Even in the Foreign Office federalism enjoyed a brief popularity, culminating in Churchill's offer of a permanent Anglo-French Union, in June 1940.⁴ In

1 Marris, "Some Reflections About War Aims", 31 March 1940, RT Papers c 784, fols 8-12.

2 Coupland to Brand, 21 Aug 1940, Brand Papers, box 153.

3 Curtis to Hailey, 8 Sept 1941, Curtis Papers 98, fols 25-26.

4 Andrea Bosco, "Federal Union, Chatham House, The Foreign Office and Anglo-French Union in Spring 1940" in Bosco (ed), *The Federal Idea, Volume 1* (London, 1991).

August 1940, Curtis urged the Round Table to exert pressure on the Government to extend its offer to all the Dominions and to the governments-in-exile of Norway, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Poland and Bohemia "should be invited to consider . . . the status of a British Dominion as it was before 1914".¹

In Curtis's mind, there was no longer any incompatibility between the oceanic and continental dimensions of federalism. This was by no means clear to others in the Moot. "What if the Dominions rejected the idea and the others jumped at it?" asked Horsfall. "We should find ourselves overnight a continental power and little else."² Brand argued that the most striking fact of the situation was that "we are dependent on the United States". Union with a handful of European states presently under Hitler's heel "would . . . be decisive as against any further association with the United States and the Dominions".³ In December 1941 the *Round Table* published an article by Brand which described as "entirely impracticable" any federation involving the United States. Brand made clear his belief that any federation not involving the United States would be unable to maintain international security.⁴

Curtis threatened to resign, and to take Bailey's £1000 pa with him. He claimed to be continuing the work for which the Round Table was founded, and to which Lothian had dedicated his life.⁵ The record of Lothian's

1 "Personal View of Lionel Curtis on the line to be followed by the Round Table", 17 Sept 1940, RT Papers c 784, fols 13-16.

2 Horsfall, "The Round Table", 26 Sept 1940, *ibid*, fols 20-22.

3 Brand, "Memorandum", [circulated 3 Oct 1940,] *ibid*, fols 18-19.

4 [Brand,] "Anglo-American Co-operation", *RT*, Dec 1941, pp 5-16.

5 Curtis to Hailey, 23 Dec 1941 (draft), Curtis Papers 98, fols 35-39; Curtis to Macadam, 8 Jan 1942, *ibid*, fol 42.

last meeting with the Moot, in November 1940, contradicted him: Lothian had then argued for an "Amphictyonic Council" for the United States and the British Commonwealth, but "no separate plea . . . for Imperial Federation".¹ According to Malcolm, Imperial federation was one point the Moot could agree on: the majority was "all for the policy of the earliest possible organic union with the Dominions". The "point really is that what we don't agree to is the idea of going for union with the U.S.A. now (à la Streit)".²

Malcolm undoubtedly exaggerated the support for Imperial federation within the Moot. He continued to believe that Imperial federation was both practicable and likely, although he thought a start might have to be made with just Australia and New Zealand.³ Nevertheless, he rejected Curtis's particular scheme, on the grounds "that Union to be workable would have to be very close indeed - which would of course increase Dominion and perhaps U.K. reluctance to accept it".⁴

Grigg, Horsfall and possibly Coupland were by now firm advocates of co-operation per se. Grigg urged the Moot to dissociate itself completely from Curtis's views. However, Grigg's own attempt to define Round Table aims, towards the end of 1944, had, according to Macadam, no chance of

1 Coupland, "Lord Lothian's Last Talk at Cliveden", pasted into minutes of RT meeting, 30 March 1941, RT (O) Papers. Curtis thought Coupland's version "distinctly coloured by his own point of view": Curtis to Hailey, 13 Oct 1941, Curtis Papers 98, fol 31.

2 Malcolm to Hodson, 16 Jan 1942, RT Papers c 875, fols 19-20.

3 Ibid.

4 Malcolm to Curtis, 16 Dec 1943, ibid., fols 121-22; cf Malcolm, "'Decision' and 'Action'", *Agenda*, Vol 1, No 2 (April 1942), pp 184-89.

being accepted by the rest of the Moot.¹

Brand also opposed Curtis's federalism. He was consistently hostile towards integration with Europe, and he found "the idea of a world state with 1000 million Asiatics - one man one vote - just dreadful". Nevertheless, at this stage he opposed Empire federalism on pragmatic grounds. He still held as the ideal "the unity of the British Commonwealth", but he now doubted whether either the Dominions or Britain could agree to an "organic union" which did not include America. This, he realised, was a much longer-term project.² Hailey was more sympathetic to Curtis's views, describing himself as "a convert" after reading *Decision*.³ Like Brand, however, he regarded the attitude of America as decisive.⁴

Dawson characteristically refused to commit himself either to Curtis's views or to those of his critics. Indeed, the "quarrel . . . seems to me to be largely imaginary and in any case likely to be solved by events". While Dawson thus favoured an "attitude of vigil and waiting on events", this did not mean that he dissented "from [Curtis's] general views on the future of the British Commonwealth".⁵

The younger Round Tablers sought to mediate between Curtis and the rest of the Moot. In May 1945, Macadam suggested to Hodson that

¹ Macadam to Grigg, 15 Nov 1944, RT Papers c 863, fol 35.

² Brand to Curtis, 13 Aug 1943, Curtis Papers 98, fols 57-62. Curtis himself never supported "one man one vote" for India and other non-European countries, although Hodson did: Hodson to Curtis, 20 Dec 1941, RT Papers c 784, fols 36-38.

³ Hailey to Curtis, 17 July 1941, Curtis Papers 98, fol 23.

⁴ Hailey to Curtis, 3 Oct 1941, *ibid*, fols 29-30.

⁵ Dawson to Curtis, 14 Oct 1942, RT Papers c 784, fols 45-46. Curtis accused Dawson of being "Asquithian": Curtis to Dawson, 19 Oct 1942, *ibid*, fols 52-54.

"we should try to persuade the rest of the Moot to agree, as many of them do, that Lionel's ideas are sound, the only difference of opinion being as to the practicability of them at the present time".¹

Nevertheless, by now a large part of the problem was Curtis himself, and his dogmatic insistence on "100 per cent. submission to his point of view".² Coupland reported from Oxford that Curtis was becoming "so offensive . . . that I have to avoid him as much as possible".³ Even Macadam was driven to describe him as "the square peg in the Round Table".⁴

Commonwealth Co-operation: the Dominions in Wartime

With the "lamentable exception" of Eire⁵, the self-governing Dominions followed Britain into war in September 1939, as they had done twenty-five years earlier. In Australia and New Zealand, belligerency was considered automatic. Curtis appeared to favour a similar doctrine, implying in an article for the *Round Table* that there was no such thing as a Dominion right of neutrality; but on this point the Moot was divided, and his article was amended accordingly.⁶

The informal arrangements which had characterised Anglo-Dominion relations in the interwar years had clearly failed to prevent war - as,

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- 1 Macadam to Hodson, 14 May 1945, RT Papers c 863, fol 56.
 - 2 Grigg to Sir Herbert Baker, 11 March 1942, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1005.
 - 3 Coupland to Grigg, 9 Oct 1943, (Lothian box), RT (O) Papers.
 - 4 Macadam to Crowther, 22 June 1943, RT Papers c 862, fol 131.
 - 5 [Mansergh,] "The Conference of 1944", RT, Sept 1944, pp 311-17.
 - 6 Coupland to Brand, 20 Aug 1940, Brand Papers, box 153. The article was an obituary of Abe Bailey, the amended version of which appeared in RT, Sept 1940, pp 743-46.

indeed, had the League of Nations, devotion to which had proved a major obstacle to Commonwealth integration. It therefore seemed clear to the Round Table "that we must plan to make the [Commonwealth] system stronger in the future than in the past".¹ Nevertheless, the existence of different, and at times conflicting, pressures made it difficult to arrive at any firm conclusions concerning the future direction of Anglo-Dominion relations. Horsfall complained that the whole exercise was "hardly less speculative than to enter for one of Mr Littlewood's pools".²

Smuts was prominent in urging the development of new Commonwealth machinery which would enable South Africa and the other Dominions to participate more fully in regional decision-making. On the other hand, he was firmly opposed to the kind of federalism which Curtis espoused.³ (Duncan thought Curtis's scheme, shorn of its European dimension, both "attractive" and "a necessity", and he believed that South Africa would join.⁴) A more worrying consideration, however, was the strength of Afrikaner republicanism, and the Moot was certainly aware of the weaknesses in Smuts's coalition.⁵

In Canada, relations with the United States were the primary consideration, but it was an open question whether those relations provided an obstacle to, or could be tied in with, closer Commonwealth integration.

¹ [Hodson,] "The Commonwealth and the Settlement", *RT*, Sept 1943, pp 306-12.

² Horsfall, "The Round Table", 26 Sept 1940, *RT Papers* c 784, fols 20-22.

³ Smuts to Dawson, 26 Jan 1940, *Dawson Papers* 81, fols 29-30.

⁴ Duncan to Malcolm, 26 April 1942, *RT Papers* c 875, fols 33-35.

⁵ See, eg, Malcolm to Curtis, 20 March 1942, *RT Papers* c 875, fol 27. The South African *Round Table* was more upbeat.

Initially, the Canadian *Round Table* was optimistic, believing that the Ogdensburg Agreement of August 1940 paved the way for "a more profound union" of the whole "English-speaking world".² By 1944, however, it was clear that the majority of Canadians was "equally opposed both to the centralization and [to] the dissolution of the Commonwealth".³

The conflict in the Far East brought the Pacific Dominions into the front line of the war. Initially, the effect was to underline their dependence on the United States. The Australian *Round Table* defended Curtin's "Australia looks to America" article of December 1941.⁴

Nevertheless, few Australians believed that co-operation with the United States would be detrimental to the Anglo-Dominion relationship.⁵ Curtin and his colleagues made much of the running in proposing ways to strengthen Commonwealth co-operation.

On the main point at issue within the Moot - not so much whether federalism was desirable, as whether it was practicable - the evidence of Canadian and South African opinion overwhelmingly supported Curtis's critics. The evidence from Australia and New Zealand indicated that support for some form of closer integration was not only possible but likely. Indeed, H McClure Smith, the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, informed Curtis in 1946 that "if Australia and New Zealand were the only

² "Canada", *RT*, March 1941, pp 340-57.

³ [George W Brown,] "Canada: the Future of the British Commonwealth", *RT*, March 1944, pp 186-92. The following quarter, the *Round Table* reported an opinion poll showing 49% of Canadians in favour of the status quo, 21% for inclusion in the US, and 24% for independence: "Canada", *RT*, June 1944, pp 270-76.

⁴ [K H Bailey,] "Australia", *RT*, June 1942, pp 416-22.

⁵ See, eg, P F Irvine to Curtis, 18 June 1942, Curtis Papers 98, fol 45.

Dominions whose consent was needed, it would not be difficult to secure some, at least, of the Imperial machinery which you and I believe to be necessary".¹ Nevertheless, union between Britain and the two antipodean Dominions (even if it had been possible) was clearly a different proposition to Imperial federation, let alone to the kind of "union of democracies" which Curtis now advocated.

Uncertainty regarding South Africa's future direction apart, there at least seemed little reason to believe that the Commonwealth was in the process of dissolution. The Moot was therefore increasingly confident in advocating new machinery for strengthening "functional" co-operation between Britain and the Dominions. Various measures were urged: more frequent Conferences, joint sessions of Parliamentary delegations, a permanent secretariat, institutionalised exchange and contact at civil service level, and "the organisation of a common system of defence".² The emerging structure of the United Nations gave further grounds for hoping that the Dominions would confront "the centrifugal forces in Imperial development" in order to "share in the permanent leadership of the world".³ Only thus could Britain, let alone the Dominions, hope to "command the authority of a world Power comparable to the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.". ⁴

1 H McClure Smith to Curtis, 21 June 1946, (ed ctee file,) RT (O) Papers. For similar opinions from New Zealand, see, eg H F von Haast to Hodson, 24 July 1941, RT Papers c 784, fols 41-43; Sir James Grose to Curtis, 4 March 1943, Curtis Papers 98, fol 68.

2 [Morrah,] "Organization of Security", RT, Sept 1944, pp 299-304; cf [Mansergh,] "The Conference of 1944", *ibid*, pp 311-17.

3 [Morrah,] "Concert of the World", RT, Dec 1944, pp 3-9.

4 "Common Counsel", RT, March 1944, p 107.

Federalism and Postwar Foreign Policy

"The fat is in the fire again", Macadam exclaimed, in May 1945.¹ The immediate reason was a request from the Melbourne group for a re-statement of Round Table aims, to be used in recruiting new members. Curtis now demanded that the Moot should make a definite choice between federalism and co-operation, and that the losers should resign.²

Hodson was given the difficult task of producing a document "which would be acceptable to all members of the Moot, including Mr Curtis".³ Hodson performed this task with considerable skill, although, significantly, Brand and Grigg (now Lord Altrincham) were absent from most of the meetings which discussed his draft.⁴ The resulting document was sent to the various Round Table groups early in November 1945, with the endorsement of the Moot.

As Morrah later remarked, some degree of "blurring" was implicit in the Round Table's statement.⁵ Curtis was no doubt unhappy with the observation that federalism was not "immediately practical politics"; some of his critics could hardly have welcomed the assertion that co-operation was at best "a stopgap and a pis aller". On the whole, Hodson's memorandum inclined towards the federalist view, albeit in terms more discriminating than Curtis's own.

1 Macadam to Hodson, 14 May 1945, RT Papers c 863, fol 56.

2 Curtis to Macadam, 26 April 1945, Curtis Papers 98, fols 73-4.

3 Minutes of RT Meeting, 30 July 1945, RT (O) Papers.

4 The most important meeting appears to have been on 25 Sept 1945, attended by Curtis, Hailey, Hodson, Horsfall, Macadam, Malcolm, Maud and Morrah: Minutes, RT (O) Papers.

5 Morrah to Altrincham, 8 Oct 1947, RT Papers c 784, fol 67.

"The ultimate ideal remains the union of nations in an organic Commonwealth Though 'ultimate' the ideal is not to be thought insubstantial or without effect on current policy Its adoption implies, first, that the opportunities of events must be seized to try to move towards the ideal, little by little, and that policies should be opposed which would tend in the long run to frustrate it. Secondly it implies that continuous and positive efforts should be made to create the general conditions in which the ideal could be brought to reality."¹

The memorandum succeeded in what had become its primary purpose: that is, persuading Curtis to stay in the Moot. It was less successful in its other purpose: that of providing a basis for the revitalisation of the Dominion groups. The Melbourne group agreed that only the British Commonwealth "as a whole" could remain a world power; nevertheless, "the cooperative method . . . should be tried to the utmost as the most hopeful line of advance".² The Sydney group also declared itself in favour of "the continuance of the Commonwealth and its closer integration". But

"We do not subscribe to the view that organic union is possible . . . in any near period of time; nor . . . that it is possible at all without the achievement of vigorous statesmanship generally favourable to the Commonwealth ideal (and this statesmanship does not exist in the United Kingdom or Australia to-day)".³

The Toronto group failed to produce a collective reply, but when its secretary, H W Macdonnell, put the case for federalism at a meeting, "the only person who gave me much support was the one member of the gathering

1 "Memorandum on Round Table Aims and Policy", Nov 1945, Curtis Papers 158, item 9.

2 "The Round Table (Melbourne Group): Reply to London Memorandum", 20 Dec 1946, Curtis Papers 98, fols 133-34.

3 "The Round Table Aims and Policy. Conclusions of the Sydney Group Formulated as at 1st October 1948", (Sydney file,) RT (O) Papers.

who was tight".¹ Perhaps the most disappointing response was from New Zealand. There, von Haast continued to support Curtis's line, but "the majority would not even agree that the ultimate ideal of the Group or of the movement should be an organic and articulate union".²

With such views filtering in from the Dominions, Curtis's critics felt increasingly emboldened to challenge the lines of policy laid down in 1945. Matters came to a head towards the end of 1947, after Morrah published a leading article pointing out that "the Round Table has not receded from its belief in organic union as the ultimate ideal".³ Altrincham wrote a furious letter, denouncing federal union as "wrong and very dangerous".⁴ Morrah suggested relaxing the rule of anonymity to allow the issue to be debated in the *Round Table*. While the Moot rejected the idea of signed articles, it was agreed that Altrincham and Curtis should put their respective views forward, to be followed by others from the Moot, the Dominion groups and elsewhere.⁵ Thus the *Round Table* published articles by Curtis and Altrincham in March 1948, by Brand in June 1948 (followed by further contributions from Curtis and Brand in September), by Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe (on behalf of "United Europe") in September 1948, by the Melbourne and Sydney groups in March and September 1949, and by Max

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- 1 Macdonnell to Morrah, 8 April 1948, (Toronto file,) RT (O) Papers.
 - 2 H F Von Haast to Curtis, 29 Aug 1946, Curtis Papers 98, fol 127. Von Haast later explained that recent recruits to the New Zealand group were "very narrow and anti Imperialistic in their attitude: Von Haast to Curtis, 13 March 1947, *ibid*, fol 143.
 - 3 (Morrah,) "Heiress and Inheritance", *RT*, Sept 1947, pp 311-18.
 - 4 Altrincham to Morrah, 7 Oct 1947, RT Papers c 784, fols 65-6.
 - 5 Minutes of RT meeting, 29 Oct 1947, RT (O) Papers.

Beloff (with a further reply by Curtis) in June 1952.¹

The *Round Table* debate of 1948-52 clearly indicated the breakdown of the compromise on federalism which had been negotiated in 1945, and which had in effect been in existence since 1917 or even earlier. It should again be emphasised that there was much common ground between the different protagonists. "Everyone is in favour of the end Lionel seeks", Brand asserted, in 1948.² All members of the Moot could agree on the necessity of maintaining, and if possible strengthening, the ties which bound the Empire/Commonwealth; all could agree on the importance of preserving the values for which they believed it stood.³ The real question was whether federalism was a practicable way of achieving those ends. And here Curtis now found himself in a minority of one.

The reasons are to be found less in any developments in the Dominions themselves (although, as after the First World War, these were clearly important) than in the new context of international relations. Between 1945 and 1948 changes in that context transformed the situation of Britain

¹ [Curtis,] "Untempered Mortar", *RT*, March 1948, pp 524-34; [Altrincham,] "Britain's Rôle in the World To-day", *ibid*, pp 535-44; [Brand,] "British Commonwealth and Western Union", *RT*, June 1948, pp 633-42; [Curtis and Brand,] "A Debate Continued", *RT*, Sept 1948, pp 749-61; [Maxwell-Fyfe,] "Next Steps for 'United Europe'", *ibid*, pp 742-48; [Melbourne Group,] "An Australian View of Empire", *RT*, March 1949, pp 111-17; [Sydney Group,] "Commonwealth and Common Policy", *RT*, Sept 1949, pp 317-22; [Beloff,] "Britain and European Federation", *RT*, June 1952, pp 211-18; [Curtis,] "The Real Issue", *ibid*, pp 219-23.

² Brand to Morrah, 8 March 1948, Brand Papers, box 171.

³ [Morrah,] "Two Views of Empire: An Introduction to Debate", *RT*, March 1948, pp 519-23.

as well as of the Dominions, and undermined the assumptions on which the federation project had been built.

The dominating fact of postwar international relations was the "cold war": the unconcealed and barely contained hostility between Soviet Russia and "the West". Curtis was amongst those who moved most quickly towards outright hostility to the Soviet régime. In January 1946 he warned against "the danger of drifting into a policy of appeasement with Russia".¹ Much of the appeal of his postwar federalism was in its call to arms against the Soviet menace.² Others were initially more equivocal. As late as October 1947 Altrincham argued that the Commonwealth's rôle was "to stand between the two great federal blocs, the American and the Soviet".³ By then, however, the "cold war" was an accepted fact. As Curtis wrote to Brand, Altrincham's policy "would . . . alienate almost every reader of *The Round Table*"; rejection of it was "one point on which I think we agree".⁴

It was not the fact of the "cold war" which divided Curtis from others in the Moot, but interpretation of its consequences. One of the most immediate effects of the "cold war" (if not, indeed, of the war itself) was to dispose of the notion that Britain could avoid implication in the security arrangements of western Europe. Despite its record in the 1920s and '30s, the Moot appears to have had no hesitation in accepting this conclusion. The case was overwhelming: Britain was now "intimately

¹ Curtis to Morrah, 14 Jan 1946, Curtis Papers 98, fol 89.

² See, eg, von Haast to Curtis, 13 March 1947, Curtis Papers 89, fol 143.

³ Altrincham to Morrah, 7 Oct 1947, RT Papers c 784, fols 65-66.

⁴ Curtis to Brand, 15 Oct 1947, Curtis Papers 98, fol 161.

related to the European continent".¹ Nevertheless, very few members of the *Moot* shared Curtis's enthusiasm even for the very limited proposals for European "union" associated with Churchill and Bevin.

Undoubtedly the most important consequence of the "cold war" both for Britain and for the Dominions was to re-emphasise their dependence on the United States. America's power was now "overwhelming".² The Anglo-American relationship was therefore bound to be unequal. But this in no way detracted from Round Table enthusiasm for it; indeed, the precariousness of Britain's position made it all the more urgent. As Hodson wrote in 1947, "we are undergoing the final death throes of the 19th century - that century in which British military and economic power dominated the world and enabled the United States to grow up in a kindergarten of her own".³

The echo of Kerr is suggestive. Was America now to return to her "kindergarten", as she had done after the First World War? Or would she accept the baton of world responsibility, as Kerr and Curtis had urged her to do a generation earlier? In the immediate aftermath of the war the answers to these questions were by no means clear, and the Round Tablers followed Canham's reports from the United States with undisguised anxiety. As late as December 1946 Brand thought that the forces pulling America in either direction were finely balanced.⁴ Only after the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947 - itself a response to Britain's threatened withdrawal from Greece - was Canham sure that America would face up to her

¹ [Morrah,] "Partnership and Policy", *RT*, Dec 1946, pp 3-7.

² Brand to Lippmann, 30 Dec 1946, Brand Papers, box 171.

³ Hodson to Canham, 24 Feb 1947, (US file,) *RT* (O) Papers.

⁴ [Brand,] "Some Thoughts on the United States", *RT*, Dec 1946, pp 8-21.

"historic responsibilities".¹

Curtis believed that the various changes in the international context wrought by the "cold war" had strengthened the case for federalism. But he realised that imperial federation by itself would now do little to meet the needs either of Britain or of the Dominions. He therefore advocated a federation of all democracies, Commonwealth, European and American. "You are certainly 'saying a mouthful'", Brand commented.²

Curtis's optimism regarding American opinion was undoubtedly the weakest point in his argument. Curtis frequently asserted that, once a start was made with some countries, the United States would be bound to join. Brand pointed out that probably the reverse was true: that if the United States did not join from the outset, which she was extremely unlikely to do, then certainly Canada and probably the other Dominions would stand apart, with the consequence that the Commonwealth would dissolve.³ In Brand's view, Curtis's federalism - which, a few years before, he had regarded as merely impracticable - was now positively dangerous.⁴

Ireland: Neutrality and Secession

Throughout 1938-39, the possibility of Irish neutrality was a major preoccupation of Horgan's *Round Table* articles. In September 1939, possibility became reality. Horgan condemned de Valera's policy as both

1 [Canham,] "A Two-World Policy at Washington", *RT*, Sept 1947, pp 362-69.

2 Brand to Curtis, 14 Oct 1947, Curtis Papers 98, fol 159.

3 Brand to Curtis, 17 Oct 1947, Curtis Papers 98, fols 164-65.

4 Brand to Morrah, 25 Aug 1949, Brand Papers, box 171.

unrealistic and hypocritical, claiming that the Taoiseach was fully aware that Eire's freedom depended on British protection.¹

De Valera's insistence that partition was the greatest obstacle to Irish belligerency was put to the test in the summer of 1940, when the British Government resolved to enter negotiations, linking the two issues. Curtis, at Bevin's request, organised an All Souls group including Toynbee, Brierly and Adams, which drafted a scheme for an executive authority for the whole of Ireland, indirectly elected by the existing legislatures of Eire and Ulster, which would bring Ireland into the war, and form the basis of a more permanent post-war constitution.² The All Souls scheme provided a starting point for Britain's proposals, subsequently modified to cover only the British use of Irish ports. Nevertheless, de Valera rejected these overtures, probably because of scepticism concerning Britain's ability to deliver Ulster.³ Horgan, possibly aware of the course of events, commented that "not even the abolition of partition would, failing German attack, induce us to enter the war".⁴

Round Table articles from Eire came to an end in December 1940, as a result of the Irish Government's restrictions on unofficial news. Horgan continued to send shorter articles via Northern Ireland until March 1942;

1 [Horgan,] "Neutral Ireland", *RT*, Dec 1939, pp 134-47. Curtis took a similar view and in subsequent years used "Irishry" as a synonym for irresponsibility: eg Curtis to Morrah, 17 June 1949, Brand Papers, box 171.

2 Curtis to Bevin, 12 June 1940, enclosing "Memorandum on Ireland", Curtis Papers 90, fols 104-06.

3 See Paul Canning, *British Policy towards Ireland, 1921-41* (Oxford, 1985) and Clive Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality* (London, 1990), pp 189-94. Canning argues that Churchill scuttled the negotiations, whereas Ponting suggests that he was reluctant to intervene.

4 [Horgan] "Divided Ireland", *RT*, Sept 1940, pp 864-78.

thereafter Mansergh and other writers attempted to keep *Round Table* readers in touch with events in the south. Mansergh recognised that Eire would carry less weight in the Commonwealth after the war.¹ More worrying was the effect of neutrality on Eire itself, where opinion was reported to have become distinctly isolationist and inward-looking.²

Horgan's articles were resumed in June 1946. His pleasure at Fianna Fail's defeat in the 1948 election was ill-concealed. Indeed, Horgan fully expected a new warmth in Anglo-Irish relations under Costello's coalition government, despite its inclusion of Republican representatives.³ Costello's announcement of moves to repeal the External Relations Act therefore came as a shock.

"At a time when the preservation, not only of peace, but of freedom and civilization, depends on a firm alliance between the Atlantic States . . . Mr Costello's Government has embarked on a policy which makes it virtually impossible for us to participate in such a combination."⁴

It was with a mixture of sadness and anger that this self-styled "Nationalist of an older and more moderate school" greeted the final severance of Eire's troubled connection with the British Crown.⁵

It is by no means clear whether Horgan's *Round Table* contributions represented the views of the Moot. (Curiously, there was no editorial comment on Irish secession.) Mansergh wrote disparagingly of his articles in 1950, "rather as though our articles on France were written, if not by a

¹ [Mansergh,] "Ireland", *RT*, Dec 1943, pp 66-68.

² [Mansergh,] "Ireland", *RT*, Sept 1943, pp 370-76.

³ [Horgan,] "Ireland: New Policies and Pacts", *RT*, Sept 1948, pp 787-92.

⁴ [Horgan,] "Ireland and the Commonwealth", *RT*, Dec 1948, pp 44-49.

⁵ [Horgan,] "'The Republic of Ireland'", *RT*, March 1949, pp 150-55.

Legitimist, at least by an Orleanist".¹ However, this was at a time when it seemed that the Irish Republic was drawing closer to co-operation with the Commonwealth, and when the arguments of the past could only serve to hinder such developments. Horgan was in fact to continue as *Round Table* correspondent in Ireland until his death in 1967.

India: War and Independence

Inglis continued to send *Round Table* "chronicles" on India until 1942, when he returned to England. His successor as *The Times'* correspondent, James Holburn, acted as *Round Table* correspondent until 1946 (with occasional articles from Sir Francis Low, editor of *The Times of India*). Thereafter, the task of producing *Round Table* articles was shared between Geoffrey Tyson (a member of the Legislative Assembly and editor of *Capital*, the Calcutta financial weekly) and G A Johnson (assistant editor of the *Calcutta Statesman*). All these correspondents tended to endorse the broad lines of government policy in India, as did the Moot as a whole. Nevertheless, the two most effective influences on *Round Table* policy were now Coupland and Hodson, both of whom were to be found on the more progressive wing of British opinion on India.

Before the war, Hodson had argued that "in the long run, undoubtedly, the better course is to give India full self-government, since to prevent her from securing it might be [a] serious additional defensive burden".² The initial effect of the war was to strengthen Britain's reasons for remaining in India, at the same time as making repression easier.³ In

¹ Mansergh to Morrah, 23 Jan 1950, Curtis Papers 98, fol 217.

² Hodson, "The Round Table", [circ 6 Jan 1939], Brand Papers, box 153.

³ J Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (Yale 1989), pp 314 ff.

the longer term, however, the circumstances of the war reinforced Hodson's argument. The attempt to find some stable alternative to British rule therefore became a matter of increasing urgency.

The appointment of Amery to the India Office in May 1940 gave a boost to hopes of a successful wooing of Congress collaboration. Amery's idea, with which the Round Table sympathised, was to invite Indian leaders "during the war" to agree on a constitution to be implemented "after the war".¹ Amery's strategy almost immediately ran up against Churchill's "crude" conservatism, however, and the "August Offer" of 1940 was an emasculated version of Amery's original scheme.² As Hodson later wrote, "the general impression was one of taking as much with one hand as was given with the other. The note of boldness or imagination or generosity [was] wholly absent". This, Hodson added, was "not being wise after the event": at the time, as a member of the Empire Division of the Ministry of Information, he had pressed for a change in the wording of the "Offer".³

Amery frequently discussed the situation in India with his friends in All Souls and the Round Table.⁴ After one such discussion with Curtis and others, in December 1940, he recorded in his diary that

"the practical upshot . . . was that nothing can be done at the moment . . . to end the deadlock, but that what is vital is that somebody should start the work of serious study so that when the

¹ W R Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!* (New York, 1992), p 128: pp 123-79 are an illuminating account of Amery's tenure of the India Office.

² *Ibid*, pp 128-136; cf G Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India* (London, 1978), pp 156-58.

³ Hodson, *The Great Divide* (London, 1969), p 86.

⁴ Amery also wrote one article for the *Round Table* ("New Proposals for Indian Settlement", Dec 1940, pp 101-15) and collaborated with Coupland on another ("India in the Post-War World", June 1941, pp 500-10).

atmosphere is better a real project can be produced which might form the basis of an agreement".¹

Over the next few months such plans took a more definite form, with Coupland volunteering to conduct a study under Nuffield College auspices, and with Amery's appointment of Hodson as the Viceroy's Reforms Commissioner.² Hodson produced a memorandum on the steps needed to lead India to Dominion Status, which Amery welcomed as "evidently entirely fulfilling the objects with which I sent him out"; nevertheless, by the end of 1942 Hodson had returned to England, having failed "to consolidate his position with Linlithgow".³

Coupland's mission led to the publication of two volumes of history, *The Indian Problem, 1833-1935* (1942) and *Indian Politics, 1936-42* (1943), which have continued to exercise an important influence on the historiography of Anglo-Indian relations.⁴ Coupland also published a third volume on *The Future of India* (1943). The latter attempted to square the circle of Indian constitutional advance by means of an elaborate scheme for a three-tiered structure of government, with intermediate federations of provinces (two predominantly Muslim and two mainly Hindu) grouped around river basins. Coupland's scheme was based on suggestions made by Maurice Yeatts, *Round Table* contributor between 1934 and 1937 and now Census

¹ J Barnes and D Nicholson (eds) *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929-45* (London, 1988), p 669 (entry of 15 Dec 1940).

² *Ibid.*, pp 674-75 (Coupland 15 Feb 1941, Hodson 5 March 1941). Amery admitted that it "does look as if I were perpetrating the mutual jobbery which is sometimes charged against All Souls!" (5 March 1941, *ibid.*, p 675).

³ *Ibid.*, pp 740 (28 Oct 1941) and 846 (26 Nov 1942).

⁴ See eg G Rizvi, "The Transfer of Power in India: A 'Re-Statement' of an Alternative Approach", pp 127-44 of R F Holland and G Rizvi (eds), *Perspectives on Imperialism and Decolonization* (London, 1984).

Commissioner for India.' Coupland's scheme was well received in Britain, but widely condemned in India. Part of the reason was that Coupland himself was viewed with suspicion following the publication of his earlier volumes, which, as Edward Thompson reported, were frequently used by the Government to attack Congress.²

Coupland and Hodson were both well placed to observe the Cripps Mission of March-April 1942. Coupland was swiftly brought into the "Crippery" in Delhi, and his sympathies were strongly with the attempt to bring Congress into government. On the crucial sticking-point of the Mission, Coupland could not see "why . . . Winston and Amery worry overmuch" about the prospect of an Indian quasi-Cabinet. "We are going to abdicate in a few years. If Wavell [the Commander-in-Chief] is sure of his own position, what does it matter if the Indian leaders are in virtual control of domestic government?"³ Nevertheless, Coupland laid the blame for the failure of the Mission squarely at Congress's door.⁴ He attributed Congress's attitude to an "inferiority complex" and the fear that co-operation would weaken the independence movement. Hodson agreed, but he was also more inclined to blame Cripps's negotiating tactics, and in particular

¹ See Yeatts to Coupland, 8 May 1943 and notes, Coupland Papers 5/2/69-99.

² Thompson to Coupland, 6 April [1943], *ibid*, 5/3/70; British reviews, *ibid*, 5/3/1-47; Indian reviews, *ibid*, 5/3/204.

³ Coupland, *Indian Diary*, 10 April 1942 (p 226), Coupland Papers, MSS Brit Emp s15.

⁴ Coupland, "The Impracticability of Full Cabinet Government at Present", 12 April 1942, postscript to *Indian diary*, *loc cit*; Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936-42* (Oxford, 1943), p 286. This view has been authoritatively rejected by R J Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India, 1939-45* (Oxford, 1979), pp 127-34.

his "easy promises" which subsequently had to be qualified.¹

Following the failure of the Cripps Mission, the situation in India deteriorated rapidly. Holburn reported "a revolutionary outbreak which has no parallel since the Mutiny".² The responsibility for ending the deadlock was thought to lie primarily in Indian, and especially in Congress, hands. Britain itself was "only too ready" to leave India.³

The "growing inadequacy" of British power was acknowledged by Hodson in a *Round Table* article of March 1945. The "Quit India" disturbances had been "terrible", but also badly organised, ill-timed and half-hearted; and the Muslims, the Communists and the army had all remained aloof. Britain had always promised to hand over power only after an agreement had been reached which would prevent civil war.

"The argument is sound, but it is a question of degree; for Britain herself can give no absolute guarantee that in the future those catastrophes will not attend her own rule. The longer self-government for India is delayed the more likely it is that they will."⁴

It was clear, therefore, that a policy of trying to hold on to India was likely to be bloody, expensive and self-defeating. The question was, whether British objectives could still be met by conceding independence and renegotiating common aims.

The Round Table had long been involved in the business of reassessing British interests. With the sharp decline in Britain's economic stake in

¹ Coupland, *Indian Diary*, 9 April 1942 (p 224), *loc cit*; "Appendix 1: Letter from Mr Hodson, 8th May 1942", *ibid*, pp 244-50.

² [Holburn,] "India: Government and Congress", *RT*, Dec 1942, pp 53-63.

³ [Holburn,] "India: Lord Linlithgow's Reign in Restrospect", *RT*, Dec 1943, pp 52-58.

⁴ [Hodson,] "Britain's Opportunity in India", *RT*, March 1945, pp 122-29.

India, those interests boiled down to the creation of a stable political and strategic partner. India was, as Amery put it with only slight exaggeration, "possibly [i.e. potentially] the greatest power in Asia".¹ That India's own interests compelled her to remain a member of the Commonwealth was frequently asserted in the *Round Table's* wartime Indian commentaries, as in Coupland's Nuffield volumes. Various reasons were adduced for this view: India's need for industrial expertise and finance, the stabilising influence of association with more experienced democracies, the continuing loyalty of the Princes and of large sections of the population, and, above all, India's need for some defensive association in a world increasingly dominated by large, expansionist Powers.²

Like the British Government, the *Round Table* was slow to accept the inevitability of Pakistan, which it regarded primarily as a bargaining-counter, and as likely to reproduce in more virulent and intractable form the problem of minorities. Instead, Hodson suggested that an all-India government be given powers over foreign policy, defence and communications; and that sovereignty in all other matters be devolved to the provinces, which could then decide what powers to transfer either to regional authorities or to the central government.³ Similar ideas formed the basis of the Cabinet Mission's proposals in 1946, which Hodson welcomed as "statesmanlike" and "infinitely flexible".⁴ Even after Pakistan was an accomplished fact, the *Round Table* cast doubt on its viability, and

¹ Amery to Coupland, 27 July 1943, Coupland Papers 5/2/32-33.

² See, *inter alia*, [Coupland,] "India in the Post-war World", *RT*, June 1941, pp 500-10.

³ [Hodson,] "India's Fatal Hour", *RT*, March 1946, pp 153-58.

⁴ [Hodson,] "India's Task", *RT*, Sept 1946, pp 340-48.

regarded as inevitable its unification with India.¹

The nearest that the Round Table came to opposing the Labour Government's Indian policy was in February 1947, with the announcement of a time-limit to the British presence in India. In a rare comment on the Indian situation, Hailey attacked the Government's policy, declaring it precipitate and injurious to British prestige.² Macadam circulated an even more virulent attack by John Coatman, the former *Round Table* contributor. Even at this stage, Coatman believed it possible for Britain to retain control of central government in India, and thus hold out for better terms.³ Hodson (writing in the *Round Table*) was less convinced.

"If British will and British resources were still matched to the task, another decade of British rule . . . might well leave a more united, peaceable and prosperous India than is likely to emerge after ten years of independence. But neither the will nor the resources are to-day so matched."

The fundamental reason for Britain's withdrawal was thus clear.

Nevertheless, Hodson was able to put a more positive gloss on Britain's retreat. Indeed, the constitutional transfer of power was a remarkable achievement, and the culmination of decades of British policy.⁴

The Middle East: Expansion and Contraction

Britain's "self-interest" in the Middle East was, in the *Round Table*'s view, quite modest: the security of communications, bases and oil supplies, and the exclusion of other military Powers (including France).

¹ [Hodson,] "Valediction to India", *RT*, Sept 1947, pp 330-38.

² *Hansard (Lords)*, 5th Series, Vol CXLV (20 Feb 1947), cols 1029-36..

³ Macadam, "For circulation to the editorial committee", 14 March 1947, Brand Papers, box 171.

⁴ [Hodson,] "Valediction to India", *RT*, Sept 1947, pp 330-38.

For the rest, "Britain can supply persuasion, and advice when it is desired, but 'benevolent despotism' is out of the question".¹

The *Round Table's* hopes for a new era in Anglo-Arab relations after 1945 were shared by Labour's Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin.² That such hopes were swiftly disappointed was the result of two factors. The first was that none of the Arab states, least of all Egypt, perceived Britain's demands to be so modest. The second was the corrosive issue of Palestine. The first of these factors was largely ignored; the second was the subject of increasingly anguished comment and analysis.

During the late 1930s, the *Round Table*, under the influence of Coupland, had briefly supported the proposals of the Peel Commission for the partition of Palestine. After 1945, under the influence of Altrincham and Nevill Barbour (a trenchant critic of Zionism), such a policy was decisively rejected.³ Revulsion towards Zionist terrorism was undoubtedly an important factor; so too was the belief that a small Jewish state would be economically and militarily vulnerable, and likely to lead to the displacement of larger numbers of Middle Eastern Jews than it could itself absorb. Above all, there was the wider context of Anglo-Arab relations, and the fact that Arab (and indeed Asian) opinion regarded Palestine as a

¹ [Harold Beeley,] "The Empire and the Arab East", *RT*, March 1945, pp 137-42. Altrincham put similar conclusions to the Colonial Office in September 1945: W R Louis, *Imperialism at Bay* (Oxford, 1977), pp 49-52.

² Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary* (London, 1983), p 113 and *passim*.

³ See Barbour's *Nisi Dominus: A Study of the Palestine Controversy* (London, 1948). For Barbour's influence, see Morrah to Curtis, 23 April 1952, RT Papers c 865, fol 148.

test of Britain's goodwill.¹ In Altrincham's view, not even American support for Zionism could weigh against such considerations: "the Empire cannot afford to allow its relations with the Arab world to be seriously prejudiced by any other . . . interest".²

The *Round Table* supported the creation of "a democratic State of Palestine, with an Arab majority", as part of a wider federation encompassing Trans-jordan, Syria and the Lebanon. The Zionists should be left to "make the best terms they could".³ Caroe continued to advocate such a solution even after the announcement of Britain's intention to resign the Mandate, and the United Nations' vote in favour of partition.⁴

The manner of Britain's departure from Palestine was to many observers ignominious. To Barbour it was "the only honourable course", given that it was impossible to fulfil Britain's pledges to both the Arab and the Zionist communities. In his view, indeed, Britain's action would win her "the friendship of the Middle East as a whole".⁵

The Colonial Empire

By 1949, Britain had been forced to concede Dominion status to Ceylon and full independence to Burma; Malaya was in the grip of a costly guerilla war; and local politicians elsewhere were making significant inroads into

1 [Altrincham,] "Palestine: Confusion, Fear and Hope", *RT*, Sept 1946, pp 313-22; [Caroe,] "Palestine in Asia", *RT*, June 1948, pp 643-48.

2 [Altrincham,] "The Empire and the Middle East", *RT*, Dec 1945, pp 26-34.

3 [Barbour,] "Resigning the Mandate", *RT*, Dec 1947, pp 448-54.

4 [Caroe,] "Palestine in Asia", *RT*, June 1948, pp 643-48.

5 [Barbour,] "Resigning the Mandate", *RT*, Dec 1947, pp 448-54.

British power. The Empire, surely, was in terminal decline.

This was not how it appeared to the Round Tablers. The latter had long regarded Britain's Asian colonies, and especially India, as being in a class apart from those in Africa and the Caribbean. All were in the same constitutional "procession", but "great distances separate the van from the rear".¹ There was little reason to expect an immediate "knock-on" effect. Indeed, Britain's Asian decolonisation was cited as a warning against the too-hasty concession of political structures which could then be turned against British rule.²

Far from being characterised by defeatism, the Round Tablers' attitude to empire in Africa and the Caribbean underwent a revival during and immediately after the war.³ In this they were led by Lord Hailey, whose *African Survey* had rapidly become a "bible" in Colonial Office circles.⁴ John Cell has pointed out that Hailey's ascendancy at the Colonial Office was relatively short-lived.⁵ His influence over the Round Table was more lasting. He wrote at least one *Round Table* article himself, and arranged authors for others. Differences of emphasis opened up in the late 1940s, especially between Hailey and Curtis, but on the whole the

¹ [Hailey,] "The Future of the Colonies", *RT*, Dec 1942, p 9.

² See, eg, Hailey's speech in *Hansard (Lords)*, 5th Series, Vol CXXXIV (20 Dec 1944), cols 465-71.

³ As was the case in Britain generally: see J A Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1982).

⁴ A H M Kirk-Greene, Introduction to Hailey, *Native Administration and Political Development in British Tropical Africa* (Liechtenstein, 1979), p viii.

⁵ J W Cell, *Hailey* (Cambridge, 1992), p 295.

latter acknowledged Hailey's authority on colonial questions.' Malcolm, Brand and Grigg appear to have held views very similar to Hailey's. The *Round Table* magazine was certainly consistent in putting forward such views.

Hailey himself stressed that his colonial philosophy was not an attack on British policy, but an extrapolation of it. He was "surprised to discover" the strength of popular feeling "that there is something inherently wrong - if not indeed discreditable - in the possession of Colonies".² He deplored the tendency "to overlook much that has been achieved", and he frequently highlighted the liberal-humanitarian continuities in British colonial thinking.³

As Roger Louis wrote, Hailey was "a godsend for the defence of the British Empire": an "Englishman who spoke to Americans with greatest authority and persuasiveness".⁴ A large part of the reason was that he spoke in the right language: partnership, progress to self-government, welfare and development. Hailey emphasised the latter in particular: the need for a "far more effective intervention on our part to promote [colonial] development".⁵

The new emphasis which Hailey and the *Round Table* placed on colonial

¹ See, eg, Curtis to Morrah, 17 June 1949, Brand Papers, box 171.

² [Hailey,] "Future of the Colonies", *RT*, Dec 1942, pp 8-16. The *Round Table's* solution was a massive increase in Imperial "education", from primary school upwards, as outlined in three articles by F B Malim entitled "Education in Empire": *RT*, Sept 1942, June 1943 and Dec 1944.

³ Hailey, *Britain and her Dependencies* (London, 1943), p 8.

⁴ V R Louis, *Imperialism at Bay* (Oxford, 1977), pp 12, 10.

⁵ [Hailey,], "Future of the Colonies", *RT*, Dec 1942, p 12.

development was an undoubted advance. (It was also of potentially great advantage to Britain itself, by facilitating the supply of dollar-free primary products; but this was a point which the *Round Table* was keen to play down.¹) There was a corollary, however: "that political advance will be an illusion, and may be a danger, unless it rests on a firmer foundation of economic and social achievement".² In effect, Hailey had identified a new obstacle to colonial self-government: economic backwardness. Especially was this the case as financial self-sufficiency was deemed to be an indispensable condition of self-government.³

Another aspect of Hailey's philosophy which deserves emphasis is his opposition to the idea of internationalising the supervision, and especially the administration, of the colonies. This was an issue on which a number of Round Tablers felt strongly, as they had done in similar circumstances at the end of the First World War.⁴ Again, the main danger was believed to come from America. The new emphasis on colonial development in British policy was thought to provide a convincing argument against such a possibility. Indeed, the 1940 Welfare and Development Act

"had for the first time envisaged the Colonies as an integral part of the Commonwealth; and the guiding principle of policy was now to be found in our determination to equip them to take their part as members of that society of free and advanced peoples".⁵

¹ "A Hundred Millions for the Colonies", *RT*, Sept 1947, pp 356-61.

² Hailey, *World Thought on the Colonial Question* (Johannesburg, 1946), p 8.

³ "Self-government is not self-government if someone else pays all the bills": [G N N Nunn,] "Federation in the British Caribbean", *RT*, June 1949, pp 234-39.

⁴ See, eg, Malcolm to Macadam, 20 May 1942, *RT Papers* c 862, fol 54.

⁵ "The International Interest in Colonies", *RT*, Dec 1944, pp 24-30.

The *Round Table* was satisfied that the trusteeship scheme eventually adopted by the United Nations would prove no more than a minor inconvenience to British colonial administration.¹

On the central question of colonial political development, Hailey and the *Round Table* deserve credit for the pressure they applied for an acceleration of the process of indigenising colonial administrative services.² Here again, however, there was a corollary: that the insufficient extent of such indigenisation was an obstacle to constitutional advance.³ The Round Tablers also envisaged a protracted period of constitution-making, grouping colonies into regional federations, before some important aspects of self-government could be transferred.⁴

Hailey further muddied the waters of colonial political development by casting doubt upon the appropriateness of the Westminster model in non-European (not just settler and "plural") societies. This was the main issue on which he and Curtis clashed. As Curtis wrote, "I rather feel that when [Hailey] talks of self-government for tropical Africa he means something rather different from what I mean".⁵ Hailey's ambivalence towards the Westminster model was closely tied up with his fear of premature political concessions: "it would be a misfortune if . . . the present few abdicated in favour of another group of very few less likely

1 "The Trusteeship System", *RT*, March 1946, pp 127-32.

2 [Sir C Jeffries,] "A Service in Transition", *RT*, Sept 1946, pp 356-58.

3 *Ibid*; Hailey, "Post-War Changes in Africa", *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol CIII (1955), pp 579-90.

4 Hailey, *World Thought on the Colonial Question* (Johannesburg, 1946).

5 Curtis to Maj L Hastings, 9 April 1947, Hailey Papers, Rhodes House, MSS Brit Emp s343.

than themselves to advance the interests of the many".¹ Instead, Hailey breathed new life into "indirect rule" as the basis for a more complex and therefore more protracted constitutional experiment.² On this point the *Round Table* followed his lead rather than Curtis's, suggesting in 1949 "that the pace of political development in West Africa is altogether too fast for stability or real democratic progress".³

While Britain's colonial rule suffered a number of setbacks during and immediately after the Second World War, the Round Tablers clearly did not regard those setbacks as indicating a process over which Britain had lost control. In Asia Britain still retained a foothold. In Africa and the Caribbean the colonial Empire had weathered the storm relatively well. At the very least, there was still room for manoeuvre.

Crown and Citizenship

The Statute of Westminster left certain elements of Commonwealth constitutional unity intact: namely, common allegiance to the Crown and (partly as a consequence) an underlying common citizenship. Both came under attack in the late 1940s: the first as a result of India's desire for a republican constitution, the second as a result of legislation introduced by Britain and the "white" Dominions.

Despite "a certain formal illogic" in the local privileges and obligations pertaining to British subjecthood, the *Round Table* believed

1 Hailey, *Britain and her Dependencies* (London, 1943), p 44.

2 Hailey, *Native Administration* (Liechtenstein, 1979 edn), *passim*.

3 [Lord Milverton,] "Indirect Rule in West Africa", *RT*, March 1949, pp 125-30.

that the system "had, and has, great advantages".

"It enabled citizens of different parts of the Commonwealth to intermarry without problems of losing or changing nationality It fostered the growth and work of unofficial all-Commonwealth association It made possible official and military collaboration. It opened the door of opportunity in the public services of the United Kingdom - civil, diplomatic, colonial, military - and in the professions, too It was of great importance in the working of the diplomatic and consular system abroad."

Canada first called into question the continuing existence of this system, by its legislation defining Canadian citizenship, passed in 1946. But it was Britain which delivered a "fatal injury" to the system, by its passage of the British Nationality Act in 1948.¹ Because of the hurried manner in which the British government introduced this legislation the *Round Table* could do no more than protest at a fait accompli. Nevertheless, it was difficult not to draw the conclusion that in the eyes of British politicians "the effectiveness of the British Commonwealth as a corporate association . . . is not so supreme an interest".²

The debate on the position of the Crown raised equally fundamental issues, although in this case the arguments for retaining the existing system had to be weighed against the more serious consequences of inflexibility.

The speed of Britain's withdrawal from India had the one advantage that it allowed the creation of successor states by an amendment of the 1935 Act, rather than by waiting for new constitutions to be agreed. Temporarily at least, India and Pakistan accepted Dominion status within the Commonwealth. Their right to decide whether or not to continue this

1 [Hodson,] "The British Subject", *RT*, June 1948, pp 655-63.

2 [Morrah,] "Half a Conference", *RT*, Sept 1948, pp 731-35.

arrangement was not disputed.¹

India's desire for a republican form of government seemed to many observers to provide an insurmountable obstacle to Commonwealth membership. Lord Altrincham declared himself unequivocally in favour of "consolidating our system in its present form", rather than "exploring the terra incognita of a Crownless Commonwealth".² Hodson later recalled that this was also the view of some other "older members".³ It was not the view of the younger members, nor of the *Round Table* magazine. Indeed, the *Round Table* was keen to point out the enormous advantages of Indian membership of the Commonwealth - both to India itself and to the other members.⁴ In an influential article published in *International Affairs*, Mansergh argued that Eire's status after 1937 provided a precedent for India.⁵ Similarly, Hodson emphasised the "pragmatic" nature of the Commonwealth, and he suggested that in some circumstances "the existing recognised symbolism may . . . actually work against the cohesion of the Commonwealth".⁶

The acceptance of republican India's continued membership of the Commonwealth, by the "practical, indeed traditional, resource of saying in

1 [G A Johnson,] "India: Division of the Indian Empire", *RT*, Sept 1947, pp 370-77.

2 [Altrincham,] "Episodes of the Month", *National Review*, Vol CXXXII (Jan 1949), pp 3-7.

3 Hodson, "The Round Table, 1910-1981", *RT*, Oct 1981, p 327. It is likely that Hodson was here referring to Malcolm and Brand.

4 See, eg, [Geoffrey Tyson,] "India: An Enigmatic Future", *RT*, June 1948, pp 690-95.

5 Mansergh, "Implications of Eire's Relationship with the British Commonwealth of Nations", *IA*, Vol 24 (Jan 1948), pp 1-8.

6 [Hodson,] "The British Subject", *RT*, June 1948, p 656.

effect that no crisis exists", was welcomed by the *Round Table*.¹ Mansergh later observed that the "period of self-destructive rigidity on this issue" had been ended none too early; and that an earlier decision might have saved Burma and Ireland for the Commonwealth.² Although this might have been in the minds of some members in 1949, Morrah provided a convincing reason otherwise, at least in the case of Ireland: "for there the republic has been set up for the sake of separation from the United Kingdom, rather than separation endured for the sake of the republic".³

The London Declaration made a special case for India; but it is unlikely that the Round Tablers believed that such a distinction could be maintained. Nevertheless, the only real cause of worry at the time was South Africa. The secretary of the South African group interpreted the Declaration as giving Malan the "opportunity of having one's cake and eating it".⁴ On the other hand, as Morrah argued, "the achievement of a South African republic outside the Commonwealth, following the model of Ireland, has not been made easier"; the effect of the London Declaration might therefore be "to split [Malan's] own party".⁵

The link between monarchy and Commonwealth was by no means broken. Indeed Morrah was keen to make the monarchy more of a Commonwealth, and less of a purely British, institution, suggesting at various times a peripatetic Court, a greater representation of Commonwealth citizens in the

1 [Morrah,] "Crown Without Sceptre", *RT*, June 1949, pp 203-07.

2 Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (London, 1982 edn), Vol 2, p 160.

3 [Morrah,] "Crown Without Sceptre", p 205.

4 Kidd to Morrah, 2 May 1949, (SA file,), *RT* (O) Papers.

5 [Morrah,] "Crown Without Sceptre", pp 205-06.

royal entourage, and a Commonwealth (including Indian) rôle in the Coronation ceremonies.¹ Common allegiance clearly remained an important bond between Britain and the "old" Dominions. Even in those countries with republican constitutions, the Queen's rôle as Head of the Commonwealth remained a symbol of "the sense of belonging together", and one which could help to strengthen that sense.² Nevertheless, contributors to subsequent issues of the *Round Table* recognised fully the extent to which the decision of 1949, in conjunction with the earlier decision to admit Asian member-states, had transformed the nature of the Commonwealth.³

- 1 See Morrah's series of articles "The Coronation and the Commonwealth": *RT*, Sept 1952, Dec 1952, Sept 1953, Dec 1953.
- 2 [Hodson,] "The Future of the Commonwealth", *RT*, Sept 1956, p 221.
- 3 See, eg, [Sydney group,] "The Commonwealth: an Australian View", *RT*, Sept 1960, pp 351-53.