

**THE ROLES OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND THE
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT DURING THE 'PHONEY WAR',
SEPTEMBER 1939 TO MAY 1940.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a detailed study of the interaction between the Conservative party and the National government during the nine months of the 'phoney war'. It concentrates on the potential strength of Chamberlain's position and the Conservative party at the outbreak of war. The Conservative party entered the Second World War full of confidence. The party dominated British politics at a national level. However, Chamberlain's failure to widen the government damaged his credibility as a wartime leader when Labour's leaders rejected his offer of key seats in the war cabinet of the National government. This thesis sets out to analyse to what extent the Conservative dominated National government was serious about co-operation with Labour and the Liberals. It will also seek to consider the way in which Chamberlain sought to construct an efficient working war cabinet and how his failure to do so undermined his position as Prime Minister. Chamberlain wanted to fight the war and believed that Nazism had to be destroyed, but those who sort to expand the theatre of war and those who wanted a peace accord with Nazi Germany weakened his position as Prime Minister and helped create the perception that he was not a serious wartime leader.

*To my parents, Anthony and Heather
Thank you for your support*

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The views expressed in this thesis and any mistakes are entirely my own.

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Abbreviations

CA	Conservative Association
CAB	Cabinet Office Papers
CCO	Conservative Central Office
CPA	Conservative Party Archive
CRD	Conservative Research Department
EIA	Empire Industries Association
FO	Foreign Office
INF	Ministry of Information Papers
LPA	Labour Party Archive
MSS	Manuscript Source
NC	Neville Chamberlain
PREM	Prime Minister's Papers
PRO	Public Record Office

INTRODUCTION

After a time-consuming effort to keep Britain safe from another European War, Neville Chamberlain bowed to the unavoidable. The German invasion of Poland, launched at dawn on 1 September, led to the British and French declarations of war on Germany issued on 3 September. The delays in declaring war were taken as proof that the appeasers were trying for another Munich. The reality was different: the delay had been necessary because of the British government's desire to declare war in unison with the French and not because it was giving serious consideration to Mussolini's proposal of an international conference. It seems clear that Neville Chamberlain had made his mind up that war could not be avoided. The declaration was determined but there was an appearance of indecision due to the need to declare war with the French.¹ Chamberlain, who had been British Prime Minister since May 1937, presided over the British declaration. For him the commencement of conflict was a personal and bitter blow, after his stubborn attempts to reach a deal with the European dictators. When he spoke to the House of Commons after the declaration, he made no attempt to disguise his feelings: 'Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in my public life has crashed into ruins'.² However, Chamberlain was unwilling to resign the Premiership and the fact that Chamberlain persisted as Prime Minister and was determined to see the war through says a lot

¹ For historical analysis of the British declaration of war see R.A.C. Parker, 'The British Government and the coming of war with Germany', in M.D.R. Foot (ed.), *War and Society*, London, 1973, pp.1-16.

² *Hansard*: House of Commons Debates, vol 350, col 297, 3 Sept. 1939.

about Chamberlain's strength of character. With nearly 425 Conservative seats to Labour's 160, Chamberlain's position seemed invulnerable. It soon became apparent, however, that there were elements within the Conservative party who were less than satisfied with the National government's prosecution of the war effort. Eight months into the war, after a parliamentary revolt following the collapse of Finland and Norway, Chamberlain resigned. The following day the Second World War began in earnest in Western Europe when German forces invaded the Low Countries and France.

The period before the start of the 'real war' is often described as 'the phoney war' or 'the bore war'.³ Before starting the first chapter it will be necessary to place the thesis in context; to examine both the historiography of the 'phoney war', the Conservative party and the National government and my justifications of the need for such a study.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY

'The phoney war' is often consigned to the margins of history. Conventional thought proceeds that it is either tacked on to the end of studies of the 1930s and appeasement, or is it treated as a prelude to the 'real conflict'.⁴ The period actually suffers from something of an image problem, especially when contrasted with the dramatic events

³ The phrase 'phoney war' was American and it only came into British circulation later. At the time in Britain, the period was known as the 'bore war' or 'strange war'. See A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p.57. In Nazi Germany it was known as the 'Sitzkrieg'.

⁴ See, for example, M. Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, Cambridge, University Press, 1975. And W. Murray, *The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1936-39*, Princeton, University Press, 1984.

of the months and years that followed it. Rarely is it treated as a distinct period of history and yet it deserves intense scrutiny. The period, which is known as the ‘phoney war’ because of the failure of the allied forces to engage the Nazi enemy, was to prove crucial in the fall of the Chamberlain administration. The challenge for an historian writing about this period is not deciding what to include but rather choosing what to exclude.

Between 1931 and 1940 Britain was administered by a National government.⁵ Begun in August 1931 as a temporary measure to fill the political vacuum created by the disintegration of the second Labour government, the National government was consolidated into a regime by the 1931 general election. This achieved permanency with the electoral mandates of 1931 and 1935. The regime, with a few changes to its party composition, stayed the same until May 1940. The advent of war put paid to another election, which Chamberlain had intended to call.

The Conservative party set the agenda for domestic and international politics in the 1930s to a quite remarkable extent. The consensus today is largely that the National government was a sham. No one at the time expressed regret when the regime had gone and by the end of the Second World War those tainted by association were, with the possible exception of ‘Rab’ Butler, either literally or politically dead. With Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan having enhanced their reputations by distancing themselves from the regime, the way was clear for Winston Churchill on his part and

⁵G.R. Searle, *Country before Party: Coalition and the idea of ‘National Government’ in Modern Britain 1885-1987*. London, Longman, 1995. Searle cites other examples of this form of government. Coalitions, multi-party groupings and National Governments have frequently held power. Examples include most importantly the Coalition ministries of the First World War under Asquith and Lloyd George.

Labour politicians on theirs to condemn the National government of the 1930s, which has assigned them to the respective wilderness. The historian Charles Loch Mowatt wrote in 1955 of the National government as one 'long diminuendo' which from its triumphant beginnings 'shambled its unimaginative way to its fall'.⁶ The turn of phrase is more reminiscent of Churchill, in its description of the Baldwin-Macdonald axis. Whether the Churchill-Attlee axis of the 1940s and 1950s was a better thing, it certainly was in a position to exploit the built-in negativity about the regime that had been defeated. Those excluded from the National Government, like Winston Churchill wrote its early history and exploited its most unconstructive points.⁷

In terms of historiography, the Conservative party's and National government's relationship with the 'phoney war' has been analysed from four different perspectives: from the ministerial angle;⁸ assessing the role of a particular individual; examining the role of the so-called anti-appeasers;⁹ from the view of the local constituency organisations.¹⁰ In the main, the historiography of the 'phoney war' has been

⁶ C.L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars*, London, 1955, p.443, Cited in N. Smart, *The National Government*, London, Longman, 1999, p.3.

⁷ See Churchill's *The Gathering Storm* and Cato's *Guilty Men* as examples of this.

⁸ The number of works that can be cited is innumerable, Here are a few more recent publications, David Carlton, *Anthony Eden: A Political Biography*, London, Allen Lane, 1981; R.R. James, *Anthony Eden*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986; J. Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1993, Andrew Roberts, *The Holy Fox: The Life of Lord Halifax*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991. D. Dutton, *Simon: A Political Biography*, London, Arnold, 1992.

⁹ N. Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers: Conservative Opposition to Appeasement during the 1930s*, London, 1971. A recent study by Dr. Larry Witherell of Lord Salisbury's Watching Committee examined the role of the Anti-Appeasers during wartime. It will be a forthcoming article in the *English Historical Review*.

¹⁰ N.J. Crowson, *Facing Fascism: The Conservative Party and the European Dictators, 1935-1940*, London, Routledge, 1997.

exclusively concerned with 'elite' history.¹¹ In contrast, historians like Professor Ramsden and Dr. Crowson have adopted a 'total concept'. These studies have demonstrated that when national archives (such as the papers of leading Conservative figures) are combined with a comprehensive analysis of the surviving regional and constituency records, the historian is able to produce a more balanced account than was previously possible.¹² This has helped remove the 'myth' created by the later leadership about divisions in the party. After 1940 historical interest concerning the phoney war era has emphasised the divisions within the party, distinguishing between appeasers and anti-appeasers. This has conveniently helped from the perspective of the post-war leadership keen to foster the myth of rebellion. Chamberlain's fall from power has received a certain amount of analysis.¹³ Some of this analysis has too readily assumed that Chamberlain's fall from power was inevitable. Paul Addison has pointed to Chamberlain's inability to harness the extra parliamentary dimension, in this particular instance, the trade unions, which encouraged dissatisfaction with the prosecution of the war.¹⁴ Historians in the 1980s and 1990s have been affected by the

¹¹ Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, 1975.

¹² John Ramsden was in fact the first historian to encompass the local perspective into the narrative of the appeasement years in *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, London, Longman, 1978. This volume was a contribution to the Longmans History of the Conservative party. In recent years, Ramsden has completed two volumes using the same methodological approach on the post 1940 period, taking the history up to 1975. See also, J. Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden*, 1995, and *The Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath*, 1996.

¹³ J. S. Rasmussen, 'Party discipline in wartime: The downfall of the Chamberlain Government', *Journal of Politics*, 32,2 1970, pp.379-406; K. Jeffreys, 'May 1940: The downfall of Neville Chamberlain', *Parliamentary History*, 10, 3 1991, pp.363-378.

¹⁴ P. Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War*, London, Cape, 1975.

reconsideration of Britain's involvement within the Second World War. The fact that Britain had stood alone against Hitler for a considerable time was credit to the nation. However, historians have considered that perhaps the cost was too high.¹⁵ The possibility of peace did not end with the declaration of war over Poland in September 1939. Hitler was dismayed by the British declaration of war, telling Alfred Rosenberg that he 'couldn't grasp' what Chamberlain was 'really after'. 'Even if England secured a victory', the real victors would be the United States, Japan and Russia.¹⁶ Revisionist historians such as John Charmley and Alan Clark have argued that this analysis was all too prescient. Britain's victory, they argue, was an insincere one. What if the war had gone ahead in 1939 but Britain had subsequently sought peace with Germany? The idea is that Germany would have spent itself fighting against Soviet Russia, leaving the British Empire intact, the Conservatives in power and the British economy unimpaired.¹⁷ Such a notion is controversial and assumes that Hitler's peace offers to Britain were sincere.

The contrasting approaches to the historiography of the 'phoney war' call into question the uses of different sources and the reliability of those sources to enhance our understanding of the period. For example, there have been many debates about the usefulness of material contained in the Public Record Office. It has been stated that 'an excessive and narrow concentration of state papers could cloud or bias an

¹⁵ K. Robbins, *Appeasement*, Oxford, Blackwell. 1988, p.10.

¹⁶ A. Roberts and N. Ferguson, 'Hitler's England'. What if Germany had Invaded Britain in May 1940?' In Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, London, Papermac, 1998, p.292.

¹⁷ As argued by J. Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, 1993.

understanding'.¹⁸ The shortcomings of this approach are highlighted by the emergence in the late sixties and early seventies of 'instant history', written to publishers' deadlines and often based upon the latest release of public records without any serious collation to other sources. This was one of the negative aspects of this redirection. A number of historians have been guilty of this approach.¹⁹ The problem with the overwhelming amount of evidence in the PRO is twofold. The first, still practiced by many political biographers and some historians is to simply ignore the PRO. This greatly impoverishes their work. They deny themselves knowledge of ministers' private remarks during the determination of policy, which can be counter balanced with frequently misleading public statements and private conferences. They are less able to judge the blends of political and official influence on policy. The outcome of this is that political and constitutional myths survive and are reinforced. This was certainly true after the war, when some of the myths about the Chamberlain administration were created. A second response is simply to sample the most easily available classes of records at the PRO and ignore the most obscure. This is acceptable but this can only lead the historian to rely on previously used sources and fails to dig deeper. The most informed response is to make a prior, informed survey of all relevant sources (not just in the PRO) and then determine the validity of all of

¹⁸ R. Lowe, 'Archival Report: Plumbing New depths: Contemporary Historians and the Public Record Office,' *20th Century British History*, 12,3, 1996. p.239.

¹⁹ C. Barnett based a number of his recent works on material gleaned from the PRO. These works include: *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a great Nation*, London, 1986 and *The Lost Victory, British Dreams, British Realities 1945-1950*, London, 1995. Another recent example is that of Richard Lamb in his book *The Macmillan Years: The Emerging Truth*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995. In the introduction he states that 'the release by the Public Record Office on the 1 January 1994 under the thirty year rule of the final archives relating to the Macmillan Government enables historians to write about the truth'.

them. However, for historians who are seeking to understand the dimensions of policy making, there can be no more important an archive. The great advantage of government records is that, correctly used, they can reveal the complete range of influences to which the government was subjected to at any one time.

The reduction in the 'closed period' for official records also encouraged a spate of biographies and edited diaries based upon private archives.²⁰ This has provided an additional perspective on the 'phoney war' era. In 1967 the diaries of a relatively obscure Member of Parliament, Sir Henry Channon were published.²¹ At the time of publication the value of the diaries to the historian were underestimated, partly as a result of the obscurity of Channon. It was only after A.J.P. Taylor publicly applied the adjective 'classic' to them that they became an essential source for historians.²² Of course Channon was important. He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to 'Rab' Butler who was Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office between 1938 and 1941. He was a devoted 'Chamberlainite', even after Chamberlain's fall from power. However, it should be pointed out that Channon is better remembered as a frivolous socialite than political soothsayer. His information was seldom correct and his prejudices ran deep. The recently published Headlam diaries edited by Stuart Ball, which cover the 'phoney war' period has added an additional perspective in our

²⁰ There are many recently published diaries dealing with the 'Phoney War' period. They include, J. Harvey (ed.), *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937-1939*, London, Collins, 1970; N. Nicolson (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Harold Nicolson*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967. More recently S. Ball (ed.), *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Attlee: The Headlam Diaries, 1935-1951*, Camden, 5th Series, 9, 1999.

²¹ R.R. James (ed.), *'CHIPS': The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967.

²² *Ibid*, p.7, preface to the 1993 edition written by R.R. James.

understanding of the period.²³ As an historical source, the main value of the Headlam diaries lies in the account they give of political opinions behind the scenes in the House of Commons. The official record of the debates may contain the text of the speech, but it cannot capture the atmosphere in which it was delivered or reveal what MPs thought about it afterwards. Headlam perhaps more revealingly than Channon records the gossip of the lobbies and the smoking room, their fluctuating views of reputations, potential leaders and election prospects. The Headlam diaries provide a remarkable insight into the mood of the Conservative party, both in and outside parliament.²⁴

Memoirs I have treated with reservation. They are often written to justify the career and attainments of the author. Certainly from the perspective of the phoney war period, memoirs are numerous.²⁵ However, winners not losers will write their memoirs and certainly from an historian's point of view the case for the defence of Chamberlain's wartime record is under-developed. The ideal situation for the researcher is when a diary remains in bulk, is deposited to a University library and a student can confirm or embellish some entry in the published selection that may have caught the eye.

Political biographies have been useful. In particular, Andrew Roberts' acclaimed

²³ Ball (ed.), *Headlam Diaries*.

²⁴ During the 'phoney war' period, Cuthbert Headlam was not an MP in the House of Commons. He had lost his Durham seat in 1935. However, he was in contact with sitting members of the House.

²⁵ These include: J. Simon, *Retrospect*, London, Collins, 1952, Earl Winterton, *Orders of the Day*, London, Cassell, 1953, Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, London, Collins, 1953, Lord Halifax, *The Fullness of Days*, London, Cassell, 1957.

biography of Lord Halifax, *The Holy Fox*.²⁶ Certain books illuminate particular aspects of a period and yet stand as worthy histories on their own; Paul Addison's *The Road to 1945*, Richard Cockett's *Twilight of Truth* and John Ramsden's *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*.

THE THESIS

The principal primary sources for my research have come from a number of private papers. At Birmingham University of course there are the Chamberlain and Eden papers. The weekly letters to Chamberlain's sisters, Hilda and Ida, are both very personal and political. They reveal to the historian Chamberlain's description of his intentions and justifications of his actions as late as 1940.²⁷ Many historians over the last twenty years have benefited from using the Chamberlain papers, especially the letters to his sisters. I make no apology for continuing this tradition. As well as using familiar sources such as the Chamberlain, Eden and Butler papers, I have tried to use sources, which are less familiar to provide some conceptualisation of views which, although they date from the 1930s, are relevant, I believe, to the period of study. The Brabourne collection at the India Office Library in London, now part of the British Library, was of assistance for me in understanding Conservatism before the war. The regular correspondence, which passed between 'Rab' Butler and Brabourne from 1933 to Brabourne's death in 1939, provides valuable source material for understanding the politics of both Britain and its empire in the 1930s.

²⁶ A. Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991.

²⁷ R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War*, London, Macmillan, 1993, p. 10.

The Conservative party archives at the Bodleian were most useful in looking at party policy at the outbreak of war, in analysing the views towards an accommodation with Labour. Also the regular correspondence between Central Office and the local associations reveal concerns within the Conservative party about the conflict between the 'moral' of helping the war effort and that of assisting the more partisan efforts of helping the party. However, the Bodleian has its limitations, as some of the pre-1940 correspondence between Central Office and the constituencies has been lost. Joseph Ball, a former director of the Conservative Research Department (CRD), destroyed much of the pre 1940 CRD archive. The historian can make up for the shortcomings in lack of material by looking in other areas. When examining the issue of cross party co-operation I found some of the most useful material could be found in the Ministry of Information files at the PRO. For Labour's response to Chamberlain's overtures I have used published primary sources such as the Dalton diaries and various monographs relating to Labour party history.²⁸ There was not adequate time to consult the Labour party archives in Manchester. I would suggest that Opposition archives could be consulted as part of further research on this topic to view Chamberlain's coalition kite flying, from the other side.

In examining the issue of pro-appeasement in the party I visited the Bristol Records Office to look at the Culverwell papers. The Bristol West Conservative association continued to function during wartime so the relevant papers still survive dealing with Culverwell's reprimand for pacifism. Many local associations ceased to

²⁸ B.Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918-1940*, London, Cape, 1986. S. Brooke, *Labour's War: The Labour Party and the Second World War*, Oxford Historical Monographs, 1992.

continue during wartime. This is why I have not undertaken a fuller examination of Conservative local association material. In short, there is very little. I have relied on secondary sources for references to local association minutes.²⁹ I did attempt to plough for more information on Cyril Culverwell's views by writing to his immediate family for access to his private papers. Regrettably that access was denied.

This thesis is about the Conservative party and the National government during the 'Phoney war'. It is divided conveniently into two chapters, the first deals with the Conservative party, the second, the National government. The first chapter attempts to analyse the state and strength of the party at the outbreak of war. It goes on to argue about the strength of Chamberlain's position as Prime Minister. It strives to focus purely on the activity of the party and not the government. However, as often is the case, themes overlap between chapters one and two. I have tried to avoid the chapters being read as two separate entities. There is a lack of chronology as I have tried to focus on particular sub themes which are relevant to each chapter; for example, Chamberlain's attempts to construct a war cabinet focus very much on the government approach which is important to Chapter two. The central theme of this thesis is that there is clear evidence to suggest that Chamberlain was serious about including Labour in a wartime coalition government. The evidence for this can be found in letters to his sisters, Ida and Hilda. His thinking on the composition of the wartime government can also be revealed by another document. The slip of paper is undated but clearly from the days before the outbreak of war. His known desire to bring the Labour party into government, although as a junior partner, is revealed by a

²⁹ N.J. Crowson, *Facing Fascism: The Conservative Party and the European Dictators, 1935-1940*, 1997.

list of ‘possible places for Labour’.³⁰ This is a document that has not previously been remarked upon by historians (with the exception of Richard Mee who was the first to highlight this point in his own PhD thesis).³¹ I have tried to balance this evidence against Chamberlain’s personal dislike of the Labour party and his concerns about fighting on a ‘total war’ economy, which would mean the introduction of large amounts of socialist legislation and would go against Tory principles of laissez-faire and a balanced budget.

There are omissions in this thesis and some issues I have passed over in silence, for example, relations between the trade unions and the National government. As stated earlier if it had been possible to conduct more research I would have been able to look in more detail at relations with the Liberal and Labour parties. However, it must be stated that my specific intention was to examine how the war impacted upon the Conservative party and the National government and the perceptions, true or false, created about Chamberlain’s handling of the war.

³⁰ Chamberlain MSS: Undated slip of paper, NC 2/29/37. This must have been written around the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact, August 31st 1939.

³¹ Mee, R., ‘The Foreign Policy of the Chamberlain Wartime Administration, September 1939-May 1940,’ unpublished University of Birmingham Ph.D., 1998.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AT WAR, SEPTEMBER

1939 TO MAY 1940

INTRODUCTION

In the early months of the war there was a re-newed sense of party unity, in part facilitated by the return to office of Churchill and Eden. However, the disappointments of ‘the phoney war’, in which Britain stood passively by whilst Poland and then Finland were destroyed, inflicted serious damage upon the party’s prestige. This chapter sets out to analyse the state and strength of the Conservative party at the outbreak of war and asks to what extent the Conservative dominated National government was serious about co-operation with Labour and the Liberals. It will also seek to question the extent to which the Labour party threatened the Conservative majority at the outbreak of war.

THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

The Conservative party entered the Second World War in 1939 full of confidence, which reflected its own recent history and electoral success. The party dominated British politics at a ‘national’ level. It had won parliamentary majorities in five of the last seven General Elections. No other party had secured a one-party majority since 1906; but in 1924, 1931 and 1935 Conservative MPs had taken two thirds of the seats in the House of Commons, whilst in the two elections of the 1930s the party had secured more than half of the popular vote. This was to be the last occasion in the 20th century in which a single party was able to do so. ‘Rab’ Butler outlined the view

shared by many Conservatives.

What I feel about politics at present is that the opposition are so weak as not to be dangerous. There is no alternative government in sight. All the by-elections have gone our way and this does not mean trouble in the near future, rather the reverse.¹

At a local level this dominance was less secure: the London County Council had been under Labour control since 1934, Labour was gaining ground at the level of local government and several other industrial cities were also Labour dominated and it was still the only party in most urban coalfield districts.

One of the interesting features of Conservative politics in the 1930s and it is a feature that is reflected in the 'Twilight War' period, is the supremacy of the party leadership which had been established by Baldwin and Chamberlain in 1931. The party leadership after the formation of the National government was never again to be pressured either from the backbenches or the Press Barons.² There were battles over particular policies, unemployment pay, India and foreign policy, but this only temporarily caused upset to the regime's stability and purpose.³ The political generation that included Chamberlain had been brought into the Bonar Law/Baldwin Ministry of 1922-23. They had steered the party through the period to 1939 and the

¹ Brabourne MSS: letter from Butler to Brabourne, 1 July 1937, Eur. F. 97/12-14.

² The exception to this is the resignation of the Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare in December 1935. During the resignation debate, Baldwin had portrayed the decision as being a consummate reaction to the outcry of public opinion. Hoare's resignation was in fact the result of backbench pressure, not of public opinion.

³ J. Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden, 1940-1957*, London, Longman, 1995, pp.1-2.

older men who had returned from coalitionist exile in 1924 had died, retired or (like Churchill) been sidelined again by 1939. When Chamberlain became Prime Minister in May 1937 his cabinet contained only men who owed their posts to Baldwin or himself. Conformists like R.A. Butler moved steadily up through the ranks, in his case as junior minister at the India and Labour departments and then as Commons spokesman for the Foreign Office, prior to what would have been an easy move into the cabinet in 1940; rebels like Harold Macmillan still awaited their first government post. Indeed such was his frustration that Macmillan had given consideration to the formation of a British popular front, or 'centre party', comprising the left of the Conservatives and the right of Labour under the possible leadership of Herbert Morrison.⁴

The government in power between 1931 and 1940 is often described as 'National'. Few historians would describe it as a coalition government, with the exception of Maurice Cowling.⁵ However, it had its coalitionist aspects as it included members of both the Labour and Liberal parties.⁶ The administration was a regime that endured due to Conservative support and which was at any time subject to the Conservative veto. In short, the Conservative party was able to govern on their own and under their

⁴ N.J. Crowson, "'Much ado about nothing": Harold Macmillan and appeasement' in R. Aldous and S. Lee (eds.), *Harold Macmillan: Aspects of a Political life*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999, p. 70.

⁵ Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.1.

⁶ Those who were Labour and Liberal members of the National Government were referred to as 'National Labour' or 'National Liberal' members of the House. In the 1935 General Election the party had won the second biggest election victory ever: 54 per cent of the national vote and 432 MPs who supported the National government in a House of 615. Cited in J. Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power-A History of the Conservative Party*, London, Harper Collins, 1998, pp.284-285. At the outbreak of war there were 425 Conservative seats to Labour's 160. In the war cabinet there were two Liberal Nationals, Sir John Simon and Leslie Hore-Belisha.

own banner. They did not choose to govern alone. However, some historians and commentators have suggested that the Conservatives formed the National government in order to keep the Labour party out of office for at least a generation.⁷ This was because the party set the agenda for domestic politics in the 1920s and 1930s to a quite remarkable extent. The adherence to the Tory ranks of significant sections of the old Liberal party, first as Liberal Unionists and latterly as Liberal Nationals in the National government, enabled the party to claim to be something more than just another political grouping. Ross McKibbin has suggested that the Conservatives managed between the wars to define ‘the public interest’ in a way that suited them and then to claim it almost as their private preserve. They had an overwhelming presence in the popular press for most of the inter-war period and also in the influential new medium of newsreel; the newly arrived BBC was the most conformist of all the media and unwilling to shatter the establishment's easy assurance. With the majority of the media sharing a broad approach to what was acceptable politics, it was impossible for Labour to contest the central position in national life to which the Conservatives had assigned themselves.⁸

Paul Addison has stated that ‘the salient political fact of the last year of peace was the continuing strength and self-confidence of the Chamberlain government. They feared the power of Germany in Europe, but not the power of the opposition in domestic politics.’⁹ This strength was based on Chamberlain’s personal hold over his

⁷ N. Smart, *The National Government, 1931-1940*, London, Longman, 1998, p.2.

⁸ R. McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, p.16. See also R. Cockett, *The Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1989.

⁹ P. Addison, ‘Political Change in Britain, 1939-1940’, D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, cited in Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, London, Longman, 1978, p.369.

party; as long as he was supported by the Conservative majority in the House of Commons he need have no fear of Labour, and as long as he had the freedom to have whom he chose in government he remained absolutely in control of government policy.

Chamberlain was not closed to new ideas and approaches; the party machine was embarking on the reconstruction of its youth movement following the Fraser report. Most importantly it was developing a strong current in domestic reform when Chamberlain became Prime Minister. It was privately considering for inclusion in its next manifesto items such as extensions to pensions, which would pre-empt the Beveridge report in 1942.¹⁰ It is easy to get carried away with the failure of the Chamberlain administration's war record and the inevitability of his fall in 1940. However, that process was far from inevitable and the issue that is rarely addressed is how a man who confessed that he was 'never meant to be a war Minister',¹¹ whose leadership was founded on an 'unbroken record of failure'¹² and whose demise was predicted as soon as war began, managed to keep his Government united and remain as Prime Minister for as long as he did.

CHAMBERLAIN'S CONSERVATISM

Chamberlain did not call himself a Conservative when leading his party. He did not hold views that could be called mainstream Conservative. In his background, he had

¹⁰ J. Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department since 1929*, London, Longman, 1980, pp 90-92.

¹¹ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 10 Sept. 1939. NC 18/1/1116.

¹² Margesson MSS: Cited in 'Chamberlain a Candid Portrait', MRGN, 1/5. This is an eight and a half page document. The author may in fact be Duff Cooper and is unlikely to be Margesson.

been a Liberal Unionist like his father. The party only reverted to 'Conservative' in a national sense in 1925. Local organisations were free to adopt any title they wished. In Birmingham official candidates of the Conservative party were selected and backed by the Birmingham Unionist association until after the Second World War. Thus, Neville Chamberlain was never actually selected as a Conservative MP. This is important in understanding his views on National government and in the forming of coalitions. He privately welcomed the advent of the National government in 1931 because it provided a chance 'that we may develop into a National party and get rid of that odious title of Conservative which has kept so many of us from joining in the past'.¹³ Chamberlain was attracted to the idea of an open-ended party of anti-socialists under a national label. Nor could Chamberlain be called a Conservative in his opinions, for he had little time for the preservation of old and tired methods where new ones seemed more likely to be effective, and even less time for the preservation of privilege merely because it was inherited. He once described himself to Samuel Hoare as a socialist, and he was often nearer to Fabian socialists than to the bulk of Conservative opinion in his wider view of domestic policy; with the Fabians he shared optimism about social progress. He also showed an obsession with administrative methods.¹⁴ Peter Clarke describes Chamberlain as 'more of a provincial businessman in politics than a traditional Conservative'.¹⁵ However, Chamberlain was a Conservative on the big issue of running the economy. In this

¹³ Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, pp.355-56.

¹⁴ See, his period as Minister for Health, 1924-29. K. Feiling's *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, London, Macmillan, 1946, pp.126-148. Also D. Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain: Pioneering and Reform, 1869-1929*, Vol 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

¹⁵ P. Clarke, *A Question of Leadership: From Gladstone to Thatcher*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1991, p.115.

sense he was closer to the old orthodoxies of laissez-faire, essentially pursuing a 'good housekeeping policy whilst waiting for the natural self-righting forces of the free market to bring a return to prosperity'. His business mind made him a perfect executor of that strategy.¹⁶ The significance of Chamberlain's approach to Conservatism was highlighted by his acceptance speech as the new Prime Minister at Caxton Hall in June 1937:

I recall that I myself was not born a little Conservative. I was brought up as a Liberal and afterwards as a Liberal Unionist. The fact that I am here accepted by you Conservatives as your leader, is to my mind a demonstration of the catholicity of the Conservative party¹⁷

Chamberlain always regarded the national status of the government as a reality. It is easy to argue that by 1937 the National government was merely a facade for Conservative rule. As long as it remained National there remained a clear guarantee that it would seek to be broader than a partisan government even when made up of largely Conservatives; that it would govern in the national rather than the party interest. This appealed to Chamberlain, and this helped it continue to enjoy wider support than a Conservative government would have been likely to acquire.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.119.

¹⁷ Quoted from *The Times*, 1 June 1937, Cited in Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 356.

THE STRENGTH OF NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN'S POSITION AS PRIME MINISTER

The sources that are available to the historian will never allow for a satisfactory answer as to why Chamberlain survived for so long as Prime Minister. As Nick Smart has pointed out, Chamberlain's supporters were loyal to the end; more numerous than his opponents, but few of them kept diaries or wrote letters which reveal the autonomy of their loyalty.¹⁸ Winners not losers will write their memoirs and certainly from an historian's point of view the case for the defence of Neville Chamberlain's wartime record is under-developed in relation to the prodigious output of the dissidents and emphasis of historians on the road to war. The sources are strong amongst well-informed people in September 1939 that the life expectancy of the Chamberlain wartime administration was expected to be very short indeed. The news that the Labour party and the Sinclairite Liberals had turned down offers to join the government prompted the damning verdict from one critic that Chamberlain was a 'fool' and 'mean minded'.¹⁹

In fact, Chamberlain's position as Prime Minister and leader of his party appeared as secure in war as it had been in peace. Despite the fact that there was a strong feeling that the Chamberlain administration would not last, it does not make Chamberlain's defeat and Churchill's succession to the premiership in May 1940 inevitable. What was to prove crucial in the early months was the perceived suitability of a minister for conducting the war. Chamberlain was no less determined than Churchill that the war should be seen through to a successful conclusion. However, as

¹⁸ Smart, *The National Government*, p. 206

¹⁹ Crookshank MSS: diary 29 Sept. 1939, MSS. Eng. D.360.

is often the case, the Westminster and Fleet Street rumour machines could not resist speculating upon who might succeed Chamberlain. It is interesting to note that on 11 October the anti-Tory *Daily Mirror* gave Churchill the credit for insisting in cabinet upon the rejection of Hitler's peace offer, despite the fact that Chamberlain had been equally opposed to it. When the war was only a month old, Oliver Harvey, a Foreign Office civil servant with an already jaded view of Chamberlain, wrote that 'the government isn't broad enough or strong enough', and 'expected it to fall before Christmas'.²⁰ John Colville writing just before his appointment as Downing Street Secretary, considered 'it would probably be a good thing if Chamberlain resigned soon', but considered that Churchill was 'rather old' to succeed.²¹ The view that Chamberlain was doomed and that he would be replaced, possibly by Churchill, was commonplace in the autumn of 1939. Euan Wallace, who was Transport Minister, found that 'Winston, had taken a long step towards being a future Prime Minister.'²² Chamberlain himself had once commented that the nearer war came then the better Churchill's chances of returning to office, but not as Prime Minister.²³ Once war broke out Churchill's standing within the party had improved. This transformation in his fortunes had been quite remarkable; a few months earlier, in July 1939, it was reported that four out of five backbenchers would not tolerate his inclusion in the Cabinet.²⁴ Churchill's opposition to Indian reform and his role in the abdication crisis had left him isolated on the fringes of the party. But the end of 1939 talked him along

²⁰ J. Harvey (ed.), *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey*, Oct.5 1939. pp.324-25.

²¹ J. Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1941, Volume One*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, 28. Sept. 1939. p.85.

²² Wallace MSS: Diary. Entry for 26 Sept. 1939, MSS. Eng. Hist. 495 (1939).

²³ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 23 Apr. 1939, NC 18/1/1095.

²⁴ Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.185.

with Halifax as a successor to Chamberlain. John Charmley has compared Churchill's position with that of Lord Kitchener in the Great War: 'he was taken by the nation as a symbol of the determination to win the war, and if he was damaged in the eyes of the public, then the war effort and the reputation of the government would suffer accordingly'.²⁵ When local party branch secretaries in North West Suffolk were canvassed in November 1939 as to whom they considered to be the four most popular Ministers, Churchill's name was listed by 63 per cent and Chamberlain's by 53 per cent.²⁶ Even, Channon, who was a Chamberlain loyalist, wrote:

There will be a 'glamorous' central government, reinforced by extreme Left Conservatives and some Socialists who are already saying that while they have refused to serve under Neville that they would agree to serve under Winston. I see it coming.²⁷

However, both Whitehall and certain government ministers remained suspicious of Churchill. 'Rab' Butler described Churchill's radio broadcast of 12 November as 'beyond words vulgar'.²⁸ Lord Stanhope, Churchill's predecessor at the Admiralty, informed Leo Amery that 'Winston's first act of state on reaching the Admiralty was to order a bottle of Whisky' and doubted whether he would stay the course after years

²⁵ J. Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1993, p.377.

²⁶ The original questionnaire is to be found in Mass Observation Archive, TB:file5/H, 'Somerset De Chair questionnaire and responses, Nov. 1939'. Cited in Crowson's *Facing Fascism*, p.185.

²⁷ Rhodes James (ed) *Chips*, 6 Sept. 1939, p.218.

²⁸ Colville, *The Fringes of Power*, 29th Oct. 1939, p.50-51.

of soft living.²⁹

Historians have pointed to the fact that Churchill was encouraging newspaper criticism in order to stiffen up the war effort. This remains uncertain. There may have been deliberate attempts to undermine Chamberlain's position for Churchill's own benefit.³⁰ In January 1940 Churchill warned W.P. Crozier 'that the war effort must be intensified'; he also complained of the slow rearmament programme.³¹ However, what is certain is that having only recently returned to office, Churchill would not risk being implicated in the fall of an administration of which he was a member. The Conservative party would not forgive such treachery. This all helped strengthen the position of Chamberlain as Prime Minister.

Chamberlain was weary at the prospect of having to face Labour and the Liberals' continued hostility from across the Commons Chamber. Chamberlain himself was not surprised by their preference to pursue the role of loyal opposition with a man they clearly despised.³² In many ways this actually made things easier for Chamberlain. He could bring the other party leaders into his confidence when the national interest demanded it, whilst at other times he could enforce his authority over the House with

²⁹ J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds.), *The Empire at Bay, The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929-1945*, London, Hutchinson, 1988, 5 Sept. 1939, p.572.

³⁰ R. Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989, pp. 151-152. Cockett is making an overall point about attempts to undermine Chamberlain's position.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.151. In gathering public opinion about the war effort, *Manchester Guardian* Journalist W.P. Crozier was been alerted to the complacency and inefficiency in government circles by a variety of sources. These sources included Robert Vansittart and Brendan Bracken who was Churchill's PPS. This is the main source for evidence of Churchill attempting to stiffen the war effort.

³² G. Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999, p.386.

a majority that still exceeded 200. With such a huge majority, it is worth asking to what extent Labour threatened the Conservative dominated National government.

THE EXTENT OF THE LABOUR PARTY THREAT?

On the 1 September 1939 Chamberlain had invited the Labour party to join his government. The executive of the Parliamentary party refused. When 'Rab' Butler, who was Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, asked Hugh Dalton why they had refused, Dalton replied that Labour could not enter a Cabinet in which Chamberlain and Simon were numbers one and two: and would also require the influence of Horace Wilson to be eliminated.³³ As long as Chamberlain and his men continued to hold the key positions, they would be the ultimate controllers. Labour's position was ambiguous; they supported the war effort, and yet this required collaboration with the government. Hugh Dalton expressed Labour's delicate position in his diary:

Our attitude towards the Government is one of cold, critical, patriotic detachment. Alternatively, we shall act as patriotic gadflies on ministers. We shall be free to criticise if we think fit in the house, and the so-called political truce whereby no contested elections take place for the time being is subject to termination at any time at our discretion.³⁴

A 'gentleman's agreement' of 5 September 1939 was the most important aspect of

³³ B. Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918-1940*, London, Cape, 1986, 6 September 1939, p.297.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.297.

Labour's support for the war.³⁵ On that day, the National Executive's Election subcommittee, chaired by Barbara Ayrton Gould, considered an informal conversation which Arthur Greenwood had undertaken with David Margesson, the government Chief Whip, concerning the possibility of an electoral truce between the three parties for the duration of the war. On 8 September, the Chief Whips of the three major parties signed an electoral truce covering by-elections. This agreement meant the party which had previously won the seat would have the right, when it fell vacant, to nominate a candidate unopposed by the other two parties. Labour party historians have tended to view the by-election truce as appropriate for wartime and part of Labour's tactic of waiting patiently for the rewards of office.³⁶ However, for Labour their power to challenge the government was limited. They were not numerous enough to pose any direct challenge to the government. Trade Union co-operation was vital to the war effort. This was not the parliamentary leadership's to give or withhold; the lingering possibility of a general election was always there as an argument for non-provocative caution.³⁷ Labour's position was similar to that of Bonar Law in 1914, in that they felt that perhaps events would turn in their favour. The Conservatives continued to allege that this was a 'political truce' between the two parties. Perhaps this was a way of subordinating Labour, by bringing an electoral truce into play, yet at the same time keeping Labour firmly in opposition. The 'by-election truce' was so disliked by Labour constituency activists that 51 resolutions calling for its termination were put on the agenda for the May 1940 party

³⁵ LPA, Elections Subcommittee minutes, 5 Sept 1939. Cited in S. Brooke's *Labour's War: A History of the Labour Party during the Second World War*, Oxford Historical Monographs, 1992, p.37.

³⁶ H. Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, London, Macmillan, 1961, p.85.

³⁷ Attlee to Middleton, 25 January 1940. Cited in Brooke's *Labour's War*, p.40.

conference.³⁸ As one Labour activist in Scotland was to recall, ‘the Labour candidate had been selected in 1939 and we wanted him to stand but, because of this pact the Tories were allowed to select’.³⁹ Labour was also made powerless by the ‘phoney war’. There was much to grumble about, but the lack of military activity made it difficult to mount a strategic attack on the government. ‘Constructive Opposition’ left Labour in a difficult position. They were neither in government or outright opposition. However, an important aspect of constructive opposition and independence was the party’s articulation of an alternative view of the war. This rested on the premise that war could serve as a vehicle for social change. Attlee did much to press this point both at Westminster and within Transport House. Before this could be done, however, he had to endure an awkward challenge to his leadership.

Clement Attlee had been unwell in the early months of the war. He had returned to take over the leadership of the party on 20 September. There were genuine doubts about his state of health, as to whether he was fit to carry on.⁴⁰ The Attlee line was that Labour would not serve in a Chamberlain-led government; he insisted on the NEC placing a veto on any member of the party who joined the government. It was the formal position of the Labour party and yet the party leadership did digress from this position a number of times during the ‘phoney war’.

Though the party had refused to participate formally in government, the war did bring closer contact between Transport House and Whitehall. Links between the party

³⁸ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, London, Cape, 1975, p.58.

³⁹ Cited from D. Weinbren (ed.), *Generating Socialism: Recollections of Life in the Labour Party*, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1997, p.143. The activist was Alex Kitson, the constituency was Midlothian.

⁴⁰ Attlee underwent two operations for prostate trouble. See C. Attlee, *As it Happened*, London, Hart Davis, 1954, p. 105.

and the administration were established on various levels in September 1939. Party agents and trade union officials were instructed by the National Executive to assume places on the local and regional committees of the Ministry of Information.⁴¹ At the parliamentary level various front benchers took up official contacts with particular government ministers and departments: Philip Noel Baker with the Ministry of Information, Lord Macmillan; Hugh Dalton with Kingsley Wood at the Air Ministry; A.V. Alexander with Churchill at the Admiralty; and H.B. Lees-Smith with Leslie Hore-Belisha at the War Office. Greenwood served as liaison with Downing Street. Such links afforded valuable access to government departments.

Historians often claim that Chamberlain was unconcerned at Labour's rejection of his invitation to serve in his wartime government.⁴² However, we do not know on what terms Chamberlain made his offer to Greenwood. Also we do not know whether the Labour refusal was grounded in principle, or as for Sinclair, resulted from vain efforts to argue the price over admission to the 'innermost councils'.⁴³ Sinclair was offered the post of Secretary of State for Scotland and refused. Perhaps Dalton would have considered office in a Chamberlain-led government. His scathing references to the 'secretary of state for the latrines' suggest that he had not entirely closed the door on future approaches.⁴⁴ That Dalton continued to discuss the party leadership question with Greenwood after Attlee's return was perhaps more than a sign of concern about

⁴¹ LPA, NEC minutes, (4) 1939-40, 2 Sept. 1939, cited in Brooke's *Labour's War*, p.37.

⁴² See, for example, K. Jefferys, *The Churchill Coalition and Wartime Politics, 1940-1945*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991, p.17.

⁴³ Smart, *The National Government*, p.208.

⁴⁴ Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 18 Sept. 1939, p.301.

the leader's health.⁴⁵ Dalton also continued to meet with dissident Conservatives like Harold Macmillan. Dalton considered that Attlee was neither 'big enough nor strong enough to carry the burden'.⁴⁶

The challenge to Attlee's leadership turned out to be a false alarm. The fact that it took place at all appears to suggest a weakness within the Labour party leadership, or perhaps that wartime politics did not differ so much from peacetime. The speculation about the future of the Chamberlain administration did not cease, despite the realisation that the wartime government had thrown off its early jitters, and, far from 'creating its own unpopularity', was doing rather well.⁴⁷ The confident September predictions that the government would collapse were now fading. For Labour's leaders it seemed that nothing would relieve the tedium and impotence of 'constructive opposition'.⁴⁸

As stated earlier co-operation between the two parties was encouraged. In the House of Commons liaison arrangements were stabilised between the government and opposition front benches, whereby a government minister would occasionally give his Labour opposite number a confidential briefing on some aspect of wartime policy. This was not particularly ground breaking, but it illustrated Conservative realisation of the growing stature of Labour. However, Chamberlain was still able to retain certain confidential aspects of the conduct of the war from other parties. In the sixth war cabinet meeting, a discussion was held on the issue of confidential information being given to the opposition parties. The war cabinet came to the conclusion that 'it

⁴⁵ K. Harris, *Attlee*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982, p.167.

⁴⁶ Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 18 Sept. 1939, p.301.

⁴⁷ Pimlott, *Hugh Dalton: A Political Biography*, London, 1985, p.272.

⁴⁸ Smart, *The National Government*, p.209.

was not possible for His Majesty's Government to share responsibility with the leaders of the Parliamentary Opposition and that no information could be given as a matter of right'. The minutes go on to conclude that 'the maintenance of the principle set out above, there was no objection to the ministers concerned maintaining informal contacts with the leaders of the opposition'.⁴⁹ This all helped strengthen Chamberlain's hand. As John Colville, Chamberlain's assistant private secretary, recorded in his diary:

After Questions the PM saw Attlee and Greenwood, and afterwards Sir A Sinclair, to harangue them about the disloyalty of the opposition whom, oblivious to the fact that we are at war, is seeking every opportunity to criticise the government and increase their difficulties.⁵⁰

There were those in the Parliamentary Labour party who were dissatisfied with constructive opposition. The electoral truce had taken place as the most convenient course for the parliamentary leadership and Transport House. Aneurin Bevan, increasingly the most important voice of the Labour left, argued that the path of 'voluntary totalitarianism' which the truce represented would lead to the party's extinction as a vital political force.⁵¹ Discomfort with the truce was not confined to the left. In December, the *New Statesmen* reported that only a small majority had renewed the National Executive's commitment to the electoral truce.⁵² With relations

⁴⁹ PRO: War Cabinet Minutes 6, 8th Sept. 1939, CAB 65/6.

⁵⁰ Colville, *The Fringes of Power*, Oct. 24 1939, p.49.

⁵¹ Cited in Brooke's *Labour's War*, p.38.

⁵² *Ibid*, p.38.

between the two parties so strained, it is interesting to analyse the attempts at cross-party co-operation that were directed at both a national and local level.

CROSS-PARTY CO-OPERATION?

AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

Paul Addison has argued that one of the mental blocks to be overcome in thinking about wartime politics is the assumption that during a great crusade against evil, calculations of personal and party advantage had to be swept aside leaving the 'national interest' as the sole guardian to action.⁵³ The sources that are available prove the reverse. Every government department believed that in the interests of victory it should have a greater voice than some less vital department on a particular committee. Thus it was that the political parties jostled with one another to appropriate credit for their contribution to the war effort. Churchill himself wrote in March 1942, 'that when the war was won the Conservative party would prove to have been the rock on which the salvation of Britain was founded and freedom of mankind was regained'.⁵⁴ Chamberlain, had he lived, may well have agreed with Churchill's sentiments. The parties may have appeared to co-operate on the surface. However, this could not have been further from the truth. At a national level, part of the problem lay with Chamberlain's rather disdainful view of Labour party policy. He once wrote that he 'dreaded the prospect of an ignorant, ill-prepared and over-pledged opposition coming to power in a slump'.⁵⁵ Sir John Simon, a confidante of Chamberlain, wrote in

⁵³ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.62.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.62.

⁵⁵ Cited in K. Middlemass, *Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972, p.56.

May 1940: 'These Labour men, though many of them are good fellows, are extremely class conscious in the sense that they are always watching out for rebukes supposed to be addressed to their inferior intellectual equipment ... when Chamberlain is faced with a half-baked argument, he exposes it.'⁵⁶ Chamberlain's Chief Whip, David Margesson, wrote after his leader's fall: 'He engendered personal dislike among his opponents to an extent almost unbelievable ... I believe the reason was that his cold intellect was too much for them, he beat them up in an argument and debunked their catchphrases.'⁵⁷ Attlee wrote that Chamberlain 'always treated us like dirt'.⁵⁸ Chamberlain did not envisage a total war. If he had, he would have set his course towards a coalition, with the aim of keeping events under the control of the Conservative party. In fact, in Chamberlain's view, Hitler was bluffing and would dare not submit the people of Germany to the deprivations of a second conflict. He was inclined to argue, for example, that Hitler would shrink from air attack on Britain for fear of the consequences to German morale if Britain retaliated; instead Hitler would rely on propaganda.⁵⁹

With the improved standing of Churchill was a growing consciousness amongst backbenchers of the potential threat Labour would pose after the war. Although for Conservatives, their concern was the prosecution of the war, backbenchers had occasion to notice the manner in which the opposition conducted themselves. The Labour leadership did indeed follow a policy of 'constructive opposition', which had been underlined by the electoral truce of 5 September 1939. At a parliamentary level

⁵⁶ Simon MSS: diary 9th May 1940. MSS Eng. hist. D.85.

⁵⁷ Margesson MSS: Margesson to Baldwin, 4 March 1941. MRGN 1/5.

⁵⁸ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.61.

⁵⁹ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 5 Nov.1939, NC 18/1/1129.

various Labour frontbenchers took up official contacts with particular ministers and departments. At the same time, Labour frontbenchers had used the demands of a successful war effort to justify socialist measures. Efficiency was the key point. Only 'superior efficiency' would defeat totalitarianism, David Grenfell told the Commons on 14 September.⁶⁰ Arthur Greenwood later stated that 'whether we are thinking in terms of war production or peace output the basic principles of Socialism ought to be applied in the interests of national efficiency'.⁶¹ The Socialist rhetoric of the 1930s centred as it was on economic efficiency, was uniquely suited to the challenge of war. This was anathema to Chamberlain's own views of the how the problems of the war should be addressed.

That the growing stature of Labour became apparent to a number of Conservatives once Labour joined the Churchill coalition in May 1940 cannot be argued with, but what is interesting is that there were limited signs of this realisation during the period of the phoney war.⁶² In a questionnaire circulated by Somerset de Chair in November 1939 Norfolk Conservative activists were asked if they preferred a coalition government; 57 per cent said no, 14 per cent said yes, 23 per cent were unresponsive. Entertainingly enough, De Chair's constituency was a safe Tory seat and branch

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, 5th Series, vol.352, 14 Sept. 1939, col.760.

⁶¹ A. Greenwood, *Why We Fight: Labour's Case*, London, Eyre and Spottiswode, 1940, p.193.

⁶² S. Brooke, *Labour's War*, pp.34-51.

secretaries were also asked if any increase in Labour support was perceived: 28 per cent said yes, whilst 60 per cent said there was no change or had forgotten.⁶³

2. AT A LOCAL LEVEL

The rather disdainful view of Labour that was reflected at a national level was reflected at local level as well. Sir Douglas Hacking, the Tory Party Chairman had sent a circular letter to all the constituencies requesting on behalf of the authorities that they close down for the duration of the war, 'in the interests of the economy'. However, as soon as Hacking had sent his letter, it left him feeling greatly worried about the 'party's position'. He believed that:

Whatever the duration of the war may be it will be disastrous if, when hostilities have ceased, we find ourselves confronted with a situation where the other parties are in possession of their organisation and ours have ceased to exist.⁶⁴

The letter from Hacking was followed by a circular from Sir Eugene Ramsden, Chairman of the National Union, to all associations, pointing out that the executive had passed a motion urging the continuation of activities during the war and the 'disastrous' consequences for the party if activities were 'seriously impaired'.⁶⁵ Many local Conservative associations did cease political activity during wartime, feeling perhaps rightly that party politics could not be continued when the national

⁶³ See Mass-Observation archive, TB: file 5/H, 'Somerset de Chair questionnaire and responses Nov 39'. Cited in Crowson's *Facing Fascism*, p.251.

⁶⁴ Conservative Party Archive, CCO 500/1/9-*Party Organisation in Wartime, 1939-42*, letter from Sir. Douglas Hacking, 12th Sept. 1939.

⁶⁵ CPA: CCO 500/1/9-Letter from Sir. Eugene Ramsden, 23rd Sept.1939.

unity and moral of the nation was at stake. Some local associations co-operated with local information committees established by the newly formed Ministry of Information.⁶⁶ In its circular of the 12 September, Central Office warned against the closure of local associations, stating the influence of other parties.⁶⁷ Included in the circular was material relating to what other political parties were doing and saying about the war. By circulating this material, it was one way for the Conservative party to keep an eye on the other parties' activities. Hacking actually thought it unwise for any but the junior movements of the Conservative party to disband. One reason, it was argued, was that Labour was not yet fit to join a coalition government, therefore Conservatives had to remain active. At a meeting of the National Union executive on 20 September 1939, reference was made to the attitude of both Labour and the opposition Liberal parties and the view was expressed that 'it would be disastrous for our own party if we were not to make every effort to maintain the constituency associations during the war'. It was argued that the main function of the local associations was in order to undertake any national work that would be required of them and to be ready for any 'eventualities'.⁶⁸ Quite what is to be interpreted by 'national work', presumably we are to understand that this means war work. Associations like Edinburgh North women's decided that with party politics in the wane, 'it would be a means of keeping in touch with our people, if a party or work parties could be arranged to do some war work, probably knitting war comforts for the

⁶⁶ I. Mc Laine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War 11*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1979, p.46.

⁶⁷ CPA: CCO 500/1/9- Letter from Douglas Hacking, 12th Sept. 1939.

⁶⁸ CPA: Microfilm-National Union Executive, minutes of the 20th Sept. 1939.

troops'.⁶⁹ The Conservatives remained uncertain about Labour's stand on cross party co-operation and vice-versa. Hacking incidentally resigned in 1942 after growing tired of urging restraint on the party.⁷⁰ Labour's motto at the beginning of the war was, 'while it does not co-operate with the National government, it co-operates in the national interest'.⁷¹ Many local associations continued to function until the fall of France in 1940. After that point most appear to have forsaken all political undertakings. As one Chairman explained:

We do not think it would be any good having a divisional council now. So many of them are doing war work ... and the women are working too that we think it would not be worth calling them and at the same time we feel sure nobody wants to think of politics now.⁷²

Although many associations did cease activities for the war's duration, some co-operated with the local information committees established by the Ministry of Information. This was an attempt by the parties at a local level to work at cross party co-operation.

⁶⁹ Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.169.

⁷⁰ Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden*, pp.24-25.

⁷¹ CPA: CCO 500/1/9-extract from *Daily Herald* article. Contained in Hacking letter of 12 Sept. 1939.

⁷² Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.169.

THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CROSS-PARTY CO-OPERATION?

There were moves to encourage positive co-operation between the parties at a local level. The local information committees were concerned with the political parties presenting a united platform in the localities, 'a means whereby the party machinery could be concentrated towards the national cause'.⁷³ On the face of it the scheme appeared to suggest positive co-operation. It drew on the best ideals of local government and participation by bringing together various interest groups such as political parties, trade unions, business leaders, voluntary societies and the press. The idea was that whatever the shade of political opinion, each parliamentary constituency throughout the country would be united together in the war effort. There was initial reluctance on the part of Labour to co-operate, 'for fear that their hands would be tied if at a later date they wanted to criticise the government'.⁷⁴ The parties finally agreed to co-operate and by early October 23 committees had been formed and a further 100 were in the process of formation and a further 500 were waiting at the initiative of the regional information officers.

The purpose of the local MOI committees was to 'explain to the people the policy of the government, and the progress of the war, the industrial and economic measures which the government will have to take ... how the individual can and should play his part by carrying out government instructions'. Great stress was placed on 'national unity' and the 'traditional love of liberty'.⁷⁵ However, national unity between the political parties was far from a reality. The reluctance of Labour to participate in the

⁷³ PRO INF: John Hilton to A.P. Waterfield, 2 Oct. 1939, INF 1/295.

⁷⁴ PRO INF: John Hilton to A.P. Waterfield, 4 Sept. 1939, INF 1/295.

⁷⁵ PRO INF: 'Notes for Speakers', 17th Sept. 1939, INF 1/294.

local information committees, which in the early days prevented the large-scale organisation of public meetings, was considered sinister by the ministry when ‘a socialist meeting addressed ... by Mr. Hugh Dalton was packed out’.⁷⁶ This reluctance of Labour to become involved in the local information committees was due to their insistence that independence had to be maintained: ‘Even if the façade of National Unity is thereby endangered and the party endures a temporary unpopularity, Labour’s position as an alternative Cabinet in Parliament and an anti-national party must be made clear.’⁷⁷ Labour felt that it had a chance to replace the Chamberlain government if it bided its time and protected this independence. Transport House had been sending similar messages to the constituencies. In September 1939, it circulated a memorandum on the Ministry of Information, which stressed:

The Labour Party retains its complete independence of the National government. It is that alternative government of the country with its own aims and policies. These must be kept continuously before the electorate, for, even in wartime, the party must be compelled to assume the responsibility of office. The more its principles can be driven home, the more pressure it will be able to exert while it in opposition. After the war, an election will rapidly follow.⁷⁸

The fear within the government was that the Labour party was getting the upper hand. At a meeting of the Cabinet’s Home Policy Committee in November, Lord

⁷⁶ McLaine, *The Ministry of Morale*, p.47.

⁷⁷ ‘Politicus’, ‘Labour and the War’, *Political Quarterly*, 10 (1939), 477-88. Cited in Brooke’s *Labour’s War*, p.39.

⁷⁸ LPA, memorandum on ‘Ministry of Information’, n.d. (Sept. 1939). Cited in Brooke’s *Labour’s War*, p.39.

Macmillan brought up the question of public meetings and observed that as the Conservative and Liberal supporters had 'gone off on war service the field had been left open to the pacifist and communist elements'. Lord Macmillan claimed that the Labour party members were both 'claiming credits for patriotic support for the war and at the same time were actively bidding support of the pacifist and defeatist elements'. He ended by stating that 'unless steps were promptly taken there was a real danger that the Labour party would soon capitalise these advantages in furtherance of their general socialistic policy'.⁷⁹ The setting up of the local information committees represents some of the cross-party mistrust that existed at a local level.

Lord Macmillan had in December 1939 urged that 'Britain must be represented as fighting Germany on land, in the air, and at sea, ceaselessly, without remorse, with all her armed might, with financial resources, industrial manpower, and commercial assets, with all her idealism and determination.'⁸⁰ Lady Astor expressed the view that the MOI was 'too insufficient and narrow for wartime'.⁸¹ Astor was sympathetic to broadcasting to the neutrals. To observers the government was failing to provide an image of idealism and determination. As one Norfolk Conservative explained, 'when more is heard of how the war is being won we can tell better if people are satisfied! The general feeling is we know too little'.⁸²

Early indications suggested that most Britons supported the general manner in which Chamberlain was conducting the war.⁸³ However, Chamberlain was a

⁷⁹ McLaine, *The Ministry of Information*, p.47.

⁸⁰ PRO INF: Memorandum by Minister of Information, December 1939, INF1/941.

⁸¹ Astor MSS: Letter to Stephen King-Hall, MS 14/16/1/1.

⁸² Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p. 180.

⁸³ As late as April 1940 Opinion Polls seemed to suggest that Chamberlain still had an approval rate that was above 60 per cent, cited in Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.78.

perceptive enough politician to realise how quickly public moods and appetites change. He was apprehensive that British pacifists would try to stop the war prematurely. He confessed that he had 'always been more afraid of a peace offer than of an air raid', since 'it was too early for any hope of a successful peace negotiation, the Germans not yet been sufficiently convinced that they could not win'. In the space of three days leading up to Hitler's October peace offer, more than three quarters of the 2450 letters Chamberlain received from the public, in some way argued to sue for peace.⁸⁴ If Britain should suffer serious reverses, there was a possibility that this would find expression in Parliament.

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE AND PARTY PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT

If the war was to be ended by peaceful means rather than by military defeat, then some form of negotiation was necessary. There was no shortage of individuals, both public and private, who were willing to look for a solution to end the conflict and do a deal with Hitler. A considerable number of these were Conservative members of the House of Lords; Arnold, Brocket, Buccleuch and Westminster. There were also a number of MPs, -Culverwell, Southby and Ramsey- who were attempting to place pressure on individuals in government who might be influenced in coming to peaceful terms with Germany. Fears that a negotiated settlement might be concluded were heightened when Hitler offered peace terms on the 6 October, but Chamberlain rejected these six days later.⁸⁵ The members of the war cabinet remained resolute in

⁸⁴ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 8 Oct.1939, NC 18/1/1124.

⁸⁵ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates 5th Series, vol. 352, cols 563-8, 12 Oct. 1939.

their attitude towards so-called 'peace feelers'. There was no question of accepting Hitler's offer and the problem for Chamberlain was how to word Britain's rejection of it.⁸⁶ Chamberlain, who had been deceived at Munich, was not about to repeat the same mistake. Some months later in response to a letter from a small group of peers suggesting that the time had come to negotiate with the present German government, Chamberlain wrote to Lord Arnold, 'I do not believe that until Germany gives proof of a change of heart a negotiated peace would be a lasting peace.'⁸⁷ Halifax also 'felt that any peace proposals would have to depend upon not only on the actual propaganda that might be made, but, no less important, upon the confidence which they might inspire as to the good faith of the German government'.⁸⁸ Apart from Hitler's half hearted peace offer, the only other 'peace feeler' seriously to interest the British government during the Phoney War was a series of communications, beginning in the Netherlands in mid-October, with sources purporting to represent a group of German generals opposed to Hitler. This contact led to the notorious 'Venlo incident' on 9 November, when two British intelligence agents awaiting a rendezvous with representatives of the German generals were kidnapped by the Gestapo in the Dutch border town of Venlo and taken back to Germany.⁸⁹ The result of this unfortunate incident was a much greater degree of suspicion in future towards any peace feelers coming from Germany. Chamberlain as Prime Minister took a robust attitude such towards peace feelers; however, other leading ministers were more open-

⁸⁶ See C. Hill, *Cabinet Decisions on British Foreign Policy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Ch 5, pp.100-145.

⁸⁷ Chamberlain MSS: Chamberlain to Lord Arnold, 10 Jan.1940, NC 7/11/33/6.

⁸⁸ PRO FO 800/328 Hal/39/45 Halifax to Lord Gort, 31/10/39.

⁸⁹ PRO FO 371/23107 C19335/19335/18 contains details of the incident, including material, which has only recently been declassified.

minded. Both Halifax and Butler, as late as March 1940, hinted that there were other 'constructive forces' which would be prepared to talk to Hitler if they could be convinced that any peace offer he was likely to make was a genuine one.⁹⁰ Butler, as Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, often gave the impression of being the Minister keenest to keep an open mind on how far the war could be taken.⁹¹ The Dukes of Brocket and Buccleuch lobbied him during the early months of the war.⁹² Both were trying to persuade the Chamberlain administration to come to an understanding with Germany. Butler however said nothing that would commit the government towards any formal framework for peace proposals. In his reply to Buccleuch, Butler stated that 'nothing will be turned down flat and every point of view will be given consideration'.⁹³

Such lobbying was common in the early months of the war. Lord Rothermere had drafted a letter to Chamberlain putting forward the arguments for peace, but withdrew the letter at the last minute, judging that such a letter could damn a man.⁹⁴ The various groups included a majority of the centre-right of British politics. There was the influential minority of its pre-war supporters in the City, in large-scale industry and amongst the landowning aristocracy who had never supported the war. After the declaration of war they worked for a cessation of hostilities and the rebuilding of the 'Anglo-German connection'. The boundary between these various peace groups was

⁹⁰ S. Newton, *The Profits of Peace: The Political Economy of Anglo-German Appeasement*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, p.151.

⁹¹ Butler and Halifax were still taking a similar line in the dark days of May 1940 after the formation of the Churchill Coalition.

⁹² Butler MSS: The Duke of Buccleuch to Butler, 29 Sept. 1939, RAB G10/18.

⁹³ Butler MSS: Butler to Buccleuch, 3 Oct. 1939, RAB G10/21.

⁹⁴ 24 Sept. 1939 'draft' letter, Lord Rothermere to Neville Chamberlain in N.J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet Street Press Barons and Politics: The Journals of Collin Brooks*,

not always clear. The highest principles guided many of the pro-peace campaigners, but anti-Semitism often appeared to be one of the motivating factors in the lobbying of ministers. In letters written to Halifax during the early stages of the war, a ‘constantly recurring feature’ was the belief that ‘war with Germany would be ruinous to Britain’s place in the world and only Jews and Communists would benefit’.⁹⁵ The Duke of Westminster, who was an old personal friend of Churchill, allegedly told a meeting that Britain need not be at war with Germany at all, it all being part of a Jewish and Masonic plot to destroy Christian civilisation. The speech was reported to the war cabinet the following day and earned the Duke a rebuke from Churchill: ‘When a country is fighting a war of this kind, very hard experiences lie before those who preach defeatism and set themselves against the will of the nation.’⁹⁶

Lord Halifax, as Foreign Secretary in the Lords, took a leading role in taking on the quite formidable opposition to the war. On 12 September, Lord Hankey wrote to Halifax warning him of a ‘somewhat defeatist and pacifist’ meeting that had been held the night before at the Duke of Westminster’s home Bourdon House. The government was kept aware of the group’s activities because one of their number, Lord Mottistone, was in fact keeping Lord Hankey informed.⁹⁷ The Dukes of Buccleuch and Brocket had attended as well as Lords Rushcliffe, Arnold and of course Mottistone. At the meeting, the former Conservative MP, Henry Drummond-Wolff, read out a highly defeatist paper.⁹⁸ Drummond-Wolff was a friend of Goering and a

London, Routledge, 1998, pp.291-292.

⁹⁵ A. Roberts, *The Holy Fox: The Life of Lord Halifax*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991, p.151.

⁹⁶ PRO PREM 1/379, letter from Churchill to Duke of Westminster, 13 Sept.1939.

⁹⁷ PRO FO 800/317, Hankey to Halifax, 12 Sept. 1939

⁹⁸ PRO FO 800/317, Hankey to Halifax, 12 Sept. 1939.

Tory Imperialist who had since 1934 served on the Committee and Council of the Empire Industries Association (EIA), founded some fifteen years earlier to encourage closer economic links between countries of the Commonwealth and the Empire.⁹⁹ The EIA could in fact claim over 200 Conservative MPs amongst its members. Some of the proposals advocated by the EIA were not dissimilar to those that were advocated at the Ottawa Conference in 1932, that of Imperial preference. However, some members like Drummond-Wolff, went further. Their contempt for *laissez-faire* on the one hand and socialism on the other had led them down the fascist path. Drummond-Wolff argued that the press only took the view that it was impossible to have peace with the Nazis because the Left and the Jews' controlled it. The war had been provoked by 'the money power'; it would be supported by the United States, which represented the Capitalist economy, and the Soviet Union, 'whose dream is world revolution'. He went on to say that Germany was invulnerable on land and at sea and that London was an easy target for air attack. These sentiments were approved by the gathering, which included Buccleuch, Arnold and Rushcliffe.¹⁰⁰ It is easy to dismiss such personalities as fading aristocrats on the fringe of British Politics.¹⁰¹ However, the support of Buccleuch tied them to the City and Court circles. Brocket was a landowner and before the war he had been a confidant of Chamberlain. The pro-peace cabal met again on 26 September. The meeting included a larger group of MPs who were sympathetic to a negotiated peace.¹⁰² For most of the time this group

⁹⁹ Newton, *Profits of Peace*, pp. 151-152.

¹⁰⁰ PRO FO 800/317, Hankey to Halifax, 12 Sept. 1939. Contains details of meeting.

¹⁰¹ A number of historians have tried to play down the influence of the pro-peace cabal. Andrew Roberts in particular has tried to cite the Tavistock proposals as the work of an eccentric. See Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p.152.

¹⁰² PRO FO 800/317, Hankey to Halifax, 26 Sept. 1939.

of peace mongers usually pressed their case for agreement with Hitler through letters and petitions to the Prime Minister. On the 8 January 1940, for example, Chamberlain was urged to undertake a peace initiative by Lord Arnold.¹⁰³ On 7 March Labour Lords Noel Buxton and Ponsomby supported by Tory Lords Aberconway, Arnold, Darnley, Harmsworth and Holden, called for a negotiated peace.¹⁰⁴ They argued that Hitler was increasingly concerned with ‘the Western advance of Russia’; he wanted peace and could be persuaded to withdraw from the non-German speaking parts of Czechoslovakia and Poland subject to international guarantees concerning general disarmament and access to food and raw materials.¹⁰⁵ The most publicly known set of peace proposals was to be brought to the public’s attention by Lord Tavistock in early 1940. This attracted some extremists and others like Lord Darnley, who had been one of the signatories of the British Council for a Christian settlement in Europe. The proposals came from the German Embassy in Dublin. These included independence for Poland and Czechoslovakia, and general disarmament with in return Germany receiving her former colonies. Darnley conveyed these proposals to Lord Halifax on January 19. Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent secretary at the Foreign Office poured scorn over the authenticity of the document, and as to the intelligence of Tavsistock and Darnley:

Pointed out to H. that the ridiculous paper given him on Fri- ‘as from’ the

¹⁰³ Chamberlain MSS: Private letter from Arnold to Chamberlain, to be signed by ten peers, 8 Jan. 1940, NC 8/24/1.

¹⁰⁴ Lord Noel Buxton had been a Labour MP. He was on the pacifist wing of the Labour Party (his brother Roden became a Quaker), and his call for a negotiated peace mentioned was typical of similar efforts by that section of the Labour party at the time.

¹⁰⁵ PRO PREM 1/443, letter from Lord Noel Buxton.

German govt-by X (from Y) was absolute bilge. Both X and Y are (a) 'pacifists' and (b) Half-wits. If the Germans want to say anything to us, they won't use this drain for their communication. Also why was the paper Roneo'd? (I should, very much like to know this!)...¹⁰⁶

Tavistock and Darnley met Halifax on 24 January, with little headway being made. On 7 January Tavistock published a letter in *Truth* floating the idea of a negotiated peace.¹⁰⁷ He did not reveal the proposals. Tavistock continued to lobby Halifax, who on the whole maintained the courteous tone he used with all such correspondents. In a letter of 14 February Halifax expressed doubts about the authenticity of the proposals. Tavistock arranged to go to Dublin; he informed Halifax, who let him make the visit. At the end of February, the affair became public knowledge. On 28 February Cadogan learned that 'half wit Tavistock is bringing out a pamphlet'.¹⁰⁸ Once the pamphlet became public knowledge, the Press poured scorn over the proposals. Tavistock later brought out a pamphlet, which contained the full correspondence between himself and Halifax, entitled, *The Fate of a Peace Effort*. Andrew Roberts has made clear that this did little damage to Halifax as Foreign Secretary, whose non-committal replies had stayed close to the government line.¹⁰⁹ It did however damage the reputation of Tavistock, as it brought his views more closely to the public eye. The letters revealed

¹⁰⁶ D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, London, Cassell, 1972, 22 Jan. 1940, p.248.

¹⁰⁷ R. Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsey, The Right Club and British Anti-Semitism, 1939-1940*, London, Constable, 1998, p.213.

¹⁰⁸ Dilks, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, 28 Feb. 1940, p.257.

¹⁰⁹ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p.152.

very clearly his pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic stance.¹¹⁰

There were a wide variety of pro-peace activities in the first nine months of the war; many of them were respectable. The boundaries between the various peace groups were unclear. However, what sometimes happens is that you can find earnest peace seekers becoming involved with more questionable persons and activities. For example, Lord Darnley's involvement with Tavistock. Chamberlain certainly rejected the defeatism of the right-wing fellow travellers. It would now appear that the manoeuvring of Churchill into the premiership rather than Halifax was related to this.¹¹¹ However, Chamberlain remained convinced of his limited war strategy right up to the end. He saw no reason to intensify the war effort until the disasters of April and May 1940 wrecked this strategy and his credibility inside parliament and throughout the country at large. How the government and the authorities viewed these people is somewhat unclear. What is clear is that the 'defeatist' element of the Conservatives posed little threat to security. The exception was Captain Ramsey, the MP for Peebles. In May 1940 he was imprisoned for the remainder of the war under regulation 18B.¹¹² This was because of his involvement with the Right Club, which in September 1939 could claim amongst its members a vice-chairman of the Conservative party and two government whips.¹¹³ The Home Office regarded it as 'designed secretly to spread subversive and defeatist views among the civil population of Great Britain, to obstruct the war effort of Great Britain and thus to endanger

¹¹⁰ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p.214.

¹¹¹ J. Costello, *Ten Days that saved the West*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991, pp.461-464.

¹¹² Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.177.

¹¹³ These MP's were Harold Mitchell, Charles Kerr and Albert Edmondson. See, Newton, *Profits of Peace*, p.153.

organisation which had sought to avoid war between Britain and Germany by educating the British population about the true nature of Nazism and correcting the 'false' impression advocated by the press.¹¹⁴ Like the other 'defeatists', Ramsey believed that the war was a deliberate Jewish plot to secure world domination. However, Ramsey, unlike Lords Westminster and Brocket (who were never interned), had little, if no access to the decision-making elites. Therefore when it came to his internment he had no influence and protection when the internment orders came through.¹¹⁵

For the rest of the party there was concern that this 'defeatism' might spread to the general public. It was a concern which was shared by the Ministry of Information, for those of a patriotic persuasion, like Leo Amery, this loss of public morale was due to the 'generally negative attitude of things, excessive concentration on "funkholism", the forbidding of meetings and the discouragement of volunteering'.¹¹⁶ It has to be stated that the desire to secure an early peace with Germany was limited to a minority of Conservatives; the remainder were concerned with issues specific to the war effort and to making the British war machine more effective. Most Conservatives were interested in all aspects of the war, enquiring about its expected duration, the reaction to the possibility of fighting Bolshevik Russia, the position of agriculture, the health of the Labour party, the success of the government's war prosecution and popularity of ministers and their war aims, to the domestic concerns about ARP and

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.177.

¹¹⁵ R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-39*, London, Constable, 1980, pp.371-372. He suggests that internment only removed the eccentrics and that the real sympathisers (mainly from the aristocracy) remained free for the duration of the war.

¹¹⁶ CPA: 1922 Committee, 4 Oct 1939, CPA/1922CMMTEE.

evacuation.¹¹⁷

A 'PATRIOTIC' CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Despite the suspicion and mistrust that existed amongst the political parties at both a national and local level, the sources available show that the Conservative party remained deeply committed to the war effort. Hacking always maintained that the Conservative party was 'a stabilising influence' and that one reason for keeping the local associations open was a way of assisting the war effort. This meant the local associations helping other associations like the Red Cross, the WVS and the ARP.¹¹⁸ There was certainly no message of appeasement coming from Central Office and the local associations. This is best reflected by the case of Cyril Culverwell, MP for Bristol West.

The attitude of surrender adopted by some Conservatives was of great concern to others in the party. Amery considered this 'sorry defeatism' to be confined to a few persons, but was ready 'to rally all forces to scotch it' should it become serious.¹¹⁹ There was a concern that this 'defeatism' might spread to the public.¹²⁰ This was a view shared by the Ministry of Information.¹²¹ The issue of Culverwell's pro-appeasement stance had emerged during a debate in a secret session of the 1922 Committee on 4 October.

¹¹⁷ Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.178.

¹¹⁸ CPA: CCO 500/1/9-Conservative Party Organisation in Wartime, letter from Hacking, 12 Sept. 1939.

¹¹⁹ Barnes and Nicholson, (ed.), *Amery Diaries*, 4 Oct.1939, p.575, CPA 1922 Committee, 4 Oct.1939, CPA/1922CMMTEE.

¹²⁰ CPA 1922 Committee, 4 Oct. 1939, CPA/1922CMMTEE.

¹²¹ Mc Laine, *The Ministry of Information*, pp.34-35.

The minutes of the meeting revealed that Culverwell felt that Britain was heading for a disaster since

The country in his view had been stampeded into war by the press, opposition and right-wing conservatives. Poland would never be restored, nor would we break through in the west, and the defeat of Germany would mean that Europe would become Bolshevik. It was folly to pursue the war and we should make peace, recognising Hitler's claim to Poland if he offered reasonable terms.¹²²

Culverwell did receive some support from MPs, although it was decided that the Committee was wasting its time discussing the matter and proposed adjourning the debate.¹²³ Culverwell's enthusiasm for the Nazi regime had been public knowledge for some time. During the Munich debate he had denied German 'war guilt' for the 1914-1918 war and argued that the regime was only seeking 'her just rights', which had been deprived by 'the stupidity of the allies'.¹²⁴

Culverwell continued to advocate the benefits of a negotiated settlement outside the 1922 committee. As a consequence he incurred the wrath of his local Bristol West association. At a special meeting of the local executive, Culverwell was called to account for his opinions. He denied the charge of being 'a pacifist, pro-Nazi or pro-German' and claimed to 'a strong and consistent supporter of Chamberlain'. Members of the executive who doubted if any guarantee given by Hitler as part of a peace deal could be trusted, Culverwell replied that 'he was only trying to correct the impression

¹²² CPA: 1922 Committee, 4 Oct. 1939, CPA/1922CMMTEE.

¹²³ CPA: 1922 Committee, 4 Oct. 1939, CPA/1922CMMTEE.

¹²⁴ *Hansard*, House of Commons vol. 339, col. 107, 3 Oct. 1938.

that it was possible to build up a utopian Europe after the war' questioned him. He went on to say that 'the only peace worth while is by negotiation, coupled with guarantees, disarmament etc'. The majority of the executive was openly hostile to Culverwell. It was urged that Culverwell 'be severely reprimanded' and that the association to do 'something definite' about his position. This led to the forming of a resolution which expressed its disagreement with his views, and a further resolution been passed warning Culverwell not to expect re-selection.¹²⁵ In fact he was deselected in 1944.¹²⁶ Therefore Central Office's stress on keeping the support of constituency officials had been highlighted by the Culverwell case. It is clear from this that Tory activists were not prepared to tolerate defeatist talk.

In December, Scottish Conservatives urged 'greater efforts ... to counteract pacifist and subversive elements, and to keep up morale "on the home front"'. In other local associations members were asked 'to quash defeatist talk'. The Maidstone association, at their March 1940 AGM, passed a resolution that 'strongly' protested at the activities of the pacifist Peace Pledge Union, considering their attitude to be an 'insult to the great mass of British people', and demanded 'that steps be taken drastically to curtail the potentiality of evil'.¹²⁷ For many Conservatives the arguments of Culverwell *et.al* were ignored for they believed that to submit to a fascist regime would entail the loss of the same liberties threatened by bolshevism.

Despite the patriotic stance adopted by many Conservatives in Parliament and in

¹²⁵ Bristol West CA, special exec. 15 Dec. 1939-these resolutions were confirmed by the AGM 6 May 1940, 38036/BW/2(b).

¹²⁶ Bristol West CA, special exec. 22 May 1944, 38036/BW/1(b); Culverwell to Down-Shaw, 6 June 1944, 38036/BCA/1(a).

¹²⁷ Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.176.



the local associations there was still much criticism of the government's handling of the war. After the initial few months of the war Chamberlain did attempt to assert his leadership over the government and party by trying to create a truly National government.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AT WAR, SEPTEMBER 1939 TO MAY 1940

INTRODUCTION

The lack of military activity during the opening weeks of the war fuelled the suspicion in some areas that Chamberlain was seeking a peace accord with Germany. The delay in starting the war was evidence that the appeasers were trying for another Munich. The reality was rather different. The delay was necessary because of the British government's desire to declare war in unison with France. Some Conservatives actually thought the delay was 'good moral propaganda'.¹ The fear that the government might opt for a negotiated settlement was heightened again when Hitler offered peace terms on 6 October, but Chamberlain publicly rejected these six days later.² The belief that there were elements within the government who favoured coming to terms with Germany was not helped by a defeatist element within the party comprising of several Conservative peers and MPs.

In reality, having embarked on a war, which they had tried so hard to avoid, Chamberlain and his colleagues were faced with a problem: how to win it. This chapter will examine Chamberlain's attempts to construct an efficient working war cabinet and a 'truly' National government that included the leaders of all the main political parties and how his failure to do so undermined his position as Prime

¹ S. Ball (ed.), *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Attlee: The Headlam Diaries*, Camden 5th Series, 9, 1999, 2 Sept. 1939, p.215.

² *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates 5th Series, vol. 352, cols 563-8, 12 Oct. 1939.

Minister.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A WAR CABINET

Chamberlain had begun to take steps towards setting up a war cabinet before the invasion of Poland. He had met Lord Hankey at 3.45 p.m. on 23 August, the day the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed. Hankey had first-hand experience of wartime command structures, having held the post of war cabinet secretary during the First World War. He had even written a book on the subject. Chamberlain was specifically looking for guidance on the creation of an executive body of ministers responsible for running the war. Hankey noted that Chamberlain seemed 'a good deal worried at the situation'. Hankey proceeded to describe Lloyd George's war cabinet. They also discussed the personnel for such a body. Chamberlain asked Hankey about his views on the inclusion of Winston Churchill and even Lloyd George (who in fact he loathed). Chamberlain stated 'that he would like to keep Sam Hoare out'.³ The following day, Hankey set out the main points, which he had made to the Prime Minister and sent them to Sir Horace Wilson. 'The object', he wrote, 'is to ensure that there is a body of Cabinet Ministers free to give their whole time and energy to the central problems of the war.' In a covering letter, he added: 'I attach more importance to the human element, teamwork, goodwill etc. than to the actual machinery, and realise that the machine must be adaptable to the personnel working it.'⁴

³ Hankey MSS: diary, 23 August 1939, HNKY 1/7.

⁴ PRO PREM 1/384 Hankey to Sir Horace Wilson, 24 August 1939, enclosed in a paper entitled 'A War Cabinet'.

Chamberlain took Hankey's advice seriously. In the days leading up to the outbreak of war, he proceeded to sound out potential members of a war cabinet. His thinking on the composition of such a body is revealed by a document, which can be found amongst his private papers. The slip of paper is undated but clearly from the days before the outbreak of war. It lists Chamberlain's choice not only of war cabinet members, but also of all the ministers in his administration. His known desire to bring the Labour party into government, although as a junior partner, is revealed by a list of 'Possible places for Labour'. Chamberlain had sought to allocate a seat in the war cabinet for Arthur Greenwood. Possible cabinet posts included the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, or the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Transport was pencilled in for Herbert Morrison. At the top of the list Chamberlain has noted 'Try for 3'.⁵ I have documented the Labour party unwillingness to join a coalition government in the previous chapter. These were posts that were significant in terms of the war effort although all the great offices of state remained in the hands of the existing Conservative dominated administration. One seat in the war cabinet would be unlikely to outweigh this. The Liberal party did less well than Labour. Sir Archibald Sinclair was to be given the post of Secretary of State for Scotland but declined to.

Outside the war cabinet, the only significant addition to the existing administration was Anthony Eden, who was to replace Inskip at the Dominions Office. Like Churchill, Eden represented a focal point for potentially damaging criticism if left out of government. As a former Foreign Secretary, Eden might have found the Dominions

⁵ Chamberlain MSS: Undated slip of paper, NC 2/29/37.

Office post a little beneath him. However, Chamberlain offered him the chance of regular attendance at the war cabinet, even though he was not formally a member of that body. Churchill was given a post in the war cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty, although Chamberlain had originally offered him a post without portfolio.⁶ However, Chamberlain felt that an unrestrained Churchill without departmental responsibilities would be interfering. Chamberlain was certainly partly successful in his reconstruction of the administration. The most dangerous of his Conservative critics had been incorporated into the government and were therefore constrained by the ethos of collective responsibility. However, the Opposition parties were still free to criticise the government.

Following the example set by Lloyd George in 1916, Chamberlain had at first envisaged creating a small war cabinet most of whose members, including Churchill, would be relieved of significant departmental concerns. In this plan, the three

⁶ Churchill Papers CHAR 2/367 Churchill to Lord Stanhope, 4/9/39. Cited in R. Mee, 'The Foreign Policy of the Chamberlain Wartime Administration, 1939-1940,' (University of Birmingham Ph.D. thesis, 1999), p.9. In this letter to his predecessor at the Admiralty, Churchill stresses he had played no part in Stanhope's removal: 'Indeed I had already accepted a deal in the war cabinet 'without portfolio' when a change of plan brought me into office.' From this evidence it seems likely that Chamberlain did not relish the prospect of an unrestrained Churchill and therefore sought to anchor him to departmental responsibilities.

ministers responsible for each of the armed forces would have been excluded from the war cabinet. This however was not to the liking of the individual ministers concerned and it was only under pressure from them that Chamberlain, keen to avoid dispute with colleagues at such a critical moment, backed down. This was unusual for Chamberlain. The consequences of these developments meant that the war cabinet became a cumbersome nine-man committee of departmental heads. Listening to Chamberlain's first speech to the Commons after the declaration of war, Amery considered it 'good, but not the speech of a war leader'. An experienced observer of political life from both the front and back benches for over thirty years, Amery thought that Chamberlain's oversized cabinet 'might work for a while, but I think I see Winston emerging as PM out of it all by the end of the year'.⁷

Hankey, due to his past experience, was made minister without portfolio. He was deputed to 'keep an eye on Winston'.⁸ Accordingly, under the terms of the 'war book' he compiled, all sorts of new ministries were created and staffed so that the machinery of government 'slid into a state of war with scarcely a ripple'.⁹ On Hankey's advice Chamberlain arranged that the deliberations of the war cabinet should be first processed by a series of ministerial committees and classified by topic. Initially there were separate bodies for home policy, civil defence and priorities. To these were added economic policy and food. All military matters started on the agenda of the Chiefs of Staff sub-committee, which reported direct to the cabinet. This procedure

⁷ Barnes and Nicholson (eds.), *The Empire at Bay 1929-1945: The Leo Amery Diaries*, 3 Sept. 1939. p.522.

⁸ Cited in S. Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets Vol 3*, London, Collins, 1972, p.419.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.422.

was 'streamlined' by Whitehall and interposed five weeks into the war, an additional intermediate stage called the military co-ordination committee.

The effect of this was that every operational issue of importance had to be tackled three times: by the Chiefs of Staff, then by the military co-ordination committee, then by the war cabinet. Professor Dilks has stated that: 'Chamberlain and others, mistrusting some of the First Lord's enthusiasms and believing him too ready to overrule advice, probably thought that the advantages of such checks outweighed the inconveniences.'¹⁰

Amery's instincts about Churchill's suitability as a war leader reflected a marked shift in the First Lord of the Admiralty's prospects. In the last months of peace, Anthony Eden had commanded the personal adherence of a larger group on the Conservative benches than Churchill had. Eden was also thought to enjoy a wider appeal as a rival leader amongst the population.¹¹ However, unlike Churchill, he had a tendency to play down his abilities as a potential leader. His new position as Dominions Secretary meant that he was formally outside the war cabinet. The former foreign secretary's decision to accept this comparatively junior role excluded him from the high table of the war's prosecution. It was accordingly viewed as a gesture of self-sacrifice and reflected his hard won sense of patriotic duty. For his own career prospects it represented the worst of both worlds: membership of the government

¹⁰ D. Dilks, 'The Twilight War and the fall of France: Chamberlain and Churchill in 1940', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, vol 28, 1978, p.65.

¹¹ An opinion poll in April 1939 had suggested that Eden, far more than Churchill or Halifax, was the country's preferred choice as the next Prime Minister. The opinion poll gave Eden 38 per cent and only 7 per cent each for Churchill and Halifax. Cited in H. Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, 1974, rev. edn, London, Macmillan, 1989, p.397.

prevented him from leading backbench discontent if events took a turn for the worst whilst exclusion from the war cabinet prevented him from developing his claims as a rival leader within the corridors of power. Unlike Churchill he had made himself irrelevant to the course of events.

The refusal of the official opposition to join the government of national unity ensued that the Premiership and the leadership of the Conservative party remained indivisible. This left Chamberlain more vulnerable to attacks from his critics who were increasing in number on both sides of the House of Commons. The lack of leadership and direction itself led to another area of concern, namely, for what purpose was Britain fighting the war?

WAR AIMS

The British public received the declaration of war by Britain and France with sombre recognition. Observers noted the difference in reception between the declaration of hostilities and that of 1914.¹² As the air raid sirens started wailing, the expected knockout blow was being unleashed. However, this proved to be a false alarm. British land forces would not commence battle for another six months. This created an unusual situation. Inskip admitted that it was an 'odd affair' and noted the words of one allied foreign minister who had 'heard of wars waged without a declaration of war but never of a war not waged after a declaration'.¹³

Chamberlain was deeply anxious about the war's possible length and its

¹² S. Ball (ed.), *Headlam Diaries*, 1 - 3 Sept. 1939, pp.166-67.

¹³ Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.171.

consequences. He continued his regular correspondence with his two sisters, Ida and Hilda, admitting that his life had deteriorated into 'one long nightmare'.¹⁴ Despite the avoidance of serious fighting in the first six weeks of the war by the British and French forces, it did not prevent him from confiding 'how I hate and loathe this war. I was never meant to be a War Minister'.¹⁵ After visiting the BEF in France in December 1939, he reported back that 'it sickened me to see the barbed wire and pill boxes and guns and anti-tank obstacles, remembering what they meant in the last war'.¹⁶

Chamberlain may have loathed the fact that Britain was at war. However, he had a strategy, which he believed would be essential in the defeat of Germany. Chamberlain was wary of defining war aims in a public statement. He stated in the 9th War Cabinet meeting that 'he was unwilling it define our war aims, as this might have the effect of tying us down to rigidly and might prejudice an eventual settlement'.¹⁷ Chamberlain instead maintained that the rapid armaments build-up in Germany during the years of appeasement would be whittled away in the months and years of conflict ahead. In contrast to the enormous reserves that Britain could extract from its vast empire, the Nazi Reich would weaken under the weight of an economic blockade. An armed stand-off between the two nations was encouraged rather than the launch of a premature assault on the German war machine that would then give it an opportunity to strike back before the allies had time to make up for their deficiencies in

¹⁴ Chamberlain MSS, NC to Ida Chamberlain, 10 Sept. 1939, NC 18/1.1116

¹⁵ Chamberlain MSS, NC to Hilda Chamberlain, 15 Oct. 1939, NC 18/1/1125.

¹⁶ Chamberlain MSS, NC to Ida Chamberlain, 20 Dec. 1939, NC 18/1/1135.

¹⁷ PRO: War Cabinet Minutes 9, 11 Sept. 1939, CAB 65/9.

rearmament.

In July 1939 Chamberlain had continued to believe that the peacetime rearmament programme would be sufficient to make Hitler 'realise that it will never be worth while'. His criticism of Churchill's arguments over rearmament was based on the assumption that 'you don't need offensive forces sufficient to win a smashing victory. What you want are defensive forces sufficiently strong to make it impossible for the other side to win except at such a cost as not to make it worth while.'¹⁸ Chamberlain's assumptions underpinning this argument were that the French would hold off an assault in the west; Germany would be brought to the peace table by an economic blockade or an internal coup against Hitler and that Germany would be unable to withstand a war of three years duration. 'It won't be by defeat in the field, but by German realisation that they can't win and that it isn't worth their while to go on getting thinner and poorer.'¹⁹ Getting the German people to turn on Hitler was the goal. Encouraging an internal coup was the rationale behind sending the RAF over Germany to drop propaganda leaflets. Bombing the civilian population was seen as self-defeating as it would turn public opinion against Britain and in favour of Hitler. Chamberlain expressed his opinion in the war cabinet that the leaflet dropping campaign was a good form of propaganda and should be continued as and when thought fit. He felt that the Germans were clearly annoyed by this.²⁰ This did cause

¹⁸ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 23 July 1939, NC 18/1/1108.

¹⁹ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 5 Nov. 1939, NC 18/1/1129.

²⁰ PRO: War Cabinet Minutes, 19 Sept. 1939, CAB 65/17/39.

great concern to Hankey, nor was it received well by Chamberlain's critics. German financial and economic problems were more severe than those faced by Britain, and German public opinion might well exercise a decisive influence as allied economic warfare began to hit back. Nevertheless, he feared, like Chamberlain the results of fighting a 'total' war. One thing was certain in Hankey's mind (and one which all his colleagues despite their reputation as appeasers, were agreed upon) was that there could be no accepting any humiliating offer of peace which the Germans might see fit to propose once the conquest of Poland was completed. Hankey noted, 'To do so would reduce British prestige to a vanquishing point, lose us the confidence of all peace loving nations and place our future in the gravest jeopardy.' The Allies must fight on. However, merely taking no action was 'unthinkable. We should become a laughing stock'. Hankey's solution was to pursue a war of nerves. It would consist of economic pressure combined with anti-Hitler propaganda. Hankey made it clear that this was unlikely to bring the conflict to an end. 'Victory can only be secured by concentrating a decisive force at the decisive point at the decisive moment', he argued. He went on to say that Britain and France did not have the decisive force.

‘The decisive point is still uncertain...The decisive time is certainly not yet.’²¹ Hankey’s appreciation puts the cautious British policy of the opening months of the war into perspective. Hankey was reflecting on the methods pursued and lessons learnt from the First World War. It becomes clear that this policy was followed because there was no real alternative. That the war could be won without carnage was attractive to the Prime Minister, as it was to many of his advisors and colleagues, including Churchill, who, whilst approving a more active prosecution of the war, also shared with Chamberlain the view that time and the French Army were invincible assets on the Allied side.²² ‘It is in our own interest’, Churchill wrote to Chamberlain, ‘that the war should be conducted in accordance with the more humane conceptions, and that we should follow and not precede the Germans in the process, no doubt inevitable, of deepening severity and violence.’²³ Even Chamberlain’s sternest critics like Viscount Cranborne believed that the German blockade could be effective. He wrote, ‘I believe that sooner or later she must be strangled.’²⁴ Effectively Cranborne was not out of line with the government. Cranborne, although critical of sections of the British public’s attitude to the war, supported the government’s line on the reply to Hitler’s peace offer. He wrote, ‘any essential condition for negotiations means having a German government that can be trusted. The German regime does not satisfy

²¹ Hankey MSS: Paper on War Policy, 12 Sept. 1939. HNKY 11/1.

²² Chamberlain did not in fact have a very high estimate of the French Army or the Maginot Line in 1935-36. A cabinet memorandum of his at the time predicted that the Maginot Line would be sidestepped and that the British needed to build strategic bombers as a deterrent against German aggression.

²³ Chamberlain MSS: Churchill to Chamberlain, 10 Sept. 1939, NC 7/9/47.

²⁴ Eden MSS: Lord Cranborne to Lord Salisbury, 23 Sept. 1939, AP20/7/63A.

this'.²⁵

The question of what Britain was actually fighting for was the subject of many intense debates. The lack of commitment to war aims on the part of the government led to correspondence in the press calling for more explicit government guidance.²⁶ Inskip wrote that 'the war goes on placidly and some people say that the public are bewildered. I would rather say they are indifferent'.²⁷ Was Britain fighting to destroy Hitler personally or to ensure the destruction of the entire Nazi regime? Many saw the war being fought to preserve liberty, both in Britain and the Empire. Lord Lloyd in his pamphlet, *The British Case*, believed that

The people of the British Commonwealth are engaged today in a life and death struggle for a political principle necessary to the liberties and therefore to the prosperity and progress of the peoples of Europe. It is the principle of national independence. This principle is the sole guarantee of the survival of individual liberty in Europe.

Lloyd drew his analogies from the Christian faith and played on the British sense of

²⁵ Eden MSS: Cranborne to Eden, Oct. 6 1939, AP20/7/66.

²⁶ Cockett, *The Twilight of Truth*, pp.151-152.

²⁷ Inskip MSS: diary, Oct. 9 1939, INKP 1/2.

fair play. Germany was a 'tyranny' determined to secure world domination. With the takeover of Austria and Czechoslovakia, 'the humanitarian motives of the German government could not be accepted at their face value by a world deeply disgusted by the steady growth of religious, racial and political persecution within the now enlarged political boundaries of the new Reich'. The responsibility for securing 'European freedom' rested entirely with Christian Britain.²⁸ The government continued to remain vague in its definition of war aims. Others saw that Hitlerism was not the real threat but the whole German military machine. Sir Robert Vansittart warned against the widely held government view of separating Prussian militarism from Nazism. He stated that it was impossible to destroy Nazism simply by securing the disappearance of Hitler himself as 'There was not a single German of good sense.' Vansittart was notoriously anti-German.²⁹ It is interesting to note that Hankey, whose sense of history came into play, also held this view. In one commentary, presumably written for private consumption, Hankey commented on the state of war. He made the comparison with Hitler and the Prussian aggressions of 1864, 1866 and 1870.³⁰

When Lord Halifax addressed a meeting of the 1922 Committee he explained that the government was seeking to improve its relations with neutral countries and that efforts were being undertaken to ensure continued Italian neutrality. As for the suggestion of an Anglo-Soviet alliance, Halifax believed that this would only be secure if the USSR was given permission to do as they pleased in the Baltic, which

²⁸ Lord Lloyd, *The British Case*, London, Eyre and Spottiswode, 1939, p.13 and 44. Includes an introduction by Lord Halifax.

²⁹ Vansittart MSS: diary, 10 Oct. 1939, VNST 2/43.

³⁰ Hankey MSS: general correspondence, 1939, HNKY 4/31

would have 'stultified our whole position with regard to aggression'. Halifax went on to say again that Britain was wary of defining aims.³¹

That Britain was now at war allowed Conservatives to unleash their hostility towards the German nation. Thus it was that the use of highly emotive language was used to rouse audiences against the Nazi threat. Churchill's speeches were a good example of this. The emotive nature of some of Churchill's peacetime speeches was discredited as 'alarmist'. However, during the war, Churchill's mastery of the English language made him a powerful speaker. During his first wartime broadcast, Churchill spoke of the allies' intention to prevent the 'Nazis carrying out the flames of war into the Balkans and Turkey'. He confidently predicted victory against Hitler 'and his group of wicked men, whose hands are stained with blood and soiled with corruption'. And stated that the British were 'the defenders of civilisation and freedom.' In another broadcast, Churchill declared:

The whole world is against Hitler and Hitlerism. Men of every race and clime feel that this monstrous apparition stands between them and the forward move, which is their due. Even in Germany itself there are millions who stand aloof from the seething mass of criminality and corruption constituted by the Nazi party machine.³²

Some critics felt that the Churchillian rhetoric was over the top. Halifax once

³¹ CPA: 1922 Committee, 25 Oct. 1939, CPA/1922CMMTEE.

³² M. Gilbert, *Finest Hour, 1939-1941*, Winston S. Churchill VI, London, Heinemann,

complained to a friend during the Phoney War how Churchill's 'voice oozes with port and the smell of chewed cigar'.³³ The BBC Director of Talks was concerned that 'these broadcasts were giving the wrong signals to the Dominions, which makes one more doubtful than ever about the value of Churchill's broadcasts. In addition, of course, he managed to offend both Italy and the US in successive talks'.³⁴

Most people were convinced that Nazism was the real enemy. The real dilemma lay in defining the expected war aims once Nazism had been defeated. Some Conservatives saw a risk in emphasising the crusade solely against Hitlerism; for fear that another Nazi Government might replace it. This would invalidate the legitimacy of continuing a war, especially to American and Dominion opinion. Winterton believed that since the German people accepted that Hitlerism and the German nation were one, it had to be made clear what Britain intended:

To smash both in overwhelming force. Then and only then can we both settle down. In peace in Europe. We do not want permanent enmity between Germany and us, but we are going to make it impossible for (her) to make another war of aggression.³⁵

However, the government, until after the fall of Chamberlain, did not accept this style

1983, p.50 and 81.

³³ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p.186.

³⁴ D.J. Wenden, 'Churchill, Radio and Cinema', in R. Blake and Wm R. Louis (eds.) *Churchill*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.222.

³⁵ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates 5th Series, vol. 360, col 1168, 7 May 1940.

of fighting talk. The problems of the British position were summarised by Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent secretary at the Foreign Office, when, at the end of September 1939, Halifax asked for his assessment of war aims:

I told him I saw awful difficulties. We can no longer say 'evacuate Poland' without wanting to go to war with Russia, which we don't want to do! I suppose the cry is 'Abolish Hitlerism'. What if Hitler hands over to Goring?³⁶

The conclusion of the war cabinet was the vague idea that the purposes was to free Europe from the fear of German aggression and enable the populations to preserve their liberties and independence. This in short meant the removal of Hitler. As Halifax wrote, he

...wished to fight long enough to induce such a state of mind in the Germans that they could say they'd had an enough of Hitler! And that point is not really met by talking about Czechoslovakia, Poland and all the rest of it. The real point is, I'm afraid, that I can trust no settlement unless and until H[itler is discredited. When we shall achieve this nobody can say, but I don't think any 'settlement' is worth much without!³⁷

³⁶ Dilks (ed.) *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, 23 Sept. 1939. p.219.

³⁷ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p.185.

This basically meant that as long as Chamberlain remained Prime Minister the war would be confined to Eastern Europe. The British government maintained the stance that Germany could only be brought to its senses by a short sharp shock.

It is easy with hindsight to criticise the administration for its often confused and vague approach to the war. It seems clear that Chamberlain disliked action for its own sake. In a reply to Commander Stephen King-Hall, Chamberlain wrote that 'there is undoubtedly danger that public opinion may press, especially in France, for action for its own sake'.³⁸ As for the leaflet dropping campaign, Chamberlain clearly wished to avoid the carnage of 'total' war by appealing to the German people. In a leaflet dropped over Germany dealing with the Prime Minister's speech of 12 October, the following passage was quoted:

'We seek no material advantage for ourselves', continued Mr. Chamberlain. 'We desire nothing from the German people, which should offend their self-respect. We are not only aiming at victory, but rather looking beyond it to the lasting of a foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of every succeeding generation.'³⁹

For Chamberlain, the inevitability of an escalation of war was less apparent. We know that from the letters to his sisters that he wanted an internal collapse in Germany, which would topple Hitler and bring into power a more moderate German

³⁸ PRO PREM 1/436, Chamberlain to Stephen King-Hall, 1 April 1940.

³⁹ PRO PREM 1/442: Letter from Campbell Stewart to Arthur Rucker, SECRET

leadership, with whom an escape from the madness of total war might be negotiated.

⁴⁰ However, by December 1939, Chamberlain was beginning to feel frustrated and had come to accept that German morale needed 'a real hard punch in the stomach' before the people would move against Hitler.⁴¹ British propaganda in the form of leaflet dropping was not enough to bring this about. Economic warfare on the other hand could have the right effect. Contraband control was introduced as soon as war broke out. It sought to cripple Germany's economy, and her ability to wage war, by preventing the importation of certain types of goods into Germany by sea. In reality, the range of goods defined, as 'contraband' was so large that it amounted to a virtual economic blockade of Germany. Further economic measures against Germany were taken when an Order from Council, issued by the King on 27 November, authorised the seizure of all goods on ships sailing from neutral ports 'which are of enemy origin or are enemy property.'⁴² This unfortunately brought Britain into dispute with a number of neutral countries, with whom Britain had no reason to antagonise, and this led to widespread concessions, which although important, reduced the effectiveness of the Allied blockade.

As long as Chamberlain remained as Prime Minister the war would be confined to Eastern Europe. The British government's attitude towards Germany was that of some young offender who could be brought to his right mind by a short sharp shock. This

dated 18 Feb. 1940.

⁴⁰ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 8 Oct. 1939, NC 18/1/1124.

⁴¹ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 3 Dec. 1939, NC 18/1/1133A.

⁴² PRO FO 800/911 'Order in Council framing Proposals for Restricting further the Commerce of Germany' Statutory rules and orders 1939, No 1709, 27 Nov. 1939.

view did not resolve the debate about war aims, and criticisms of the government's approach were to persist throughout the months that Chamberlain remained Prime Minister. Lord Reith, the Minister of Information from January 1940, was longing during mid-March for a 'concrete indication...of the precise policy they intended to pursue to defeat Germany', which would enable him to counter the 'general atmosphere of anxiety in regard to high policy and the conduct of the war in general'.⁴³ These doubts were kept private. The public words of the government, with its broad emphasis on defeating Nazi aggression in Europe, suggested at least for the sake of national unity to accept the government's aims. By the time Churchill succeeded to the premiership the immediate war aims were much clearer, having been narrowed specifically to military issues of survival or surrender.

During the debates about Britain's war aims and war prosecution, these did not make Chamberlain's defeat and Churchill's succession to the premiership in May 1940 inevitable. What was to prove crucial was the perceived suitability of a minister for conducting a war. Chamberlain had once commented that the nearer war came the better Churchill's chances of returning to office.⁴⁴ Chamberlain's faith in Churchill's abilities as a government minister was to indirectly lead to his fall from office.

THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

At the outbreak of the war, Chamberlain's critics in the party were the same handful

⁴³ Wallace MSS, diary, 18 March 1940, MS.Eng.hist.c.496.

⁴⁴ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 23 April 1939, NC 18/1/1095.

of backbenchers that had opposed the Munich agreement. However, they were no longer under the leadership of Churchill and Eden, who had now joined the government. Now there was developing a new kind of critic. Lady Astor, the Conservative MP for Plymouth Sutton and Cliveden hostess, added to the criticism of the Chamberlain administration. Before the war, Lady Astor had been strongly supportive of Chamberlain. However, her account of a private speech made by Chamberlain to the Conservative 1922 Committee in November 1939 was damning:

The P.M spoke with vigour and he looked extremely well, but what he said depressed me more than anything else since the war began...He said that the critics had been confounded, and that the Axis instead of working was breaking...he implied that the Government's policy had been definitely planned one carried out, and that we had entered the war fully prepared.⁴⁵

The 'Twilight War' was a strange time in British political life. Nothing was quite as it seemed and a degree of boredom had set in amongst both ministers and backbenchers alike. Astor's feelings about Chamberlain express some of that frustration. For those who had ministerial responsibilities there was work enough to complete. Yet for those without, Parliament became more of a sorting office for constituents' complaints. Around 90 government supporting MPs were on active service with the armed forces

⁴⁵ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, pp.65-66.

by January 1940, whilst many more performed some kind of home defence work.⁴⁶ Sittings were fewer at Westminster in wartime. For obvious reasons little strategic information was divulged. Ministers attended the Chamber simply to make statements about what their particular department was doing. Debate was almost non-existent. It was within this atmosphere of frustration that the Liberal Clement Davis with the Independent Eleanor Rathbone as Secretary founded the 'all action party group' in September 1939. It was in short a club for discontented MPs who could voice their frustrations about the progress of the war. Some unpleasant things had been said at a secret session debate during mid-December, but it is difficult to judge whether Nicolson's feeling that it marked 'a stage in the end of this administration'⁴⁷ was more accurate than Channon's comment that 'the PM seems to be in even better form and fettle'.⁴⁸ Inskip noted that the government's 'popularity rises and falls' and 'that the papers are grumbling about everything'.⁴⁹ The excited speculation of September gave way at Christmas to gossip about the state of Chamberlain's health and about who was performing well or badly in the administration.

The lack of military activity was perhaps one reason why boredom had set in amongst those in parliament. Adjusting to the terms of this strangely unwarlike war took time. Emrys-Evans complained bitterly to Eden about the 'sham' of 'parliament going on exactly as if we were at peace,' and that 'there is no reality about this

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.69.

⁴⁷ N. Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1939-1945*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, 14 Dec. 1939, p.50.

⁴⁸ Rhodes James (ed.), '*Chips*', 13-14th Dec. 1939, p.278.

⁴⁹ Inskip MSS: diary 16 Dec. 1939, INKP/2.

activity',⁵⁰ whilst Amery, who had been critical of Chamberlain's peacetime administration, now found it 'absurd that I should not be made use of'.⁵¹ Therefore criticism of the government was becoming more widespread. The Ministry of Information was badly run and there was inter-departmental rivalry. With the war so remote, it is hardly surprising that politics seemed to take the same centre stage of interest as it did in peacetime. Hore-Belisha's sacking in early January was an example of this. Chamberlain had no wish to dismiss his Secretary of State for War. In fact, before Christmas he had expressed confidence in him.⁵² Chamberlain had planned to move him in a reshuffle to either the Ministry of Information, or at Halifax's suggestion, the Board of Trade.⁵³ The demand for his sacking was activated by the demands of the King and the generals, Lord Gort in France and General Ironside in London, although Chamberlain was publicly to deny that they had any such involvement in his sacking.⁵⁴ Hore-Belisha had to go. Belisha was unwilling to accept a lesser post and resigned, although initially his resignation/sacking caused a sensation, it soon died down. Part of the reason, lay in the fact that Hore-Belisha had little parliamentary following. Chamberlain also gained confidence from dismissing Belisha and during the next month he appeared at his best.⁵⁵ Much has been written

⁵⁰ Emrys-Evans MSS: Emrys-Evans, E-E. to Eden, 17th March 1940. Ad.MS 582242.

⁵¹ Emrys-Evans MSS: Emrys-Evans, E.E to Eden, 17th March 1949. Ad.MS 582242.

⁵² I. Macleod, *Neville Chamberlain*, London, Muller, 1961, p.284.

⁵³ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p.192.

⁵⁴ Inskip MSS: Diary, 8th January 1940. INKP 1/2.

⁵⁵ Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p. 189.

about Hore-Belisha's sacking by historians.⁵⁶ They have argued that anti-Semitism prompted his departure. This is an important factor and should not be forsaken. However, his departure is important in that it was probably a factor in preventing Chamberlain from carrying out a much more 'daring project' to regenerate the government onto a truly 'national' status.⁵⁷

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Much focus has been given to Chamberlain's inflexible approach to the construction of the war cabinet. However, Labour's leaders would have perhaps been surprised to learn that the two bogey-men of the government, Hoare and Simon, were now regarded by Margesson as 'egocentric intriguers', whom he thought should be 'got rid of'.⁵⁸ At the time of Hore-Belisha's removal, Chamberlain was planning to sideline Simon at the Exchequer and replace him with Lord Stamp. What were Chamberlain's motives for this? Perhaps he felt embarrassed by Simon's attitude leading up to the outbreak of war.⁵⁹ Montague Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, wanted him sacked. Another intriguing possibility is that Chamberlain was thinking in terms of a reconstruction of the government on the lines of Lloyd George's radical war cabinet of 1916. This could perhaps clear the path for some of Labour's leaders to be

⁵⁶ See, in particular Andrew Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994, pp.30-33 and Crowson's *Facing Fascism*, pp.187-190, A.J. Trythall, 'The Downfall of Leslie Hore-Belisha', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16,3 (1981), pp.391-411.

⁵⁷ Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida, 20 Jan. 1940. NC 18/1/1139. Chamberlain talked about making radical changes to the Government.

⁵⁸ Colville, *Fringes of Power*, 4 Nov. 1939, p.47.

⁵⁹ D. Dutton, *Simon-A Political Biography*, London, Arnold, 1992, p.287.

drawn in.

A major criticism of Chamberlain centred on his refusal to institute stronger co-ordination of the economy. In economic affairs there were several departments leading independent lives: the Board of Trade, the ministries of Labour, Supply, Food, Shipping, and Economic Warfare. They were co-ordinated by two committees under Treasury control: an official committee under the chief economic advisor, Lord Stamp, and a ministerial committee under the Chancellor, Sir John Simon. As the newly elected National Labour M.P., Stephen King Hall, observed, criticism fastened on to the inability of Simon to double the roles of minister in charge of the Treasury and the economic strategist.⁶⁰ Perhaps, this would clear the path for some of Labour's leaders to join a coalition. This was clearly an attempt by Chamberlain to assert his leadership. The government's popularity was by this time rather volatile. The appointments of Morrison, as Minister for Food, and Dorman-Smith at agriculture, were unpopular and deemed a weakness of the government. For critics of the government, this was evidence of the influence wielded by Horace Wilson and David Margesson, the Chief Whip. Margesson, however, felt that changes to the government were necessary and that Chamberlain was experiencing difficulties in finding men and women of sufficient quality for ministerial appointments, therefore 'it was considered that some accession of strength to the government might be found from importing one or two people from outside'.⁶¹ This was not a new concern for Chamberlain, for even in peacetime he had complained about the lack of young talent on the government

⁶⁰ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.65.

⁶¹ Wallace MSS: Diary, 12 Nov.1939, MS. Eng. hist. c. 495.

backbenches.⁶² Under the pressure of wartime, Chamberlain was forced to look to the world of business for men he deemed worthy. This led to a series of men from business appointments. In January 1940, Sir Andrew Duncan, Chairman of the British Iron and Steel Federation, became President of the Board of Trade and Sir John Reith, the former Director-General of the B.B.C became Minister of Information.

In the months leading up to the war, Chamberlain had favoured Simon's supporters in his ministerial appointments. Simon, who as a National Liberal had been part of the National Government since 1931, had always felt that his influence on policy as a 'Liberal' was important in a largely Conservative-dominated administration. In fact, Simon considered that the Liberals could achieve a lot more in co-operation with the Conservatives than remaining outside the government, as a Liberal. Simon was not a popular figure within Conservative circles; neither was Hore-Belisha who was also a

⁶² Chamberlain MSS: NC to Ida Chamberlain, 17 December 1938, NC18/1/1080.

National Liberal. Collin Brooks, a right-wing journalist, wrote that Belisha had grown 'bumptious and cocky with office, and became just an impossible person with whom to work'.⁶³ Simon's removal would have pleased a large body of the Conservative party and would have meant Labour leaders would have been happier to accept office.

Chamberlain was aware of the politically damaging accusation that his government was not 'national' enough long before his critics could make that charge effective. That he was unable to transform his administration into a more 'true', 'genuine', or 'real' National government was certainly a misfortune. Had his pursuit of Lord Stamp been successful, the Norway debate might have actually favoured Chamberlain, despite the division that followed it. The appointment of Stamp was based on the idea that non-political specialists could be made to appear positive in wartime. Chamberlain, like Margaret Thatcher, was very keen on appointing those outside the political arena who could bring their specialist knowledge to work in government.⁶⁴ Chamberlain was also keen, like Thatcher, to de-politicise the Conservative Party by bringing in people who were not accountable to the electorate. This does not imply dictatorship; it had more to do with Chamberlain's belief in business and getting things done efficiently. He believed that such an ethos could be applied to government. Chamberlain, at the beginning of his premiership, had talked about

⁶³ N.J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet Street Press Barons and Politics: The Journals of Collin Brooks*, London, Routledge, 1998. 7th Jan. 1940, p.263.

⁶⁴ Examples of this include Lord (David) Young's appointment as Secretary of State for Employment and later the DTI in the 1980s. Lord Young was a businessman. Also, Sir Jefferey Stirling, Chairman of P&O from 1986, who was an advisor at the DTI under the Thatcher administration.

moving away from the straightjacket of party politics.⁶⁵ What was also useful about their non-political base is that they could be dismissed or forced to resign with the minimum of political fuss.⁶⁶

Lord Hankey explored the possibility of an enabling bill whereby a peer might speak, but not be able to vote in Parliament. Hankey, who had served as the first Cabinet Secretary in Lloyd George's war cabinet, had no doubt that 'Chamberlain was fully equipped to carry out the functions of a war Prime Minister'.⁶⁷ John Colville was entrusted with the task of arranging discussions with Montague Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, and Horace Wilson, about effecting the change.⁶⁸ Stamp was in fact reluctant to become Chancellor and nothing came of the plan, although Hore-Belisha's removal also played its part. It would look bad for Chamberlain if he had to dispense with another National Liberal member of the war cabinet. There were about thirty National Liberals. They could not both be axed at once. Thus, the 'daring project' that Chamberlain had envisaged resulted in the most minor of reshuffles. Oliver Stanley moved into the War Office, whilst Duncan took the Board of Trade. Lord Reith replaced Lord Macmillan as Minister of Information,

⁶⁵ See, Neville Chamberlain's Caxton Hall Speech, June 1937 on accepting the leadership of the Conservative Party. *The Times*, 1 June 1937. Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p.356.

⁶⁶ Chamberlain had been briefly Director of National Service in the First World War and had been sacked by Lloyd George in 1917.

⁶⁷ Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets 111*, p.427. The post of Cabinet Secretary was created in December 1916. Hankey had been Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence since 1912. He became the first Cabinet Secretary in December 1916.

⁶⁸ Colville, *The Fringes of Power*, 28 Dec. 1939, p.60.

changes that were badly received.⁶⁹ It should be pointed out that Stanley was not a businessman but a career politician. The appointments of the supermen were not successful. Neither man appeared comfortable in his post; both would remain in office only until Chamberlain's fall from power. Emrys-Evans considered the appointment of Stanley as 'an astonishing appointment'. Stanley was 'a weak man,' and Evans could not 'help feeling that it is his weakness which has been his chief recommendation in the eyes of the PM'.⁷⁰

The three ministerial changes that Chamberlain made were ineffective. In April 1940 he made some additional changes but the reception was not good after rumours abounded that he had offered Labour three seats in the Cabinet.⁷¹ Kingsley Wood swapped places with Hoare, and Chatfield, who had thought his job 'superfluous' for some time, was sacked.⁷² The effect of the April reshuffle carried two important consequences. One was that a large section of parliamentary opinion was not satisfied with the changes Chamberlain had made. Euan Wallace told Margesson that 'the very worst possible thing' was for ministers simply to 'exchange offices'.⁷³ Lord Salisbury felt that public opinion was not appreciated; thus the decision was made to inaugurate the Watching Committee made up of both vocal peers and commoners. It was in this light that Tory ultras could now channel their weight towards criticising the

⁶⁹ Crookshank MSS, diary, 4 April 1940, MS. Eng.hist.d360 f.55; Wallace MSS, diary, 3 April 1940, MS. Eng.hist.c.496.

⁷⁰ Emrys-Evans MSS: Emrys-Evans to Eden, 7 Jan. 1940, Add. Ms.58242 f.20.

⁷¹ Pimlott, *Dalton*, p.272.

⁷² Inskip MSS: Diary, 9 April 1940, INKP 2.

⁷³ Wallace MSS: Diary, 31 March 1940. MSS Eng. Hist. 496.

government more directly. Its purpose was 'to watch the conduct of the war ... to make representations to the government where they consider there is a risk of mistakes being made or where it seems that the trend of public opinion is not appreciated.'⁷⁴ The Watching Committee was formed around the Cecil family, and comprised members from both Houses of Parliament, it held its first meeting on 4 April 1940, and just days after another cabinet reshuffle had been badly received. Although the committee contained a number of potential critics of the government, it also contained potential loyalists and technical specialists. The blend of critics and loyalists was deliberately created so that all trends of party opinion would be represented.⁷⁵

PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP: CHURCHILL, CHAMBERLAIN AND NORWAY

The war cabinet contained in Chamberlain and Churchill two natural driving forces. Although Chamberlain was not a visionary politician, he was masterful in administration, swift in the assimilation of detail and the execution of policy. He was also stubborn. The powers of the Prime Minister were at his disposal and he could rely on the steady solidity of the Conservative party in the Commons. An opinion poll in April 1940 recorded a 57 per cent approval of his premiership.⁷⁶ Although an unspectacular leader, Chamberlain gave the appearance of quiet, middle class

⁷⁴ Emrys-Evans MSS, Lord Salisbury to Evans, 31 March 1940, Add. MS. 58245.

⁷⁵ Emrys-Evans MSS, Evans to Amery, 1 July 1954, Add. MS.58247 f.22

assurance and decency. Churchill's talents were also varied. In the war cabinet he displayed his restless spirit and formidable powers of oratory. His department, the Admiralty, was considered to be the only service that possessed any glamour. It was also considered to be superior in relation to its German opposite number and offered the best chances for Churchill to launch some of the aggressive tactics that he had in mind.

Churchill and Chamberlain worked well together in the new war cabinet, notwithstanding their continued rivalry in the execution of policy. There was a difference of attitude towards fighting the war and Germany. Chamberlain had stated the formal position of the British Government on peace on 12 October 1939:

Either the German Government must give convincing proof of the sincerity of their desire for peace by definite acts and by provision of effective guarantees of their intention to fulfil their undertakings, or we must preserve in our duty to the end.⁷⁷

Chamberlain was clear that the elimination of Hitlerism was the central war aim. Neither Chamberlain nor Halifax expected Hitler to become a reformed character, but Chamberlain especially clung to the belief that a total war could be avoided. Churchill, in contrast, felt that a long war lay ahead, and there was no way to avoid an all-out struggle. As he informed Roosevelt's envoy, Sumner Welles, in March 1940:

⁷⁶ H. Cantril, *Public Opinion*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1951, pp.96-97.

⁷⁷ *Hansard*, House of Commons debates 5th Series, Vol. 352, 12 October 1939, col.568.

The objectives of the German people had not changed and would not change. These were world supremacy and military conquest. There could be no solution other than the outright and complete defeat of Germany; the destruction of National Socialism, and the determination in the new peace treaty of dispositions which would control Germany's course in the future in such a way as to give Europe, and the world, peace and security for 100 years.⁷⁸

The difference of attitudes towards Germany was part of something wider. Chamberlain, Simon, Hoare and Halifax still believed in the liberal conservatism of the inter war years. They had learned to accept the limits of British power and to react to that with peace and morality. When challenged by the Congress party in India, by Mussolini in the Mediterranean, or by Hitler in Central Europe, they generally took the line of appeasement. Churchill's entry into the war cabinet meant the intrusion of a different kind of patriotism of the pre-1914 school. After the Munich agreement, Churchill had called for a 'supreme recovery of mental health and martial vigour'.⁷⁹ Although, like Chamberlain, he could operate with stealth and masterly delay, Churchill had an irrepressible urge to fly the flag and bang the drum. He was anxious to prove his loyalty to the Chamberlain team, and thus to work his passage back to respectability. Churchill could not help bursting into the language of Palmerston and

⁷⁸ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.83.

Disraeli. These few points show where Churchill differed from the majority of the war cabinet. However, Chamberlain had enough confidence in Churchill to make him effective chairman of the service ministers coordination committee in the April 1940 reshuffle. It recognised Churchill's public reputation for energy and drive in the conduct of war. It also sought to promote greater integration among the services when the plan to extend the theatre of war to Norway was made, as to demonstrate allied action mindedness and deprive Germany of iron ore. One of the problems with the ministerial reshuffle of April 1940 was that the dust was never allowed to settle on the new ministerial arrangements for them to succeed. There was not enough time to identify scapegoats when things started to go wrong. Had the judgement been restricted to ministerial colleagues, service chiefs and senior civil servants, there can be little doubt that the blunders of the Norway Campaign would have been heaped on Churchill's shoulders, just as he had lost the same post over the Gallipoli fiasco in 1915. This would have been a fair verdict on the performance of the First Lord of the Admiralty in the spring of 1940. His chairing of the military co-ordination committee caused such a 'pandemonium' that a semblance of order was only restored when Chamberlain reverted to chairing its meetings from 16 April.⁸⁰ Operationally Churchill was also at fault. His decision on 8 April to send all naval units to cover a breakout in the Atlantic, whereas in fact German warships were moving northwards towards Norway was a costly error.⁸¹ He was perhaps to blame for turning a setback

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.83

⁸⁰ J. Wheeler-Bennett (ed.), *Action this Day*, London, Macmillan, 1968, p.48.

⁸¹ D. Irving, *Churchill's War: The Path to Power Vol 1*, Australia, Veritus, 1987, pp.236-237.

into a disaster through ‘meddling’ and his indecision over attacking Trondeheim in central Norway and thereby denying Germany the use of airbases there.⁸² However, Churchill was not to be made a sacrificial lamb a second time. He offended the other service ministers to the extent that they threatened resignation, exasperated the Admiralty staff and had rows with Chamberlain over the extent of his powers.⁸³ He also attacked the ‘machine’ that provided professional advice about the conduct of the war.⁸⁴ At the same time he took careful steps to disassociate himself from Chamberlain’s leadership by establishing contact with the Liberal leader Archie Sinclair, A.V. Alexander for Labour and Salisbury’s Watching Committee.⁸⁵ In this way a channel for counter-propaganda was established just at the time when defeat in Norway became public knowledge. At the end of April, the political question of whose head would roll rose to the surface. Lord Dunglass, perhaps on instruction from Chamberlain, ‘pumped’ Channon on the prospects of deflating Churchill’s ego and removing him from the Admiralty.⁸⁶ At the same time Halifax noted that great efforts ‘were being made to represent the Norwegian business as the result of timid colleagues restraining the bold, dashing, courageous Winston’.⁸⁷ Thus it was with

⁸² Chamberlain MSS: NC to Hilda Chamberlain, 4 May 1940, NC 18/1/1153.

⁸³ J.A. Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare: A Political Biography*, London, Cape, 1977, pp.314-315.

⁸⁴ M. Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p.370.

⁸⁵ Their relationship predated this period. Churchill and Sinclair had served together in the First World War and Sinclair was Churchill’s junior during the Lloyd George coalition. There is no doubt that Churchill found his contact with Sinclair useful throughout the late 30s as well as during the ‘phoney war’.

⁸⁶ Rhodes James (ed.), *‘Chips’*, 25 April 1940, p.297.

⁸⁷ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p.194.

some irony that the stage was set for the man chiefly responsible for military failure to emerge as its political beneficiary. It was of little matter that the Norwegian Campaign was not yet over and that naval successes would produce a more complex situation. What was important was that Chamberlain's critics were handed the pretext for their offensive. Provided they had a forum, the 'fishers in troubled waters' were organised and determined to press home their attacks.⁸⁸ They did not have to look far. The debate on the Whitsun adjournment, a scheduled parliamentary occasion, presented them with their opportunity.

For three weeks during April and May 1940 Churchill's standing had diminished. Each day had brought news of sinking, evacuation and casualties. Perhaps with some irony, the defeat in Norway seemed to rally support, not just for the government but also for Chamberlain's own policy of detachment. On 5 March 1940 Lord Beaverbrook had entertained the Independent Labour MP's James Maxton and John McGovern. McGovern attributes this statement to Beaverbrook:

He could not see any alternative at that time but to negotiate an honourable settlement, retire behind our Empire frontiers, arm ourselves to the teeth, leave the continent to work out its won destiny and defend the empire with all its strength.⁸⁹

This in part reflected some of Chamberlain's sentiments, although he would have

⁸⁸ Wallace MSS: diary, 1 May 1940. MSS Eng. Hist. 497.

⁸⁹ A. Clark, *The Tories: The Conservatives and the Nation-State, 1922-1997*, London,

stopped short of a negotiated settlement. According to A.J.P. Taylor, Beaverbrook had been against going to war. He did not believe that a strongly armed Britain was in danger from Germany.⁹⁰ The issue of what ‘the Beaver’ was up to is an interesting one. It seems that he was offering to finance the ILP’s anti-war campaign, however, it was something that he was to later deny.⁹¹ Beaverbrook continued to defend the government in a leader page article he wrote in the *Daily Express*.⁹² This all helped strengthen Chamberlain’s hand. He dismissed the Norwegian defeat as ‘a minor affair’. He claimed credit for the government that London was not been bombed - ‘nor is it likely to be’. He cited the defeat of the U-boats, immense financial resources, the impregnable Maginot Line. This was a brilliant piece of propaganda and a robust defence of the Prime Minister’s wartime strategy. Beaverbrook received a handwritten note from the Prime Minister - ‘When so many are sounding the defeatist note over a minor setback, it is a relief to read such a courageous and inspiring summons to a saner view.’⁹³ Churchill’s reputation at this point was in the shadow. As stated earlier the military co-ordination committee was in disarray and Chamberlain had himself taken the chair. Chamberlain recorded that:

It is...getting into a sad mess, with everyone feeling irritable and strained and

Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998, p.203.

⁹⁰ A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, London, 1972, p. 404.

⁹¹ M. Davie and A. Chisholm, *Beaverbrook: A Life*, London, Hutchinson, 1992, p.372.

⁹² Throughout the Phoney War, *The Daily Express* was obstructing the war effort. It criticized the Blackout, and ran a campaign against food rationing. Cited in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life*, p.373.

⁹³ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p.404.

with a general conviction that Winston had smashed the machine that we had so carefully built up⁹⁴

Within forty-eight hours the political situation would change completely. There was a developing feeling of indignation at the Norway defeat. It was seen as a major humiliation of the world's greatest naval power. This was an instinct, which was to also afflict the Major government in 1997. The general feeling was that the administration was decomposing. When the party of government is in such a state, members of parliament always find it difficult to resist an opportunity and make an impression on the passage of history.

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE NORWAY DEBATE

The story of the two-day Norway debate of 7-8 May has often been told. It must be stated that the event, although a factor in Chamberlain resigning the Premiership on 10 May, was not a cause of it. The extent of the rebellion is inflated. Historians have often accepted the rebels' version of events and in particular, their wildly inflated recollections on the number of government supporters who defied their Whips and voted with the Opposition or abstained. In some accounts the figure for Conservative rebels is made to be as high as 50. In others, stiffened by the findings of political science, the number of Conservatives as distinct from National Liberal or National

⁹⁴ Chamberlain to his Sister, 20 April 1940, cited in Charmley, *The End of Glory*, p.387.

Labour rebels is somewhere in the forties.⁹⁵ Dr. Crowson states that ‘forty-four Conservatives had cross-voted and sixty abstained’.⁹⁶ Actually, a mere 38 MPs who took the Conservative Whip (of whom only 33 were Conservatives) voted with the Opposition and most of them were known rebels. There is no list of abstentions so calculating their number is difficult. However, careful examination reveals that the figure was no higher than 25 and was probably closer to 20.⁹⁷ Therefore the scale of the rebellion is far less than it has usually been made out to be. In mythical terms, something like 100 government supporting MPs are supposed to have defied the Whips on 8 May 1940 whereas, in fact, as James Stuart recorded, only ‘some sixty Tories...failed to support Chamberlain in the Norway vote’.⁹⁸ Stuart’s recollection is of course one among many. But that he was deputy chief whip only adds weight to it. The core of the opposition came from the Watching Committee: Amery, Cooper, Emrys-Evans, Law, Macmillan and Nicolson, most of whom had long accepted that Chamberlain must go, and had committed to voting against the government. Close allies and friends, including Lady Astor (who was married to a committee member), followed them. This enlarged group then brought along more Conservative backbenchers.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ramussen’s ‘Party Discipline in Wartime’ analysis is still, despite its age and errors much relied on.

⁹⁶ Cited in Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.195.

⁹⁷ N.Smart, ‘Four Days in May: The Norway Debate and the Downfall of Neville Chamberlain’, *Parliamentary History*, 17, 2, 1998.

⁹⁸ J. Stuart, *Within the Fringe*, London, Bodley Head, 1967, p.87.

⁹⁹ L.Witherell, ‘Lord Salisbury’s ‘Watching Committee and the Fall of Neville Chamberlain, May 1940’, *English Historical Review* forthcoming article. I would like to thank Dr. Witherell for granting me advance viewing of this article.

Another piece of enduring myth is the claim that the government's 'technical victory' by 81 votes was a moral defeat, as a majority well in excess of 200 should have been obtained.¹⁰⁰ This does not take account of serving MPs absences from Westminster, by-election changes in the 1935 parliament and changes of party allegiance. Actually a majority of 100 would have been enough to persuade everyone –whether the government's supporters or critics of the security of Chamberlain's position.

If the failed Norway expedition had been an isolated incident then it would have been unlikely to lead to the fall of the government. However, for many Conservatives it was perceived as yet another example of the weakness and ineffectiveness of the administration. From the outset of the war, Chamberlain appeared to act on the assumption that the National government would be able to continue running the country through a limited war, without major upheavals in the pre-war *status quo*. The major issue concerning the effectiveness of the personnel of the war cabinet and the supposed unwillingness of the government to take the war to Germany provided the right ingredients for discontent. War no longer required party politics but a government of national unity. This was a realisation that had dawned upon Chamberlain at the beginning of the war. However, his failure to broaden the government by bringing Labour into the wartime coalition made him more vulnerable to attack from the Opposition parties. In part this was due to his character, with its combination of vanity and shyness. 'Ungregarious by nature', wrote Duff Cooper, Chamberlain 'never frequented the smoking room of the House of Commons, where

¹⁰⁰ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, pp.98-9.

Stanley Baldwin and Winston Churchill were familiar figures, often in the centre of groups which included political opponents'.¹⁰¹ This failure to mix freely with his backbenchers had by 1940 created the belief that the leadership was no longer receptive to criticisms. Chamberlain's own conservative conviction combined with his reserved nature tended to divorce him from many of the younger minds in the party whom he was inclined to dismiss as a disappearing lot. This emphasised the generation gap within the party. Many of those who were to rebel against the government were the foreign policy sceptics of the peace years, their sense of national duty under the pressure of war meant that they could no longer keep their criticisms private. The younger MPs who rebelled felt unconstrained by normal obligations to the party whip. This kind of behaviour would have been inconceivable in peacetime. MPs on war service attended the Commons infrequently. This denied them the normal channels of communication through which to express concerns over a period of time and lobby for a particular issue. If an MP were only attending for a special debate then a public registration of protest would have been perceived as a most profitable exercise. At one extreme there were some Conservatives, like Richard Law and Ronald Cartland, who were so disillusioned with the state of the party that they were contemplating never returning to politics, which meant the action of cross-voting or abstention and its expected censure carried no risks. Whilst the Norway debate is important because it brought down a government, it perhaps should be viewed as an untypical example of the breakdown of a party system.

¹⁰¹ D. Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, London, Collins, 1953, p.188.

CONCLUSION

This study has been an analysis of how a party and government responded to war. In the first months of the conflict there was some rallying to the government, and at least a veneer of party unity was restored by the reintroduction into office of Churchill and Eden. Conscious that victory could come only in a long war, for which economic resources would need to be carefully husbanded, Chamberlain still sought to avoid too abrupt a transition to a war economy, but this earned him the reputation more of a half-hearted warlord than of a careful planner. Amongst Tory circles only Churchill's reputation rose during the 'Phoney war', partly from a real zest for conflict and action which few of his colleagues seemed to share. This was a result of Churchill being at the helm of the one armed service that easily outgunned its German equivalent (so that the Navy alone won clear victories in the first year),¹ and partly because he managed quite brilliantly to remain loyal towards Chamberlain but at the same time to convey the impression that he would do the job far better than the incumbent.

When boredom and frustration were followed in 1940 by the humiliation of military defeat in Norway (for which Churchill was substantially responsible, but for which Chamberlain got most of the blame) and then even more seriously in France and Belgium, the slide in Chamberlain's fortunes turned into a collapse. He failed, as Asquith had done in 1916, to take the advice that might have saved him, which was to reconstruct his government far more drastically than in 1939. But Labour refused to serve under Chamberlain. However, from Chamberlain's own private papers and from

¹ The Navy was involved in skirmishes, the most famous of which being the sinking of the pocket battleship *Graf Spee* in Dec. 1939, whilst the RAF confined itself to dropping leaflets over Germany and the occasional Bombing raid. The British Expeditionary force remained inactive in France awaiting a German attack.

his conversations with Hankey, it seems clear that it was his intention to reconstruct the government on more radical lines. He failed to do so because of Attlee's veto on Labour members serving under Chamberlain. The drift of events should not be exaggerated, for far more Tory MPs still backed Chamberlain than opposed him; when he was eventually supplanted by Churchill, it was Chamberlain who was cheered from the Tory benches on his next appearance in the House and Churchill whose first speech as Prime Minister was received with Labour cheers and Tory silence. Nevertheless, the number of critics had grown substantially, many of them now the younger Tory MPs who were themselves in the armed forces and who returned periodically to the Commons to bemoan the lack of equipment, training and pre-war preparation in their own units.

Chamberlain's control of his party was undermined in the early months of the war; this was partly as a result of pressure coming from two different areas of his party. The first was from those who believed that there elements within the government who favoured coming to a peace accord with Germany and who were putting pressure on government ministers to sue for peace. The second group were the foreign policy sceptics who held the lingering suspicion that Chamberlain was only half-hearted about his desire to pursue the war.

During the years of peace there was no real doubt about Chamberlain's suitability as leader. Foreign and defence policies, though progressively more dominant in people's minds, were not the only areas of government policy. In domestic policies, the Chamberlain administration's achievements were considered sound. Certainly by 1939 Central Office (or more specifically the CRD) detected a change in public

opinion that desired a greater stress on domestic reforms.² This development suggested that if the government expected to be returned convincingly at the next election then a revised domestic policy was required. It would only be in the atmosphere of war, when all aspects of life and government policy were subjugated to the war effort, that doubts about Chamberlain's leadership abilities arose. Although Conservatives are strong on the idea of pulling together in a crisis, by May 1940 a significant proportion of the Tory party felt estranged from the decision making process. The impression that Chamberlain and his closest advisors were impervious to backbench expressions of concern persuaded a small number that it was necessary to give the leadership a jolt. It was not the intention to bring down the government. For those Conservatives who had been the foreign policy sceptics during the years of peace, Chamberlain's weakness was already apparent, and the lingering suspicion that Chamberlain was only half-hearted about his desire to pursue the war was not easily dispelled. The apparent inability of the government to adopt a positive and constructive approach to various areas of the war effort, especially the economy and agriculture, when combined with the reverses in Scandinavia in early 1940 created an atmosphere of despondency. This was compounded by Chamberlain's personality and the personnel problems of his cabinet. Although one speaker in the Norway debate suggested that these problems, if true, would have been reflected in his constituency postbags and they were not, many Conservatives were not so convinced.³

In the 'Norway' debate on 7 and 8 May 1940 Chamberlain's attempts to use the peacetime party mechanism of whipping, and his personal appeal to the loyalty of his

² CPA: D.Clark to J. Ball, 28 Nov. 1938, CRD1/7/35.

³ *Hansard*: House of Commons Debates, vol.360, col.1317 (Courthorpe), 8 May 1940.

'friends', struck the wrong note in a House profoundly worried about the threat to the national interest. Chamberlain's supporters recognised that Labour must be brought into office because of the benefit this would produce in encouraging trade unions to cooperate in the war industries, but Labour still refused to serve under Chamberlain because of his known contempt for them. Chamberlain's Chief Whip commented that his personalisation of policy disputes 'engendered personal dislike among his opponents to an extent almost unbelievable'.⁴ This factor alone would have sealed his fate as a war minister seeking to unite the country, once Conservative MPs failed to sustain him with a united party of his own.

⁴ Margesson MSS: Margesson to Baldwin, 4 March 1941. MRGN 1/5.

Appendix 1 -Selected individual mentioned in Thesis

1) Members of the War Cabinet: September 39 to May 1940

Prime Minister: Neville Chamberlain

Chancellor of the Exchequer: Sir John Simon (National Liberal)

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: Lord Halifax

Lord Privy Seal: Sir Samuel Hoare (from 3rd April 1940), Sir Kingsley Wood

Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence: Lord Chatfield (post abolished 3rd April 1940)

Secretary of State for War: Leslie Hoare-Belisha (National Liberal) (to 5th January 1940), Oliver Stanley

First Lord of the Admiralty: Winston Churchill

Secretary of State for Air: Sir Kingsley Wood (to 3rd April 1940), Sir Samuel Hoare)

Minister without Portfolio: Lord Hankey

2) Other Ministers and Senior Government Officials: (non-War Cabinet)

Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs: Anthony Eden (allowed to sit in War Cabinet)

Home Secretary: Sir John Anderson (National)

Minister for Economic Warfare: Ronald H. Cross

Minister for Information: Lord Macmillan (to 5th January 1940), Sir John Reith.

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: R.A. Butler

Minister of Supply: Sir Thomas Inskip

President of the Board of Trade: Oliver Stanley (to 5th January 1940), Sir Andrew Duncan

Chief Industrial Advisor: Sir Horace Wilson

Attorney General: Sir Donald Somervell

Master of the Rolls: Sir Wilfred Greene

Minister for Transport: Euan Wallace

3) Members of the Foreign Office

Permanent Under-Secretary of State: Sir Alexander Cadogan

Deputy Under-Secretary of State: Sir Orme Sargent

Assistant Under-Secretary of State: Sir William Strang

Chief Diplomatic Advisor: Sir Robert Vansittart

4) Miscellaneous:

Secretary to the War Cabinet: Sir Edward Bridges

Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister: Arthur Rucker

Private Secretary to the Prime Minister: Cecil Syers

Assistant Private Secretary to the Prime Minister: John Colville

Ministry of Information: Charles Peake, E.H. Carr, Lord Perth

Archbishop of Canterbury: Cosmo Gordon Lang

5) Others

Leopold Stennet Amery, MP for Sparkbrook, Birmingham

Cyril Thomas Culverwell, MP for Bristol West

The Duke of Buccleuch

Lord Brocket

Paul Emrys-Evans, MP for Derbyshire South

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Lord Halifax

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INF 1: General Correspondence

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National:

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Local Associations:

Bristol West (for Cyril Culverwell MP), *Bristol Record Office.*

3. Private Papers

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R.A. Butler, MSS *Trinity College, Cambridge*

Caldecote (Thomas Inskip), MSS *Churchill College, Cambridge*

Neville Chamberlain, MSS *Birmingham University Library*

David Margesson, MSS *Churchill College, Cambridge*

Sir John Simon, MSS *Bodleian Library, Oxford*

Euan Wallace, MSS *Bodleian Library, Oxford*

b) Conservative MPs and Peers

Lord and Lady Astor, MSS *Reading University Library*

Harry Crookshank, MSS *Bodleian Library, Oxford*

Paul Emrys-Evans, MSS *British Library*

c) Civil Servants and Foreign Office Officials

Sir. Maurice Hankey, MSS *Churchill College, Cambridge*

Sir. Robert Vansittart, MSS *Churchill College, Cambridge*

d) Miscellaneous

5th Baron Brabourne, MSS *British Library*

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