

‘Ambulant amateurs’: the rise and fade of the Anglo-German Fellowship

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Abstract

This thesis chronicles the fortunes of the Anglo-German Fellowship, the British society founded in 1935 that advocated friendship with Hitler's Germany up to its suspension in October 1939 following the outbreak of war. Drawing on newly discovered and previously overlooked primary sources, thematic and chronological methods are combined to explore how the Fellowship's leaders played a bigger role in the diplomatic crises of the late 1930s than previously acknowledged. Supported by its sister organisation in Germany, the Fellowship attracted support from British royal, political, diplomatic, aristocratic, business, financial, military, sporting and intelligence elites with its membership reaching nine hundred by 1938. Funded by business and financial interests and patronised by Anglo-German royalty, it was influenced by the German high command, welcomed by elements of the British establishment and infiltrated by British, German, Russian and Jewish intelligence agents.

To the extent it has been covered in the secondary literature, those assessing the Fellowship have classed it alongside the nasty, the eccentric and the irrelevant within 'the Fellow Travellers of the Right' tradition. This thesis challenges those stereotypes, arguing that it has been consequently misinterpreted and underestimated both by scholars and in popular culture over the last eighty years. Using primary sources to build an objective prosopography of its membership, evidence is offered that the Fellowship was more than a fringe pressure group and dining club and achieved international credibility as a lobbying body, diplomatic intermediary and intelligence-gathering tool.

Having surveyed the heritage of earlier transnational friendship societies, this thesis examines the business and economic motives, on both sides of the North Sea, in founding the Fellowship, before charting how it then recruited support from across the political spectrum. Arranging landmark meetings between British politicians and the National Socialist leadership, it proved itself as a conduit for diplomatic dialogue with Germany. The central chapters probe the prosopography to highlight the Fellowship's penetration of the British Establishment before lifting the lid of respectability to

measure the extent to which it harboured pro-fascist and anti-Semitic enthusiasts for Hitler's Germany.

As the narrative moves into the final three years before war, two chapters explore how the Fellowship accessed the central political and diplomatic bodies in both countries including Downing Street, the houses of parliament, British political parties, Hitler's Chancellery, the NSDAP, both foreign ministries and their embassies while simultaneously establishing dialogue with those opposing Hitler's regime and challenging the wisdom of appeasement. Finally, the organisation's legacy is examined to ask whether, by developing a different flavour of appeasement to Chamberlain's, it offered a real alternative to war and whether this contributes to the continuing discourse surrounding inter-war appeasement.

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List of abbreviations

ACC	Archive of The Board of Deputies of British Jews, London Metropolitan Archives
AGA	Anglo-German Association
AGF	Anglo-German Fellowship
BL	The British Library, London
BR	Papers of Wilfred Ashley, 1st Baron Mount Temple, Broadlands archives, Hartley Library, University of Southampton
CAB	Records of the Cabinet Office, TNA
CHAR	Papers of Sir Winston Churchill, Churchill College, Cambridge
CHRS	Papers of Group Captain Malcolm Grahame Christie, Churchill College, Cambridge
CONWELL	Papers of TP Conwell-Evans, Sir Martin Gilbert papers
DAV	Papers of JCC Davidson MP, UK Parliamentary Archives
<i>DBFP</i>	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy</i>
DEG	Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft
<i>DGFP</i>	<i>Documents on German Foreign Policy</i>
FO	Records of the Foreign Office, TNA
GILB	Papers of Sir Martin Gilbert, Lady Gilbert private collection
HALIFAX	Papers of Edward Wood, 1st Earl of Halifax, University of York
HAMILTON/KCL	Papers of General Sir Ian Hamilton, King's College London
HAMILTON/NRS	Papers of the 14th Duke of Hamilton, National Records of Scotland
INKP	Papers of Thomas Inskip, 1st Viscount Caldecote, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge
KERR/NRS	Papers of Philip Kerr, 11th Marquess of Lothian, National Records of Scotland
KV	Records of the Security Service, TNA
LASP	Lascelles Papers, TNA
LG	Papers of David Lloyd George, 1st Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, UK Parliamentary Archives
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
<i>NSB</i>	<i>None So Blind: A Study of the Crisis Years, 1930-1939</i> by TP Conwell-Evans (1947)
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PIRI	Papers of George Pitt-Rivers, Churchill College, Cambridge
PREM1	Prime Minister's Office records, TNA
SCHROD	Schroder Archive, Schrodgers plc, London
TA	<i>True Account</i> , by EWD Tennant (1957)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK
VNST	Papers of Robert, 1st Viscount Vansittart, Churchill College, Cambridge

Place of publication for secondary sources is London, unless stated otherwise

Introduction

The genesis and historiography of the Anglo-German Fellowship

In July 1939, with war looming, Ernest Tennant, the founder and honorary secretary of the Anglo-German Fellowship, undertook an unorthodox, secret mission to meet his sometime friend and colleague Joachim Ribbentrop in the recently-unified Greater Germany. Although Tennant travelled in his customary guise as a City merchant with business interests in the country, his trip was informally sanctioned by Downing Street and blessed by the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain. Ribbentrop, the former champagne salesman and distributor for Johnnie Walker whisky, was now (following a brief stint as ambassador to the Court of St James's) Reich minister for foreign affairs. With Chamberlain's dogged attempts at appeasement evidently failing and war only weeks away, the story of Tennant's lone mission seems straight from a novel rather than the serious world of diplomacy. His hope was to 'get Ribbentrop away from his present feeling of hostility to Britain and back nearer to his state of mind of seeking friendship with this country which existed until the beginning of 1937'.¹ Given the intensity of the international diplomatic crisis that summer, with Ribbentrop immersed in negotiations with the Russians, it is significant that he immediately agreed to see Tennant at a time of his choosing and offered to arrange his accommodation in Salzburg. Tennant had suggested that, as 'visiting the Foreign Minister in his magnificence in the Wilhelmstrasse is rather alarming for a private individual', a quiet dinner might be best, so they could have 'a real talk as we used to in the old days'.²

These two friends had conceived the Anglo-German Fellowship, and its sister society, the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft (hereafter, DEG), five years previously, 'to promote good understanding between England and Germany and thus contribute to the maintenance of peace and the development of prosperity'. Wholly distinct organisationally, membership of the British Fellowship was only open to British nationals, while German Anglophiles could join the German organisation. The DEG had 'fine premises' in the shape of a mansion on 30 Bendlerstrasse in Berlin ('a quiet

¹ Tennant to Chamberlain, 4 July, 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

² Tennant to Ribbentrop, 10 July, 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

street where the American Embassy and the homes of several ministers are situated'³) and branches in other German cities including Bremen, Hamburg, Heidelberg, Essen, Stuttgart and Wiesbaden which displayed portraits of the British king and welcomed English visitors.⁴ The Fellowship meanwhile was headquartered rather more modestly in a flat at 223 Cranmer Court in Chelsea, albeit its banquets were hosted at prominent London hotels including Grosvenor House, Claridge's and the Dorchester.

By December 1938, the Fellowship's individual membership had reached exactly nine hundred and included luminaries from each of the British 'Establishment' elites – royal, political, diplomatic, aristocratic, business, financial, military, sporting and intelligence.⁵ This study seeks to explore how the Fellowship achieved such rapid success and whether it is fair to regard it as a broader - and higher - church than has been accepted to date. It was funded by powerful business interests, patronised by Anglo-German royalty, influenced by the German high command, welcomed by elements of the British establishment and infiltrated by British, German, Russian and Jewish intelligence agents. The Fellowship from the outset was much more than a pressure group, dining club or study group. Over the course of its short life, it acted explicitly as a lobbying body, propaganda vehicle (for both Britain and Germany), meeting facilitator, interpreter and travel agent. More discreetly, it was an effective conduit for communications, formal and informal, between the two countries for statesmen, soldiers, politicians and civil servants. Intriguingly, the British, German and Russian governments each used it as an intelligence-gathering tool and, it will be argued, what they determined from that intelligence influenced foreign policy accordingly.

The Fellowship was self-admittedly elitist with, at its pinnacle, patronage from the royal houses of Hanover, Hohenzollern, Saxe-Coburg Gotha and their English cousins within the House of Windsor. Three cousins feature in the Fellowship's royal adventure: Charles Edward, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha; the Duke of Brunswick, and Edward VIII, His Imperial Majesty the King Emperor. Underpinning this royal support was extensive representation from across the aristocratic, military and political

³ AGF, *Brochure*, 1936, KV5/3 C440756, TNA. Bendlerstrasse was later renamed Stauffenbergstrasse in memory of the members of the German resistance who were executed in the Bendlerblock in 1944.

⁴ For more on the DEG see Ernst Ritter, 'Die erste Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft (1935-1939)' in *Aus der Arbeit der Archive*, (Boppard, 1989).

⁵ AGF, Companies House filing, 8 December 1938, BT 31/33916/305554, TNA.

spectrum in Britain and Germany. Around one hundred members of the Houses of Lords and Commons were supporters and, importantly, these were drawn from each of the political parties and not just the far right of the Conservative party as according to historical tradition. The ‘top brass’ from each of the three services was similarly represented. In addition to Unilever and ICI, who provided the bulk of its founding capital, the Fellowship’s corporate representation ranged across the titans of British industry, finance and commerce including the Bank of England, Barclays Bank, Schroders, Lazards, Dunlop, Morris Motors, Shell, P&O and Thomas Cook. The Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft had comparable backing in Germany with support from IG Farben, Robert Bosch, Siemens, AEG and Deutsche Bank.

The Fellowship’s leadership had direct and prompt access to Hitler and both his supporters and critics in Germany. Similarly, it spoke in person with three successive British prime ministers, as well as their governments, civil servants and diplomats. To those British political figures public-spirited, curious or (with hindsight) foolish enough to engage with Germany’s National Socialist leadership, the twin friendship societies offered effective access to both old and new German elites - political, commercial and royal – and especially Adolf Hitler himself. As explored later, the Fellowship organised most (and with former prime minister, David Lloyd George, the highest profile) of the various meetings between British visitors and Hitler. How it built such credibility so quickly is intriguing. It seems that no other non-governmental foreign body had such frequent direct access to the Führer and that four within its membership – Tennant, TP Conwell-Evans, Lord Londonderry (its leading aristocrat) and the infamous Führer-follower Unity Mitford – had more frequent contact with Hitler than any other Britons.

While the Fellowship offered an ‘umbrella’ for some of the ‘pro-Nazi’, fellow travellers of the Right, their voices were always in the minority and their involvement was short-lived.⁶ In fact, the Fellowship’s leadership, even early on, had serious concerns about the Führer’s behaviour and philosophy, especially in respect to mistreatment of Jews and other minorities and took active, albeit ineffective, measures to influence the situation. They were consistently, if mostly discreetly, critical friends to the regime throughout, to the point of riling their German colleagues. Despite these

⁶ Richard Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British anti-Semitism 1939-40* (1998), p. 37.

efforts, it remains a conundrum how apparently civilised and humane men reconciled their Germanophile enthusiasms with this evidently brutal regime.

My central thesis is that the Fellowship has been, in George W Bush's unmatched term, *misunderestimated* by scholars and other commentators over the last eighty years.⁷ However total the failure of its primary mission to prevent war, it was a significant and whole-hearted enterprise. As will be argued, most commentary has been dismissive, perfunctory and often inaccurate, relying on contemporary left wing political polemic as developed by a small group of historians and writers. (Secondary sources covering the DEG are even less satisfactory: its main chronicler, Ernst Ritter, concluded in 1989 that 'evidence of the DEG's existence within the literature is almost non-existent'.⁸)

Generally, the prevailing stereotype of the membership is Lord Darlington from the 1989 Booker prize-winning *The Remains of the Day* by Nobel prize-winning Kazuo Ishiguro. One writer painted 'a picture of a knot of peers adrift in an uncongenial world, united by paranoia, pessimism and panic', who 'blamed the misfortunes of their times and class on an immensely powerful but clandestine Judaeo-Bolshevik global conspiracy which could be thwarted only by Fascism and Nazism'.⁹ Another dismissed the membership of the Fellowship as 'a mixture of English Fascists, appeasers, anti-Semites, hard headed businessmen, fanatical anti-Bolsheviks, eccentric aristocrats and neurotic Mayfair society women'.¹⁰ These powerful stereotypes have been perpetuated in film, television drama, and popular fiction such as the successful 1993 film adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*, Stephen Poliakoff's 2009 film *Glorious 39*, television series such as *Cambridge Spies* (2003), *Upstairs Downstairs* (2010) and *The Halcyon* (2016) and historical novels such as William Boyd's *Any Human Heart* (2002), CJ Sansom's *Dominion* (2012) and Ken Follett's *Winter of the World* (2012). Often any awareness of the Fellowship has been as a bit

⁷ Leading historians have confused its name, see for example: L. B. Namier, 'Erich and Theo Kordt: Resisters after the Event', *History Today*, (1951) Vol. 1, Issue 6; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis*, (2000), p. 378; Andrew Roberts, *The Holy Fox' a biography of Lord Halifax*, (1991), p. 145 and p. 161, David Faber, *Munich*, (2008), p. 235.

⁸ Ritter, 'Die erste DEG'.

⁹ Lawrence James, *Aristocrats: Power, Grace and Decadence*, (2009), p. 371.

¹⁰ Phillip Knightly, *Philby: KGB Master Spy*, (1998), p. 51.

player in three of the twentieth century's most chronicled *causes célèbres* – the Cambridge spies, the Mitford sisters and the Hess affair.

Historiography of appeasement

Over half a century ago, AJP Taylor insisted that 'historians do a bad day's work when they write the appeasers off as stupid or cowards'.¹¹ To date, no historian has done a full day's work on the Anglo-German Fellowship and what has been done has emphasised stupidity and cowardice. The Fellowship has been classed alongside the nasty, the eccentric and the irrelevant firmly within the 'Fellow Travellers of the Right' tradition developed by Richard Griffiths in his important trilogy and from which most later students of the far right in Britain have drawn their inspiration.¹² This study's first ambition is to give a fuller narrative and prosopography of the organisation on its own merits. Historians have achieved that with important studies of contemporary non-governmental organisations that were sympathetic to Germany and whose stories and *dramatis personae* overlapped with the Fellowship. These include the Royal British Legion¹³, the Bank of England,¹⁴ the League of Nations,¹⁵ the Rhodes Trust,¹⁶ *The Times*,¹⁷ the DEG,¹⁸ the Royal Institute of International Affairs,¹⁹ All Souls, Oxford,²⁰ the Cliveden Set²¹ and the Round Table.²² Taken together, they have given students of the 1930s a deeper insight into how such bodies

¹¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, (1961), p. xxii.

¹² Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-1939*, (1980); *Patriotism Perverted*; and *What did you do during the war?: The last throes of the British pro-Nazi Right, 1940-45*, (2017).

¹³ Graham Wootton, *The official history of the British Legion*, (1956); Brian Harding, *Keeping Faith: the History of the Royal British Legion*, (2001).

¹⁴ David Kynaston, *Till Time's Last Sand: A History of the Bank of England 1694-2013*, (2017).

¹⁵ Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations; Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918-45*, (Manchester, 2011); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, (Oxford, 2015).

¹⁶ Philip Ziegler, *Legacy: Cecil Rhodes, the Rhodes Trust and Rhodes Scholarships*, (New Haven, 2008); Anthony Kenny (ed), *The History of the Rhodes Trust: 1902-1999*, (Oxford, 2001).

¹⁷ *The Times*, *The History of the Times*, (1952), A. L. Kennedy, (ed. Gordon Martel), *The Times and Appeasement: The Journals of A. L. Kennedy, 1932-1939*, (Cambridge, 2009).

¹⁸ Ritter, 'Die erste DEG'.

¹⁹ Andrea Bosco and Cornelia Navari, *Chatham House and British foreign policy 1919-1945: the Royal Institute of International Affairs during the inter-war period*, (1994); Christian Haase, 'In Search of a European Settlement: Chatham House and British-German Relations, 1920-55', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 3, (2007), pp. 371-397.

²⁰ A. L. Rowse, *All Souls and Appeasement: a Contribution to Contemporary History*, (1961).

²¹ Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set: Portrait of an Exclusive Fraternity*, (2000).

²² Alex May, 'The Round Table, 1910-66', DPhil thesis, (Oxford, 1995).

intersected with the official organs of the British government and how together they promulgated appeasement. In the Fellowship's case, it is hoped to provide a degree of statistical discipline to offer 'some welcome quantitative precision into the woolly and wistful world of Waugh and Wodehouse' while challenging the stereotyping to which it has been subjected.²³ While concentrating on the Fellowship's impact at home, its influence abroad will also be examined in three specific geographies: how it prepared Lord Lothian for his work as ambassador to Washington, how it inspired Rudolf Hess in his decision to fly solo to Scotland and how, through Kim Philby, it fed the paranoia of Joseph Stalin.

This study's second ambition is to set these biographical efforts within the historiography of inter-war appeasement and ask whether that sheds any further light on the British establishment's entanglement with the Third Reich. Specifically, I will recommend that the Anglo-German Fellowship deserves to be studied as often by scholars of appeasement as by scholars of the British far right.

Defining 'appeasement' is the first job of its student and mapping its historiography among the hardest.²⁴ Now glibly used by politicians and the media to denote craven concessions to hostile, undemocratic foreigners, the term had a wider sense and better pedigree before Hitler's war. As Stedman insists, it should not be a 'a lazy umbrella term' for Chamberlain's foreign policy as that adapted materially during his premiership and his was not the only flavour of appeasement.²⁵ In this thesis appeasement is accepted as a valid political term for a potentially honourable, if ill-advised, strategy to prevent a second European war by revising the allegedly draconian terms of the Versailles Treaty. David Dutton, Robert Caputi, Sidney Aster, Robert Self and others have provided useful reviews of the literature and chronologies of the debate around the 1930s appeasement of Germany.²⁶ But, as Martin Gilbert argued in 1966, the concept of 'appeasing' Germany had a respectable heritage dating back well

²³ David Cannadine, *Pleasures of the Past*, (New York, 1989), p. 197.

²⁴ For discussion on the evolution of the term within useful overviews of appeasement see also: R. J. Q. Adams, *British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement. 1935-39*, (1993); Rock, William R., *British Appeasement in the 1930s*, (1977) and Keith Robbins, *Appeasement*, (Oxford, 1988).

²⁵ Andrew David Stedman, *Alternatives to Appeasement: Neville Chamberlain and Hitler's Germany*, (2011), p. 10.

²⁶ David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, (2001), Sidney Aster, 'Appeasement: Before and After Revisionism', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 445-7 (September 2008); Robert Caputi, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement*, (Selinsgrove, 2000); Robert Self, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940*, (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 5-33.

before the Great War' for which Gaynor Johnson has provided an excellent review of the literature, including studies on the Paris Peace Conference, Chamberlain before his premiership and Lloyd George during and after his.²⁷

It was the publication of the polemic *Guilty Men* in 1940 that both initiated this debate and set its tone for a quarter of a century. Authored by a trio of left wing journalists, Michael Foot (later leader of the Labour Party), Frank Owen and Peter Howard, it was written in just four days. They identified MacDonald, Chamberlain, Baldwin, Simon, Hoare, Halifax and nine other British politicians as the architects of inter-war appeasement and, as such, damned them as 'cowardly, traitorous crypto-Fascists leading Britain to ruin because of their own weaknesses'.²⁸ The simple charge against the Guilty Men was that 'their underestimation of the dynamism of Nazism, refusal to educate the public about Hitler's expansionist ambitions and failure to rearm adequately, [had] contributed to the outbreak of war'.²⁹

As Finney has argued, this populist and party-political charge was given 'a judicial imprimatur' by the Nürnberg war trials in 1945-6.³⁰ As the National Socialist leaders were found guilty of planning, initiating and waging war, the verdicts implied corresponding negligence on the part of the British government in not recognising that predetermination to wage war. Paradoxically, it was Winston Churchill (the Conservative prime minister who had lost the 1945 General Election) who, with the publication of *The Gathering Storm* in 1948, then wove the Nürnberg verdicts into the Guilty Men tradition, damning the legacies of his two immediate predecessors as prime minister along the way. In the same year, Lewis Namier and his friend John Wheeler-Bennett 'helped give academic respectability'³¹ to the Guilty Men verdict with their histories of the years immediately preceding the war.³² Writing in the early days of the Cold War, Churchill drew 'parallels between the Nazi threat in the 1930s and the alleged threat from Soviet Russia' thereby establishing the custom of

²⁷ Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement* (1966), pp. 54-5; Gaynor Johnson, 'British Policy towards Europe. 1919-1939', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 46, no. 2 (June, 2003); see also Dutton, *Chamberlain*, pp. 160-1.

²⁸ Caputi, *Chamberlain*, p. 230.

²⁹ Aster, 'Appeasement', p. 444.

³⁰ Patrick Finney, 'The romance of decline: the historiography of appeasement and British national identity' *Electronic Journal of International History*, (2000). For more on the Nürnberg trials see Ann and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg trial*, (1983).

³¹ Dutton, *Chamberlain*, p. 232.

³² Lewis Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-9* (1948); John Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, (1948).

politicians using the hapless appeasers for contemporary diplomatic polemics of their own.³³ In this way, his first volume of war memoirs was ‘able to influence the historical record in a remarkable way’ and ‘enshrined the disillusion of a generation’ to ‘set the tone of debate for the study of appeasement for twenty years after the war’.³⁴

This interpretation survived well into the 1960s with historians such as Rowse still ‘suffused with a righteous anger and a negative tone’ and Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott broadly following the Guilty Men line with their popular book.³⁵ However, Taylor, Gilbert (in an acknowledged example of self-revisionism), Donald Cameron Watt and Keith Robbins, (spurred in due course by the release of British government documents under the Thirty Year Rule and the publication of memoirs by the main players) initiated the body of academic historical revisionist, and later counter-revisionist and neo-revisionist, work that challenged the oversimplified and distorted interpretation of appeasement.³⁶ The breadth of opinion in this debate is impressive, ranging from the orthodox Churchillian view that the only way to contain Hitler was a war fought to the bitter end, to John Charmley’s suggestion that Chamberlain’s appeasement bought Britain valuable time to re-arm and that, in any event, she might have better preserved her empire and stemmed the rise of communism by suing for peace with Hitler’s Germany.³⁷ Prominent in the debate in the 1990s was Alister Parker whose landmark 1993 book shone a renewed and critical light on Chamberlain in particular. This was followed by his (almost heretical) study of Churchill as a closeted appeaser.³⁸ Beyond Parker and Charmley, Frank McDonough, Richard Cockett, David Dutton and Peter Neville have each dissected Chamberlain’s premiership and reputation.³⁹ Other scholars have focused on the British Foreign

³³ Finney, ‘The romance of decline’.

³⁴ Peter Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement: The British Attempt to Prevent the Second World War*, (2006), p. xi; Sidney Aster, ‘Guilty Men: The Case of Neville Chamberlain’ in *Paths to War*, ed. R. Boyce and E. Robertson, (1989), p. 235.

³⁵ Rowse, *All Souls and Appeasement*; Caputi, *Chamberlain*, p. 89; Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *The Appeasers*, (1963).

³⁶ Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*; Gilbert, *Roots of Appeasement*, D. C. Watt, ‘Appeasement: The Rise of a Revisionist School?’, *Political Quarterly*, (1965); Keith Robbins, *Munich 1938*, (1968).

³⁷ John Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace*, (1989) and *Churchill: The End of Glory - A Political Biography*, (1993).

³⁸ R. A. C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, (Basingstoke, 1993) and *Churchill and Appeasement*, (2000).

³⁹ Frank McDonough, *Neville Chamberlain, Appeasement and the British Road to War*, (Manchester, 2010); Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press*, (1989); Dutton, *Chamberlain*; Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement*.

Office's role in appeasement and have particularly informed this thesis including Keith Middlemas, Donald Cameron Watt and Patricia Meehan.⁴⁰ As will be explored in later chapters, the Fellowship's diplomatic perambulations led it into the covert fields of diplomacy where Wesley Wark and John Ferris's work on intelligence and appeasement has been an inspiration.⁴¹

While broad debate across the spectrum, from the Guilty Men traditionalists to the Chamberlain apologists, continues apace, other historians have developed new angles in 'the search for the *mentalité* of appeasement' in the last two decades.⁴² Arguing that 'writing on British appeasement cannot be satisfactorily understood ... without serious consideration of a range of cultural and ideological forces', Patrick Finney has set it against Britain's declining empire and fading world status – an approach that resonates with the Fellowship's elitist and establishment biases.⁴³ Meanwhile, building on her work on feminine fascism in Britain, Julie Gottlieb has explored inter-war appeasement from the female perspective. Both strands of her scholarship are pertinent given the contribution of the Fellowship's female membership as explored in chapter five.⁴⁴ Similarly, Scott Newton's work on Anglo-German relations as implemented through economic appeasement has informed chapter one.⁴⁵ Dan Stone's book on British responses to Nazism before war and the Holocaust, while barely mentioning the Fellowship, provided analysis of the influence of the contemporary left-wing polemics attacking both National Socialism and appeasement published by Gollancz and Penguin.⁴⁶ As will be explored below, these publications

⁴⁰ Keith Middlemas, *Diplomacy of illusion: the British Government and Germany, 1937-39*, (1972); D. C. Watt, 'Chamberlain's Ambassadors' in M. L. Dockrill and B. J. C. McKercher (ed.), *Diplomacy and World Power*, (Cambridge, 1996); Patricia Meehan, *The Unnecessary War: Whitehall and the German Resistance to Hitler*, (1992).

⁴¹ Wesley K. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939*, (Oxford, 1985) and 'British Intelligence on the German Air Force and Aircraft Industry, 1933-1939', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 25, no. 3, (September 1982); John Ferris, "'Now that the Milk is Spilt': Appeasement and the Archive on Intelligence', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 19, no. 3, (September 2008) and *Intelligence and Strategy: Selected Essays*, (Abingdon, 2005).

⁴² Julie V. Gottlieb, *'Guilty Women', Foreign Policy, and Appeasement in Inter-War Britain*, (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 8.

⁴³ Finney, 'The romance of decline'.

⁴⁴ Gottlieb, *Guilty Women and Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement 1923-1945*, (2003).

⁴⁵ Scott Newton, *Profits of Peace: The Political Economy of Anglo-German Appeasement*, (Oxford, 1996) and 'The Anglo-German connection and the political economy of appeasement', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 2, no. 3, (1991).

⁴⁶ Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939: before war and holocaust*, (Basingstoke, 2003).

have tarnished the reputation of the Fellowship specifically as well as the appeasers generally. Other scholars have widened our understanding of appeasement by concentrating on prominent individual appeasers other than Chamberlain, each of whom broke bread (or took tea) with the Fellowship. These include Philip Williamson on Baldwin, Ian Kershaw and Neil Fleming on Lord Londonderry, Anthony Lentin and Stella Rudman on Lloyd George (especially his Fellowship-arranged meeting with Hitler in 1936 as chronicled in chapter three), Andrew Roberts on Lord Halifax, Peter Neville on Sir Neville Henderson and George Peden and Martin Gilbert on Sir Horace Wilson.⁴⁷ Meanwhile Andrew Stedman's 2011 publication offers a useful updated résumé of the historiography before an intriguing exploration of the practical alternatives to appeasement.⁴⁸ These range from isolationism and economic and colonial appeasement to the promotion of the League of Nations, the negotiation of grand alliances, the urging of rearmament and the explicit threat of war. Each of these were elements of the Fellowship's interpretation of appeasement.

Aster has argued that, far from being an abstruse academic debate, proper definition and understanding of appeasement has a nobler purpose.⁴⁹ In the last two decades, Anglo-Saxon politicians, including both Presidents Bush, Tony Blair, and, most recently President Trump, have ignored the progress made by historians and, vainly aping Churchill, have reverted to crude interpretations of 1930s appeasement to justify aggressive military interventions from the Middle East to North Korea.

A better than average violinist

The trajectory of Tennant and Ribbentrop's friendship, dating back to 1932, offers insight into the German High Command's volte-face on Britain's suitability as an ally for the Reich. As such, it is reasonable to include the history of the Fellowship as a

⁴⁷ Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative leadership and national values*, (Cambridge, 1999); Ian Kershaw, *Making friends with Hitler: Lord Londonderry and Britain's Road to War*, (2004); N. C. Fleming, *The Marquess of Londonderry. Aristocracy, Power and Politics in Britain and Ireland*, (2005); Anthony Lentin, *Lloyd George and the Lost Peace: From Versailles to Hitler 1919-1940*, (Basingstoke, 2001) and Stella Rudman, *Lloyd George and the Appeasement of Germany, 1919-1945*, (Cambridge, 2011); Roberts, *Holy Fox*; Peter Neville, *Appeasing Hitler: the diplomacy of Sir Neville Henderson, 1937-39*, (Basingstoke, 2000); and G. C. Peden, 'Sir Horace Wilson and Appeasement', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 53, issue 4, (December 2010), pp. 983-1014; Martin Gilbert, 'Horace Wilson: Man of Munich?', *History Today*, no. 32, issue 10, (1982).

⁴⁸ Stedman, *Alternatives to Appeasement*.

⁴⁹ Aster, 'Appeasement'.

strand in the tangled web of diplomatic ineptitude that led to the Second World War. It had been Tennant who opened the doors of London socially and politically to Ribbentrop acting as the 'ideal linkman... to introduce him to the important personages he wanted to meet'.⁵⁰ Ribbentrop then claimed to be still 'a private citizen with no political position', not yet even a Nazi, and indeed told Tennant (possibly untruthfully) that he had only met Hitler in August of that year.⁵¹ On the face of it theirs was an unlikely friendship but Tennant noted that Ribbentrop 'spoke excellent English and French... liked shooting and fishing and pictures and all the things that I liked and he was a better than average violinist' but also found him maddening at times. Both men were polyglot, international businessmen but also imperialists and patriots with a mounting suspicion of Soviet Russia.⁵² It was Eugen Lehnkering, C. Tennant and Sons' German business agent, who had introduced Tennant to Ribbentrop in 1932. One of Hitler's earliest supporters and a veteran flying officer from the Great War, Lehnkering was the twenty-first member of the Nazi Party giving him significant credibility and status within the party hierarchy.⁵³

While their friendship had cooled following Ribbentrop's departure from London, the two men had met again in Berlin earlier that summer of 1939 at Ribbentrop's request. The newly-appointed foreign minister, 'in one of his pompous moods' had been particularly exercised by several letters that he and Hitler had received from England suggesting the war should be delayed 'until after Ascot, or until after the Eton and Harrow match'.⁵⁴

Ernest Tennant

Described by the novelist, Muriel Spark, as 'one of those City business personalities who are usually seen but not heard',⁵⁵ Tennant had been acknowledged by Hitler (in an inscription on a signed photograph) as 'the determined pioneer of Anglo-German

⁵⁰ Michael Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, (1992), p. 39.

⁵¹ Ernest W. D. Tennant, *True Account*, (1957), p. 151.

⁵² Tennant, *TA*, p. 151.

⁵³ For more on Lehnkering see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Aussen Politik 1933-38* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 263, 267, 285, 701.

⁵⁴ Tennant, *TA*, p. 214.

⁵⁵ *Time and Tide*, 1 February 1958.

understanding'.⁵⁶ A decorated Great War intelligence officer, he had been one of the first three British officers to visit Berlin after the Armistice. He was a surviving member of that golden generation so hard hit by the Great War and its aftermath (especially the rise of Communism) that shaped their world view. Born into a wealthy Scottish industrialist family, he was cousin to both Lord Glenconner and Margot, Lady Oxford (*née* Tennant), the widow of prime minister HH Asquith. At Eton (from where he had watched Queen Victoria's funeral cortège) he had been a member of the elite Eton Society ('Pop'), the self-electing school prefects. His loss of family and friends in the Great War was unusually high: of the twenty-eight members of his year (1905) in Pop, nineteen were dead by 1916 while of his 'combatant Tennant relations – brother and cousins – out of eleven of military age seven had been killed by the time [he] was passed fit for service' in 1916.⁵⁷ Put another way, only one third of his school peers and male family contemporaries survived the Great War.

Tennant trained in a steel company before joining the family firm in 1908. His background and training were in industry and business - he was never the 'merchant banker' claimed by many historians since. He had volunteered in the first week of September 1914 but was rejected due to his 'old lung trouble' and injuries sustained following an attack by a lion in Africa. He was only accepted for service in the Intelligence Corps in 1916 (for which he was awarded an OBE in 1919) and posted to France. Here his business training was deployed answering questions from the House of Commons about unusual trade activities, ranging from the cement industry to 'enormous deliveries of rubber contraceptives' to Holland (which he discovered the Germans were using to keep hand grenades dry) and where he developed the appetite for the intelligence gathering that would inspire his work in the 1930s.⁵⁸

In January 1919, Tennant had been sent by the British Government to lead a handful of officers into shattered post-war Berlin to report on the food situation. They were the first allied officers into the city and reported their findings to the secretary of state for war and the war cabinet. Firmly linking food shortages, shattered transport links and unemployment with the risk of famine and rising Bolshevism, they warned that 'probably both... will ensue before the next harvest, if help from outside is not

⁵⁶ Tennant, Confidential report to prime minister on 'E. W. D. Tennant's Relations with Herr von Ribbentrop', 4 July 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

⁵⁷ Tennant, *TA*, p. 78.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

forthcoming'. Chillingly, their report recognised that Germany remained 'an enemy country, which has not yet signed peace terms', so recommended against mitigating 'the menace of starvation by a too sudden and abundant supply of food stocks'. This would be 'a powerful lever for negotiation' especially as 'it is still impossible to gauge the period within which Germany's military power could revive'.⁵⁹ Instigated at the outbreak of war in August 1914, the blockade was maintained into 1919 and its effects haunted Tennant for decades. Its impact on the civilian population has been debated by historians with estimates of unnecessary civilian deaths running into the hundreds of thousands.⁶⁰ Writing twenty years' later to the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, a remorseful Tennant explained that his shock at seeing 'children in hospital with hunger madness' had driven his determination 'to re-establish friendship between the two countries' and during the next twenty years he visited Germany around 180 times, and met Hitler and his paladins frequently, in his quest to promote better relations.⁶¹

Tennant's tool for the improvement of Anglo-German relations was the Fellowship. Its founding meeting had been held in the City on 11 March 1935 and was chaired by Sir Frank D'Arcy Cooper, the chairman of Unilever (by then 'one of the biggest industrial amalgamations in European history'), that provided the financial backing along with Imperial Chemical Industries.⁶² The meeting was attended by a group of businessmen alongside Tennant and TP Conwell-Evans, a visiting lecturer in English history at Königsberg University who would later serve as secretary of the Fellowship. At the meeting, Conwell-Evans was asked to approach Lord Lothian, the Liberal peer, whom he had taken to meet Hitler two months previously, to serve as chairman of the Fellowship.⁶³

Following Lothian's, no doubt polite, refusal to take on the chairmanship (probably due to his mounting workload), the Fellowship's Council decided to approach Lord

⁵⁹ War Cabinet, *Combined Report on Food Conditions in Germany during the period 12 January-12 February 1919*, 16 February 1919, FO 608/222/18, TNA.

⁶⁰ Eg. Paul Vincent, *The politics of hunger: the allied blockade of Germany, 1915-1919*, (Ohio, 1985); N. P. Howard, 'The Social and Political Consequences of the Allied Food Blockade of Germany, 1918-19' *German History*, vol. 11, no. 2, (June 1993), pp. 161-188; Eric W. Osborne, *Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany, 1914-1919*, (2004); Sally Marks, 'Mistakes and Myths: The Allies, Germany, and the Versailles Treaty, 1918-1921', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 85, no. 3, (September 2013), p. 650.

⁶¹ Tennant, 'Relations with Herr von Ribbentrop'.

⁶² Charles Wilson, *A History of Unilever. A Study in Economic Growth vol. 1* (1954) vol 1, p. xvii.

⁶³ See Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 13 March 1935 and 17 March 1935, CONWELL.

Mount Temple, formerly Wilfred Ashley. Mount Temple was an astute alternative choice and seems to have presided effectively until his resignation in protest at Kristallnacht in November 1938. Formerly a Conservative MP and minister and now an active member of the House of Lords, he was well-connected in political, social and royal circles. His daughter Edwina had married Lord Louis Mountbatten in 1922 with the groom's cousin, the Prince of Wales, serving as best man. Edward VII had stood as her godfather. Mount Temple's house, Broadlands in Hampshire (later home to the Mountbattens), was ideal for entertaining German visitors and 'every social asset was his - good looks, immense charm and real brilliance as a public speaker'.⁶⁴ As minister of transport, Mount Temple had been effective, introducing one-way streets, roundabouts and 'arterial roads' - the precursors of motorways. Originally a Liberal, he had switched to the Conservatives and was increasingly suspicious of anything 'leftish', becoming chairman of the Anti-Socialist and the Anti-Communist Union. He served in the trenches in Flanders (commanding the 20th Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment) and was a founder of the Comrades of the Great War, a precursor to the British Legion. Though broadly fitting the aristocratic, right-wing and conservative stereotype of one of 'Hitler's Englishmen', Mount Temple had been promoting relations with Germany well before Hitler came to power. No anti-Semite, his beloved first wife was Jewish (the daughter of Sir Ernest Cassel, the fabulously rich and decorated Edwardian magnate and philanthropist) and he presided at a public meeting in Whitechapel in March 1933 to protest at the mistreatment of Jews by the new German government.

The Gollancz interpretation

That fateful summer of 1939, the Left Book Club had published *Tory MP* (provocatively titled *England's Money Lords* in the US) and it is this slim volume that has shaped the historiography of the Anglo-German Fellowship ever since. Founded by the campaigning publisher Victor Gollancz at around the same time as the Fellowship, the immediately successful Left Book Club, as its name implies, made no secret of its politically evangelical purpose. Its list of authors included luminaries

⁶⁴ Brian Connell, *Manifest Destiny; A study in five profiles of the rise and influence of the Mountbatten family*, (1953), p. 90.

from the far left, including members of the Communist Party, and its prolific output over the period has been credited with helping the Labour Party to win the 1945 general election, with Gollancz's biographer claiming that 'his colossal influence on a vital election remains unmatched in twentieth century political history'.⁶⁵ Affordably priced at 7s 6d and authored pseudonymously by 'Simon Haxey', the book was offered by the club in July and was an immediate bestseller. A political polemic attacking the Conservative Party, it set out a detailed and (at least as far as it goes) meticulously-researched critique of 'the economic affiliations of the "hard-faced men" who compose the ranks of the Government's supporters'.⁶⁶ The chapter entitled 'The Tory Right Wing' includes a dozen pages analysing those Conservative MPs connected with the Fellowship. Consistent with the book's wider purpose, Haxey sought to interpret these links with Germany as explicit support for National Socialism and, in doing so, attacked the Fellowship aggressively. Most scholars and commentators assessing the Fellowship since the Second War have relied on data and analysis from *Tory MP* and this reliance has distorted perception ever since.

Contemporary reviewers were less accepting of its suitability as a historical source. *The* (admittedly energetically appeasing) *Times* saw it as 'propaganda as remarkable for its tireless research as for its fanatical one-sidedness'.⁶⁷ *The Manchester Guardian* recognised it as a useful handbook for critics of the parliamentary elite but thought far-fetched the allegations of Fascist tendencies within the Fellowship, pointing out that, 'most of the distinguished members... have long since slunk away with their tails between their legs and, apart from a few cranky incorrigibles, are now as anti-Hitler as Mr Haxey'.⁶⁸ Similarly, *The Times Literary Supplement* lauded the book's aims but regretted its 'narrowly partisan... spirit'.⁶⁹ Apparently only one historian, Robert Caputi, has directly questioned *Tory MP*'s suitability as a primary source pointing out that its 'venomous tone and accusatory content had the flavour of class warfare, from an overly bitter and cynical perspective'.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Ruth D. Edwards, *Victor Gollancz: a biography*, (1987), p. 399. See also John Lewis, *The Left Book Club: an historical record*, (1970) and Stone, *Responses to Nazism*.

⁶⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 July 1939.

⁶⁷ *The Times*, 21 July 1939.

⁶⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 July 1939.

⁶⁹ *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 July 1939.

⁷⁰ Caputi, *Chamberlain*, p. 18.

Simon Haxey was a pseudonym for a husband and wife team - Arthur and Margaret Wynn (nee Moxon).⁷¹ Arthur's 2001 obituary in *The Guardian* painted a benign portrait of a leading light on the left of British politics who as 'one half of a remarkable medico-sociological research team' during 'a long and astonishingly productive life' had been a champion of mine safety and free school meals. The couple were acknowledged as 'life-long Labour supporters' and were described as 'a latter-day Sydney [sic] and Beatrice Webb - though reportedly more fun'.⁷² Eight years after his death, it emerged that Arthur had leant quite a lot further to the left when he was exposed as 'Agent SCOTT', the recruiter credited with creating the 'Oxford Ring' of Soviet spies in the 1930s. So, it seems that most analysis of the Anglo-German Fellowship's political aim and membership has been reliant on a secondary source written by a Soviet spy and his wife who had been a fellow member of the Communist Party.

Victor Gollancz followed *Tory MP* with three slim volumes that together have set the tone of wider appeasement historiography for subsequent decades.⁷³ Most notorious is *Guilty Men* which Gollancz claimed to be 'probably the most famous British pamphlet for a hundred years'.⁷⁴ In 1943, it was followed by *The Trial of Mussolini* authored by Michael Foot on his own (under the pseudonym 'Cassius') and selling 150,000 copies. Written as an allegory, it sought to expose the immoral support for Mussolini from Conservative politicians dating back to 1922 and named both Cato's guilty men and anti-appeasers including Winston Churchill and Duff Cooper. Reviewing the book, George Orwell, while sympathetic politically, acknowledged the one-sidedness in that 'throughout his book it is implied that only Tories are immoral' and perceptively raised the unspoken corollary that 'although it was in every way more pardonable, the attitude of the Left towards the Russian regime has been distinctly similar to the attitude of the Tories towards Fascism'.⁷⁵

The third in the series, and most relevant to the historiography of the Fellowship, was *Your MP* published in 1944. Again, it was authored under a classical pseudonym, 'Tiberius Gracchus', actually Tom Wintringham, an alumnus of Gresham's School

⁷¹ And not for Foot, Owen and Howard as assumed by Maurice Cowling, in *The Impact of Hitler*, (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 539-40.

⁷² Ian Aitkin, 'Arthur Wynn', *The Guardian*, 29 September 2001.

⁷³ For more on the effects of the Gollancz publications see: Aster, 'Appeasement', pp. 445-447

⁷⁴ Caputi, *Chamberlain*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ George Orwell, 'Who are the War Criminals?', *Tribune*, October 22, 1943.

and Balliol College, Oxford. Like the Wynns a communist since the early 1920s (albeit he was expelled from the Party because of his complex love life) he was a shining light of the political left as a founder of both the *Daily Worker* and the *Left Review* and fought in the Spanish Civil War. Far less balanced and calm in tone than Haxey's work, *Your MP* posited a stereotypical backbench Conservative MP - Major RE Patriot, OBE - whose beloved son has just died in a German prison camp. Having created this pathetic character sketch and back story (in poor taste, as many real Conservative MPs would have lost sons in the war) he collated evidence of pro-German and appeasing statements by such MPs into a toxic cocktail of guilt for the death of his own son. Major Patriot is characterised as admiring Hitler on the basis that 'he loathed or feared the bestial passions of Leninism so religiously that he could feel quite happy at the idea of strengthening the Nazis in order that they should save Western civilisation and destroy Bolshevism'.⁷⁶ *Your MP* included a full chapter on the Fellowship and, acknowledging the author's debt to Haxey, highlights its Conservative MPs and parades (ever benefiting from hindsight) their far from sensible public statements before the outbreak of war.

Belatedly, the Conservatives fought back against this leftist onslaught on their reputation. They were led by the young MP, Quintin Hogg, (later Lord Hailsham) who went on to serve as a minister, chairman of the Conservative Party, leader of the House of Lords and lord chancellor. Hogg published a review of *Your MP* in *The Spectator* titled 'Waste Paper' that damned it as 'dismal muck-raking' that attempted to 'pillory a group of politicians by quoting their less considered utterances'.⁷⁷ He followed the article with a slim volume published in June 1945 by Faber & Faber with a Gollancz-style sensationalist dust-jacket, *The Left was never Right*. This defended the Conservatives' record and highlighted support for appeasement, pacifism and disarmament from the left that, he argued, had facilitated Hitler's aggression as much as Tory appeasement. An energetic defence but, coming only a month before the General Election, as Hogg ruefully remembered, it was 'too little and too late to counteract the impression made by the earlier Gollancz publications' and therefore to stem the shift to the left ahead of the Labour landslide.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Gracchus, *Your MP*, (1944), p. 12.

⁷⁷ *The Spectator*, 18 May 1944.

⁷⁸ Quintin Hogg, *A Sparrow's Flight: Memoirs*, (1990), p. 230.

TP Conwell-Evans

In late August 1939, a month after Tennant had reported to Downing Street on his meeting with Ribbentrop and only days before Hitler's troops marched into Poland, the Fellowship's full-time secretary, TP Conwell-Evans, was in a private room in the House of Commons briefing three of Chamberlain's most vocal critics, Lloyd George (the British prime minister who had 'won the Great War') Winston Churchill (who a few days later was to be appointed first lord of the Admiralty and within a year prime minister) and Anthony Eden (reappointed as foreign secretary in December 1940) on the immediate prospects for avoiding war. While Ernest Tennant offered much of the organisational drive and administrative zeal in setting up the Fellowship, it is Conwell-Evans who should rightly be seen as its intellectual and philosophical 'high priest'. Both men were committed and passionate Germanophiles, fluent in the language, and shared an enthusiasm for the country that long pre-dated any admiration for Hitler and the National Socialists.

Treated with suspicion by most historians, it is the mysterious Conwell-Evans who is the central enigma in this story. His social background, education and politics were starkly different to Tennant's and the traditional Conservative and aristocratic profile assumed by many chroniclers of the Fellowship. Born the second son of a master tailor in Carmarthen, Wales, he was educated at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, then in France and Germany where he learned each language, before going up to Jesus College Oxford in 1911 to read modern and medieval literature and languages. Appointed joint honorary secretary of the Fellowship in 1936 (and full-time secretary in February 1937) he was an historian, political adviser, secretary, interpreter and intelligence agent who worked with Tennant and Ribbentrop but has never been subject to biographical study. While his contribution to meetings between Hitler and British statesmen such as Lloyd George, Lord Allen and Lord Lothian has been noted, his political influence and wider work for the Fellowship is less often studied. He has puzzled most historians and been dismissed by many and often, it seems, both. Confusion has reigned over where he came from and what he did, which this study hopes to clarify following the unearthing of his curriculum vitae in an application to join the Travellers Club and, most significantly, the recent discovery of his surviving personal papers.

Richard Griffiths called Conwell-Evans ‘a rather shadowy figure’, Kenneth Morgan agreed he was ‘somewhat mysterious’ while Antony Lentin abandoned his attempt to establish his dates.⁷⁹ In her recent book on Hitler’s aristocratic go-betweens, Karina Urbach has gone the furthest, citing a 1947 allegation by a captured German officer, SS-Oberführer Wilhelm Rodde, that he (and Tennant) had carried out ‘intelligence work’ for Ribbentrop and she concluded that consequently ‘it is not clear to this day what Conwell-Evans actually was’.⁸⁰ Others have been merely somewhat dismissive - Ian Kershaw called him ‘a great admirer of the new Germany’, Peter Nevile dubbed him ‘the maverick English professor’ while Andrew Roberts described him, along with Tennant and Mount Temple, as ‘German sympathisers’.⁸¹ Earlier historians were more interested. Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott were ‘most intrigued by his appearance in [their] story’ but ‘took a long time to track him down in the flesh’.⁸² Having done so, Gilbert, by then Churchill’s official biographer, interviewed Conwell-Evans for *The Roots of Appeasement* (and included his verbatim account of Lloyd George’s meeting with Hitler as an appendix) but made no mention of his role within the Fellowship. Leonard Mosley studied him in some detail describing him as ‘a typical public school type [wrongly], gay, witty, debonair, superficially shallow but deeply sensitive beneath the surface, and much concerned about the future’.⁸³ Also writing in the 1960s, Harold Deutsch acknowledged his sincerity as being ‘deeply dedicated to preventing war between Britain and Germany’.⁸⁴ Clearly intrigued, Deutsch found him ‘impossible to locate’ in London in May 1967 despite ‘no report of his death’ when he was in fact living out his final months in Notting Hill. Michael Bloch did acknowledge Conwell-Evans’s importance (alongside Lord Lothian) as an ‘ardent intellectual advocate of Anglo German *rapprochement*’, but few, if any, historians have acknowledged his vital role within the Fellowship especially after he became its full-time secretary in February 1937.⁸⁵ From 1935 to the outbreak of the war, all his activities relating to Germany were undertaken under the Fellowship’s

⁷⁹ Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p. 112; Kenneth Morgan, ‘Lloyd George and Germany’, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 755-766; Lentin, *Lloyd George*, p. 74.

⁸⁰ Karina Urbach, *Go-betweens for Hitler*, (Oxford, 2015), p. 300.

⁸¹ Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 62; Peter Nevile, ‘The Appointment of Sir Nevile Henderson, 1937 - Design or Blunder?’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 33, no. 4, (October 1998), p. 618; Andrew Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians*, (1994), p. 300.

⁸² Email Richard Gott to author, 4 December 2012.

⁸³ Leonard Mosley, *On Borrowed Time How World War II Began*, (1969), p. 252.

⁸⁴ Harold C. Deutsch, *The Conspiracy Against Hitler in the Twilight War*, (Minnesota, 1969), p. 159 n. 19 and p. 160, n. 23.

⁸⁵ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 63.

aegis and authority. This connection has been largely ignored by modern historians, but, as will be evidenced, was well understood by his contemporaries.

Such confusion may be partially the result of his changing names. Born Evans, which remained the only constant, he went up to Oxford as Thomas Pugh Evans albeit apparently known as Phillip by his intimates (his code-name when dealing with the German resistance was 'Phillipos'). His family added *Conwil* as a prefix in the 1920s that he later anglicised to *Conwell*. Confusing to any biographer, his first two books were published under *Conwil-Evans* and the last three (from the later 1920s) under his final moniker of *TP Conwell-Evans*. His contemporaries seemed unsure how to address him. Lloyd George and Sir Robert Vansittart both called him *Conwell*. Ramsay MacDonald used *Evans*, Lord Halifax preferred *Professor* while his niece, Rose Rosenberg (MacDonald's secretary) and Martin Gilbert each knew him as *TP*. His death notice in *The Times* covers all the options by listing him as *Dr Thomas Phillip Pugh (TP) Conwell-Evans*.⁸⁶ His doctorate was hard won, being awarded by the London School of Economics in 1929 despite a nervous breakdown through overwork. The use of the title of professor is dubious: he was only a visiting lecturer for two years at Königsberg and never held a chair at a university. Perhaps, as a socially ambitious historian, amateur diplomat and ad hoc intelligence agent, this opaqueness may have been deliberate.

Martin Gilbert, writing days after Conwell-Evans's death, aged seventy-six in November 1968, admitted that, when they first met, he had been 'one of those who believed that he had betrayed his country'. Their recently unearthed correspondence reveals that, following an introduction from MG Christie, they developed a close friendship and that Gilbert coaxed him out of the life of a recluse. Conwell-Evans appointed Gilbert as his literary executor and left him his surviving papers. In a heartfelt letter of condolence to his niece, Gilbert wrote: 'TP played an important part in our history - and sooner or later it will be recognised. He suffered more than anyone I knew from the sneers and accusations of those who did not know his true achievements... over the years I have collected evidence absolutely refuting these charges. To the contrary, he did things for our country of which no man need be ashamed - and few could parallel'.⁸⁷ Gilbert was at the time immersed in researching

⁸⁶ *The Times*, 15 Nov 1968.

⁸⁷ Gilbert to Pamela Turner, 22 November 1968, CONWELL.

his magisterial twenty-four volume official biography of Churchill, the arch anti-appeaser, and interviewing the surviving players from the period so this is an astounding and authoritative claim. In the same letter, he explained to the niece that Conwell-Evans knew he wanted to ‘write something about him’. The completion of *Churchill* and many other projects intervened so the project never advanced. Thanks to the kind initiative of Sir Martin’s widow, the Holocaust historian Esther Goldberg, who, remembering a two-year old enquiry, found the Conwell-Evans papers and tracked down this student, it is possible to include this primary material in such a study for the first time.

None So Blind

Conwell-Evans’s last book, *None So Blind*, has itself contributed to the wider mystery. Based on the papers of his close friend, fellow intelligence agent and Fellowship Council member, Group Captain Malcolm Christie, DSO, MC, it was written in 1941 (a year after *Guilty Men*) but only privately printed six years later in 1947. Harshly critical of the British government’s failure to act on the intelligence supplied by Christie, Conwell-Evans and others, the print run was limited to only one hundred numbered copies before the ‘type was distributed’.

Soon after the outbreak of war, Christie ‘feeling his work of so many years had been in vain began to destroy his voluminous files’.⁸⁸ Thankfully for historians, Conwell-Evans interceded and persuaded his friend to let him, as an experienced and published historian, develop the papers and their combined recollections into a book. Agreeing it would ‘not be helpful to raise during the war issues that might be contentious’, they waited until 1947 to have the book privately printed by Harrison & Sons Limited, printers to His Majesty the King and better known for printing bank notes and postage stamps and for publishing *The London Gazette* and *Burke’s Peerage*. At this point the story becomes more mysterious - the copies were not distributed until after they were both dead i.e. nearly thirty years after they were writing. Christie’s will (dated 28 November 1970) referenced a legal agreement between him and Conwell-Evans (dated 22 June 1965) concerning the distribution of the book. It provides Conwell-Evans (who confusingly had been dead for a year) and/or his niece Pamela Turner

⁸⁸ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, Introduction, p. x.

with up to £200 to cover the cost of distributing the book to selected libraries and newspapers around the world. To date, eighteen copies have been identified as surviving.⁸⁹

In 1992 in *The Unnecessary War*, Patricia Meehan pointed a finger at the British Foreign Office: ‘somebody, somewhere, must have embargoed the book’.⁹⁰ Despite her book’s critical success, her question remains unanswered, so we can only speculate as to why the two men, having gone to the expense of having their book printed by the King’s printer, should have delayed distribution till after their deaths. Analysis of Conwell-Evans’s recently rediscovered papers suggests that the only historian to have read it, prior to the 1970s, was Martin Gilbert. He did so having signed a confidentiality agreement promising to show it to no one, to make no quotations without the author’s permission and to make no reference to Christie or his history as a former British air attaché.

While *None So Blind* makes no reference to the Fellowship, it does detail, in the two years leading up to the war, how two of its Council members exploited its locus in Anglo-German relations to provide accurate, valuable intelligence to the British government. Now an important primary source for historians, its suppression and limited availability even when distributed, especially in contrast to the ubiquitous Gollancz publications, have contributed to the opaque historical assessment of Christie and Conwell-Evans and their roles within the Fellowship.

Traditions of Anglo-German friendship

The custom of distinguished Britons and Germans establishing exclusive societies hoping to improve relations between their countries dates back (at least) to the early twentieth century in parallel with the traditions of British appeasement of Germany discussed above. The nomenclature and identities of the various Anglo-German friendship societies (and their German counterparts) have confused both contemporary commentators and later scholars. Clarifying that Pythonesque confusion helps any

⁸⁹ Viz: British Library, Cardiff University, Columbia University, Harvard College Library, Imperial War Museum, Library of Congress, London Library, Marlborough District Libraries, Martin Gilbert Papers, McGill University, Princeton University, Trinity College Dublin, Universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Oxford and Yale University.

⁹⁰ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 94.

analysis of the Fellowship's predecessors and the precedent they set. What emerges is an amateur tradition of the 'great and the good' promoting friendly relations with Germany independent from the professional activities of the British Foreign Office. These were mostly self-consciously elitist bodies and, as Conwell-Evans was keen to emphasise to Lothian in respect of the Fellowship, not 'hole and corner' organisations.⁹¹

Despite rising Germanophobia at the time (portrayed in the espionage novels of William Le Queux, whose 1906 *The Invasion of 1910* sold over a million copies), professing friendship towards the Germans was a respectable and normal pastime for Edwardian gentlemen. The Anglo-German friendship societies that campaigned to prevent the First World War provided a template for the style of organisation that Fellowship members presumably thought they were joining. These had enlisted broad support from the cream of Edwardian society, especially the political leadership, the aristocracy and the senior military but also extending into the law, medicine and the arts. The United Anglo-German Friendship Societies had political connections with both Liberal and Labour parties, while the Anglo German Union Club was associated with the Conservative Party. Established in May 1911 'with the main object of making a determined effort to establish a better feeling between Great Britain and Germany', the former had a membership of nearly five hundred of which over one hundred were MPs.⁹² More than half were titled, led by five dukes and 28 earls and guided spiritually by two dozen bishops. Liberal and Labour future parliamentary stars on the membership included Keir Hardie, a former leader of the Labour Party; Ramsay MacDonald, later leader of the Labour Party and prime minister; the Liberal Sir John Simon, later foreign secretary, home secretary and chancellor of the exchequer; and Philip Snowden, the first Labour chancellor of the exchequer. It attracted support from the arts, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Edward Elgar, George Bernard Shaw and Ellen Terry. Representation from the services included Major General Sir Douglas Haig, General Sir Ian Hamilton and a host of distinguished admirals. Several members of the pre-war Society were fathers to future members of the Fellowship, including Lord Redesdale, Admiral Sir Compton Domvile, Lord Aberdare and Sir John Brunner.

⁹¹ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 13 March 1935, CONWELL.

⁹² *The Spectator*, 10 February 1912, p. 14.

The Anglo German Union Club had been set up earlier in 1905 with offices in Fleet Street 'to promote friendship between the two Countries... to arrange meetings between British and German Parliamentary Representatives... and to arrange international sport'.⁹³ These noble objects were also approved by aristocrats, and military leaders including the Duke of Connaught, the Earls of Rosebery and Spencer, Field Marshal the Earl Roberts and General Baden Powell. The committee included prominent members of the Anglo-German community in London including Baron Bruno Schröder, Alexander Siemens and Edgar Speyer. Arthur Balfour, Conservative prime minister until December 1905, was 'a leading patron' and the future Conservative prime minister, Andrew Bonar Law was also a member'.⁹⁴ This involvement has helped challenge the thesis that the Conservative Party was organisationally anti-German at the time. Support from such senior politicians was an inspiration for Conwell-Evans and Tennant in their pursuit of MacDonald, Baldwin and Chamberlain. The Club sought support from the German embassy in London, cultivating both Count Metternich, the ambassador, and Count Bernstorff, the councillor (and later ambassador to the US) who had 'taken the keenest interest in the movement for the establishment of this Club'.⁹⁵ Such ambassadorial blessing was what the Fellowship sought to elicit from Leopold von Hoesch, Ribbentrop and Herbert von Dirksen, the three ambassadors at 9 Carlton House Terrace during the late 1930s.

Most often compared, and sometimes confused, with the Fellowship is the Anglo-German Association (AGA).⁹⁶ Founded in August 1928, towards the end of the golden era of the Weimar Republic, its 'main and immediate object' was 'the promotion of rapprochement between Germany and Great Britain'.⁹⁷ Headquartered in Hampstead, the president was Rufus Isaacs, Marquess of Reading, former viceroy of India, foreign secretary, lord chief justice and the first practising Jew to hold a Cabinet position in the UK. He was supported by seven vice presidents - the Earl of Derby; admiral of the fleet Earl Jellicoe; Viscount D'Abernon, the former ambassador to Germany; Sir Robert Horne, former chancellor of the exchequer; Philip Snowden,

⁹³ The Anglo German Union Club, LASP, TNA.

⁹⁴ Frank McDonough, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905–1914*, (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 42.

⁹⁵ The Anglo German Union Club, LASP, TNA.

⁹⁶ For analysis of the AGA see Kershaw, *Making Friends*, pp. 53-6 *et passim*.

⁹⁷ AGA, Founding meeting minutes, 1 August 1928, HAMILTON/KCL.

the chancellor in MacDonald's Labour government; General Sir Ian Hamilton, and Herbert Fisher, the warden of New College Oxford. Other distinguished members included the authors HG Wells, John Buchan and John Galsworthy as well as Gilbert Murray, Harold Nicolson and Sir William Beveridge.

The Association has tended to be portrayed as the anti-Nazi counterpart to a pro-Nazi Fellowship. One writer described it as a group of 'who had banded together in 1928, long before the rise of Nazism, to try to repair the relationship between the two countries' that should never be confused with 'the sinister Anglo-German Fellowship, which was formed later, and was used as an umbrella group by Nazi sympathisers in Germany and Britain'.⁹⁸ While the Fellowship was more palatable to the National Socialists than the older Association, it is wrong to depict the latter as consistently opposed to Hitler and his regime. In November 1931, its secretary had suggested hosting a dinner for Hitler in London to General Hamilton who had thought it might be 'rather fun'. Having made enquiries with 'important personages', he realised 'it would alienate some of our best friends on both sides' and 'scare the French'.⁹⁹ So not inviting Hitler to London was a decision made for political expediency rather than moral principle and Hamilton went on to meet Hitler in Berlin in August 1938.¹⁰⁰

The Association was even more elitist than the Fellowship in that it limited its membership to only '100 gentlemen being natural born British subjects' and did not admit women.¹⁰¹ Approximately a third of the members were MPs from each of the main political parties and its committee meetings were held in the House of Commons. It had been structured on similar lines to the later Fellowship with a German sister organisation, the *Deutsch Englishvereinigung* ('German English Association'). Although there was never a formal link, several prominent AGA members went on to join the Fellowship, including Lord Sempill and Walter Runciman (both on the AGA committee) as well as Mount Temple, Londonderry, Lothian, Julian Piggott, Sir Josiah Stamp, Richard Meinertzhagen and MG Christie.

The AGA encompassed a range of opinions about Hitler and debates about his regime led to tensions so extreme that the only solution was to dissolve. Writing to the British Embassy in Berlin, Hamilton explained that the German Association was being

⁹⁸ Geordie Greig, *Louis and the Prince*, (1999), pp. 272-3.

⁹⁹ Hamilton to Sir Robert Hutchison, 24 November 1931, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹⁰⁰ Hamilton to Garvin, 18 November 1931, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹⁰¹ AGA, Membership list, HAMILTON/KCL.

dissolved ‘some say by Hitler’s command in order that he may reconstitute it with pure Nazis whilst others are firm that it has dissolved itself’.¹⁰² A group within the English Association resisted dissolution, led, it seems, by Richard Meinertzhagen and Hamilton. Crisis meetings were held, and Hamilton enlisted the help of Andrew Thorn, the British military attaché in Berlin, who wrote arguing against dissolution, pointing out that ‘the German Government and many Nazi organisations are making very considerable efforts to entertain English visitors and... it would be an excellent plan if Germans could be shown our institutions under equally friendly conditions’.¹⁰³ Despite these efforts the AGA was dissolved in April 1935. Thorn was blunt, chilling even, in his advice about a possible replacement for the Association in Britain, arguing that ‘people who insist on living in the past, whether Jews, Monarchists, Liberals or Republicans, have no right to a place in the reconstituted association’.¹⁰⁴

While the AGA was the most significant of the Fellowship’s immediate precursors, there were other similar-sounding bodies in the business of Anglo-German friendship. The Anglo German Club had been founded by Mark Neven du Mont and Lord Sempill in 1931 and, by the end of 1933, had seven hundred members.¹⁰⁵ It maintained premises at 6 Carlton Gardens, adjacent to the German embassy, with a sherry bar, ballroom, and a *Bierstube* ‘where a variety of snacks, iced lager and *Münchener Hofbräu* are supplied’.¹⁰⁶ The president was Viscount D’Abernon with Earl de La Warr, Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen, the painter Sir John Lavery, the Bishop of Lincoln, Harold Nicolson and Gilbert Murray serving as vice-presidents. The German board members were similarly distinguished and included Konrad Adenauer, later to serve as West Germany’s first post-war Chancellor, Hugo Eckener the commander of the Graf Zeppelin airship, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, the Nobel prize winning author and Hjalmar Schacht the economist and finance minister.¹⁰⁷ In June 1934, the Anglo-German Club changed its name to the D’Abernon Club after the former ambassador to Berlin, presumably a more elegant way of distancing itself from the Nazi regime than the unseemly dispute raging at the AGA.

¹⁰² Hamilton to Thorne, 4 March 1935, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹⁰³ Thorne to Hamilton, 26 June 1934, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹⁰⁴ Thorne to Hamilton, 7 March 1935, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹⁰⁵ See James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, ‘London’s German Community in the Early 1930s’ in ed. Panikos Panayi, *Germans in Britain since 1500* (1996), p. 134.

¹⁰⁶ D’Abernon Club brochure, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹⁰⁷ See Ritter, ‘Die erste DEG’.

Other bodies in this cocktail of confusion include the Anglo-German Group, the Anglo-German Brotherhood, the Anglo-German Trade Association and, a journal, the *Anglo-German Review*.¹⁰⁸ The Anglo-German Group was set up in 1933 and chaired by Lord Allen, with membership comprised mostly of Quakers, pacifists and Labour supporters such as Noel and Charles Buxton.¹⁰⁹ The Anglo-German Brotherhood was set up by Baron Friedrich von der Ropp to promote ‘understanding between clergy and laity of the German and English Churches’.¹¹⁰ Conwell-Evans was a member for a while and it eventually was subsumed into the energetically pro-Nazi organisation The Link. The Anglo-German Trade Association, with offices in Gordon Square London, had as committee members directors of Imperial Airways and General Electric and was ‘exclusively interested in the development of reciprocal British and German trade’.¹¹¹

Importantly, the *Anglo-German Review* initially had no direct link to any of these organisations. It was founded and edited by CE Carroll, a pro-Nazi Great War veteran and former editor of the British Legion’s journal, who joined the Fellowship and later became secretary of The Link and was interned in 1940 under Regulation 18B. Fellowship members, including Mount Temple, contributed articles to early editions of the lavishly-illustrated *Anglo-German Review*. As one historian has recorded, it was a ‘sort of celebrity magazine for the Third Reich, with extensive photo spreads showing Hitler and other Nazi officials relaxing and spending time with children featured in nearly every issue’.¹¹² It was never, as continues to be claimed or inferred by historians, the official organ of the Fellowship but rather evolved into the mouthpiece of The Link.¹¹³ Contemporaries were similarly confused - as explored in chapter five, the Board of Deputies of British Jews based their analysis of the Fellowship’s intentions on its content and tone. Such confusion has skewed

¹⁰⁸ See Idem for analysis of German societies that preceded or overlapped with the DEG

¹⁰⁹ See Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, pp. 110-2.

¹¹⁰ Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p. 251.

¹¹¹ Anglo-German Trade Association pamphlet, HAMILTON/KCL.

¹¹² Bradley W. Hart, *George Pitt-Rivers and the Nazis*, (2015), pp. 114-5.

¹¹³ For examples of such confusion see: Gilbert and Gott, *The Appeasers*, p. 47; McDonough, *Chamberlain*, p. 144; Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p. 239; Martin Gilbert, *Sir Horace Rumbold*, (1973), p. 394 n. 2, Gottlieb, *‘Guilty Women’*, p. 85, Hart, *George Pitt Rivers and the Nazis*, (2015), p. 128; Julia Boyd, *Travellers in the Third Reich: The rise of Fascism through the eyes of everyday people*, (2017), p. 262.

interpretations of the Fellowship, which had its own *Monthly Review*, especially as the ideological gulf between it and The Link widened as war approached.

Conwell-Evans looked back to these predecessor societies as both inspiration and a warning for the Fellowship. In 1932, a year before Hitler came to power, he had published a critique of the Asquith government's slide into war which Gilbert argued had made 'a serious contribution to the war guilt controversy'.¹¹⁴ Conwell-Evans regretted that, before 1914, 'the activity of associations, such as the Anglo German society and the groups of MPs, who worked for an appeasement of the European situation, failed to arouse from the nation a deep seated response'.

A note on sources

Until the 2003 release of the heavily weeded MI5 file on the Fellowship, historians had found few primary sources or contemporary accounts other than the Gollancz publications. The Fellowship's archive appears lost as does that of the DEG.¹¹⁵ The MI5 file offers a better, and relatively objective, resource including a copy of the first annual report with membership list, the minutes of the founding meeting, two editions of its *Monthly Journal*, the founding membership list for the DEG, reports from the two intelligence officers infiltrated into the organisation and related reports. Critically, however, it is missing the second annual report, published in early 1938 with the fullest published list of members. Tracking down this original document (from which Haxey and Gracchus quoted extensively but selectively), covering the Fellowship's glory years, has given us a better-balanced picture of the Fellowship and its membership. Few, if any, historians have reviewed this source since it was published. Collating these two membership lists, reports in *The Times* on guests at the Fellowship's dinners, and information from its Companies House filings with biographical data has facilitated a database of its supporters that will be mined in subsequent chapters. Perhaps ambitiously, from this it is hoped to uncover, what Lawrence Stone considered the first purpose of a prosopography, the 'deeper interests that are thought to lie beneath the rhetoric of politics; the analysis of the social and

¹¹⁴ Gilbert, *Roots of Appeasement*, p. 28.

¹¹⁵ See Ritter, 'Die erste DEG'.

economic affiliations of political groupings; the exposure of the workings of a political machine; and the identification of those who pull the levers'.¹¹⁶

Adding flesh to this skeleton has involved identifying supporting contemporary correspondence from a number of archives. Several appear to have escaped examination by students of the Fellowship and no review of the primary sources has been previously undertaken. As well as various prime ministerial, Cabinet and Foreign Office file series, these include those surviving personal papers of participants including Neville Chamberlain, MG Christie, TP Conwell-Evans, JCC Davidson, Lord Halifax, General Sir Ian Hamilton, the Duke of Hamilton, David Lloyd George, Lord Lothian, DM Mason, Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Mount Temple, George Pitt-Rivers, Sir Eric Phipps and Lords Runciman, Simon and Vansittart. Especially helpful are those diaries kept by contemporaries including Robert Bruce Lockhart, Alexander Cadogan, Henry 'Chips' Channon, John 'Jock' Colville, William Dodd, Bella Fromm, Oliver Harvey, Thomas Jones, AJ Kennedy, Guy Liddell, Ivan Maisky, Eric Phipps and AJ Sylvester. Further valuable primary sources have been unearthed in the student files of the London School of Economics and Jesus College Oxford as well as the archives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Travellers Club, Unilever plc and the Weiner Library. While Ernst Ritter's survey and analysis of the German archive material is invaluable, there is doubtless further work to be done in the German archive which is beyond the scope of this study.

Beyond the prosopography, a richer understanding of the founders and leaders of the Fellowship is overdue. Contemporary memoirs, autobiographies and biographies of the protagonists have shone light on the individuals as well as the hopes and fears of the time. Ribbentrop left us his memoirs hastily composed ahead of the hangman's noose and completed by his widow. Michael Bloch's excellent biography and other historians have contributed to the picture of this central figure. Ernest Tennant's memoir is an important published primary source. Rightly treated warily as a revisionist apologia by an old man embarrassed by his pre-war enthusiasm for Hitler, it is however ruefully honest.¹¹⁷ Tennant based it on his contemporary notes, especially his July 1939 briefing note to the prime minister, which are available for cross-referencing by historians. It was well reviewed on publication. The novelist

¹¹⁶ Lawrence Stone, 'Prosopography', *Daedalus*, vol. 100, no. 1, *Historical Studies Today*, (Winter, 1971), pp. 46-79.

¹¹⁷ See eg. Urbach, *Go-betweenes*, pp. 204-6.

and wartime intelligence officer Muriel Spark (whose best-known novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) explored British fascination with fascism) thought it ‘delightfully rich, recounted with humorous and modest charm’.¹¹⁸

But it has been the rediscovery, after forty years, of Conwell-Evans’s papers and his extensive post-war correspondence with Martin Gilbert that has most enriched the primary sources available for this thesis. These two box files were unsorted and evidently incomplete but seem neither weeded nor edited. The contents have shone light on the shadowy Conwell-Evans and filled gaps in the story of his work with Germany and the Fellowship. Previously unknown correspondence with Chamberlain, Lothian, Halifax, Vansittart, Henderson and MacDonald add depth and colour to his relationships with these most prominent politicians and diplomats. From scribbled notes for a memoir on scraps of paper (perhaps prepared with Gilbert) along with notes in Gilbert’s hand, it has been possible to piece together a detailed biographical profile for the first time. Other important discoveries include the original transcript of the private meeting between Lloyd George and Hitler, photographs from that trip and a menu card, signed by the guests, from a dinner for the British party following the tea with Hitler. Cross-referencing the Conwell-Evans papers with the Christie papers has allowed a detailed picture of the work undertaken by the two friends in the build-up to the Second World War.

What scholarly historical scrutiny that has been applied to the Fellowship and its leaders has tended to be cursory and tangential within important studies focused on the far right in Britain,¹¹⁹ international diplomacy,¹²⁰ economic¹²¹ (and wider)

¹¹⁸ *Time and Tide*, 1 February 1958.

¹¹⁹ Eg. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, pp. 183-6 *et passim*; Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*, pp. 276-348; James J. Barnes and Patricia P. Barnes, *Nazis in Pre-War London 1930-1939*, (Eastbourne, 2005), p. 236; Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, pp. 35-9 *et passim*; Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-85*, (Oxford, 1987); Martin Pugh, ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’: *Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars*, (2005), pp.269-72 *et passim*; Hart, *George Pitt Rivers*; Griffiths, *What did...*

¹²⁰ Eg. Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 90 *et passim*; G. T. Waddington, ‘“An idyllic and unruffled atmosphere of complete Anglo-German misunderstanding’: Aspects of the Operations of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop in Great Britain, 1934–1938’, *History*, vol 82, issue 265, (January 1997), pp. 44-72.

¹²¹ Eg. Newton, *Profits of Peace*; Neil Forbes, *Doing Business with the Nazis: Britain's Economic and Financial Relations with Germany 1931-39*, (2000), pp. 40-1 *et passim*.

appeasement,¹²² biography¹²³ and social history¹²⁴ (especially studies of the aristocracy¹²⁵). In most of these, the Fellowship has merited no more than a few pages and is often relegated to asides and footnotes. This neglect applies even to those important recent reassessments of the leading actors in the *Guilty Men* drama such as Baldwin, Chamberlain, Halifax, Henderson, and Londonderry.¹²⁶ The economic historians, especially Newton and Forbes, have been least dismissive - correctly calibrating, whatever else, the global prestige and financial clout of the Fellowship's corporate backers. The corporate histories of the companies that funded the Fellowship rarely dwell on involvement with Anglo-German relations and appeasement but do offer understanding of their subject's exposure to Germany and wider international ambitions.¹²⁷

Examining the extent to which the Fellowship had an anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi mission, the historians of such extremism, especially Griffiths and Pugh, have found the Fellowship disappointingly moderate. Nonetheless, they have compared it with avowedly pro-Nazi organisations such as Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, Admiral Domvile's The Link and Archibald Ramsay's Right Club rather than, say, other more moderate bodies arguing for peace with Germany - such as the British Legion, the Round Table or the Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House) -

¹²² Eg. Gilbert and Gott, *Appeasers*, pp. 197-211 *et passim*; Gilbert, *Roots of Appeasement*, pp. 46-8, 322; Parker, *Churchill and Chamberlain: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War*, (1993); McDonough, *Chamberlain*, pp. 97, 143-6, 150-1; Caputi, *Chamberlain*, pp. 18-19, 30-1; Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement*, p. 19.

¹²³ Eg. Kershaw, *Nemesis*, p. 378; Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, pp. 39-44, 79-80 *et passim*; Andrew Roberts, *'The Holy Fox' a biography of Lord Halifax*, (1991), pp. 145, 161; J. R. M. Butler, *Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr)*, (1960), p. 202ff; Fleming, *Londonderry*; Arthur Marwick, *Clifford Allen: The Open Conspirator*, (1964); Lentin, *Lloyd George*; Stella Rudman, *Lloyd George and the Appeasement of Germany, 1919-1945*, (Cambridge, 2011); Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat*, (1978), pp. 135-7, 232-8 *et passim*.

¹²⁴ Martin Pugh, *We danced all night: A social history of Britain between the Wars*, (2008), pp. 361, 381; Denys Blakeway, *The Last Dance 1936: The Year of Change*, (2010), p. 79 *et passim*.

¹²⁵ Eg. David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (Yale, 1990), p. 549; Karina Urbach, 'Age of no Extremes? The British aristocracy between the House of Lords and the Mosley Movement,' in: Karina Urbach (ed.), *European Aristocracies and the Radical Right. 1918-1939*, (Oxford, 2007), pp. 53-71; Peregrine Worsthorne, *In Defence of Aristocracy* (2013); James, *Aristocrats*, p. 371; Urbach, *Go-Betweens*, pp. 201-6 *et passim*.

¹²⁶ Charmley, *Chamberlain*; Roberts, *Holy Fox*; Fleming, *Londonderry*; Kershaw, *Making Friends*, pp.143-4 *et passim*; Parker, *Chamberlain*; Neville, *Appeasing Hitler*, p. 28 *et passim*; Williamson, *Baldwin*, p. 299 *et passim*.

¹²⁷ Eg. W. J. Reader, *50 years of Unilever*, (1980); Wilson, *Unilever*, (1954); W. J. Reader, *Imperial Chemical Industries, a History*, (1970); Ronald Storrs, *Dunlop in War and Peace*, (1946); James McMillan, *The Dunlop Story*, (1989); R. J. Overy, *William Morris, Viscount Nuffield*, (1976); Richard W. Roberts, *Schroders: Merchants and bankers*, (1992); Edgar Jones, *True and Fair: a History of Price Waterhouse*, (1995).

with each of which it shared both members and philosophy. A key question therefore is whether the Fellowship has been examined in the wrong context - tried in the wrong court - and therefore damned by association from the outset.

Hardly surprisingly, involvement with inter-war bodies arguing for appeasement of Germany was swiftly forgotten once the war started and the Churchillian and Guilty Men traditions took hold. With Tennant the exception, few mention involvement with the Fellowship in post-war memoirs and biographers rarely focus on it. Just as aristocratic German families distanced themselves from their Nazi pasts and emphasized any connections to the resistance to Hitler, so the British elite that supported the Fellowship has forgotten such engagement. Its recruitment success within society meant that several hundred Fellowship members warranted entries in *Who's Who*, yet only Lord Mount Temple listed it amongst his many appointments. As will be argued, they had less to be ashamed of than thought at the time and perhaps, as the critical reevaluation of appeasement continues, little to be ashamed of at all.

Building on the prosopography, this study also chronicles the Fellowship's rise and the pivotal moments in the development of the twin friendship societies. The Fellowship's leadership managed to play first-hand witness to key historical events - briefing Ramsay MacDonald on matters German on walks across Hampstead Heath; picking through the just-sacked Karl Liebknecht House in Berlin in February 1933; briefing Baldwin on the new National Socialist regime in August 1933; witnessing Ribbentrop's tantrum with Hitler over his career prospects in March 1934; dining with Himmler in Ribbentrop's garden on the eve of the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934; dining with Hitler six months later to celebrate the tenth anniversary of his release from prison; dropping in to Buckingham Palace for an impromptu meeting with the new king in January 1936; warning the British Foreign Office of Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland planned for the next day; convincing Lloyd George that summer to visit Germany; over tea in the Berghof that September inviting Hitler to visit London; warning Halifax of the threatened invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1938; walking through Kensington Gardens with the Oster conspirators that same month; waving goodbye to Chamberlain at Heston airport as he took his maiden aircraft flight a month later to meet Hitler; dining with Ribbentrop on his private train; briefing Churchill and Eden on the Nazi leadership on the eve of the Second World

War and then representing the British government in negotiations with the German resistance after war had been declared.

Given their core mission was the preservation of peace, the Anglo-German Fellowship and the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft clearly failed. As such, the Fellowship has been traditionally associated with Chamberlain's vilified policy of appeasement. I will argue that, while its leaders remained appeasers right up to the outbreak of war and publicly offered support for the prime minister, their flavour of appeasement was markedly different from Chamberlain's, being based on a better understanding of Hitler, his advisers and his regime. Close analysis will show how its leadership also worked with his two immediate predecessors as prime minister and, counter-intuitively, with the 'anti-appeasement' camp both within the Foreign Office and in the 'wilderness'. The twin friendship societies have been written off as doomed, foolish and naïve ventures from the outset - no more than Ribbentrop's clumsy propaganda tools for Hitler's unavoidably bellicose foreign policy.¹²⁸ More considered analysis of the German connections reveals conversations with the industrial, military and diplomatic resistance to Hitler and his regime. Given this breadth of connections, it seems reasonable to ask whether the British government could have made better use of the wise counsel from these friends of Germany who may have better understood how to challenge, and even contain, the Führer.

Chapter one explores the business, financial and economic context for the Fellowship on both sides of the North Sea and those businessmen that founded it, for whom another war was certainly bad for business. Chapter two challenges the prevailing tradition that the Fellowship's political origins were within the far right of the Conservative Party, instead analysing its support from a politically broader church. Having explored how it started and from where it came, chapter three looks at what the Fellowship achieved politically and diplomatically in its first two years. Chapter four widens the prosopography to explore the Fellowship's social, military and sporting milieu and its Anglo-German royal imprimatur. Chapter five lifts that lid of respectability to examine to what extent the Fellowship deserves its reputation as a harbour for 'sharks in the shallows' alongside pro-fascist and anti-Semitic organisations. As the narrative moves into the penultimate two years before the

¹²⁸ For possibly the most damning assessment on these lines see Waddington, 'An idyllic and unruffled atmosphere'.

outbreak of war, chapter six explores how the Fellowship adapted to the increasing failure of appeasement and sought to connect with those resisting Hitler's regime. Chapter seven seeks to draw together the themes and narrative and examine how 1939 was its final and defining year. The conclusion examines what happened to the *dramatis personae* once war was declared and from there hopes to define the organisation's legacy both during and after the war.

Chapter 1

Gold, rubber and margarine: business, finance and the Fellowship

When invited to join the Anglo-German Fellowship, General Sir Ian Hamilton, vice-president of the recently dissolved Anglo-German Association, declined on the grounds that he would not ‘touch any association with purely business connections’.¹ This chapter will explore the context of the general’s prejudices and catalogue how Ernest Tennant and his colleagues corralled support and financial backing from British industry and the City. While a complex story, the Fellowship’s founding was motivated by rational business and financial priorities albeit coloured by significant, if not unusual, naiveté around the direction of Hitler’s Germany. Broadly speaking, the membership has been portrayed as pro-German, pro-Nazi, anti-Bolshevik, anti-socialist, culturally reactionary, aspirationally aristocratic and probably both anti-Semitic and sinisterly right wing. While examples of craven admiration for Nazism within the Fellowship emerge later, there is no explicit evidence of any political perspective amongst the founding businessmen and financiers at this stage. It was the perceived needs of British business that inspired the founders to play their part in the wider context of ‘economic appeasement’, more than admiration for Hitler and his regime. The British businessmen sponsoring the Fellowship and many of their German counterparts founding the DEG represent a roster of names whose businesses wielded enormous economic power and were internationally-recognised household brands throughout the twentieth century (and in most cases today) – AEG, Barclays, Bosch, Bayer, Cooper, Dunlop, Guinness, Johnny Walker, McDougall, Morris, Nobel, Nuffield, Schrodgers, Siemens, Tate & Lyle, Unilever and Zeiss.

As Tennant recognised, Germany had the largest population in Europe with the largest national market and was ‘the world’s third largest importer’.² Notwithstanding the challenges of rebuilding her economy following the Great War and the economic roller-coaster of the 1920s and early 1930s, she remained Britain’s main European trading and financial partner. She was Britain’s fifth largest customer, after India, South Africa, Australia and Canada, and therefore the largest outside the British Empire with imports

¹ Hamilton to Carroll, 3 February 1936, HAMILTON/KCL.

² Tennant, *TA*, p. 12.

valued at £20.6 million, a third more than France.³ This was a position Britain, as Richard Overy has argued, certainly ‘did not want to lose... at a critical time for the British economy’.⁴ German industry before 1933 can be characterised as broadly expansionist with its companies looking to source raw materials from around the world and export well-respected manufactured goods in return, ‘a necessity that mothered both invention and insecurity’.⁵ The picture is complicated by rising nationalism, protectionism and an array of cartel and tariff structures in different industries. The more successful German companies were far from cowed by the legacies of Versailles and hyperinflation – IG Farben, for example, had lobbied hard to persuade ICI and the US giant Allied Chemical to join it in a global chemicals behemoth with IG firmly in the driving seat. The new National Socialist economic model was characterised by the move towards autarky and the development of synthetics to achieve greater self-sufficiency evolving into Göring’s Five Year Plan. Frank D’Arcy Cooper, Fellowship founder, Unilever chairman and one of the most successful British businessmen of the first half of the twentieth century, published an article in early 1935 politely but firmly critical of the new German policy. He pointed out that the ‘production of synthetic raw material, and other efforts designed to make the country more self-sufficient, has naturally aroused misgivings in the countries supplying such raw material’. He appealed to the German people, ‘held in such high esteem for their great contributions to the spiritual treasures and material progress of mankind’, for a restoration of freer trade ‘by which all countries - Germany herself included - are bound to benefit greatly and equally’.⁶

Tennant and Mount Temple had both previously been involved in Anglo-German trade talks at the highest level. In October 1926, long before the Fellowship was conceived (and while Hitler was still banned from public speaking in Germany) Mount Temple had hosted ‘the largest Anglo-German economic conference of the 1920s’ at Broadlands, his country estate in Hampshire. This provided a pre-Nazi model for industrial cooperation - driven by business not politics - that the Fellowship’s founders sought to emulate. Triggered by the recent iron and steel cartel between Germany,

³ Newton, *Profits*, p. 66.

⁴ Richard Overy, forward in Forbes, *Doing Business*, p. xii-xiii.

⁵ Peter Hayes, ‘Carl Bosch and Carl Krauch: Chemistry and the Political Economy of Germany, 1925-1945’, *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 47, no. 2, (June 1987), p. 353.

⁶ Francis D’Arcy Cooper, ‘Germany’s economic policy: an attempt at an interpretation’, *Progress*, vol 35, no 203, (January 1935), pp. 1-6.

France and Belgium, the twenty-four attendees represented ‘a *Who’s Who* in British and German business during the inter-war period’.⁷ The British delegation included the presidents of the Coal Association, the Iron and Steel Association, the Engineers Employers Federation and the Federation of British Industry along with senior directors from General Electric Company, Daimler and BSA. Their German counterparts included senior representatives from the mining, metals, paints and coatings industries along with the chairman of the Federation of German Industry and were led by Dr Cuno, a former chancellor of the German Reich and chairman of the Hamburg America Line. FC Goodenough, the chairman of Barclays Bank welcomed his counterpart from Deutsche Bank. The cause of some controversy, it was held with the awareness, if not approval, of the prime minister and the foreign secretary and resulted in protests from both the French and Italian ambassadors. Initially secret, it was widely publicised the weekend it happened, having been inadvertently leaked to the press in Berlin. *The Times* reported that the conference ‘achieved so large a measure of agreement on broad questions of international cooperation that a joint committee has been appointed’ while the *Daily Mail*, whose political correspondent, Victor Gordon Lennox had been present, concluded that both sides were ‘greatly delighted with the successful nature of the meeting’.⁸

Tennant had recently been asked by the directors of Unilever to introduce them to the Führer and Wilhelm Keppler, his economics adviser. This had evolved into the 1934 British trade mission to Germany that included directors of Unilever, Shell and Dunlop under the cautious blessing of Montagu Norman, the governor of the Bank of England. The group, several of whom ‘had left London feeling extremely hostile to Germany and out to have a real row’, met Hjalmar Schacht, Norman’s friend and counterpart at the Reichsbank, as well as Ribbentrop, Keppler, the Duke of Brunswick, Lehnkering and Hitler.⁹ The mission had been suggested by Ribbentrop in response to the deterioration of trade relations between Britain and Germany as the latter’s gold and foreign currency reserves fell rapidly in early 1934 and rising global prices hit her exports badly. The perceived success of this mission gave Tennant and his newly-enthusiastic industrial backers the inspiration to found the Fellowship. On his return, Tennant briefed the

⁷ McDonough, *Chamberlain*, pp. 135-6.

⁸ *The Times*, 11 October 1926; *Daily Mail*, 11 October 1926.

⁹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 179.

Board of Trade on Germany's plans to increase autarky with the development of *ersatz* materials to reduce imports and the use of barter to get around currency controls. The Department of Trade were apparently 'amused' and accused him of exaggerating.¹⁰ He wasn't.

The Fellowship's launch was sponsored by the cream of British industry and finance, in particular Unilever and ICI who provided over half the initial funding. Both were recently-created, fast-growing conglomerates led by ambitious modern businessmen dominating their sectors internationally. Unilever was the largest British company in 1930 with an estimated market value of £132 million and ICI the third largest at £77 million.¹¹ The British corporate landscape had been transformed by a wave of mergers in the 1920s as specific industries concentrated and internationalised. The British champions were inspired by admiration for German and US industrial models being built on aggressive consolidation and product innovation, dosed with a real fear of competitive threat. The corporate members, donors and prominent directors who joined the Fellowship represented many of the best-known industrial concerns, often, like Unilever and ICI, newly-created by mergers. By late 1937, fifty-nine companies were corporate members each paying between five and ten guineas annual subscription and together contributed over £2,000 (roughly £120,000 in 2018 prices) to finance the Fellowship. As well as contributing financially, each company was required to nominate at least one representative from its senior management. It is notable that these were senior directors, founders or chairmen rather than more junior executives with responsibility for Germany. The Fellowship was unapologetically exclusive, boasting in its annual report of strong representation from 'the city, banking, great commercial and industrial concerns'.¹²

While not formally incorporated (as a company limited by guarantee) until October 1935, the Fellowship's launch meeting was hosted by Tennant at the City offices of his family firm, C Tennant Sons & Co, seven months earlier on 11 March 1935 following extensive preparation. This predates by three months the Prince of Wales's famous speech to the British Legion and Sir Thomas Moore's subsequent call for a 'German

¹⁰ Tennant, Report sent to Prime Minister on Tennant's relations with Herr von Ribbentrop, 4 July 1939, PREM1/335 C497340, TNA.

¹¹ See Leslie Hannah, *Rise of the Corporate Economy*, (1976), p. 120.

¹² AGF, *Annual Report 1936-7*, p. 1.

study group for MPs to promote peace' which have been each cited by historians as the clarion call for such a friendship body to be established.¹³ The meeting was chaired by D'Arcy Cooper with Conwell-Evans present, along with a group of senior businessmen whose support underlines the importance of the undertaking. A second Unilever director, Paul Rykens, joined D'Arcy Cooper; Charles Proctor, the UK managing director of Dunlop, represented the British rubber industry; Julian Piggott, manager of the British Steel Export Association, represented steel, while OV Asser of JC Duffus & Co, spoke for jute, then still a vital industrial material. Also present was Major CJP Ball from FA Hughes, a plastics manufacturer while two international trading companies, Bird & Co and Shaw Luthke & Co sent board representatives. The world of finance was represented by John Bain from insurance brokers, AW Bain & Sons, while Arthur Guinness attended on behalf of his family's merchant bank, Guinness Mahon. Representing the City professions was MC Spencer from Price Waterhouse, the leading accounting firm, (and soon to be appointed the Fellowship's auditor as well as a corporate member) while Gerald le Blount Kidd served as solicitor and company secretary. Only two of the attendees were not strictly from the world of business - Julian Weigall and Richard Meinertzhagen who both, like Tennant, had backgrounds in military intelligence. So, at this stage there were no MPs, serving military, right-wing cranks, aristocrats or other society figures involved in the nascent Anglo-German Fellowship.

The selection of auditor is significant. MC Spencer was a senior and well-respected partner from what was in the 1930s 'arguably the largest and possibly the most prominent practice in the City and, by implication, in Britain' with a blue-chip list of clients.¹⁴ Appointing a senior City figure from this leading firm for the mundane task of auditing the Fellowship's modest books illustrates how keen the founders were to establish it as a respected and transparent institution. Spencer was audit partner to leading businesses including Unilever (who presumably proposed him) Barclays Bank and Associated Biscuit Manufacturers. An internationalist at a time when accounting was a mostly domestic profession, he had worked in Holland during the Great War and for the British government investigating 'businesses suspected of trading with the

¹³ Eg. Pugh, *Hurrah*, p. 269.

¹⁴ Jones, *True and Fair*, p. 133.

enemy'.¹⁵ Price Waterhouse had a successful and growing practice in Germany in the 1930s and was auditor for the Agent General for Reparations Payments in Berlin.

This distinguished group agreed to 'constitute themselves as a provisional committee of the Fellowship'. A list of founding members had been prepared along with a list of people who had 'the question of joining under favourable consideration' including more businessmen, especially from the steel industry, presumably under persuasion from Piggott and Tennant. Meanwhile, a third list was tabled of 'persons who it was considered desirable should be invited to join' with designated 'inviters' from the committee.¹⁶ A draft circular was prepared. Brief and to the point, it opened that 'a growing body of opinion in Great Britain and Germany is anxious to promote goodwill and understanding between these two countries' and proposed that recruitment to the Fellowship will be 'through business and personal contact and subject to invitation by the committee' but otherwise with 'no restrictions for membership'. Germans were not eligible for membership but rather could join the recently-formed sister organisation, the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft in Berlin which 'already has an influential membership' and had set up premises in Unter den Linden, Berlin. The annual subscription for individuals was set at a minimum of one guinea and at five guineas for firms (albeit tax deductible) while it was agreed that 'a special appeal will be made to firms and companies for contributions towards foundation expenses'.¹⁷ The possibility of permanent premises was considered but hotels considered suitable for now with the Hotel Metropole and the Carlton to be approached. Expenses were to be covered by subscriptions and donations with eight firms each agreeing to give a minimum donation of £50.

There was an impressive urgency and energy to the enterprise matched by a swift and efficient covert monitoring by various British government departments. Establishing the Fellowship's respectability on both sides of the North Sea was the priority. Piggott reported that he and Tennant had already briefed the German ambassador, Leopold von Hoesch, who was popular within London diplomatic, social and royal circles. Wary of the Nazis, like many of the old school German diplomats, he had failed to develop a working relationship with Ribbentrop. As reported by Piggott, his Excellency

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁶ AGF, minutes of meeting, 11 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

¹⁷ AGF, draft circular, 11 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

‘thoroughly approved of the scheme and promised his support’.¹⁸ At this stage, notwithstanding Tennant’s and Conwell-Evans active friendship with him, there is little sign of Ribbentrop’s direct involvement nor apparently, any funding from Germany. Indeed, National Socialism does not yet feature in the various discussions.

Only three days later, seeking British ministerial approval, Piggott visited the Department of Overseas Trade to explain its role to the minister, John Colville and officials from his department. Colville had a background in steel, serving on the board of his family firm, David Colville & Sons where Piggott had worked in the 1920s. He explained confidentially that the Fellowship planned to invite Lord Lothian to be chairman, briefed the officials on the membership of the DEG and supplied copies of the minutes of the founding meeting and supporting documents. They asked about the connection, if any, between the Fellowship and the ‘Anglo-German Club’ and Piggott explained that it had been ‘rather frowned at by the German Embassy, but on the other hand the Embassy are friendly to the Fellowship’. Piggott explained that another trade mission was being considered but it was agreed that no further action should be taken until Sir John Simon, the foreign secretary, had returned from his official trip to Germany.¹⁹

Notwithstanding this open approach, the officials were suspicious enough to brief colleagues in the Home Office tasked with monitoring potentially unhealthy pro-German activity. A confidential minute of the meeting was sent to Frank Newsam at the Home Office barely ten days later. Newsam, previously principal private secretary to four home secretaries in succession, was now in charge of a new division whose ‘main task was to address the problems caused by the disorders resulting from the activities of the British Fascists’.²⁰ Now the wheels of government were turning quickly. Special Branch produced a report barely a month after the founding meeting and several months before its formal incorporation. Inspector Morse (yes, really) and Superintendent Canning concluded that the Fellowship was ‘evidently intended to take the place of the old Anglo-German Club’ following the ‘difficulties which had arisen...over Jewish members’ and recognised it was ‘approved by the German authorities, and... sponsored by many prominent National-Socialist Party members in

¹⁸ AGF, minutes of meeting, 11 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

¹⁹ Memorandum to FA Newsam, 25 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

²⁰ Lord Allen of Abbeydale, ‘Newsam, Sir Frank Aubrey’, ODNB.

Germany'.²¹ Thus can be seen how from the outset, the Anglo-German Fellowship was labelled as a Nazi creation and propaganda tool, a half-truth that has stained its reputation and dogged its historiography ever since.

Margarine

The role of Unilever and other companies in launching the Fellowship has received scant attention from historians of either. Unilever provided its splendid boardroom for Council meetings. Its widely-lauded chairman D'Arcy Cooper chaired the founding meeting and served as a Council member throughout, along with his Dutch fellow director, Paul Rykens (who donated £20 personally), despite their enormous executive responsibilities. Another director, Clement Davies MP (later leader of the Liberal Party) joined as a member and attended at least one dinner. The chancellorship of Hitler had caused immediate concern in the Unilever boardroom as indeed in the boardrooms of other international industrial, business and finance houses. The directors were alarmed by the risk of nationalisation, trade restriction, regulation and anti-Semitism. As its official historian put it, 'the impact of German economic policy on Unilever was spectacular and bizarre'.²² Created just before the 1929 stock market crash through the merger of Lever Brothers, the leading soap manufacturer, with the Margarine Union of Holland into what *The Economist* described as 'one of the biggest industrial amalgamations in European history', Unilever 'bought and processed more than a third of the whole tonnage of oils and fats which find their way into world commerce... traded in more places and in more products than any other concern in the world... employed nearly a quarter of a million people, represented capital supplied by about 300,000 investors, and counted its customers not in thousands but in millions'.²³ It was the largest foreign corporate investor in Germany having committed nearly £38 million by 1939 (only 20% less than the total invested in Germany by the US) and Germany

²¹ Report on Anglo-German Fellowship, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 5 April 1935, KV5/3 C 440756, TNA.

²² Reader, *Unilever*, p. 41.

²³ Wilson, *Unilever*, vol 1, pp. xvii-xviii.

was its second largest country of operation with nearly 34,000 employees in over one hundred operating subsidiaries.²⁴

The new German government immediately threatened Unilever's interests on several fronts but most significantly in margarine, a politically and socially sensitive commodity. Developed under the sponsorship of Napoleon III in nineteenth-century France but thereafter aggressively marketed by the Dutch, it became a crucial staple of the German urban diet as a cheaper alternative to butter. At the start of Hitler's regime Unilever was supplying nearly seventy per cent of Germany's margarine needs with an annual retail value of approximately £1 billion at modern prices. This dominant market position would rightly alarm any government as a foreign near-monopoly, let alone one focused on autarky. Sensitive to German dairy farmers, many of whom had voted for Hitler, whose butter sales were threatened, the government introduced legislation requiring the addition of butter to margarine. Unilever faced additional challenges from exchange controls much of which predated Hitler's government. Required to Aryanise subsidiary boards by asking Jewish directors to step down, one director complained of having 'to adjust ourselves to circumstances and feelings which we do not find sympathetic' and regretted that the firm had little choice but to 'swim with the Aryan current'.²⁵

Tennant had been advising Unilever's board on matters German since summer 1933. He had opened previously closed doors into the NSDAP high command and had lobbied hard on the company's behalf. Ribbentrop played a key role in setting up meetings with Keppler and Hitler and had been sent a detailed briefing on Unilever's German operations. That first year of Hitler's chancellorship gives a flavour of Tennant's effectiveness as a mediator, advising the company on presenting its case to the German authorities and its wider public relations. Unilever used its sponsorship of the Fellowship as evidence to senior National Socialists of its sincere contribution to better Anglo-German relations.

²⁴ See Ben Wubs, 'Guns and margarine. Or how the Nazis disliked margarine, but could not afford to attack the Dutch Margarine Trust', *14th Annual Conference EBHA*, (August, 2010), p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 9.

Chemicals

ICI's motivation for backing the Fellowship is less obvious and consequently intriguing. It had links with the late Anglo-German Association as one of its directors, Lord Reading, was also the Association's chairman. ICI was a somewhat-awed rival to IG Farben of Germany which was apparently the leading corporate backer of the DEG. There were international cartel arrangements between the two groups (especially in dyes) and patent-sharing arrangements, also including Du Pont of the US, as part of an unholy trinity established 'to divide the world market between themselves'.²⁶ ICI was another multinational giant created four years before Unilever, during the 1920s merger boom, as a combination of four leading British chemical companies (including Nobel Industries, the explosives manufacturer) in response to the creation of IG Farben. While another war threatened Unilever, Dunlop and others with the loss of valuable subsidiaries and markets in Germany, ICI was already benefitting from Britain's limited rearmament as the major manufacturer of explosives. For reasons unclear, it was never a corporate member but made the largest single donation of £550 to help found the Fellowship. Lord McGowan, its autocratic chairman for two decades, joined personally (and attended the 1937 Christmas banquet) as did Lord Stamp who had been secretary and director of Nobel Industries in the 1920s before moving to the railways. Tennant's cousin, Lord Glenconner, was a lay director and attended the Fellowship's July 1936 dinner with his wife; their mutual forebear, Sir Charles Tennant, had been one of the founders of Nobels.

ICI appears to have kept close to its friends in Germany thereby straying into the murky worlds of military and political intelligence. The directors had British government encouragement to investigate IG Farben's synthetic petrol manufacturing process and monitor their technical competence 'of which the chemical industry in the rest of the world stood in awe'. ICI was intimate with British government with McGowan close to Walter Runciman, president of the Board of Trade, and the finance director, WH Coates, friendly with Sir Horace Wilson, chief industrial adviser to the government. Reader goes as far as to conclude that 'directors of this stamp might perhaps be considered informal trustees for the public interest and they certainly ensured a close

²⁶ Hannah, *Corporate Economy*, p. 132.

connection between ICI and the world of government and politics'.²⁷ The British Foreign Office files include correspondence between Lord Melchett (then a director who would succeed McGowan as Chairman in 1940) and Lord Halifax including detailed intelligence from Dr Otto Fischer, head of the Reich's Kredit Gesellschaft. He was a 'close collaborator of Field Marshal Goering, and has, it seems, the Fuhrer's confidence' and detailed the debate then raging among Hitler's advisers around the wisdom of invading Czechoslovakia.²⁸

Reader details the central involvement of ICI in British rearmament and asserts that 'with war becoming every day more likely, the state needed help from ICI' as 'no other organisation, industrial or academic, privately owned or owned by the state, could match ICI's combined command of scientific talent, industrial technology, and managerial skill'.²⁹ During the War, ICI played a vital role in technological advances that helped defeat the Axis Powers' military machine ranging from radar to the atom bomb. From this, it may be reasonable to assume that ICI was using the Fellowship at least partially to gather industrial intelligence.

Rubber, cars and sugar

Lord McGowan had also, since 1919, been a director of The Dunlop Rubber Company, the leading British tyre company, and another founding Fellowship corporate member and donor. Its UK managing director, Charles Proctor, had been with Tennant on the 1934 trade mission, had attended the founding meeting and served on the Council from the outset. Frederic de Paula, Dunlop's controller of finance, also joined the Fellowship. Formerly professor of accounting at the London School of Economics, he developed new management accounting methods suitable for these modern multinational enterprises and was lauded as 'one of the most imaginative and brilliant accountants of his period'.³⁰ By 1930, Dunlop was the largest tyre and rubber goods manufacturer in Britain and the eighth largest British company. It had been active in the German market since the 1890s, but while its tyre business had prospered generally

²⁷ W. J. Reader, 'Imperial Chemical Industries and the State 1926-1945' in Barry Supple ed., *Essays in British Business History*, (Oxford, 1977), pp. 231-3.

²⁸ Lord Melchett to Halifax, 10 October 1938, FO C12117/1180/18, TNA.

²⁹ Reader, 'ICI and the State', pp. 237-8.

³⁰ McMillan, *The Dunlop Story*, p. 71.

during the Great War, its German operations had been sequestered by the German government, as had those owned by Lever Brothers. Following the war, it had re-invested with enthusiasm in Germany such that, by 1929, it owned the second largest tyre factory in the country, run by Proctor's brother-in-law. In contrast to Unilever, the Dunlop board had initially 'welcomed the Nazi acquisition of power' and benefitted from quick confirmation as an Aryan organisation.³¹ Such enthusiasm was short-lived as it was forced by the German government to buy only local raw materials, join cartels and deny its parent company dividends. Back in Britain, Dunlop's role in 1930s rearmament and the actual war effort has been well documented. Rubber was a vital strategic raw material used in an array of military equipment that Dunlop manufactured ranging from tyres for military vehicles, components for tanks, guns and bombers to rubber dinghies, barrage balloons, wetsuits for frogmen, rubber decoy tanks, refuelling hoses and infantrymen's boots.

The Fellowship's membership includes other household names in several industries notably Lord Nuffield, previously William Morris the founder of Morris Motors, by then Britain's leading car producer with half the domestic market. Often controversial, Nuffield was an early proponent of rearmament, a call wrongly assumed by government to be motivated by self-interest as, in fact, 'he used his industrial power and his personal fortune to help society at large, whether through medical benefactions or the defence of Britain against Hitler'.³² Morris had expanded into aero-engines in 1929 and had offered to build them for the Air Ministry but had been 'vigorously cold-shouldered in official and unofficial quarters' until war was inevitable.³³ Then the Morris works in Cowley were adapted to aircraft repair and fixed over 80,000 planes, while more than a quarter of all British tank output were produced by Nuffield Mechanisations. Bizarrely, lacking confidence only about his foreign language skills, Morris claimed that he 'could have stopped Hitler, if only he had spoken English'.³⁴ While never on

³¹ Geoffrey Jones, 'The growth and performance of British multinational firms before 1939: the case of Dunlop', *The Economic History Review*, vol. 37, no. 1 (February 1984), p. 48.

³² Overy, *Morris*, p. 107.

³³ Ernest Fairfax, *Calling all arms: the story of how a loyal company of British men and women lived through six historic years*, (1945), p. 12.

³⁴ Overy, *Morris*, p. 118.

the Council, Tennant proposed him as chairman after Mount Temple's resignation in 1938.³⁵

Sir Leonard (later Lord) Lyle, chairman of Tate & Lyle and the Lawn Tennis Association, joined in the first year. His company was another 1920s oligopolistic merger that had created the largest sugar refiner in the UK, providing three-quarters of the country's sugar needs. The Scotch whisky industry was represented by Sir Alexander Walker, grandson of the eponymous Johnnie Walker whose company had merged into Distillers in 1925 to create Britain's sixth largest industrial concern with a market value of £45 million and by Archibald Board DSO, MC who was a director of Distillers. Walker was friendly with Ribbentrop who had been the distributor of Johnnie Walker in Germany. Charles McDougall of McDougalls, millers and pioneers of self-raising flour, represented the food industry. Britain's two leading oil companies were represented by directors who joined as individuals - Andrew Agnew, the managing director of Shell Transport and Trading and Frank Tiarks, a director of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (later to become British Petroleum) who between them had 'major interests in German oil refining and distribution'.³⁶ Julian Piggott, as manager of the British Steel Export Association, actively promoted the Fellowship in the metals sector, recruiting Firth-Vickers Stainless Steels, Birmingham Aluminium Casting and James Booth & Co as corporate members as well as directors of United Steel Co, Steel Peech & Tozer and William Beardmore & Co who joined as individuals. The British steel industry had suffered a 'Black Decade' with severe recession and European cartels resulting in a 45% drop in production between 1929 and 1932.³⁷

Alongside ICI, the British chemical industry was represented by Bush, Beach & Gent, the UK distributors for BASF of Germany and Brown & Forth while pioneers from the emerging plastics industry such as British Industrial Plastics and FA Hughes & Co also joined. Several textile companies were corporate members including Combined Egyptian Mills, a 1929 combination of fifteen struggling firms and a UK top fifty company. FT Davies who joined as an individual member was a director of Courtaulds, the highly-successful pioneers of rayon. This involvement was unsurprising as the

³⁵ See Tennant, *TA*, p. 202.

³⁶ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, (2006), p. 133.

³⁷ See Duncan Burn, *Economic History of Steelmaking 1867-1939; A Study in Competition*, (Cambridge, 1961).

textile sector had accounted for a quarter of all British exports in 1925 but had seen that drop to just over 13% by 1937. Shortage of foreign currency reserves in Germany had necessitated government controls on imports of wool and cotton and a shift towards manmade fibres such as rayon.

Even thoroughly domestic industries signed up with Lord Stamp, president of the LMS (the world's largest transport organisation, the largest commercial undertaking in the British Empire and Britain's second largest employer with a quarter of a million employees) and Sir David Milne Watson, the managing director of the Gas Lighting and Coke Company, the largest gas company in the world, joining. Nor was support limited to Britain's traditional heavy manufacturing; younger, high-technology companies joined the Fellowship. Imperial Airways (which merged into BOAC in 1939) was a corporate member and represented by its energetic managing director, GE Woods-Humphrey. Ever-Ready, the pioneers of branded electrical consumer goods, such as torches, radios and batteries, was a member as was Automatic Telephone & Electric Co, one of the early telephone companies. Triplex Safety Glass who supplied glass for cars and planes were represented by CH Cunningham.

An important aspect of the Fellowship's work was to encourage tourism across the North Sea to promote mutual understanding, so transport interests feature in its corporate landscape. The 1937 annual report recorded that in that summer 'every week about 1,000 tourists arrived on board one of the German liners at Greenwich Harbour, and on the evening of their arrival two members of the Council delivered speeches of welcome' such that by the end of September, about 15,000 had been so welcomed.³⁸ The Fellowship arranged visits for interested Germans to visit 'factories and industrial concerns' and contributed to British visits to Germany such as the civic mission in August 1937 led by the lord mayor of Stoke-on-Trent. Meanwhile, Paul Einzig, the contemporary critic of appeasement, reported that 'during the years of peace hundreds of thousands of British tourists paid visits to Germany, and almost without exception they came back with favourable impressions'.³⁹ Not surprisingly therefore, Thomas Cook, Britain's most famous travel agent, was an enthusiastic corporate member, seconding an employee, Elwin Wright, as the Fellowship's secretary, supplying two

³⁸ AGF, *Annual Report 1936-37*, p. 4.

³⁹ Paul Einzig, *Appeasement Before, During and After the War*, (1941), p. 18.

representatives to the membership and advertising in the Fellowship's monthly journal. Hamburg Amerika, the leading German transatlantic shipping company, was unusually a corporate member of both the Fellowship and the DEG and advertised in the monthly journal. Other corporate members from the world of transport included Alfred Holt & Co, the famous Blue Funnel Liverpool shipping line while P&O was represented by one of its directors, Sir Geoffrey Clarke. Other industries represented on the corporate list included sports (Slazenger and Alpine Sports Limited), jute (JC Duffus & Co), engineering (J Stone & Co), paper (Edwards & Cleave), wine (Deinhard & Co), hosiery (M&H Seiflow) and - a perennial favourite with the Germans - model railways (Bassett-Lowke).

The Old Lady, the Square Mile and the Fellowship

While the breadth of this support from industry was impressive, the links between the Fellowship and the City of London were also extensive and the stakes far greater. As Tooze has emphasised, 'the cumulative total of direct investment in Germany was dwarfed by the billions that were in default to American and European banks and bond holders'.⁴⁰ Newton has shown that, in 1930s Britain, the wider interests of the manufacturing and financial sectors were frequently misaligned specifically in relation to Germany. In broad terms, the City favoured freedom in currency and trade while industry was open to government-sponsored tariffs, cartels and even barter arrangements. This tension dated back to the 1920s with industrialists resentful of the damage caused to industry by the City's 1928 domestic equity issuance bubble, the catastrophic worldwide stock market collapse the following year and the limitations put on their businesses by the twin evils of high interest rates and a strong pound. While few 1930s industrialists, having survived the Great War, are likely to have favoured war, it is clear many could and did play an enthusiastic part in rearmament and continued to grow their businesses by switching production to a war footing. While Germany was an important market for British manufacturers, it equated to less than a twentieth of exports in 1938 and even Unilever and Dunlop could find alternative markets for their products.

⁴⁰ Tooze, *Wages*, p. 133.

By contrast, the City's exposure to both Germany and war was potentially fatal. The First World War had been 'the worst thing that ever happened to the City of London' triggering both financial chaos and robbing it of centuries-long-cherished independence from government.⁴¹ The City's cultivation of German trade finance in the 1920s left it exposed to any volatility in German markets and vulnerable to interference by the new German government in the free flow of capital and goods. The 1931 European financial crisis, triggered by the collapse of the Austrian banking system, was a massive trauma for London based banks. Frank Tiarks, Lord Stamp and Sir Robert Kindersley, who had been tasked with managing that crisis for both the City and the British government, each went on to join the Fellowship.

The City was instinctively both conservative and Conservative. While friendship with Germany is oft-cited as a bulwark against Bolshevism - a lesser evil perhaps - there was, as Kynaston emphasized, no question of such a choice in the City. From its perspective, 'Soviet Russia was beyond the pale... [and]... the City would have little to do with that part of the world for another sixty years'. Even mild socialism was disturbing to the financiers who were suspicious of MacDonald's Labour administration. Lazards funded the Anti-Socialist Union (also chaired by Lord Mount Temple) to the tune of a generous £5,000. Within the Fellowship, industrialists and financiers seem to have found common ground in their Germanophilia working together effectively and harmoniously. The balance of activities in the inter-war Square Mile was markedly different to today's - more involved with international trade, rather than just finance and investment. Many industrial companies were still headquartered there, notably Unilever in its splendid Art Deco palace on the Thames. The City was still home to exchanges dealing in commodities such as coal, corn and metals with physical deliveries via the Port of London's nearby wharves as well as markets selling fish, meat and vegetables. The merchant banks supporting the Fellowship were absorbed in international trade through 'acceptance' business - that is, oiling its wheels by guaranteeing trade debts between cross-border counterparties - and raising fresh equity and debt capital for higher-risk foreign ventures such as railways and mining exploration. It was the commercial or 'clearing' banks that typically provided the capital for more pedestrian domestic ventures.

⁴¹ Kynaston, *The City of London: Illusions of Gold, 1914-1945*, (1994), p. 10.

The Fellowship's access to the City elite started in Threadneedle Street with three directors of the Bank of England joining, almost certainly with the blessing of Montagu Norman, the Germanophile governor and *soi-disant* 'Pope of the City'. Widely acknowledged as the father of the modern tax system, Sir Josiah Stamp (later Baron Stamp of Shortlands) was a trusted adviser to Chamberlain who, when war became inevitable, appointed him chief adviser on economic co-ordination and wanted him as chancellor of the exchequer in January 1940. The other two were leading merchant bankers of the era: Frank Tiarks, also a member of the Fellowship's Council, represented J Henry Schröder & Co as a corporate member and significant donor, while Sir Robert Kindersley represented Lazard Brothers. Both were prominent members of the Accepting Houses Committee 'the innermost, and most mystique-laden, of the City of London's many clubs'.⁴² Two other London merchant banks were corporate supporters: Guinness Mahon, represented by Arthur Guinness - a scion of the founding family (also of stout brewing fame) who also served on the Council and donated £20 personally - and Ralli Brothers who were donors and were represented by three directors, Pandias Calvocoressi, George Malcolm and Henri Pfister.

Merchant banking and the Anglo-German heritage

Enthusiasm for the Fellowship from the merchant bank, J Henry Schröder & Co, was inspired by its Anglo-German heritage and painful memories of the firm's treatment in the Great War but was triggered by its significant exposure to German clients. It was the British bank most heavily committed to Germany with, by the early 1930s, around eighty per cent of its acceptance business with German clients. There is, however, no suggestion of enthusiasm for the Nazis. Baron Bruno Schröder, head of the family and senior partner of the still 'bravely unlauted' firm was vocal in his opposition to Hitler and active support for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Nazis' arch-critic.⁴³ (Gracchus in *Your MP* emphasised that Bruno was from the 'same family' as the notorious Hitler supporter, Baron Kurt von Schroeder, when in fact Kurt was not involved with the London firm and the two branches of the family had separated in the early nineteenth

⁴² Kynaston, *Illusions*, p. 3.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 3.

century⁴⁴). Bruno's partner, Frank Tiarks, alongside Kindersley of Lazard, had represented the City in negotiations with Germany during the 1931 financial crisis as chairman of the Foreign Bankers Committee and was widely considered 'one of the leading international financiers of the age'.⁴⁵

Born in 1874 in London into a prominent Anglo-German family, Tiarks's grandfather had moved to London in the 1820s and served as chaplain to Queen Victoria's mother. It was Frank who had saved Schröders from British government seizure by leveraging his directorship of the Bank of England to have Bruno, and thereby their partnership firm, swiftly naturalised as British in the first few days of the Great War. Despite this, the vilification of the Schröder family and firm was deeply upsetting and coloured their perspective when war again loomed two decades later. As the firm's official historian has recorded, 'Baron Bruno's naturalisation was greeted with outrage by those caught up in the outburst of chauvinistic fervour that swept the country after the declaration of war'. Questions were raised in Parliament and angry comments appeared in *The Times*. His sponsorship (alongside other distinguished gentlemen of German origin such as Sir Edgar Speyer and Sir Ernest Cassel, Mount Temple's father-in-law) of the Anglo-German Union Club, a precursor to the Fellowship, was portrayed as 'evidence of treacherous sympathies' as were his endowment of a professorship in German at Cambridge University, his charity to prisoners of war on both sides, his firm's sponsorship of the Austrian government bond issue of 1914, and his elder son being forced to serve in the German Army. Asked to explain his painfully divided loyalties, Bruno explained that it was as if 'his father and mother have quarrelled'.⁴⁶ Tiarks was similarly agonised; following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, he decided to insist the firm be dissolved after the war. He was only dissuaded from this path by Walter Cunliffe, then Governor of the Bank of England, who declared it contrary to the national interest.

Tiarks is the epitome of a successful Anglo-German. He, his wife and children were fully German by blood, and yet he prospered in England through two wars against the land of his forefathers without (unlike his Schröder partners) any real suggestion of divided loyalty. Among his many achievements, he was responsible for introducing

⁴⁴ Gracchus, *Your MP*, p. 46.

⁴⁵ Forbes, *Doing Business*, p. 139.

⁴⁶ Roberts, *Schroders*, pp. 155-6.

the Germans to polo, a sport he played enthusiastically in England. During the First World War he had helped the Bank of England deal with the fallout from severed financial relations with Germany, then re-joined the Navy to work in the Admiralty's famous Room 40 tracking German submarines and, in 1919, served as financial adviser to the British army in Germany. Not surprisingly, he continued to play a central role in Anglo-German relations in the 1930s, and while his conciliatory approach was seen as economic appeasement, there was neither suggestion of fellow travelling nor questioning of his loyalty to the Crown. Indeed, the Gestapo had included his name on their 'black list' of Britons to be arrested immediately after a German invasion along with, *inter alios*, Beatrice Webb, Sir Robert Vansittart and HG Wells.⁴⁷ The Tiarks involvement with Schröders was dynastic with son Henry following father and grandfather into the partnership. By 1930, both Frank and Henry were partners alongside Bruno Schröder and his son, Helmut. The two families were close. Helmut and Henry were sent to Eton together, joined the family firm on New Year's Day 1926 and retired simultaneously, having run the business together for nearly forty years, in 1965.⁴⁸ Both families were active members of the Fellowship and attended the dinners. As well as his representing the firm and sitting on the Council, Tiarks's wife and two sons were members. Helmut and his mother, Baroness Bruno Schröder, were members with his wife joining them at dinners.

While Montagu Norman was its Pope, Robert Kindersley was dubbed 'the God of the City' by Win Beyen (the distinguished president of the Bank of International Settlements, sometime Dutch ambassador to Paris and another director of Unilever).⁴⁹ Kindersley served as director of the Bank of England for over three decades and chairman of Lazards from 1919, which he transformed 'into one of London's most innovative, aggressive, and successful merchant banks'.⁵⁰ The British representative on the Dawes Committee on Reparations in 1924, he played a central role in the 1931 crisis and thereafter helped 'manage sterling on a day-to-day basis'.⁵¹ Described by his *Times* obituarist as 'a man with whom it would be safe to go tiger hunting and whom it would probably be unprofitable to oppose', he devised national savings as chairman of

⁴⁷ See *The Guardian*, 15 September 1945.

⁴⁸ See Richard Roberts, Henry Tiarks obituary, *The Independent*, 6 July 1995.

⁴⁹ Cited in Kynaston, *Illusions*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ John Orbell, 'Robert Kindersley', *ODNB*.

⁵¹ D. E. Moggeridge, 'Kindersley, Robert Molesworth', *Dictionary of Business Biography*, vol. 3, p. 596.

the National Savings Committee persuading the British to save £9 billion during the Second World War.⁵² Like Schröders and four other merchant banks, Lazards ‘was virtually bankrupted by its exposure in Germany’ and Kindersley would have been personally ruined had he not secured £3 million in emergency support from his friends at the Bank of England.⁵³

The deposit-taking banks were also exposed to the German financial crisis - albeit, with their larger balance sheets, less immediately vulnerable. Midland Bank had loaned over £2 million to Deutsche and Dresdner Banks, both of which were represented on the DEG. While not corporate members, three of the ‘Big Five’ high street banks were represented by main board directors joining the Fellowship: Robert Barclay and Sir Donald Horsfall from Barclays, Lord Barnby, Sir Leonard Lyle and the Hon. Walter Runciman (son of the president of the Board of Trade) from Lloyds Bank (where the Fellowship had its own bank accounts) and Lord McGowan and Sir Alexander Roger from the Midland. Directors from Chemical Bank & Trust, British Overseas Bank, National & Grindleys and Coutts (bankers to the royal family) also joined the Fellowship. Lord Lothian was governor of the National Bank of Scotland. In the 1930s, as now, London was the centre of international insurance whose leaders feature in both the corporate and individual membership of the Fellowship. CT Bowring & Co (whose representative served on the Council), Bevington, Vaizey & Foster, Hartley Cooper & Co, Price Forbes, Willis and Faber & Dumas were each corporate members while Commercial Union, Guardian Insurance, Norwich Union, and Bain & Co were represented by directors. Sir Percy McKinnon, recently-retired as the long-standing chairman of Lloyds of London, was also a member.

Money and the Fellowship

Despite its deep-pocketed corporate backers and steady success at recruiting individual members, the Anglo-German Fellowship was never well-financed and recently-discovered correspondence illustrates how precarious were its finances. By 30 September 1936, it was comfortably, but not extravagantly, installed in its Chelsea apartment having invested in office furniture and equipment valued at £200. Nearly

⁵² *The Times*, 21 July 1954.

⁵³ *Forbes, Doing Business*, p. 40.

£2,000 (or approximately £120,000 in 2018 prices) had been raised in subscriptions and donations in its first year with the latter accounting for three-quarters of the cash raised. In its first year of operations, the Fellowship generated a healthy surplus of £364 after establishment and running expenses and ended the year with just over £600 cash in the bank.

But, after the generosity of the founding corporate donors, the value of donations dropped by four-fifths with only £275 donated in 1937 - £250 of which came from Unilever and the rest from individuals. Ticket sales for events were an important source of income, rising by a quarter from £600 in 1936 to £750 in 1937, but were not a source of profit as the events were expensive to host. As membership grew, the income from subscriptions doubled to over £1,000 in 1937 which only partially offset the loss of donations. Consequently, in its second year, the Fellowship lived beyond its means with an 'excess of expenditure over income' of nearly £300 that halved its cash reserves to just over £300 (£18,000 in 2018 prices) by September 1937.⁵⁴

It is clear from the surviving correspondence that funding was a constant source of concern for the executive and the Council which, in the 1937 annual report, ventured 'to hope that further donations will be forthcoming' and pointed out that 'if the Fellowship is to carry out the important duties with which it has been entrusted... its power and efficiency should not be hampered by lack of funds'.⁵⁵ This impecuniousness is relevant to historians questioning the extent to which the Fellowship was, or may have been, funded by the NSDAP and/or the German government. Detailed analysis of the two sets of filed accounts offers no evidence of formal financial support from overseas. One donation of £100 is noted to 'anonymous' but that has recently been identified as coming from a Jewish refugee whose brother Tennant had tried to rescue from imprisonment in Germany. All the other donors were reputable British companies and named individuals and Tennant mentions in his memoir that the British Council provided some help 'on a most limited scale'.⁵⁶ Were the German authorities or the much-better funded DEG to be providing any meaningful financial support, the profit and loss account would have painted a prettier financial

⁵⁴ Financial analysis based on the Fellowship's filed two sets of accounts at Companies House, covering the first 11 months ended 30 September 1936 and the 12 months ended 30 September 1937, BT 31/33916, TNA.

⁵⁵ AGF, 1937 Annual Report.

⁵⁶ Tennant, *TA*, p. 200.

picture. It seems improbable that Price Waterhouse would have colluded in any fraudulent accounting. However, it is known that the Germans generously hosted Fellowship members, providing transport, accommodation and entertainment once in Germany (just as they did for Lloyd George's visit) and they may well have subsidised the costs of air travel between London and Berlin. Urbach has unearthed evidence that Conwell-Evans, on at least of one recorded occasion, received a significant cash contribution from Ribbentrop.⁵⁷ Given his frequent crossings of the North Sea, his always precarious personal financial circumstances and the Fellowship's limited resources, it is hard to see how he would have managed so many trips without such support. By 1939, Tennant was struggling to find sufficient finance to support the level of activity urged by his German DEG colleagues who were continuing to expand. Rather than relying on the Germans, he appealed to the British government for funds, arguing to an unnamed cabinet minister in February that 'the expenditure of a few thousand pounds... would have immensely valuable results – equal in value as a means of promoting peace to equipping several divisions or to building several cruisers'.⁵⁸

German industrialists and the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft

Attached to the minutes of the Fellowship's founding meeting is a list of fifty-eight individual members of its Berlin sister organisation, the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft. Apparently formed in late 1934, the British embassy in Berlin and the consulate-general in Hamburg had been monitoring its development and reporting back to the British Foreign Office which appears then broadly supportive of its aims.⁵⁹ Alongside 'prominent members of the Nazi party' such as Ribbentrop, Coburg, Keppler and General von Reichenau, it lists the leaders of several of Germany's most famous and innovative industrial concerns whose membership would presumably reassure potential corporate members of the Fellowship of its commercial *bona fides*.⁶⁰ While each was later rightly vilified for equipping the Nazi war machine, including with the tools of Holocaust such as Zyklon B and other extermination equipment, several of these business leaders were critical of Hitler and the National Socialists. This suggests

⁵⁷ See Urbach, *Go-betweeners*, p. 300.

⁵⁸ Tennant, *TA*, p. 200.

⁵⁹ See D. F. S. Filliter, British Consulate-General to Basil Newton, 7 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

⁶⁰ Foreign Office confidential memorandum to Newsam, Home Office, March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

the portrayal by many historians of the DEG as solely a crude Nazi propaganda tool and its membership as restricted to 'good' Nazis may be an over-simplification.⁶¹ Writing to the prime minister in 1939, Tennant recognised this equivocal relationship between German industry and National Socialism: 'many of the big German industrialists and others who are working so actively in the DEG are lukewarm supporters of the present regime in Germany and are genuinely anxious in what they consider to be the best interests of their country to improve relations with Britain'.⁶² Similarly, Wilhelm Rodde, who had worked for Ribbentrop and been a DEG founder member, told his Russian captors in 1947 that (in its early days at least) 'all the leading posts in the German-English Society in Berlin were taken by big financiers negatively disposed against the new Nazi regime'.⁶³ The list includes four of the most prominent German industrialists of the twentieth century - Robert Bosch, his nephew Carl Bosch, Carl Friedrich von Siemens and Hermann Bücher.

Robert Bosch founded the eponymous spark plug pioneer which grew into an internationally diversified electrical engineering concern. His success as an industrialist, social reformer (he introduced eight-hour working days) and philanthropist (he left most of his wealth to charity) gave him a fame and respect in Germany perhaps without equivalent in Britain. A 'thoroughly liberal, humane entrepreneur, wholly immune to any nationalist aspirations', Bosch had been dismayed by the Great War and dedicated himself to the promotion of international understanding, hosting a group of French veterans to Stuttgart in 1935.⁶⁴ Asked to meet Hitler in September 1933, an unimpressed Bosch had urged rapprochement with France and upset Hitler by suggesting he must be uncomfortable sitting in Bismarck's chair. An Anglophile, Bosch had worked in England in 1885 for Siemens Brothers, and in 1931, his firm developed a joint venture with Joseph Lucas Limited of Birmingham. During the Munich crisis, the workforces of the two companies sent each other anxious messages of peace and friendship and Bosch continued to speak well of

⁶¹ See for example Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 79 who describes the DEG and its French equivalent as 'directly under the control of the Dienststelle and run by hand-picked committees of Nazi academics and businessmen'.

⁶² Tennant, *TA*, p. 203.

⁶³ Urbach, *Go-betweens*, p. 203.

⁶⁴ Klemens von Klemperer, review of *Robert Bosch und der liberale Widerstand gegen Hitler, 1933 bis 1945*, by Joachim Scholtzseck (Munich, 1999) in *Central European History*, vol. 34, No. 3. (2001) p. 450.

his English friends into the Second World War. He came back to Britain in 1936, where, trailed by German intelligence agents, he visited Gordonstoun, the Scottish boarding school founded by his Jewish friend, Kurt Hahn, who had been critical of Nazi brutality, imprisoned and then driven from Germany in 1933.

Back in Germany, Bosch engaged with the Jewish question and supported resistance to Hitler. In 1937, he employed Carl Goerdeler, the former lord mayor of Leipzig who would have served as chancellor had the July 1944 plot against Hitler succeeded, in an international marketing role so he could use company premises to host resistance meetings. Bosch challenged the anti-Jewish policy directly with the Ministry of Economics, supported the Berlin chief rabbi, Leo Baeck, hired Jewish boys as apprentices and funded Jewish charities. For this work in 1969 he was posthumously awarded the title 'Righteous among the Nations' by the Yad Vashim Shrine of Remembrance in Israel. Bosch had been friends since 1910 with MG Christie, a Fellowship Council member, and has been identified as the 'important industrialist' who supplied Christie and therefore Vansittart with valuable intelligence and presumably introduced Christie to Goerdeler.⁶⁵

Robert was close to his nephew, Carl, the Nobel prize-winning chemist and chairman of IG Farben. Bosch and Jewish-born chemist Fritz Haber were responsible for the Haber-Bosch process for the synthetic production of ammonia. Developed just before the Great War, this technological innovation is arguably 'the single most important change affecting the world's population' freeing Germany from her dependence on imports to produce fertilisers and explosives that were critical to her survival in both wars.⁶⁶ Frankfurt-based IG Farben was a 1925 merger of six world-leading German chemical companies that had expanded into pharmaceuticals. Its subsidiaries had invented two of the most well-known pharmaceuticals: aspirin 'the most successful drug the world has known' and, initially for legitimate clinical use, heroin.⁶⁷ Once merged, it had 218,000 employees, was the largest chemical company and the fourth largest industrial concern in the world. While it did capitulate to the regime and facilitate some of the worst horrors of the Nazi regime and benefitted from wartime

⁶⁵ Rose, *Vansittart*, p. 136; see also Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, p. 65.

⁶⁶ Vaclav Smil, *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the Transformation of World Food Production*, (Cambridge, Mass, 2001).

⁶⁷ Peter Watson, *The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, The Second Scientific Revolution, and the Twentieth Century*, (2010), p. 364.

slave labour, its political leanings in the late 1920s and early 1930s were liberal. Its directors were keen to avoid the twin threats of Nazism and Communism so supported moderate, business-friendly politics especially Gustav Stresemann and the German People's Party. Carl Bosch had refinanced the struggling liberal newspaper *Frankfurter Zeitung*. IG Farben employed many Jewish scientists and half its *Verwaltungsrat* (supervisory board) were Jewish so his objection to anti-Semitism was 'both personal and professional'. Invited to meet Hitler in May 1933 (even before his illustrious uncle), he challenged him about the treatment of the Jews, at which point the Führer lost his temper, and threw him out threatening that Germany would, if so forced, 'work one hundred years without physics and chemistry'.⁶⁸ Bosch never gave up in his criticism of the regime; as late as May 1939 he was openly challenging Nazi economic policy and questioning the Führer's infallibility. His failure to sway the regime led to his withdrawal from public life, alcoholism and death in 1940 aged sixty-five.

IG Farben seems to have seconded more directors to the DEG than any other company and presumably provided significant funding. Three other board members are listed on the founders' list: Hermann Schmitz, who succeeded Bosch as chairman of the board in 1935, Professor Erwin Selck, and Hermann Bücher, managing director of AEG, who was a non-executive director. Other IG representatives joined the DEG including Eduard Weber-Andrae, chairman of the chemicals committee, who served as chairman of the Frankfurt branch and, according to an impressed Tennant, considered his efforts for the DEG of 'greater importance than his work for the IG Farben, and... wanted to make it his main life task'.⁶⁹ Bosch, Schmitz and Weber-Andrae never joined the Nazi party albeit Schmitz served as chairman all through the war and was imprisoned after the war for four years as a war criminal.

Carl Bosch's friend and fellow director, Hermann Bücher, was managing director of AEG (Allgemeine Elektrische Gesellschaft) - 'Germany's other great engineering company, alongside Siemens'.⁷⁰ He was also a close friend and hunting companion of Carl's uncle Robert. Founded in the late nineteenth century by Jewish father and son, Emil and Walther Rathenau, AEG had bought some of Thomas Edison's patents and had an association with Vickers in Britain. As well as inventing the hairdryer and tape

⁶⁸ Peter Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era*, (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 90-92.

⁶⁹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 202.

⁷⁰ Watson, *Genius*, p. 379.

recorder, AEG made aircraft, fridges, irons and train locomotives. *The Times* correspondent, AL Kennedy visited the ‘huge and wonderful organisation’ outside Berlin in March 1936 and noted wryly that ‘industrial cooperation between business houses seems to be a good deal easier than political cooperation’.⁷¹ Like his two Bosch friends, Bücher had little affection for the new regime, calling for international arms controls and challenging Schacht’s New Plan. Implicated in the 1944 plot against Hitler, he was only saved from execution by the intervention by his friend Albert Speer, Hitler’s architect.

Between them, AEG and Siemens controlled the German electrical industry.⁷² Carl Friedrich von Siemens, son of the founder, rescued the company after the Great War and built a huge industrial concern with 185,000 employees, making it the fourth largest private sector employer in the world. The firm had longstanding links with Britain having established Siemens Brothers in London in 1858. Following success in telegraphy and the invention of the dynamo, it developed the first electric railway, streetlights, elevators, streetcars and drills in the nineteenth century and went on to introduce traffic lights, medical X-rays and television into Germany. While the company did use forced labour to supply the German war machine, Carl Friedrich expressed disgust with National Socialism from both a commercial and moral perspective. Having held various important Weimar government and industry posts, he resigned them all when the Nazis came to power. His firm was exporting a third of its production so was threatened by autarky and export control. He had Jewish friends, colleagues and assistants and used his group’s international network to find work for them overseas. In 1938 when it became clear that all Jews would need to be expelled from the business, Siemens pensioned off his remaining Jewish employees so that they would have some financial resources.

Other prominent German businessmen who joined the fledgling DEG included Ernst Hagemeyer, CEO of Adler-Werke, the Frankfurt-based manufacturer of cars, bicycles, motorcycles and typewriters, and Geheimrat Harting, managing director of Zeiss-Werke of Jena, the inventor of the first SLR camera and manufacturer of binoculars, rifle sights and microscopes. Like its sister organisation, the DEG brought together the

⁷¹ Kennedy, *Journals*, p. 205.

⁷² See Henry Ashby Turner Jr., *German Big Business and the rise of Hitler*, (New York, 1985), p. 440.

worlds of finance, commerce and industry. Leading German banks including Westfalenbank, Commerz Bank and Deutsche Bank were represented by directors and the DEG organised a football match between teams from Dresdner Bank and Barclays Bank in 1937 and 1938. Meanwhile, State Councillor Helfferich, chairman of the supervisory board of the Hamburg-Amerika Line and State Councillor Lindermann, chairman of the Norddeutschen Lloyd of Bremen represented the shipping industry.

Less sordid motives

So, the Fellowship was sponsored by modern businesses and modern businessmen. They wanted it to be, and be seen to be, a respectable, open and transparent organisation working to improve Anglo-German relations and reduce the risk of war. Not for them the extremism of the openly pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic groups such as the Right Club and The Link. They published the Fellowship's financial accounts (audited by the most prestigious accounting firm of the day) along with its full membership list, all donations and separately listed the notable attendees at each dinner in *The Times*. While, as explored in chapter four, certainly elitist, the aristocratic stereotype stemming from *Tory MP* is exaggerated. Though elevated to the House of Lords, many of the Fellowship's barons were self-made. Stamp was son of a shopkeeper and a milliner; Nuffield's father was a draper and McGowan's a brass fitter. Each had left school and started work before his sixteenth birthday. This was a group keen to build modern British industrial companies that led their industries globally. Several continue to do so eight decades later.

While damning, Einzig did grudgingly admit 'there were other pro-German bankers and business men whose motives were less sordid. They were simply pro-German because of their vague fears that another war, no matter what its outcome, would bring socialism to Great Britain. For this reason, they were in favour of avoiding another war at no matter what cost'.⁷³ However one judges their political perspectives, they were right to worry. The Second World War was disastrous for British business and finance; the peace in 1945 did usher in a socialist government and did accelerate the dismantling of the British Empire. Bolshevik Russia survived the war with a communist empire

⁷³ Einzig, *Appeasement*, p. 23.

that would drive the geopolitical agenda for over four decades. The worst fears of the merchant bankers were realised as the war, reported the *Financial News*, did lead to ‘an almost catastrophic loss of business’.⁷⁴ British finance and business would have to wait decades before recovering a modicum of its international prestige.

When war did come, the leading business and City supporters of the Fellowship did not slink back into the appeasement shadows with tails between their legs but rather put their skills and companies to work for the war effort with gusto. Generally too old for active service, most still had another ‘good’ war: D’Arcy Cooper was awarded a baronetcy in 1941 in recognition of a mysterious mission he undertook for the Board of Trade to secure closer economic cooperation with the Americans; Tennant went to Norway for the British government; Piggott applied his expertise in steel at the Ministry of Aircraft Production; Nuffield and his company’s extraordinary contribution has already been noted; while Kindersley stepped back into leadership of the National Saving Committee in 1939 and was created Baron Kindersley in 1941 in recognition of his success. While City firms were side-lined and diminished by war, industrial companies such as Unilever, Dunlop, ICI and Morris played critical roles in feeding, washing, clothing and equipping the British military and its citizenry. This underlines the extraordinary economic power wielded on both sides of the North Sea by the industrial sponsors of the Fellowship and the DEG. D’Arcy Cooper, Stamp, McGowan, Carl Bosch and Siemens had between them well over a million employees.

While certainly nervous of the threat of socialism at home and Bolshevism abroad, the businessmen behind the Fellowship were more immediately focused on the rising threat to capitalism not from the left but from fascism and particularly National Socialism. Their admiration for German business and their cultivation of German markets long predated Hitler’s assumption of power. Their flavour of free market capitalism was challenged by his promotion of protectionism, autarky, tariffs and currency restrictions. As will be argued in chapter five, there is little evidence of anti-Semitic views for the clear majority and no evidence of active support for Nazi persecutions. Nor should this group be portrayed as committed supporters of Chamberlain’s appeasement, as several were urging greater focus on rearmament.

⁷⁴ Roberts, *Schroders*, p. 274.

Though dismissed by many then and since, the Fellowship commercial pedigree was better respected by government than often suggested. Newton is one of the few historians to recognise a quasi-governmental status: ‘the level of political access enjoyed by organisations such as the Anglo-German Fellowship... made it hard to distinguish between the international interests of the state and the foreign policy of powerful economic pressure groups’.⁷⁵ It is evident that both ICI and the Bank of England, each peculiarly semi-governmental organisations, supported the Fellowship as a means of intelligence-gathering on the German state. As will be explored in the following chapters, the relationship of the sister societies with the National Socialists was difficult from the outset as each included critics of the regime. They differ in that the Fellowship offered an occasional forum for such open criticism while the DEG was never able to escape the close control of the NSDAP.

This was more than a group of ‘fellow travellers of the right’ - maybe, rather, a fellowship of commercial travellers - a union of business-like Germanophiles and Anglophiles. Montagu Norman’s biographer nicely summarised this Germanophilia from the British perspective (which the Fellowship insisted did not ‘necessarily imply approval of National Socialism’⁷⁶) when he asked ‘was this not the nation which had produced some of the best banking brains in Europe? Had not Germany been Britain’s natural trading partner since the days of the Hanseatic League? If Germany had brought untold harm to the world and herself in the past half-century, the fault lay with her political rulers, not with her thrifty industrious merchants, her workers, and her bankers, who deserved better now than to be ground into the dust’.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Scott Newton, ‘The Anglo-German connection and the political economy of appeasement’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 2, no. 3, (1991), p. 191.

⁷⁶ AGF, Application form, 1936, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

⁷⁷ Andrew Boyle, *Montagu Norman*, (1967), p. 174.

Chapter 2

Facing the politicians: the Fellowship, politics and diplomacy

While business imperatives were central to the Anglo-German Fellowship's conception, political and diplomatic objectives soon became its core purpose. As one historian neatly summarised, 'it has long been an article of faith, particularly amongst left-leaning critics of appeasement, that fascist sympathies amongst the British elite helped to explain the policy of appeasement and the early failure of the National Government to stand up to Hitler'.¹ The Fellowship has been placed firmly within this tradition. To challenge this and other articles of faith, objective analysis of the membership's political hue is overdue and now practicable following the discovery of the 1937 annual report. From there we can ask whether it was ever effective as a political and diplomatic force, whether it impacted the course of Anglo-German relations and whether, under different circumstances, it might have made a difference. In the final analysis, did it matter? For this, it is pertinent to explore the strength, depth and chronology of the Fellowship's relationships with the main political and diplomatic bodies in each country - 10 Downing Street, both houses of parliament, the British political parties, Hitler's Chancellery, the NSDAP, both Foreign Offices and their embassies in London and Berlin.

As evidenced in chapter one, the motivations of the Fellowship's founders were commercial, financial and economic. Its membership covered a relatively broad church with no obviously shared ideology beyond what the political theorist and author, Leonard Woolf, identified in 1939 as the preservation of 'peace, capitalism and the British Empire'.² Party political considerations were not then especially relevant and, whatever people thought about the new regime, something should be done as Britain needed to define its policy towards the largest economy on the Continent. As Londonderry recognised, there was a 'fundamental absence of any clear strategy in Whitehall for dealing with Hitler.'³

¹ G. Bruce Strang, 'The Spirit of Ulysses? Ideology and British Appeasement in the 1930s', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 19, no. 3, (September 2008), p. 483.

² Leonard Woolf, *Barbarians at the Gate*, (1939), p. 209.

³ Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 348.

Once up and running, the Fellowship's newly-created Council enthusiastically sought support with energetic recruitment in both Houses of Parliament and from both sides of the political divide. Haxey in *Tory MP* painted the Fellowship's political backing as firmly on the right wing of the Conservative Party and subsequent historians have consistently followed his lead with one recent study reiterating that 'the overwhelming majority of members... were Tories'.⁴ Haxey alleged that its members' enthusiasm for Hitler's Germany was driven by fear of Bolshevism and socialism and, as such, was obstructing any chance of alliance between Britain and Russia - 'the Tories are so hag-ridden with prejudices about the Soviet Union that they are placing every obstacle in the way of such an alliance'.⁵ It is certainly true that few of the Fellowship's membership shared Haxey's enthusiasm for Soviet Russia and many were hostile, especially following the short-lived but alarming General Strike of 1926. Mount Temple was chairman of the Anti-Socialist and Anti-Communist Union and 'his attitudes to Russia and all left-wing ideas were explosive and condemnatory'.⁶ Tennant had argued in 1934 that Hitler's brand of fascism was better than communism and was frustrated that the 'Allied countries, headed by France openly sided with the Reds against Franco on the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War'.⁷ He admitted to having developed a 'considerable distaste for communists' following his wife's unsuccessful election campaign for the strongly Labour Silvertown constituency in both the 1931 and 1935 General Elections. They had had their car tyres slashed, been spat at by 'wild women' while the men had shouted out 'the nice methods they had thought out for murdering "our class" as soon as they got into power...'⁸ His fears of Bolshevism dated back to his work in Berlin in 1919 where he had correlated the threat of communism with economic chaos - 'unemployment and hunger are the chief predisposing causes of Bolshevism' - while concluding that 'if these are removed, there is no chance of Bolshevism gaining a foothold in Germany'.⁹

Lothian was certainly wary of Russia, writing to the Duchess of Atholl MP: 'I am not sure that Russia is not more dangerous than Germany, and personally I am for re-armament'. He was rightly worried about the 'impending collision between Fascism

⁴ Gottlieb, *Guilty Women*, p. 129.

⁵ Haxey, *Tory MP*, p. 246.

⁶ Connell, *Manifest Destiny*, p. 90.

⁷ Tennant, *TA*, p. 193.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁹ 'War Cabinet, Combined Report on Food Conditions in Germany', 16 February 1919, TNA.

and Communism' concluding he was 'against both.'¹⁰ In similar vein, Conwell-Evans wrote to Lothian soon after the remilitarization of the Rhineland that 'a German hegemony in Eastern Europe would be far less dangerous than a Russian and if the Slav conquered the Teuton, there would be an end of European civilisation.'¹¹ For the European royal families, including Edward VIII and his German cousins, 'the murders at Yekaterinburg provided the single most traumatic moment... and helped produce an intense, almost visceral hatred of bolshevism'.¹²

However, it was the supposed injustices of Versailles, the horrors of the Great War and the preservation of the British Empire, that I will argue (as Gilbert and Gott did more generally over fifty years ago¹³), hung as heavier clouds over the consciences of the Fellowship's membership and gave them, rightly or wrongly, the justification for extending a friendly hand towards Germany. As such, the Fellowship was a child of Flanders, Versailles and the Raj as much as a reaction to the Bolshevik menace. Haxey's portrayal set the tone for subsequent interpretation by many historians of the 1930s who have relied on his conclusions without any calm analysis of the membership's actual composition. Boyle dismissed the Fellowship as 'a loose association of Conservative and other well-wishers of Hitler', Garfield portrayed it as a 'Nazi-front', while Pugh condemned it confidently as an 'anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi' right-wing group whose members 'discreetly raised the swastika among the rhododendrons, dressed up in jackboots, and drank toasts to the Führer'.¹⁴ Kershaw saw it as a 'thoroughly nazified' organisation that 'served largely as an indirect tool of Nazi propaganda in high places, a vehicle for exerting German influence in Britain'.¹⁵ Griffiths, in his celebrated studies of British right-wing enthusiasm for Nazi Germany, embedded his thoughtful and relatively detailed analysis of the Fellowship firmly alongside discussion of far nastier travelling companions. Sounding almost disappointed, he did acknowledge that 'views of the Anglo-German Fellowship have differed' but concluded that it 'obviously served German propaganda purposes' while

¹⁰ Lothian to Duchess of Atholl MP, 16 July 1936, KERR/NRS.

¹¹ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 5 April 1936, KERR/NRS.

¹² Jonathan Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich: The Princes von Hessen in Nazi Germany*, (Oxford, 2006), p. 199.

¹³ Gilbert and Gott, *The Appeasers*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Boyle, *The Climate of Treason*, p. 120; Brian Garfield, *The Meinertzhagen Mystery: The Life and Legend of a colossal fraud*, (Washington DC, 2007) p. 180; Pugh, *We danced*, p. 363; Pugh, *Hurrah*, p. 270.

¹⁵ Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 55, p. 143.

accepting grudgingly it ‘was never rabidly pro-Nazi’.¹⁶ It is the often-glib repetition of his ‘Fellow Travellers of the Right’ wider narrative that has damned the Fellowship by association and dogged its reputation ever since. Haxey’s analysis of the Fellowship’s membership forms the bulk of a chapter titled, ‘The Tory Right Wing’ and his purpose was explicitly to highlight empathy for Hitler’s Germany within the Conservative Party and its business and aristocratic backing. He never intended *Tory MP* to be a balanced political prosopography of the Fellowship, but it has been wrongly and widely relied on as such by historians ever since.

The Council

The Council’s political hue is relevant to the wider picture. Remaining relatively unstained by party politics, it was led by businessmen as much as politicians with both the Conservative and Liberal parties well represented. The chairman, Lord Mount Temple, was indeed a former Conservative minister and aristocratic peer, with estates in Hampshire and Ireland, and saw ‘the Hitler regime as a bulwark against Bolshevism’.¹⁷ However, he had been second choice to Lord Lothian, a prominent Liberal politician and left-leaning polemicist who was haunted by the injustices of Versailles. Though treated cynically then and since, the Fellowship consistently claimed to be ‘divorced from party politics’ with its purpose being to promote fellowship between the two peoples’. It did admit that it hoped to influence the politicians and that ‘however much such a purpose is non-political its fulfilment must inevitably have important consequences on policy’.¹⁸

As the Fellowship’s energetic honorary secretary and intellectual high priest, Conwell-Evans was a political rather than a commercial beast and his political credentials were impeccably left wing.¹⁹ It seems probable that Conwell-Evans took prime responsibility for recruiting from the House of Commons and Elwin Wright (the Fellowship’s first secretary) referred to him as its ‘political secretary’.²⁰ As an Oxford undergraduate he had joined the Fabian Society and on coming to London he joined the

¹⁶ Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p. 184.

¹⁷ E. J. Feuchtwanger, ‘Ashley, Wilfrid William, Baron Mount Temple’, *ODNB*.

¹⁸ AGF, *Annual Report 1936-37*, p. 7.

¹⁹ For more on his political heritage see his Manuscript Memoir, CONWELL.

²⁰ Wright to Hunter, 3 April 1937, PIRI.

1917 Club, a group of left-leaning pacifists founded by Leonard Woolf, Aldous Huxley and HG Wells. Here he met Ramsay MacDonald, the future Labour prime minister, to whom he was to become sometime speechwriter, adviser on matters German and walking companion in a friendship that lasted past MacDonald's eventual retirement as prime minister in 1935. As a post-graduate at the London School of Economics he was supervised by Philip Noel-Baker, Cassel professor of international relations. A politician, academic, Olympic silver medallist, committed pacifist, Quaker and later Nobel Peace Prize winner, Noel-Baker had driven ambulances during the war and been decorated for valour. A member of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, he had later worked with the League of Nations so was ideally qualified to supervise Conwell-Evans's thesis on the League. Sir William Beveridge, the director of the London School of Economics and vice-chancellor of London University (later to author the eponymous report on social welfare) was another mentor who took a direct interest in Conwell-Evans's academic career.

Conwell-Evans's engagement with pacifism survived the Great War. He had provided the translation for the 1919 English publication of *Civilisation* by Georges Duhamel, a French army surgeon described by a contemporary US reviewer as 'one of the most influential and one of the best, of contemporary French novelists'.²¹ This was an important novel set in the French trenches, deeply critical of mechanised warfare ('the tragic fate of twentieth-century man'²²) and broadly anticipating the themes of both Robert Graves's *Good-Bye to All That* and Erich Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* both published a decade later. *Civilisation* won the *Prix Goncourt*, the prestigious French literary prize for young authors and a special award from the *Académie Française*.

Conwell-Evans was well-connected to both Houses of Parliament through his work as secretary to the Armenian and Balkan committees. This and his political co-authorship with Noel Buxton, (later Lord Noel-Buxton), a Labour MP to whom he had acted as secretary, gave him access to the Labour and Liberal political elite more than the Conservatives. He had protested at the mistreatment of communists in Bulgaria and wanted to stand as a Labour candidate in the 1931 election, but poverty precluded it.

²¹ Waldo Frank, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 24 November 1928.

²² Georges Duhamel, *Civilisation*, (1919), p. 1.

Tennant, while foremost a man of business, was a traditional Tory who built his best political connections with Conservatives such as Baldwin, Chamberlain, Mount Temple and Davidson. He supported his wife's unsuccessful parliamentary candidacy under a Conservative banner but still worked well with a Liberal luminary in Lloyd George.

Two Conservative MPs, both distinguished soldiers, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Thomas CR Moore and Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Assheton Pownall, sat on the Council throughout its existence. Moore had flirted with Mosley's Blackshirts, was close to Princess Stephanie Hohenlohe (Hitler's 'spy princess') and wrote in support of Hitler's regime in the British press.²³ He had famously called for the foundation of a 'German study group for MPs to promote peace' following the Prince of Wales's British Legion speech once plans for the Fellowship were well underway.²⁴ Apparently untainted by their involvement with the Fellowship and pro-German activities, their political careers prospered into the Second World War: Moore became chairman of the Home Guard Joint Parliament Committee and Pownall chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. Other Conservative politicians on the Council included Lord Eltisley, a former MP, and Norman (later Wing-Commander Sir Norman) Hulbert, an MP and chairman of a steel company who joined in 1938. DM Mason, a pacifist Liberal former MP joined the Council in 1937 while Julian Weigall who served on the Council throughout had stood as a Liberal candidate in the 1910 general election.

The Houses of Parliament

A total of fifty-seven current, previous or future members of the House of Commons joined the Fellowship or broke bread as guests at its illustrious dinners. Of these, thirty-one were serving MPs while eleven had been elevated to the House of Lords. The majority had (not surprisingly) fought in the Great War, generally with distinction and counted three MCs and four DSOs amongst them. While this political support has been portrayed as stemming from the Conservative Party (and its right wing at that), in fact party affiliation spread across each of the main political parties. Just over three-

²³ See Urbach, *Go-Betweens*, p. 230.

²⁴ Pugh, *Hurrah*, p. 269.

quarters, forty-six, were Conservative (or Unionist). Of the remainder, eight were Liberal and three from the Labour Party. This is almost exactly as Conservative a political mix as that prevailing in the 1931-35 House of Commons where the Conservatives held 76% of the seats.²⁵

The Fellowship included a significant membership from the traditional gentlemen's clubs - 'the London watering holes where, it appears, so much real business was done in Tory circles'²⁶ - and membership of these offers another gauge of political allegiance. The largest contingent was indeed from the traditionally Conservative Carlton Club with at least thirty members, but this was balanced by at least a dozen from the avowedly liberal Reform Club. So, by these simple measures at least, there is no case to be made that it was any more Conservative or 'right wing' than the parliament of its day.

Liberals

Above and beyond these eight MPs, Liberal involvement with the Fellowship was politically and intellectually significant. Leading liberals from the political, academic, journalistic and financial worlds joined or were guests. As will be explored, the Fellowship's role in the key missions to meet Hitler by senior British political figures, particularly Lloyd George and Lothian, was more obviously Liberal than Conservative. David Lloyd George himself was never a member but, as we shall see, relied on the Fellowship's leadership to conceive, arrange and execute his landmark meeting with the Führer in September 1936. Despite turning down the chair, Lothian was one of the Fellowship's most prominent members and relied on Conwell-Evans to advise on, guide and arrange his interactions with the Nazi regime. Lloyd George's younger son, Major Gwilym Lloyd George MP (later a Conservative home secretary) was a member. So was Clement Davies, another Welsh MP, who led the Liberal Party between 1945 and 1956 and attended the Christmas 1936 dinner. So wedded to his 'Fellow Travellers' thesis, Griffiths considered Davies's membership 'completely unlikely' as he 'was not on record as having made any public pro-Nazi pronouncements' perhaps unaware that, first, he was a director of Unilever, one of the key sponsors and that, second, pro-Nazi

²⁵ i.e. 470 out of 615, see F. W. S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts: 1832-1987*, (1987). The Conservative majority did reduce to 387 or 63% in the November 1935 election.

²⁶ Peter Jupp, review of *Fleming, Londonderry*, www.history.ac.uk.

pronouncements were not a requirement for membership of the Fellowship.²⁷ Also on the membership list was Lord Hutchinson, the former Liberal chief whip who served under Baldwin and Chamberlain as paymaster-general. Sir Felix Brunner (a scion of the Brunner Mond chemical business that merged into ICI), who served as president of the Liberal Party in the early 1960s, was another member as was Lord Mottistone, who as Jack Seely had switched from the Conservatives to the Liberals in 1904 and served as secretary of state for war in 1912. A war hero from the Boer and Great wars, he led one of the last great cavalry charges in history at the battle of Moreuil Wood in March 1918. A close friend of Winston Churchill, he attended the July 1936 dinner with his wife. Leslie Burgin, a Liberal MP who served as minister of transport, before being appointed minister of supply at the start of the Second War, was a guest at the Christmas 1936 dinner. He had been a member of the General Council of the League of Nations Union and a British delegate to the League of Nations in 1935. Also, a guest at both the 1936 dinners was Lord Strathcarron, previously Sir Ian Macpherson, another former Liberal MP who had served as under-secretary of state for war in the Great War. Another distinguished Liberal, Viscount Mersey, came to the July 1936 dinner. He was a deputy speaker in the House of Lords and went on to be Liberal chief whip in the late 1940s. Like so many of the Fellowship's political members and guests, he had played a role in the Paris Peace Conference having been specially attached to the British delegation.

The Fellowship, presumably spear-headed by Conwell-Evans and Lothian, was successful in attracting Liberal academic and journalistic heavyweights to the membership. William Adams, the warden of All Souls, Oxford was a member. A former Gladstone professor of political theory and institutions at Oxford, founder and former editor of *The Political Quarterly*, he had been, like Lothian, one of Lloyd George's secretaries during the First War. He was, according to his biographer, a passionate believer in 'the unashamed dominance of liberal-minded and rational debate within an intellectual élite with close links to Whitehall and Westminster'.²⁸ All Souls was a centre for the appeasement debate at the time with Halifax and Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times* appointed fellows and Lothian having been nominated but unsuccessful. The Fellowship attracted leading Liberal figures from the fourth estate

²⁷ Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, pp. 184-5.

²⁸ Brian Harrison, 'Adams, William George Stewart', *ODNB*.

including the publisher Sir Frank Newnes, another former Liberal MP, chairman of *Country Life* and a director of the *Westminster Gazette* (founded by his father and ‘unchallenged as the honourable, influential, Liberal, heavyweight newspaper’²⁹) and Sir George Paish, the financial journalist and economist, who had been an adviser to the chancellor of the exchequer and the British Treasury on financial and economic questions during the First World War.

Prominent Liberals from the financial and business worlds also supported the work of the Fellowship. The polymath Lord Stamp, although described by his biographer as a ‘non-partisan figure who held aloof from politics’ nevertheless ‘regarded himself as a Liberal’.³⁰ Known by the newspapers as ‘the busiest man in England’ with a *Who’s Who* entry longer even than Churchill’s, he was as a director of the Bank of England and president of the LMS railway well connected in the City and business.³¹ As chairman of the London School of Economics he was also a luminary in academe with honorary degrees from twenty-six universities. DM Mason, a maverick retired Liberal back bencher, former banker and economics author, joined the Council in 1937 with several of his family also members and enthusiastic guests. He had opposed conscription in 1916, campaigned for a negotiated peace in the First War and supported women’s suffrage. He had founded the Sound Currency Association in 1920, a pressure group that successfully campaigned for the restoration of the Gold Standard.

Labour

The handful of Labour political figures involved with the Fellowship was also not without influence and prestige. Edward Shackleton, son of the famous explorer, was himself intrepid having led the Oxford University expedition to Ellesmereland in 1934. After a ‘good’ Second War, he served as a Labour MP in the 1940s and 1950s. He lectured at geographical societies in Germany in the 1930s under the aegis of the Fellowship which he had joined in 1937. Another member who joined the Council in early 1938, Lord (Sydney) Arnold, previously a pacifist Liberal, had joined the Labour Party in 1922. Created a peer two years later, he had a ‘significant influence on policy’

²⁹ A. J. A. Morris, ‘Newnes, Sir George’, *ODNB*.

³⁰ Lord Beveridge, ‘Stamp, Josiah Charles, first Baron Stamp’, *ODNB*.

³¹ J. Harry Jones, *Josiah Stamp, Public Servant: The Life of the First Baron Stamp of Shortlands*, (1964) p. 355.

within the party.³² He served as paymaster-general and became a close confidant to Ramsay MacDonald, accompanying him on the first visit of a serving prime minister to the US. Sir Ernest Bennett was an active Fellowship member, attending most of the annual dinners, and another leading Labour figure. A journalist for *The Times*, *Westminster Gazette* and *Guardian* he was one of the first Liberal MPs to defect to Labour in 1916, supporting MacDonald's National Government. According to his biographer, he 'had three predominant political concerns: anti-communism, improving relations with Germany, and a pro-Arab, anti-Zionist policy for Palestine'.³³ Also on the membership list was the near-blind, pacifist Labour peer, Lord Sanderson (previously Henry Furniss), who had been principal of Ruskin College, Oxford, the working men's (and later women's) college. He stood unsuccessfully as the first Labour candidate for the University of Oxford in the 1918 General Election and was a member of the Parliamentary Executive of the Labour Party in the 1930s. True to his pacifist principles, he resigned from the Labour Party in 1938 to support Chamberlain's Conservatives over Munich.

Conservatives

The Fellowship boasted a good number of belted aristocrats, eccentrics and right-leaning backwoodsmen whose natural political home was the Conservative party, 'long identified with hierarchy, privilege, monarchy, property, sound finance, imperialism, and the armed services'.³⁴ However, Baldwin's biographer, Philip Williamson, challenging Pugh *et al*, has argued that the easy association of the inter-war Conservative Party with supposed fascist enthusiasms has been exaggerated by left-leaning historians and commentators. He argued that 'it is notable how few Conservative politicians and organisers were attracted by fascism as such and were associated with fascist or pro-fascist groups'.³⁵ Warning against identifying appeasement with pro-Nazism, he claimed that 'there were more Jewish members of parliament on the Conservative benches than members of the Anglo-German

³² Mark Pottle, 'Arnold, Sydney, Baron Arnold', *ODNB*.

³³ Roger T. Stearn, 'Bennett, Sir Ernest Nathaniel', *ODNB*.

³⁴ Williamson, *Baldwin*, p. 2.

³⁵ Philip Williamson, *The Conservative Party, Fascism and Anti-Fascism 1918-1939*, in *Varieties of anti-fascism: Britain in the inter-war period*, (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 4.

Fellowship and that those who were fell away as the regime's evil intentions became clear'.³⁶

In an era when public deference to the aristocracy remained high, the highest profile political supporters were indeed the Tory grandees. Their attendance at Fellowship dinners, speeches and comments to journalists were widely reported in the newspapers. Most prominent was Charles Vane-Tempest-Stewart, the seventh Marquess of Londonderry, who had been persuaded to join the Fellowship by his friend Ribbentrop. He attended the December 1936 dinner, where he gave the keynote address, as well as the May 1938 reception. Viscount Halifax (later the first Earl of Halifax) attended the December 1937 dinner and gave the main speech. Formerly (as Lord Irwin), viceroy of India and secretary of state for war, he was leader of the House of Lords and lord president of the council and was to become foreign secretary and later the ambassador to the US after Lothian's untimely death. The Marquess of Zetland came to the July 1936 dinner. Another former Conservative MP, he was the secretary of state for India and Burma.

Alongside these were several other senior peers, mostly naturally Conservative with varying degrees of actual party-political activity. The Earl and Countess of Malmesbury were members; he was a former lord-in-waiting to King George V, former honorary treasurer of the Anti-Socialist Union and attended the Christmas 1937 dinner. Four further earls were members. The Earl of Airlie, another former lord-in-waiting, had been wounded in the First War, mentioned in despatches and awarded the MC and Grand Cross Knight of the *Légion d'honneur*. He owned about 40,000 acres and served on the boards of various banks. The Earl of Galloway had been taken prisoner in the Great War and thereafter served as ADC to the military governor in Cologne in 1919. The Earl of Glasgow also served in the war, was mentioned in despatches and awarded the DSO. The Earl of Harrowby, a former Conservative MP, was a member along with his countess.

Though illuminated by these grandees, the Conservative majority in the Fellowship encompassed a broad church within the party - politically, socially and generationally. It could not be characterised as a definable fringe group on either side of the party. Unsurprisingly, almost all the Conservative members had been affected by their

³⁶ Strang, 'The spirit of Ulysses?', p. 487.

experiences in the First World War. Several had direct links to the Paris Peace Conference as well as the efforts of the League of Nations to promote peace thereafter. Lord Rennell of Rodd was a member and attended at least three dinners. A renowned former diplomat and MP, as ambassador to Italy he is credited with bringing the Italians into the First War on the Allied side. He served as British delegate to the League of Nations in the early 1920s. Robert Peel's grandson, Sir Sidney Peel, veteran of South African and Great wars and a former MP was also a member. He had served as a financial adviser to the Foreign Office in 1918 and, like Lothian, was a member of the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference a year later. Lord Blanesburgh was a judge and law lord who served as the principal British representative on the German reparations commission in the 1920s and came to the July 1936 dinner. Sir Sidney Clive had been the British military representative to the League of Nations in Geneva and later military attaché in Paris. Admiral Sir Aubrey Smith who came to the July 1936 dinner had been the British naval representative to the League of Nations. He had previously served as ADC to the King and naval attaché to Russia, Sweden and Norway before the Great War.

Nor was the political membership all elderly. The Fellowship successfully attracted a younger generation of Conservative MPs including parliamentary private secretaries representing several government departments. This was the generation that had been children during the Great War and included the twenty-eight-year-old Duncan Sandys. Churchill's son-in-law following his marriage to his eldest daughter Diana, he had served in the British Embassy in Berlin in the early 1930s. He gave a speech at the Fellowship's 1937 annual general meeting.³⁷ His direct contemporary at Eton, the Hon. William Waldorf Astor, was also a member. PPS to Sir Samuel Hoare (as first lord of the Admiralty and later home secretary) and the son of Waldorf and Nancy of Cliveden fame, it was he of whom Mandy Rice-Davies said in 1963 'he would [say that], wouldn't he'. He also had peacekeeping credentials, having been secretary to the Earl of Lytton on the League of Nations Commission of Enquiry in Manchuria in 1932. Another member under thirty was Loel Guinness. An MP since 1931, he went on to serve in the RAF in the Second War, was mentioned in despatches five times and awarded the Croix de Guerre. Other PPSs who joined the Fellowship included Wing-

³⁷ See Findlay *et al* to Wright, 21 February 1937, PIRI.

Commander AWH James (PPS to RA Butler, while at the India Office and later the Ministry of Labour), Stuart Russell (PPS to Sir Philip Sassoon when under-secretary of state for air and to Sir John Simon while chancellor of the exchequer) and Lieutenant-Commander Peter Agnew (PPS to Walter Runciman while president of the Board of Trade, and later to Sir Philip Sassoon).

The thirty-five-year-old RA Butler had himself attended the Fellowship's May 1938 reception. As undersecretary of state in the Foreign Office, he deputised permanently for Halifax in the House of Commons and was a protégé of Chamberlain. A noted appeaser, he was Tennant's local MP and their correspondence on Anglo-German matters survives. Following the Second War, during which he served as minister of education, he served as chancellor of the exchequer, leader of the House of Commons, home secretary, deputy prime minister, foreign secretary and chairman of the Conservative Party, and was remembered by his supporters as 'the best prime minister we never had'.³⁸

Sir Harry Brittain, journalist, politician and inveterate committee enthusiast, another former Conservative MP, was an active member and provides the connection to the Pilgrims Society which seems to have inspired the Fellowship. He and his wife Alida attended dinners and his daughter (also Alida) served as a member of the Fellowship's Ladies' Advisory Committee in 1937. Brittain was one of the founders of the Pilgrims' Society and served as its honorary secretary and chairman for seventeen years. Founded in 1902, it is, with its sister organisation the Pilgrims of the United States, the oldest and most prestigious society dedicated to furthering Anglo-American fellowship. Other Pilgrims who were also members of the Fellowship include Major (later Brigadier Sir) Ralph Rayner and Sir Stanley Machin. Although the debt was never acknowledged, the Pilgrims served as a template for the Fellowship. It remains to this day a bilateral friendship society, with British Royal patronage and an elite membership from politics, diplomacy, the military and society. The Fellowship's marketing material has frequent echoes of Pilgrims' language and they had developed a tradition (which continues) whereby the first speech on British soil by a new American ambassador is to the Pilgrims' Society while, correspondingly, the first US speech by a new British ambassador is to the Pilgrims of the United States. (Lothian gave key note

³⁸ see Cannadine, *Pleasures of the Past*, p. 326.

speeches to both societies in 1939). This was surely the inspiration for the speeches given by Ribbentrop and Henderson following their respective appointments. (Henderson wanted to give a speech to the Fellowship as well as the DEG but was overruled by Eden.)

So, it is certainly reasonable to portray the Fellowship's political members and friends as distinguished, influential and well-connected. Nevertheless, many were somewhat distant from the levers of power. Most of the members then serving as MPs were back-benchers or PPSs. While Londonderry, Lothian, Halifax, Zetland and Butler all attended dinners, several senior political figures politely declined such invitations, presumably anxious to avoid implying support for the Nazi regime, including Samuel Hoare, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden.

Cranky incorrigibles

As with the wider membership (analysed in chapter five), there were certainly several members from both Houses of Parliament who represented the stereotypical 'nasty' tendency (Griffiths's 'sharks in the shallows') with a range of extremist right-wing sympathies and anti-Semitic leanings. Fitting the Lord Darlington mould was the fifth Duke of Wellington who came to the December 1936 dinner with his duchess and donated two pounds. 'Prominent in right-wing and anti-Semitic circles,' he was a warden of the Right Club and on the day that war broke out, was quoted as blaming the war on 'anti-appeasers and the fucking Jews'.³⁹ Two of the Fellowship's earls, Glasgow and Galloway, were both wardens of the Right Club as were lords Sempill and Redesdale. Major Sir Jocelyn Lucas MC, KBE, MP, pioneer of the Lucas terrier, was a Fellowship member and attended dinners. He was later a guest at a controversial dinner hosted by Oswald Mosley in July 1939.⁴⁰ A handful of MPs who joined the Fellowship also joined the Right Club including Peter Agnew and the Hon JJ Stourton. Sir Ernest Bennett was also a Right Club member, albeit judged by its chronicler as not necessarily anti-Semitic but nonetheless guilty of 'naivety on fairly stupendous scale'.⁴¹ Another member, Sir Robert Burton-Chadwick, who had served as parliamentary

³⁹ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 144; *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 2009.

⁴⁰ *The Evening Standard*, 27 July 1936; Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 113.

⁴¹ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 146.

secretary to the Board of Trade in the 1920s, had joined the British Fascists in the 1930s. While significant, they were never more than a small minority and there is no evidence they found the Fellowship an effective forum for their offensive views. As with the wider membership, they were to find that outlet with the extreme right-wing organisations they joined in addition to the Fellowship such as The Link, the Right Club and the Nordic League.

10 Downing Street

Whatever its party-political complexion, the famous front door to 10 Downing Street remained open to the Fellowship's leadership throughout its conception, prime and decline. Three prime ministers held office during the period, each in National Governments. Ramsay MacDonald, by then ostracised by his own Labour Party, was followed by two Conservatives in Baldwin and Chamberlain - both 'old men, whose outlook and attitudes had been shaped in the Victoria era.'⁴² Each had a working relationship with the Fellowship that facilitated an extraordinary degree of access to the prime minister and his close advisers. This represented an opportunity to influence governmental policy and implementation (effective or not) beyond envy to modern political lobbyists. Baldwin and Chamberlain each replaced his ailing predecessor following a period of impatient understudy. Conwell-Evans's friend MacDonald was suffering from 'failing memory, poor concentration, insomnia, glaucoma and depression' when Baldwin took over as prime minister for the third time in June 1935. Baldwin's own nervous collapse a year later ahead of the abdication crisis led to his replacement by the ageing Chamberlain in May 1937. While historians debate their foreign policy achievements, none is or was considered strong on foreign affairs and none had a cogent plan for developing a *modus vivendi* with Hitler's Germany. MacDonald and his cabinet were 'baffled by Hitler' and, broadly speaking, 10 Downing Street seems to have remained baffled for the rest of the 1930s.⁴³ The challenge of a resurgent Germany seems to have been a headache no prime minister had enthusiasm to address such that 'the often muffled or ambivalent British response encouraged

⁴² Blakeway, *The Last Dance*, p. 140.

⁴³ David Marquand, 'MacDonald, (James) Ramsay', *ODNB*.

illusions that... [Hitler's] tactics might prove successful'.⁴⁴ Until Chamberlain's celebrated flight to Munich in September 1938 (which was surely too late) none had been to Germany while in office and none appears to have had German friends, nor particular knowledge of the country. Despite the association of Chamberlain's leadership with appeasement, it is important to remember as Gilbert emphasised, that appeasement was the 'corner-stone of inter war foreign policy' and that 'Lloyd George cautiously, Ramsay MacDonald enthusiastically, Stanley Baldwin doggedly and Neville Chamberlain defiantly [had] pursued it throughout their premierships'.⁴⁵

As Weinberg suggested, 'with Stanley Baldwin as prime minister, ineffectual pessimism in foreign affairs had succeeded the ineffectual optimism of Ramsay MacDonald at 10 Downing Street'.⁴⁶ Baldwin was alarmed by the pace of modern diplomacy and technology. In a speech to Cambridge schoolboys in June 1936 he was nostalgic for when it 'took sixteen days for news of Trafalgar to reach London' and alarmed that 'today the cables of the whole world are throbbing day and night... before a cable from your representative at Tokyo has been decoded, the telephone rings and the Japanese Ambassador is asking for your explanation'.⁴⁷ In this context, 'nothing could be more alien to the pipe-smoking, cricket-loving Baldwin than Hitlerite Germany'.⁴⁸

Baldwin was a prominent casualty of the *Guilty Men* and Churchillian analysis, but recent scholars have shone more favourable light. As Williamson has argued, Baldwin was 'the first Conservative leader to be confronted by Stalinist and fascist ideologies, and the first who had to justify rearmament to an electorate apprised of the horrors of modern aerial bombardment, steeped in anti-war feeling, and placing its trust in international peace-keeping'. He was also 'the only prime minister to have superintended a royal abdication' during which Eden remembered he had begged not to be troubled 'too much with foreign affairs'.⁴⁹ Nevertheless 'at the end of his ministerial career, cursed with hindsight about the continued deterioration in European

⁴⁴ Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History, 1933-1939*, (Oxford, 2011), p. 18.

⁴⁵ Gilbert, *Roots*, pp. 54-5.

⁴⁶ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933-1939: The road to World War II*, (New York, 2005), p. 212.

⁴⁷ Stanley Baldwin, *Service of our Lives, Last Speeches as Prime Minister*, (1937), p. 31.

⁴⁸ Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement*, p. 37.

⁴⁹ Wilkinson, *Baldwin*, p. 2; Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators*, (1962) p. 410.

relations... [Baldwin] did come to regret that he had not asserted himself more in foreign affairs'.⁵⁰

As Kershaw has succinctly summarised, 'without policies of befriending, removing, containing or deterring Hitler, Britain was left with hope, drift and forced concessions in turn as its approaches to avoiding another war'.⁵¹ It is against this combination of ignorance and failure to plan that the work of the Fellowship with Downing Street should be set. It was not for want of trying by the Fellowship's leadership. Tennant had introduced the newly empowered National Socialists, in the shape of Ribbentrop, into the heart of the British establishment back in 1933. Having written an article for *The English Review* entitled 'Herr Hitler and his Policy' (which evolved into a speech that summer at Ashridge College, the Conservative Party's 'political school'), Tennant was approached by JCC Davidson, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster. Davidson asked him to brief his friend Baldwin, then lord president of the council and effectively deputy prime minister, with what was, apparently and worryingly, 'the first picture [he] had had of the Hitler movement'.⁵²

Tennant suggested that Baldwin would be 'the ideal person to visit Berlin' and was asked by Ribbentrop to arrange a private introduction, by-passing the German embassy and the British Foreign Office.⁵³ Ribbentrop was still 'without any credentials' in either the German government or the NSDAP but Davidson was under no illusion that he was speaking under direct instructions from Hitler.⁵⁴ His themes were to become only too familiar: nobody understood Germany; the British press was negatively influenced by propaganda from 'internationally-minded persons, mainly Jews'; Bolshevism was the main threat to European civilisation and that Hitler's focus was on solving domestic unemployment rather than war. He explained that Germany sought 'amicable arrangements' with France and a naval agreement with Great Britain but that Hitler could not rely on the German diplomatic service who had opposed the National Socialist revolution. Germany would not re-join the League of Nations which Hitler 'regarded as a sounding board for war and completely incompetent as a negotiating

⁵⁰ Wilkinson, *Baldwin*, p. 298.

⁵¹ Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 348.

⁵² Tennant, *TA*, p. 160.

⁵³ Davidson to Tennant, 6 November 1933, DAV.

⁵⁴ Tennant, *Report on E. W. D. Tennant's Relations with Herr von Ribbentrop*, July 1939, DAV.

body' and had to have the means to defend herself as she 'could not remain as a second-rate power'.⁵⁵

Ribbentrop took the opportunity to invite Baldwin to visit Germany and meet the Führer. This proposed meeting between the two men became for Ribbentrop, Hitler, and the Fellowship, a totemic obsession. Its progress consequently offers a barometer of Ribbentrop's bipolar relationship with Britain and sets the scene for the Fellowship's arrangement of subsequent meetings between Hitler and other British political figures. Ribbentrop was then, rather comically, invited to tea that same afternoon at 'a house in Downing Street' and instructed to ring the bell but not to give his name. As Tennant remembered, 'during tea Mr Ramsay MacDonald, the prime minister, dropped in,' adding (somewhat unnecessarily) 'no doubt by arrangement'.⁵⁶ Ribbentrop found both Baldwin and MacDonald friendly and tea was replaced by whisky. Buoyed by the success of the lunch and the whisky drinking session, he asked for a further meeting to include Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary and he passed on a specific personal invitation from Hitler for 'a British minister' to come to Germany to see the Führer who had yet to meet a senior British statesman.⁵⁷ Simon, appalled by this amateur and irregular diplomacy, insisted such arrangements go through proper diplomatic channels and an hour-long argument ensued. As Tennant later complained to Chamberlain 'the professional diplomats of both countries closed their ranks against this amateur, and the first great chance of laying the foundations of an understanding with a disarmed Germany was lost'.⁵⁸ Baldwin did make a positive speech about Anglo-German relations in the House of Commons that, according to *The Times*, was 'at once witty and constructive' and 'greatly impressed the House'. He warned against an arms race with Germany and encouraged her back into the League of Nations, reminding the House that 'the France of Napoleon – viewed much like the Germany of today – had become the most pacific nation in Europe'.⁵⁹ This was most probably the first measurable public output from Tennant's lobbying and must have offered some comfort to Ribbentrop and the Germans.

⁵⁵ Davidson report on lunch, 20 November 1933, DAV.

⁵⁶ Tennant, *TA*, p. 164.

⁵⁷ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 43.

⁵⁸ *Report on EWD Tennant's Relations with Herr von Ribbentrop*, July 1939, PREM1/335.

⁵⁹ *The Times*, 28 November 1933.

The British Foreign Office

Understanding the interplay between the Fellowship and His Majesty's Foreign Office is a challenge to historians. The 'Office' of the time was 'hesitant, unsure and often divided in its views on how to tackle the problem of Hitler and Nazism'.⁶⁰ Its intelligence arm (SIS or MI6) was arguably overly-focused on Russia and under-resourced. It is tempting to portray the Fellowship and its counterpart in Germany as a competing diplomatic axis, bypassing and thereby antagonising the formal diplomatic channels. The journalist AL Kennedy of *The Times* remarked on this in his journal in May 1935, following a meeting with Conwell-Evans, that 'the way things are done now is curious... after the famous Anglo-French communique of February 3 Hitler wished to find out what sort of reply would be considered satisfactory in England... he mentioned this to Ribbentrop... Ribbentrop telephoned across the North Sea to Conwell-Evans, C-E asked Lothian, & Lothian asked Simon - & the answer went back through the same chain!'⁶¹ This thread of irregular diplomacy had its origins in Ribbentrop's first clandestine visit to Downing Street in 1933 which had frustrated the professional diplomatists in both countries. However, as the Fellowship's work gained momentum, the picture becomes more complex as the attempts to mediate with Germany by both gentlemen amateurs and professional players became increasingly intertwined.

The titan leading the professional players in the 1930s British Foreign Office and originator of the 'ambulant amateur' slur was Sir Robert Vansittart. Permanent under-secretary for eight years until January 1938, when he was 'kicked upstairs' to the newly-created role of chief diplomatic adviser to the government, as head of the Office he served three prime ministers and five foreign secretaries. Dubbed by Conwell-Evans as the 'stormy petrel in the doldrums of appeasement', he, alongside Churchill and Duff Cooper, was the most active critic of Chamberlain's foreign policy setting him on a collision course with the prime minister following his appointment in May 1937.

Two ambassadors served in the British embassy in Berlin during the life of the Fellowship - Sir Eric Phipps (August 1933 to April 1937) and Sir Nevile Henderson (April 1937 to September 1939) - and Conwell-Evans developed a working relationship

⁶⁰ Kershaw, *Making Friends* p. 27.

⁶¹ Kennedy, *Journals*, p. 177.

with each. Phipps had followed Sir Horace Rumbold who, Conwell-Evans remembered, had challenged Hitler about the persecution of the Jews, who had taken ‘refuge in hysterical bawling with his hair falling over his eyebrows – behaviour hardly likely to impress the ambassador who, for all his vitality and energy, has always insisted on preserving the decencies and conventions of social life’.⁶² Rumbold had been relieved of his post but nonetheless Conwell-Evans had approached him (and he demurred) to join the Fellowship demonstrating, if nothing else, that admiration for National Socialism was not a requirement for membership. Phipps was also wary of the regime and struggled to build working relationships with the German hierarchy. While, at the time, Vansittart expressed frustration at the amateur diplomatic efforts of the Fellowship and its ilk, Phipps was more sanguine. He thought it ‘particularly desirable to avoid giving the Germans reasons to suppose, by adopting a sulky attitude, that the Embassy disapproves of any efforts, however unauthorised on our side, to promote Anglo-German agreement and understanding.’

Phipps was given the ‘hard sell’ on the newly incorporated Fellowship on 1 December 1935 by Frank Tiarks when they met at a lunch given by Hjalmar and Frau Schact. Tiarks was keen to use the Fellowship to prevent further persecution of the Jews in Germany and discussed his plans with the ambassador and their host, neither of whom was optimistic as to his chances of success. Briefing the Foreign Office subsequently, Phipps proposed not to accept any position such as ‘honorary chairman’ within the Fellowship on the grounds that it was a ‘private institution’ but agreed he should attend the DEG opening in Berlin.⁶³ He suggested that ‘a friendly meal with us may help to prevent the complete nobbling of the missionary by the ineffable Ribbentrop, who is convinced, and probably seeks to convince all his English friends, that the Foreign Office, and perhaps also the Embassy, are rabidly Germanophobe’.⁶⁴ He did warn George V, three days after attending the DEG’s launch dinner (and only three weeks before the King’s death) that these initiatives risked raising ‘false German hopes as regards British friendship and cause a reaction against it in England, where public

⁶² Gilbert, *Rumbold*, p. 452.

⁶³ Phipps to Sargent, 2 December 1935, FO371/18878, TNA.

⁶⁴ *DBFP*, 2nd series, xii, no. 440.

opinion is very naturally hostile to the Nazi regime and its methods' and regretted that 'the movers in both countries are so keen that it is impossible to restrain their ardour'.⁶⁵

The British embassy in Berlin and the consulates around Germany kept close tabs on the newly-created Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft and briefed their masters in London. Douglas Filliter, British consul general in Hamburg, sent a note to Basil Newton, British minister at the embassy in Berlin, on the establishment of the DEG's Hamburg branch in March 1935. He explained its aims, background and membership of 'prominent and representative people, both business and official'. He advised that 'in view of the aims and composition of the Society, it may be said to merit H.E.'s recognition' and suggested the ambassador should attend the opening.⁶⁶ A week later he wrote again, following a meeting with two of the founders, explaining the relationship of the new organisation to the previous 'Deutsch-Englische Vereinigung' (sister to the Anglo-German Association).⁶⁷ Newton sent both letters to Reginald Leeper, counsellor at the Foreign Office in London, noting that the 'English branch is being reconstituted' and asking to be updated on 'what has happened at home both for our information and in case it should have a bearing on the attitude of the Embassy.'⁶⁸

Notwithstanding Phipps's concerns, the Fellowship had good access to the British embassy and a working relationship during his tenure. Whatever the Office's scepticism, the embassy staff were punctilious in their attendance at DEG events and several joined the Fellowship. By 1937, the DEG could report with satisfaction that 'finally after initial and deliberate neglect, the members of the British Embassy have now become regulars' in their attendance at the lavishly appointed club house. The DEG dinner held in January 1936 was attended by the senior embassy officials; Phipps; Newton; Colonel Hotblack, the military attaché; and Wing Commander Don, the air attaché.⁶⁹ Hotblack, who went on to be ADC to the King in 1939, joined the Fellowship as did Commander Hearson, the naval and press attaché. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha hosted as president, Mount Temple represented the Fellowship and senior Nazis including Ribbentrop and Hess, Hitler's deputy, turned out in force. Afterwards the party were guests of Göring at the State Opera House. Conwell-Evans was a regular

⁶⁵ Phipps to the King, 8 January 1936, PHPP.

⁶⁶ Filliter to Newton, 7 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

⁶⁷ Filliter to Newton, 14 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

⁶⁸ Newton to Leeper, 18 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

⁶⁹ Ritter, 'Die erste DEG', p. 817 n. 27.

guest at the embassy during the period, enjoying Sunday lunch *à deux* with Phipps in January 1936 and joining a dinner alongside Ribbentrop in October 1936. While happy to accept the Embassy's hospitality, he had a low opinion of its denizens, writing to Lothian that 'there is only one man in the Embassy who is any good, the others are quite hopeless'.⁷⁰

The German Foreign Ministry

In the early years, the Fellowship's relationship with the German embassy in London was certainly warmer than with the British embassy in Berlin. The Council maintained excellent rapport with each of the German ambassadors in London, despite their very different personalities, and welcomed officials at all levels within the German embassy in London as honoured guests at Fellowship events. Surprisingly, given its patronage from Ribbentrop, whom he detested, the Fellowship was friendly with Leopold von Hoesch, the German ambassador in London from 1932 until his death in April 1936. Hoesch was guest of honour at a private dinner at the Dorchester Hotel given by the Fellowship's Council in November 1935 and was accompanied by Prince Bismarck and other members of the embassy. Cultured and sophisticated, he has been the ambassador in Paris throughout the 1920s. An old-school Foreign Office anglophile he was close to both Edward VIII and his mother Queen Mary. Tennant considered him a friend and, bizarrely provided him intelligence on what was happening in Berlin 'as he, the Ambassador, was kept completely in the dark', illustrating Hitler's distrust of professional diplomats.⁷¹ While von Hoesch's exact degree of enthusiasm for National Socialism is open to debate, contemporary London saw him as no friend of the Nazis, especially in contrast to Ribbentrop. Kennedy of *The Times*, following lunch together in October 1933 noted that 'Hösch is clearly no Nazi, and hinted to me that he would probably have to go; but in the meantime he says what he can for the Nazi regime'⁷² while the secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews called him 'notoriously anti-Nazi in his views'.⁷³ The Fellowship recorded its 'deep regret' at his sudden and never-fully-explained death and recorded its appreciation of his 'sympathetic encouragement which he showed at the time of its foundation'.⁷⁴ Meanwhile since the

⁷⁰ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 22 June 1936, KERR/NRS.

⁷¹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 194.

⁷² Kennedy, *Journals*, p. 108.

⁷³ Salomon to Isidore Warski, 29 April 1937, ACC.

⁷⁴ AGF, *Annual Report*, 1935-36, p. 3.

early 1930s, Conwell-Evans had been assiduously developing valuable contacts with ‘young officials of the German Foreign Office who occupied important posts’ that would later play important roles in the attempts to remove Hitler from power.⁷⁵

Making friends with Göring

Conwell-Evans’s closest collaborator in the gathering of intelligence, especially from Göring on Germany’s political and military ambitions, was MG Christie. Born in 1881, Christie had lived in Germany for nine years before the First World War and had been awarded the degree of *Doktor Ingenieur* by Aachen University. An early aviator, at the outbreak of the Great War he had joined the Royal Flying Corps and remained with its successor the Royal Air Force until 1930 when he retired following a breakdown of his health. While serving as air attaché in Washington (1922-26) and then Berlin (1927–30), he developed a taste for intelligence gathering that ‘bordered on espionage’.⁷⁶ In the US this frustrated his Whitehall employers, but they valued these skills when deployed in Germany.

A character seemingly straight from a John Buchan novel, his obituarist recorded that he was ‘noted among his friends for his great courage, physical and intellectual alike’ and that ‘on one occasion, with his aircraft out of control, he flew straight into a hanger to avoid the risk to the ground staff on the airfield, escaping death only by a miracle’.⁷⁷ Independently wealthy, he established himself as a self-employed intelligence agent with his house on the Dutch-German border as his base of operations (with the Travellers Club as his London headquarters) and, as Conwell-Evans remembered, spent ‘eight months of each year in central and eastern European countries and in France, in order to examine the effect of German developments on the general situation’.⁷⁸ His gentleman amateur status was unusual, as Wark has concluded, in that ‘he was not a spy in the usual sense of the word because he was neither paid nor controlled by anyone’.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. xi.

⁷⁶ Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, p. 61.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, 24 November 1971.

⁷⁸ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Wark, *Ultimate Enemy*, p. 52.

Christie established senior contacts with the National Socialist leadership early in the regime. He had first met Hitler in 1932 with Hess and Hitler's economic adviser Otto Wagener at the Kaiserhof Hotel in Berlin. As an aviation pioneer he befriended the 'curious fraternity of airmen', including: Göring, whom he first met in early 1931; Erhard Milch, the state secretary of the Reich Aviation Ministry; Hugo Junkers leader of the Junkers Flugzeug-und Motorenwerke AG; and Hans Ritter, an employee of Junkers.⁸⁰ Between January 1935 and May 1937 these gave him invaluable insight into the build-up of the Luftwaffe that he reported back conscientiously to London.

Christie had first met Sir Robert Vansittart in the latter 1920s when he was air attaché in Washington and Vansittart was head of the American department at the Foreign Office. It seems they started collaborating on German intelligence gathering as early as 1930. This was the foundation of Van's famous 'private detective agency' which he developed at the Foreign Office in the 1930s to augment the work of MI5 and SIS of which he nonetheless was 'the most committed Whitehall supporter'.⁸¹ The two men developed an intense working relationship. As Conwell-Evans remembered, in Vansittart Christie 'found a friend upon whose discreet silence he could entirely rely, and one whose brilliant and unconventional mind was quickly responsive and sympathetic to his voluntary efforts to help' while, as Ferris concludes, for Van, Christie was 'Britain's best source on the inner workings of the Nazi state'.⁸²

Quite when Conwell-Evans and Vansittart first met and who introduced whom is unclear. Both men were close to Ramsay MacDonald in the 1920s and Conwell-Evans had sent a copy of his League of Nations book in 1929 to Vansittart, then principal private secretary to the prime minister and correspondence survives on international affairs from early 1932.⁸³ In his unpublished autobiographical notes, Conwell-Evans remembered that 'Christie put me onto Van: he took my warnings'.⁸⁴ Although historians have noted that Conwell-Evans and Christie worked together for Vansittart, none seems to have associated Christie with the Fellowship nor fully explored the three men's relationship. Christie had been proposed for membership in 1931 of the Anglo-German Association by Harold Nicolson (later famous as an anti-appeaser but at that

⁸⁰ Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, p. 64.

⁸¹ Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*, (2009), p. 195.

⁸² Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, introduction, p. x; Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, p. 64.

⁸³ See Vansittart to Conwell-Evans, 13 May 1932, CONWELL.

⁸⁴ Conwell-Evans, Manuscript Memoir, CONWELL.

time associated with Oswald Mosley's New Party) who recommended him on the strength of his 'enormous circle of German friends, as well as being able to speak the language with great fluency'.⁸⁵ On hand to assist Tennant's aborted visit to Germany for JCC Davidson in December 1933, he joined the Fellowship soon after its foundation. He donated £5 over and above his annual subscriptions and came to at least two events - the Brunswick dinner in July 1936 and the reception for Ambassador Dirksen two years later. Notwithstanding his urgent warnings to the British Foreign Office of the rising threat from Hitler's Germany, he was elected to the Fellowship's Council on 17 January 1938. It was from 1938 that he and Conwell-Evans worked together, and it is easy to speculate that Vansittart, a guest at Fellowship events despite his vocal hostility towards Germany, may have encouraged Christie to accept election to the Council to burnish his cover and widen opportunities for networking with leading Germans at that diplomatically critical time. Though historians have overlooked his involvement with the Fellowship, his membership was highlighted by the police when they detained him *en route* to Switzerland in the first year of the war even though the organisation was by then defunct.

Christie and Conwell-Evans's relationship remains something of a puzzle. Both were lifelong bachelors and the friendship survived over three decades. A recently unearthed letter from Vansittart to Conwell-Evans from May 1941 shows how close the three men had become and may imply that Conwell-Evans and Christie were in personal partnership. Having succumbed to calls to retire, following his intemperate Black Record broadcasts damning the German national character in April 1941, Vansittart wrote: 'I am looking forward to making good use of my liberty in the national interest, and I shall more than ever need your and Grahame's collaboration' before signing off 'with my love to you both'.⁸⁶

From the outset, Christie's intelligence was valued by the British Foreign Office and not just by Vansittart as permanent under-secretary. A 1932 minute emphasises that 'Captain Christie's information in the past has often been useful and he has exceptional opportunities for gauging certain elements of German opinion'. Even before Hitler's assumption of the chancellorship, Christie was operating *sub rosa* and was 'particularly

⁸⁵ Morgan to Hamilton 26th of May 1931, HAMILTON/KCL.

⁸⁶ Vansittart to Conwell-Evans, 29 May 1941, CONWELL.

anxious that he should not be quoted anywhere'.⁸⁷ Determining the value of Christie's intelligence is complex. His obituarist shrewdly pointed out 'it will be for historians to judge later whether Lord Vansittart's opinions on German intentions were formed or merely confirmed by this class of evidence, and what impact Christie made on Foreign Office thinking'.⁸⁸ While deserving further attention, several historians have been intrigued by Christie including Vansittart's biographer who acknowledged that most of his 'secret sources of information about Germany's rearmament schemes, particularly in the air' came from Christie.⁸⁹ Meehan was certain that he was Van's 'most important agent' and that the relationship he built with Göring and the intelligence he garnered was 'penetration of the inner counsels of the Nazi Party beyond the wildest dreams of any secret service agent'.⁹⁰ Von Klemperer, the eminent historian of the German resistance, assessed both Christie and Conwell-Evans as 'men of extraordinary enterprise and ingenuity' through whom 'Van was able to establish ties with the German power elites and was encouraged in his illusion of being in the position of an arbiter on German affairs, on Anglo-German relations, and indeed on the question of war or peace'.⁹¹ Ferris has produced the most detailed analysis of Christie's, and to some extent Conwell-Evans's, contribution which informs the analysis of the Fellowship's relevance to the process of gathering and communicating this intelligence in the following chapters.

It was this range of carefully-nurtured political and diplomatic connections and networks, from Downing Street to the Wilhelmstrasse that provided the Anglo-German Fellowship with an unrivalled platform for its programme to influence the governments, diplomatic services and, counter-intuitively, the opposition to the government in both countries. This programme would involve almost all the relevant political leaders in both countries and continue up to and beyond the outbreak of war in September 1939.

⁸⁷ Foreign Office Minute, 7 October 1932, FO 371/15946.

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 24 November 1971.

⁸⁹ Rose, *Vansittart*, pp. 135-6 et passim.

⁹⁰ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, pp. 88-9.

⁹¹ Klemens von Klemperer, *German Resistance Against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad, 1938-1945*, (Oxford, 1992), pp. 90-1.

Chapter 3

Coffee with Hitler: the years of optimism

As 1935 opened, the economies in both Germany and Britain were finally emerging from the Depression and, in Germany's case, benefitting from rearmament. In an economic report on Germany, Tennant wrote that 'home trade continues to improve and money is flowing fast and freely... the theatres, restaurants and cafes are packed'.¹ It was into this more positive atmosphere that the Fellowship's founders ventured forth as amateur diplomats, having secured financial backing from leading British financiers and industrialists and political support from across the aisles of both houses of parliament. Encouraged by the improving economy, Hitler tested international opinion with two bold moves. In March, he announced the reintroduction of national military service, which Conwell-Evans saw as 'strengthening his hands before negotiations'² and which left 'Europe profoundly disturbed – but only for a time'.³ Two months later Hitler sent Ribbentrop, then special commissioner for disarmament, to London to negotiate the Anglo-German Naval agreement. This was the first of Ribbentrop's unlikely diplomatic triumphs that Conwell-Evans excitedly promised to Lothian proved that 'Germany's will to friendship with us is real and permanent'.⁴

This optimism needs to be set in the context of what Halifax called 'a high tide of wholly irrational pacifist sentiment in Britain' following the Peace Ballot in June 1935 in which the clear majority of the eleven million voters supported the League of Nations, disarmament, abolition of air warfare and international cooperation to prevent war.⁵ Those Francophile voices in the Foreign Office arguing for a more circumspect approach to Germany were, by the end of the year, severely embarrassed by the exposure of the Hoare-Laval pact following Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. All of which emboldened Hitler's strategy combining the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in March 1936, blatantly breaching the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, with vocal diplomatic reassurances to the British. This faced no military resistance, little coordinated international complaint and was hugely popular in Germany. As Weinberg

¹ Tennant, German economic report, 17 February 1935, KERR/NRS.

² Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 17 March 1935, CONWELL.

³ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 35.

⁴ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 23 June 1935, CONWELL.

⁵ The Earl of Halifax, *Fullness of Days*, (1957), p. 181.

has argued there was no stomach in Britain for a military response. Even Churchill was sanguine, failing to ‘advocate immediate and decisive action to throw the German army out of the Rhineland’ and accepting the British government’s ‘evasive policy of futile talking and negotiation’. Eden, the foreign secretary, had been prepared to concede it to the Germans in any event, and, as Parker concluded, ‘it was unthinkable at the time, whatever anyone later claimed, that Britain would push France into firmness over a Rhineland demilitarised zone that most in Britain thought to be a legacy of the unfairness of Versailles, and something that would in any case soon be negotiated away’.⁶ But critically, as Steiner suggested, ‘the French failure to respond militarily to German provocation increased Hitler’s confidence’ and ‘confirmed his belief that despite its materially superior army, France would never act without Britain’.⁷

The sympathy of the Fellowship’s leaders towards Germany’s grievances should not be equated with complacency about the threat she posed. Back in March 1935 Conwell-Evans had warned Lothian that ‘the most dangerous aspect for the future is the demilitarised zone’.⁸ In February 1936, Tennant and Conwell-Evans had warned leading British statesmen that the planned Franco-Russian alliance would lead Germany to ‘feel that her encirclement has been completed and... take drastic steps to meet the situation’.⁹ It was MG Christie who alerted the British to the impending action, telephoning Vansittart the night before at his Mayfair home with details of the timing and strength of the invasion.¹⁰ According to Tennant’s memoir, it was from then that his relations with Ribbentrop ‘moved down to quite a different and more distant plane’ and so he concentrated on expanding the Fellowship.¹¹ According to Wright, the invasion of the Rhineland caused a ‘panic’ and a hurriedly convened Council meeting which ‘drew up an ungrammatical letter which was little more than an appeal to the Fuhrer to undo what he had done’.¹² Nonetheless, Ambassador von Hoesch reported back to Berlin that ‘our old and faithful friends’ including Ian Hamilton, Colonel Moore and Londonderry were supportive and the next day met with Lothian

⁶ Parker, *Churchill*, p. 90.

⁷ Steiner, *Triumph*, p. 19.

⁸ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 17 March 1935, CONWELL.

⁹ Tennant, Memorandum, 2 February 1936, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

¹⁰ See Christie message to Vansittart, 12.45am, 7 March 1936, CHRS.

¹¹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 193.

¹² Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

who was purportedly unperturbed by the remilitarisation.¹³ Reflecting over a year later, Conwell-Evans wrote to Lothian: ‘it is odd that only a great crisis threatening immediate war rallies our people to examine a thing on its own merits, as in the Rhineland case when sentiment was pro-German. In between crises Moscow propagandists seem to have it all their own way’.¹⁴

The interaction between leading British and German statesmen in the five-and-a-half-year period between early 1933 and Chamberlain’s meetings with Hitler in September 1938 was patchy, chaotic, amateur and eccentric. The rarity of face-to-face meetings between leaders of the two governments was a constant theme for the Fellowship and its leadership. Tennant passionately believed personal contact with dictators was essential to successful diplomacy, quoting Samuel Hoare’s view that ‘with the advent of the dictators, the diplomats had almost ceased to exist’.¹⁵ It was specially to fill this diplomatic vacuum that he had created the Fellowship.

In December 1933 Hitler had complained to Tennant that, even though he had been in power for nearly a year, ‘Allied statesman travel round Europe from Paris to Rome from Rome to London discussing him when none of them had ever seen him so knew nothing about him’. He reiterated the invitation to Baldwin whom he admired for giving a portion of his fortune to pay down the national debt. He suggested that, as he could not leave Germany, the meeting could be held ‘in a frontier town or in a battleship off Hamburg’ and would provoke ‘such a return of confidence that in six months there will be not one unemployed man in Europe’. Back in London, Tennant briefed Baldwin who ‘walked up and down his room smoking his pipe and clicking his fingers’ but declared that, while he would like to accept, it was not his job. Tennant suggested some underlings go as ‘an advance guard’ so Baldwin proposed his friend Davidson and Geoffrey Lloyd, his principal private secretary. A few days later, Davidson, deeply apologetic, pulled out of the trip but emphasised Lloyd’s credentials to go alone. Hitler insisted that Lloyd would only be welcome carrying a personal message from Baldwin who demurred as this would need Foreign Office blessing and the next day Lloyd pulled

¹³ See von Hoesch, ‘The Mood and Situation in England’, Memorandum to Foreign Ministry Berlin, 10 March 1936, *DGFP* and von Hoesch, Telegram to Foreign Ministry, 11 March 1936, *DGFP*.

¹⁴ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 10 April 1937, KERR/NRS.

¹⁵ Viscount Templewood, *Nine Trouble Years*, (1954), p. 379.

out claiming illness. For Tennant and Ribbentrop this debacle was a ‘serious setback’ and the former reported that Hitler was ‘furious’.¹⁶

In March 1935, Sir John Simon, accompanied by Anthony Eden (by then Lord Privy Seal) was the first serving British cabinet minister to meet Hitler, over two years after he had been appointed chancellor of Germany. In the meanwhile, apparently to mitigate this diplomatic cold-shoulder, an assortment of senior British political figures of varying hue and degrees of eccentricity made the trip to Berlin or Berchtesgaden to take coffee with the Führer. Of the semi-official, the more politically significant were Lords Londonderry, Allen and Lothian and the former prime minister Lloyd George in 1936. Far from coming from the right of the Conservative party, the more important meetings were with senior Liberal and Labour politicians. A flow of lesser politicians and businessmen, each members of the Fellowship, included lords Mount Temple, Stamp, Brocket, McGowan and Mottistone and, a retired MP, DM Mason. Former diplomat, Harold Nicolson’s disapproval of ‘ex-cabinet ministers trotting across to Germany’ giving ‘the impression of secret negotiations’ is typical of the then scornful Foreign Office attitude to the Fellowship and its missions.¹⁷ Each mission was nonetheless a forerunner for Chamberlain and his umbrella at Munich. In most, the Fellowship played its part in suggesting, promoting, arranging and translating (Conwell-Evans, Tennant and Christie each spoke fluent German). Understanding each, particularly the visits by Lothian, Londonderry and Lloyd George, is central to any proper analysis of the Fellowship’s diplomatic and political ambitions.

It is tempting, as Vansittart did, to divide these gentlemen from the players and portray the ‘ambulant amateurs’ as promoting a competing, unsanctioned, diplomatic choreography in this series of visits to Hitler (what the Germans term *substitutionsdiplomatie*).¹⁸ However, the boundaries of professionalism are harder to define and each of these meetings is part of an interlinked sequence. Baldwin remained Hitler’s elusive Holy Grail while Lothian paved the way for the visit by Simon and Eden a few weeks later, inspired Londonderry and helped to organise Halifax’s visit. The two professionals, Simon and Eden, were a disappointment to both sides. Lloyd George was a publicity coup and fleeting delight, while Londonderry was a warm-up

¹⁶ Tennant, *TA*, pp. 165-8.

¹⁷ Harold Nicolson, (ed. Nigel Nicolson), *Diaries and Letters, 1907-1964*, (2004).

¹⁸ See Urbach, *Go-Betweens*, p. 7.

act for Halifax who went on to disappoint. These tourists have been derided by historians as amateur, naïve, unauthorised and irresponsible - 'a stream of distinguished and gullible visitors... the majority of whom came away convinced of the Nazi leader's reasonableness and desire for peace with the British Empire'.¹⁹ No doubt later commentators have been influenced by Churchill's conclusion that 'all those Englishmen who visited the German Führer in these years were embarrassed or compromised'.²⁰ However this was a distinguished, varied and intelligent group – were they really all gulled?

The visitors, however amateur, were not without governmental blessing. Lord Allen was the unofficial representative of Ramsay MacDonald, Lloyd George went with Baldwin's blessing, while Lothian and Londonderry liaised with the Foreign Office and Downing Street on each of their meetings. Nor were the official visits any less amateur. The patrician Lord Halifax, while not yet foreign secretary, met Hitler in November 1937 under the guise as master of the Middleton Hunt visiting a 'slightly absurd' hunting exhibition in Berlin.²¹ Clearly an awkward emissary, he initially mistook the Führer for a footman.²² Nor were the professional diplomatists wholly immune to Hitler's charm. Eden got on well with Hitler, preferring him to Stalin and especially Mussolini, whom he thought 'a complete gangster with dreadful table manners to boot'.²³ Hitler invited Eden to stay at his 'cottage' at Berchtesgaden at a later date and they discussed the Great War where it turned out they had served on opposite sides of the River Oise. They agreed that 'ex-soldiers should be the last ever to wish for another war'.²⁴

Lord Lothian

Of the British politicians who met Hitler in the mid-1930s, Philip Kerr (from 1930, the eleventh Marquess of Lothian) is especially pivotal to the story of the Anglo-German Fellowship. Despite declining the offer of the chairmanship, he worked closely with

¹⁹ Blakeway, *Last Dance*, p. 74.

²⁰ Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, pp. 224-225.

²¹ Parker, *Chamberlain*, p. 97.

²² For his diary account see Halifax, *Fullness*, pp. 184-191.

²³ D. R. Thorpe, 'Eden, (Robert) Anthony, first earl of Avon', *ODNB*.

²⁴ Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 64.

Conwell-Evans and they met Hitler together twice (in January 1935 and May 1937) under the direct auspices of the Fellowship. Hitler described Lothian as ‘the most helpful Englishman he has met’.²⁵ Conwell-Evans had introduced Ribbentrop to Lothian in November 1934 who entertained him at Blickling Hall, his magnificent Jacobean stately home in Norfolk in June 1935. Lothian recommended Conwell-Evans to his old boss Lloyd George as adviser on matters German. He gave the keynote speech at the Fellowship dinner in July 1936 at which he gently but firmly criticised his German friends. Though aristocratic by blood (his paternal grandfather was the seventh Marquess and his maternal grandfather a duke), his father had been an army officer who brought up his children in a modest dower house. Lothian was never wholly comfortable with the trappings of aristocracy arriving at the coronation of George VI in a battered Austin Seven and favoured the American style of informality. As a Christian Scientist, hardworking journalist, secretary of the Rhodes Trust and later a diplomat, he was far from both the Lord Darlington stereotype and the elegant nobility of lords Londonderry and Halifax. While associated with the ‘Cliveden Set’, his political friendships and influence were wide. Although a devoted Liberal and loyal to Lloyd George, he had served in MacDonald’s coalition government, lent his stately home to the nervously collapsed Baldwin, was an ally to Chamberlain and was appointed ambassador to Washington by his friend Halifax. Thereupon he developed a successful relationship with the new prime minister, Winston Churchill, despite initial mutual antipathy. As one of Lloyd George’s secretaries at Versailles and his *eminence grise* on foreign affairs, he had been responsible for drafting Article 231, the notorious German ‘war guilt’ clause. As Kennedy of *The Times* wrote in May 1937, he was ‘now a little ashamed of his handiwork, and makes what excuses he can for it’ in both Germany and Britain.²⁶

Secretly nominated British ambassador to the US in August 1938, Lothian arrived *en poste* a year later, four days before the outbreak of war and served for just sixteen months before his sudden death of blood poisoning in December 1940. As ambassador, against the headwinds of the US Neutrality Acts and the 1940 presidential election, he played a vital role in building American public support for the British war effort. Working with Churchill to build his relationship with Roosevelt, they persuaded the

²⁵ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 10 August 1935, KERR/NRS.

²⁶ Kennedy, *Journals*, p. 247.

president to support Britain with the Destroyers for Bases agreement and the initiation of Lend-Lease. His junior colleague, the historian John Wheeler-Bennett concluded 'his was the hand who laid the foundation for the "Special Relationship"'.²⁷ Jay Moffat, the US ambassador to Canada noted that, if Joseph Kennedy, the US ambassador to London, said 'something is black and Lothian says it is white, we believe Lord Lothian'.²⁸ Having considered Lothian's appointment 'disastrous'²⁹, both on grounds of his amateur status and involvement with appeasement, Vansittart later called him 'the greatest of all our Ambassadors'.³⁰ Churchill, Van's fellow anti-appeaser, eulogised him similarly in a cable to Roosevelt as 'our greatest ambassador to the United States' while Roosevelt cabled his shock and horror 'beyond measure' to George VI at the loss of his 'old friend'.³¹

While now far from a household name, Lothian's efforts in foreign affairs in the 1930s were well reported at the time. After the war, and despite Churchill's gratitude, his legacy was inevitably overshadowed by the *Guilty Men* and Cliveden Set traditions. He has since been the subject of scholars of Anglo-American diplomacy who have lauded him as a sophisticated internationalist.³² However, analysis of his Anglo-German enthusiasms by both contemporaries and historians has been negative and patronising such that it can be hard to believe one is reading about the same man. Despite their friendship, Vansittart had called him an 'incurably superficial Johnny know-all'.³³ Bloch dismissed him as 'an eccentric liberal', and Griffiths as a 'well-meaning and Christian-minded searcher for peace' but 'a leading apologist for Anglo-German understanding'.³⁴ Kershaw identified 'a certain gullibility about him', Waddington damned his views as 'naïve ejaculations' while Cowling wrote him off as 'not of the

²⁷ John Wheeler-Bennett, *Special Relationships: America In Peace And War*, (New York, 1975), pp. 115-16.

²⁸ J. Simon Rofe, 'Lord Lothian, 1939-1940' in *The Washington Embassy: British Ambassadors to the United States, 1939-77*, ed. Michael F. Hopkins, Saul Kelly and John W. Young (2009), p. 28.

²⁹ Wheeler-Bennett, *Special Relationships*, p. 66.

³⁰ Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart*, (1958), p. 255.

³¹ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 318; cited in Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindberg and America's Fight over World War II, 1939-1941*, (New York, 2013), p. 271.

³² E.g. Reynolds, 'Lord Lothian and Anglo-American Relations', pp. 1-65; Rofe, 'Lord Lothian'; Priscilla Roberts, 'Lord Lothian and the Atlantic World', *The Historian*, no. 57, (2004), pp. 97-127; David P. Billington, Jr. *Lothian: Philip Kerr and the Quest for World Order*, (Westport, 2006) and Olson, *Those Angry Days*.

³³ Minute by Creswell, 1 February 1935, FO 371/18824, TNA..

³⁴ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 63; Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p.78 and p. 112.

first importance' albeit admitting he was, at least, 'listened to'.³⁵ Somewhat desperately, his otherwise admiring biographer explained his poor judgement on a compartmental basis: 'the pity was that Lothian, whose human contacts with the English-speaking peoples were so fruitful, knew so little at first hand of conditions in central Europe and altogether failed to comprehend the mentality of Hitler and his crew'.³⁶ Priscilla Roberts is unusual in concluding that 'Lothian was not an apologist for... Adolf Hitler'.

These two phases and themes of Lothian's career overlapped and represent his political and intellectual maturity. As will be argued, his intelligence on Germany was better than most and helped persuade the sceptical American administration to support British military efforts in the first years of the war. As Reynolds concluded, 'in practice, Lothian's efforts to reach some modus vivendi with Hitler and Mussolini proved little obstacle to his ambassadorial effectiveness'. Roosevelt seems to have recognised the convictions of a convert and teased him for his earlier credulity of the Nazi regime. Lothian's conviction that world peace should be built on an Anglo-American axis of mutual support dated back to before the Great War. In 1909, he had sent a memorandum to Arthur Balfour proposing 'an Anglo-Saxon Federation' between the US and Britain to check German imperialism and persuade President Theodore Roosevelt away from a potential German-US alliance. In 1915, he was, according to the then US ambassador, 'red hot for a close and perfect understanding between Great Britain and the United States' and was Lloyd George's principal adviser on Anglo-American relations.³⁷ While campaigning for appeasement in Germany in the mid-1930s he was still calling for improved Anglo-American cooperation. He had built rapport with Franklin Roosevelt well before his name was in the frame to be ambassador. In November 1934 AL Kennedy of *The Times* reported that Lothian had just returned from the USA where he had a 'good talk on Anglo-American-Japanese relations with President Roosevelt'.³⁸

Conwell-Evans and Lothian became friends, frequent correspondents and colleagues and Conwell-Evans was a welcome guest at Blickling. Both life-long bachelors

³⁵ Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 61; Waddington, 'An idyllic and unruffled atmosphere', p. 54; Cowling, *Impact*, p. 133.

³⁶ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 217.

³⁷ See Butler, *Lothian*, p. 59.

³⁸ Kennedy, *Journals*, p. 148.

suffered from their nerves and had worked together at the Rhodes Trust and contributed keenly to Chatham House. Lothian secured his friend membership of the exclusive Travellers Club which became the base for his operations. Their efforts to improve Anglo-German relations were initiated in November 1934 when Conwell-Evans, fresh back from living in Germany, wrote to Lothian offering to brief him on the country and introduce him to Ribbentrop who was ‘very anxious to make [his] acquaintance’.³⁹ He arranged for Lothian to meet Hitler in early 1935 with Ribbentrop translating Lothian to Hitler and Conwell-Evans translating Hitler to Lothian. Lothian saw Conwell-Evans’s involvement as ‘an immense advantage’⁴⁰ while Conwell-Evans saw the meeting as an opportunity ‘for Germany to make clear to an independent Englishman of very great influence what the aims of the Nazi government are’.⁴¹

In briefing his masters in Berlin, Ambassador von Hoesch had described Lothian as ‘without doubt the most important non-official Englishman who has so far asked to be received by the Chancellor’ while Ribbentrop agreed he was ‘the most influential Englishman outside the government’.⁴² Lothian and Conwell-Evans met von Neurath and von Bulow at the Foreign Ministry and discussed disarmament with Blomberg, Hess and Ribbentrop before a two-hour meeting with Hitler. The Führer, following his customary monologue on Russia, in a rare attempt at ironic humour, challenged the presumption that France, with a smaller population, should be allowed a larger army than Germany, pointing out that ‘in the same reasoning Germany should have a larger army than Russia; and Luxembourg should have a larger army than that of any other country in the world’. While stressing that he ‘personally had no official position nor diplomatic mission’, Lothian saw his trip as paving the way for a more official visit and promised Hitler he would report back to the British government. Hitler concluded that ‘the greatest madness was the war of 1914 between the two peoples – the English and the Germans’⁴³ which convinced Lothian that ‘Germany doesn’t want war... her preoccupation is with domestic affairs; and insofar as she looks outwards it is anxiously towards the East, and not to the West’.⁴⁴ Lothian quoted Cecil Rhodes’s ambition that ‘USA, England and Germany would together preserve peace of the world’. He wrote

³⁹ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 14 November 1934, KERR/NRS.

⁴⁰ Lothian to Conwell-Evans, 17 December 1934, KERR/NRS.

⁴¹ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 8 January 1935, KERR/NRS.

⁴² Butler, *Lothian* p. 202; James Fox, *The Langhorne Sisters*, (1998), p. 435.

⁴³ Conwell-Evans, Note of interview with Herr Hitler, 29 January 1935, CONWELL.

⁴⁴ Kennedy, *Journal*, 31 January 1935, p. 160.

immediately to the foreign secretary urging direct contact with Hitler and sent Conwell-Evans's record of the interview to the prime minister, Baldwin and Ribbentrop as well as briefing Kennedy of *The Times*.⁴⁵

From the start, Lothian was far from a blind admirer of, or apologist for, Hitler, writing in 1933 that 'like most liberals I loathe the Nazi regime'. Nevertheless, he argued 'we should be willing to do justice to Germany' while resisting 'any unjust pretension which she herself may later put forward'.⁴⁶ Writing to the Labour peer, Lord Allen, he insisted that 'every time I see Ribbentrop, and every time I know anybody going to Nazi headquarters, I'd tell him to tell them that the present obstacle to better Anglo German relations today is the persecution of the Christians, Jews and Liberal Pacifists'.⁴⁷ Nor was he averse to criticising the Nazi regime in public. At the July 1936 Fellowship dinner, he appealed directly to Hitler and warned 'there are aspects of internal policy of the National-Socialist state which are a serious obstacle to the establishment of cordial relations between Britain and the German people'.⁴⁸ He also raised awareness of the persecution of Roman Catholics in Germany by arranging a talk at Chatham House.

Lord Londonderry

The two marquesses, Lothian and Londonderry, were starkly different in style, demeanour and political affiliation. In contrast to the informal, sartorially ruffled, Liberal, Lothian, Lord Londonderry was the epitome of a truly aristocratic Conservative politician. Apparently the inspiration for the character of Lord Darlington in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day*, his huge wealth, ambitious wife and London house staffed by forty-four servants was used to pursue what was never more than a second division parliamentary career. He worried about the rising threat of the communists, supported rearmament and, as air minister, played an acknowledged role in building up the RAF. Londonderry's enthusiasm for friendship with Hitler's Germany has been the subject of two recent re-evaluations that have rendered him as

⁴⁵ See *The Times*, 31 January and 1 February 1935.

⁴⁶ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 197.

⁴⁷ Lothian to Allen, 18 October 1935, KERR/NRS.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, 15 July 1936.

more than just a ‘pure pro-Nazi apologist’.⁴⁹ They have challenged the popular mythology, that has similarly skewed analysis of the Fellowship, of a British aristocracy ‘inclined to fascism’ that even ‘harboured a desire to establish a fascist government in the United Kingdom’.⁵⁰ Fleming has also emphasised that Londonderry’s concern for better relations with Germany, like many in the Fellowship, long pre-dated the National Socialists taking power.⁵¹

There is no evidence that the Fellowship had any direct role in arranging Londonderry’s several meetings with Hitler that started in January 1936. Like Tennant and Conwell-Evans, Londonderry had developed a friendship with Ribbentrop whom he first met in 1934. Keen to capitalise on his friend’s social prestige, Ribbentrop directly arranged the practical aspects of his meetings with the Nazi high command. Londonderry did use Conwell-Evans to introduce him to the German conservative resistance to Hitler in 1938 once he realised *entente* might well be a lost cause. So, while he did not need the Fellowship’s help to meet the ‘bad’ Germans, he did to meet the ‘good’.

Londonderry had been a member of the Anglo-German Association before becoming air minister and joined the Fellowship in February 1936 under persuasion from Ribbentrop who was keen to promote his new venture. Kershaw has concluded ‘there is no indication that Londonderry was a notably active member of the Fellowship’ but suggested that, by joining, he ‘was now certainly swimming among the sharks’. Londonderry’s daughter Lady Mairi Bury, in a 2002 interview had ‘confirmed her father had not been an active member’.⁵² This was a lapse of memory not untypical of families that had been members. In truth, her father was one of the more attentive of the senior aristocratic Fellowship members. He had been entertained to a special lunch by the DEG on his first visit to Germany in February 1936. A few months later, he attended the July 1936 banquet at the Dorchester Hotel in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick. Later that year, he toasted his friend Ribbentrop at the Fellowship banquet at Grosvenor House, noting that the Fellowship ‘was becoming a great factor for good’ and called for a four-nation pact, an end to the arms race and no repeat of 1914.⁵³ He attended the May 1938 reception at the May Fair Hotel in honour

⁴⁹ Oliver Harvey, (ed. by John Harvey), *Diplomatic Diaries, 1937-40*, (1970), 1 March 1938, p. 118.

⁵⁰ Fleming, *Londonderry*; Kershaw, *Making Friends*.

⁵¹ Fleming, *Londonderry*, pp. 177-181.

⁵² Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 144; p. 394, n. 95.

⁵³ *The Times*, 16 December 1936.

of the new German ambassador and remained a member of the Fellowship up to and beyond its moment of crisis. Unlike the chairman and half of the membership, there is no evidence he resigned following the atrocities of Kristallnacht in November 1938.

Lloyd George

At ten in the morning on the 2 September 1936, Tennant stood on the platform at Liverpool Street Station. He was waving goodbye as Conwell-Evans led the seventy-two-year-old David Lloyd George, the ‘man who won the War’, on board a train bound for Munich to meet the Führer. The party included Lloyd George’s son, Major Gwyllim and, apparently reluctantly, his daughter Megan (both themselves MPs) supported by his long-suffering private secretary AJ Sylvester. Supposedly incognito, their departure had been leaked to the press and a *Daily Telegraph* journalist was on hand to report it in the next day’s paper to Lloyd George’s fury. Tennant later remembered being ‘pleased that at least one of our leading statesmen was going to meet Hitler’ but even then - more than three years before the start of the war - felt ‘it was at least a year too late’.⁵⁴ The party was later joined by Tom Jones, deputy secretary to the Cabinet and close confidant of prime minister, Baldwin.

The meeting between Lloyd George and Hitler was subject to intense scrutiny at the time and continues to fascinate historians and biographers. Most of those present produced memoirs of the trip – Tom Jones, Lord Dawson, Conwell-Evans (who was the only other Briton to join the private audience with Hitler), Sylvester and Emrys Pride. Lloyd George’s own thoughts appeared for public consumption in a controversial *Daily Express* article and an interview with AJ Cummings in the *News Chronicle*.⁵⁵ On the German side, Paul Schmidt, the Foreign Ministry appointed interpreter (and, according to some, covert critic of Hitler) left a detailed account. A cine film taken by Sylvester survives of his master admiring the huge picture window at the Berghof with its breath-taking views of the Bavarian Alps. This inspired him to install a similar window at Churt, his Surrey home, albeit presumably with a more prosaic view.

⁵⁴ Tennant, *TA*, p. 195.

⁵⁵ *The Daily Express*, 17 September 1936 and *News Chronicle*, 21 September 1936.

Lloyd George was the ‘most important British visitor to date’ and the Fellowship, now incorporated for nearly a year, had conceived, planned, facilitated and directed his visit with Conwell-Evans as his trusted adviser and interpreter.⁵⁶ While his participation has been noted, Tennant's contribution has been ignored and the duo’s leadership of the Fellowship overlooked.⁵⁷ This was the high-water mark of the Fellowship’s efforts to stimulate direct dialogue between the leadership of the two countries. Though out of government for fourteen years, Lloyd George remained a political giant amongst pygmies with popular appeal at home and abroad. Hitler was never more charming than when meeting the Great War premier for whom his admiration strayed into hero-worship. Ribbentrop shared his master’s adulation going so far, according to Conwell-Evans, as to boast that ‘the Germans have in Hitler their Lloyd George’.⁵⁸ For Ribbentrop, having failed to deliver Baldwin, Lloyd George was the biggest fish yet caught and this was the zenith of his Anglophile charm offensive. His new friend, Edward VIII, to whom he had been introduced by von Hoesch, had acceded to the throne eight months previously. That summer’s Olympics had been an international propaganda success and the upcoming Nürnberg Rally was planned as the most welcoming to foreigners to date. Ribbentrop’s appointment as ambassador to the Court of St James had just been confirmed.

Eden had vetoed a visit by Baldwin, now finally prime minister, for fear of upsetting the French so the Lloyd George visit was a proxy. Tom Jones was included to give an aura of Baldwinite approval and prevent ‘any appearance of L. G. interfering’ while retaining plausible deniability in Downing Street and Whitehall.⁵⁹ Lord Dawson of Penn, Baldwin’s doctor and confidante, also joined and the party was even asked to bring back some blue gentian flowers for Mrs Baldwin. As Lentin put it, ‘Baldwin’s spectre, genial but wary, hovers equivocally in the background of this entire episode’.⁶⁰ During the visit, Jones kept Baldwin ‘posted with a short account of the family party’s progress and the people [they] met’.⁶¹ At the tea party, Dawson and Jones together asked Hitler to excuse Baldwin’s absence on health grounds. Weeks later at Nürnberg,

⁵⁶ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 101.

⁵⁷ Griffiths acknowledged the Tennant/Lloyd George lunch but claimed Lloyd George wanted ‘to tell him that he was thinking of going to Germany’, see Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p. 222.

⁵⁸ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 162.

⁵⁹ A. J. Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George: the diary of AJ Sylvester 1931-45*, (New York, 1975), p. 145

⁶⁰ Lentin, *Lloyd George*, p. 92.

⁶¹ Emrys Pride, *Why Lloyd George met Hitler*, (Risca, 1981) p. 24.

with the glow from the Welshman's visit fading, Hitler was reported by Jones to have wept at the fading prospect of ever meeting Baldwin.⁶² For one historian 'the imagination boggles at the effort to visualise Baldwin and Hitler conversing'.⁶³

Despite its wide reporting at the time and detailed subsequent analysis, little attention has been paid by historians as to how and why the meeting was conceived. Most have traced the idea of a meeting to a spontaneous invitation from Ribbentrop at a lunch with Lloyd George in the summer of 1936.⁶⁴ Lloyd George himself mischievously told the *Daily Telegraph* reporter that the invitation had originated from Ribbentrop when he 'had called on him a short time ago in London' implying a spontaneous jaunt to Germany, arranged at the last minute. In fact, the idea had been gestating for well over a year. In spring of 1935, Lloyd George had written an article that prompted Tennant to write, with impressive *chutzpah*, introducing himself as a 'student of German affairs'. He explained he had visited the country 'more than 130 times since the Armistice' citing as credentials his 1919 War Office report and friendship with both Ribbentrop and the Führer and enclosing his latest report on Germany.⁶⁵ This was Tennant's first attempt to re-engage with a leading British statesman following his and Ribbentrop's rejection by the political and diplomatic elite in 1933. Lloyd George, who had 'the largest postbag of any British politician' little of which he apparently read, replied less than a week later asking for more information.⁶⁶ From then on, Tennant and Conwell-Evans found their way into the great man's inner circle as trusted advisers and guides on all matters German.

A month later, Tennant, yet to meet Lloyd George in person, wrote urgently from the Hotel Esplanade in Berlin following dinner *chez* Ribbentrop, inviting him to visit Germany. He insisted (disingenuously) that it was he, and not Baldwin, that was 'the British statesmen they were now most anxious to have visit Berlin'.⁶⁷ Lloyd George's office replied requesting further reports which he was finding of 'absorbing interest'.⁶⁸ In October, Tennant was invited to lunch at Churt to discuss the German trip. Joined

⁶² Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters 1931-1950*, (Oxford, 1954), p. 258.

⁶³ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 212.

⁶⁴ E.g. Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George: His Life and Times*, (1954), p. 733; and Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Germany'.

⁶⁵ Tennant to Lloyd George, 3 April 1935, LG.

⁶⁶ Lentin, *Lloyd George*, p. 91.

⁶⁷ Tennant to Lloyd George, 12 May 1935, LG.

⁶⁸ Lloyd George's office to Tennant, 31 May 1935, LG.

by his two secretaries, AJ Sylvester and Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George explained that he had chosen Tennant, whom he ‘bombarded with questions’, because ‘business men gave [him] much better information than the diplomats’.⁶⁹ Lloyd George queried Churchill’s assessment of Germany’s rearmament supposedly running at one billion pounds per annum and Tennant agreed to discuss it with Ribbentrop.⁷⁰ Ten days later, Tennant and Conwell-Evans were staying with the Ribbentrops in Berlin when he was handed a copy of Churchill’s speech on German rearmament. As Tennant excitedly reported back to Lloyd George, Ribbentrop ‘looked very white and angry for about a minute’ before telling them ‘very calmly’ with a clumsy but chilling attempt at humour that ‘Mr Churchill is quite wrong in his figures... we are not spending a paltry 800 millions on rearming. We are spending £10,000 millions a month. We are turning out 25,000 aeroplanes a day and 1,000 big guns a minute’. Rising to his theme, he explained ‘Herr Hitler is just about to pass a law making any woman liable to concentration camp who fails to have twins in 1936, triplets in 1937 and quadruplets there after and the ratio must be at least three boys to one girl... we aim at a population the size of India...’ before asking rhetorically ‘my God what can you do with men who make wild statements like that?’ Tennant reiterated the open invitation for Lloyd George to come to Germany, explaining that the chancellor is a sincere admirer and promising he can be ‘absolutely certain of a great reception’.⁷¹ A delighted Lloyd George promised to return to the idea after the election and, that summer, plans for a visit finally took shape. At the lunch with Lloyd George, Ribbentrop reconfirmed the invitation and his guest accepted immediately.

At this point, Lloyd George instructed his secretary Sylvester to enlist his fellow Welshman, Conwell-Evans, as ‘an admirable liaison officer... acceptable to both parties’.⁷² Sylvester had been private secretary to both Bonar Law and Baldwin in the 1920s and worked for Lloyd George from 1923 until his death in 1945. A skilful secretary, diarist, speed typist, obsessive shorthand note taker and amateur filmmaker, he was Lloyd George’s amanuensis - a hybrid of Money Penny, Jeeves and Boswell. Conwell-Evans had been recommended by Lothian through whom he had volunteered his services as ‘Hon. Attaché’ suggesting that Lloyd George will ‘need someone who

⁶⁹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 195.

⁷⁰ Tennant to Lloyd George, 23 October 1935, LG.

⁷¹ Tennant to Lloyd George 25 October 1935, LG.

⁷² A. J. Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George*, (1947), p. 192.

knows the situation and the good and the great and who can speak the language and take independent notes'.⁷³ He was much more than a mere 'interpreter' from the outset.⁷⁴

Sylvester wasted no time in summoning Conwell-Evans back from Germany and Lloyd George took 'an instant liking to him'.⁷⁵ He explained he wanted to visit Germany 'to see the great roads [and] the development around the towns which has provided work for all the unemployed'. Disingenuously, he claimed he was 'not interested in the armament work' but rather in the 'industrial and agricultural developments'. This interest in the German economic miracle was nonetheless sincere as he had been absorbed for months on how to improve the British employment situation. Anxious to re-engage with foreign affairs, he had offered himself to Baldwin as foreign secretary suggesting he 'might be of some use in placating Germany'. Keen to meet General Ludendorff, the victor of the Battle of Tannenberg in August 1914, to discuss the First War for his war memoirs, he was also interested in understanding the position of religion in Germany especially the status of the nonconformist churches. Stepping back on the international stage, after a disappointing election campaign and failure to join the new cabinet, 'the invitation tickled his vanity, and it appealed to his dramatic as well as to his political imagination'.⁷⁶

Lloyd George had a relatively positive and consistent perspective on Germany. During the 1919 Peace Conference, he had 'fought consistently in the main, for moderation and magnanimity towards the defeated Germans'.⁷⁷ There was a sense of unfinished business; he had last visited Germany in August 1908 while chancellor of the exchequer, with an interest in studying its economic and social reforms and specifically pensions. Then, both Chancellor Bulow and the Kaiser had refused to meet him so 'as an exercise in diplomacy, the visit was a failure from the start'.⁷⁸ According to biographers, his real agenda was then to persuade the Germans to de-escalate the arms race. The study of German pensions provided cover for the trip just as the German economic recovery would nearly three decades later.

⁷³ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 22 July 1936, KERR/NRS.

⁷⁴ See e.g. *The Times*, 3 September 1936 and Tom Jones, *Lloyd George* (1951), p. 244.

⁷⁵ Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George*, p. 192.

⁷⁶ Lentin, *Lloyd George*, p. 91-92.

⁷⁷ Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Germany', p. 755-60.

⁷⁸ Roy Hattersley, *David Lloyd George - the Great Outsider* (2010), p. 229.

Before he left for Germany – perhaps in the interest of balance - Lloyd George had lunched with his friend Ivan Maisky, the Russian ambassador to St James's with whom he had developed a plan for an Anglo-Soviet axis to restrain Germany.⁷⁹ Maisky thought Lloyd George 'the outstanding statesman Great Britain has produced throughout his period' but was alarmed by his new found enthusiasm for Hitler and précised for him those sections of *Mein Kampf* excluded from the English translation covering Hitler's plans for Russia.⁸⁰

Meanwhile Conwell-Evans returned from Germany to be met by Sylvester at Croydon airport from where they went to dine at the National Liberal Club to finalise logistics. Planning was similarly thorough on the German side with Ribbentrop 'taking the greatest possible interest' and 'all the hotel accommodation ... being made officially'.⁸¹ Conwell-Evans arranged for Tom Jones to travel from a sanatorium in Switzerland (where he had been sent by Dawson for a rest cure) to Munich, making it clear that his expenses would be met and all he needed was 'pocket money'.⁸² Jones had briefed Dawson on the trip, who asked to join at his own expense, to which Lloyd George and Ribbentrop agreed immediately, no doubt delighted by the party's growing momentum.

Historians have speculated as to whether a face-to-face meeting between the two men was arranged before the party left London.⁸³ Accepting that Hitler's diary was somewhat fluid, the suggestion that it might not seems improbable. According to Sylvester it had been set for 4 September before they left England. Tennant had made it quite clear that Hitler was an admirer and that any visit would involve a meeting of the two demagogues while Conwell-Evans had told Lloyd George that he was the 'only man who understood Hitler and that conversely Lloyd George was the only man for whom Hitler had any respect on this side'.⁸⁴ The absurd idea that the two might meet spontaneously if their diaries permitted appears to originate from a report in *The Times*, itself presumably a panicked damage limitation exercise in response to the *Daily Telegraph* article the day before. The former cited Colonel Tweed, Lloyd George's chief of staff, who claimed 'no actual meeting had been arranged with Herr Hitler, but

⁷⁹ Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 207.

⁸⁰ Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Germany', p. 764.

⁸¹ Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George*, p. 195.

⁸² Conwell-Evans to Jones, 29 August 1936 in Jones, *Diary*, p. 239.

⁸³ Eg. Rudman, *Lloyd George*, p. 220.

⁸⁴ Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 145.

it was not unlikely that an opportunity would occur for a meeting'.⁸⁵ Given the sixteen months of painstaking planning, Hitler's hero-worship for the former British prime minister, Ribbentrop's enthusiasm for the enterprise and Lloyd George's considerable ego, it is almost unthinkable that a face-to-face meeting was not always central to the plan.

On their first night, the party was treated to dinner by the Ribbentrops at Berchtesgaden, with Joachim 'harping on Russia and the spread of Communism in Spain, France and China and the menace to India'. Lloyd George challenged this obsession countering that Russia's nationalism, imperialism and militarism were greater threats and that, in any event, the 'French peasant will never go communist'. The following day, after a leisurely lunch on the terrace with Lloyd George demonstrating the 'loquacity of age', Hitler sent his own car to collect him, Ribbentrop and Conwell-Evans for the drive to Haus Wachenfeld, his 'bright airy chalet' close to the Austrian border leaving the rest of the party at the hotel somewhat disgruntled.⁸⁶ Funded by the royalties from *Mein Kampf*, and admired by *Homes and Gardens* (which featured it in a gushing lifestyle feature in the November 1938 edition) it was here 'amid an unsophisticated peasantry of carvers and hunters' that the 'Squire of Wachenfeld' in his Anglo-Saxon idyll was most relaxed and charming to distinguished British visitors.⁸⁷ The moment of first meeting is captured in a telling photograph taken by Kurt Huhle, showing Hitler coming down the 'large flight of stone steps leading from his house to the Alpine Road' to greet his guest with a warm and gripping hand shake.⁸⁸ Dawson recognised this as pure theatre that enabled 'the Führer to be above his guests as the latter arrive, and... descend to meet them in proportion to the occasion'.⁸⁹ Now, 'face-to-face were the statesman who had dominated the First World War, leonine with flowing white hair, a still bewitching figure, and the restless, magnetic personality of Hitler'.⁹⁰ It is a smiling, confident Conwell-Evans lifting his Homburg in the middle of the composition with, in stark contrast, Ribbentrop hanging back, unsmiling and anxious. The generation gap (Hitler was twenty-seven years younger) is evident in clothing - Hitler sports a

⁸⁵ *The Times*, 3 September 1936.

⁸⁶ Jones, *Diary*, pp. 195-243.

⁸⁷ Ignatius Phayre, 'Hitler's Mountain Home', *Homes and Gardens*, November 1938, pp. 193-195.

⁸⁸ Conwell-Evans, 'Notes of a conversation between Mr Lloyd George & Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on Friday, 4th Sept. 1936', CONWELL.

⁸⁹ Francis Watson, *Dawson of Penn*, (1950), p. 289.

⁹⁰ Morgan, *Lloyd George*, p. 188.

contemporary cut suit, with turn-ups and a soft-collared shirt while Lloyd George, essentially Edwardian, wears his characteristic stick-up collar with neatly combed hair and holds his hat lightly in his left hand. Passing through the entrance hall ‘filled with a curious display of majolica pots’, Lloyd George correctly identified a portrait of a small boy as the young Frederick the Great, to which the Chancellor responded with a laugh with ‘eyes beaming with benevolence and admiration’.

Lloyd George, though enthralled by Hitler, did not lose all critical faculties as Churchill and others have suggested. Picking up on his challenge to Ribbentrop the night before and no doubt mindful of his lunch with Maisky, he warned Hitler that ‘his emphasis upon the Bolshevik danger might be regarded by some people as an obsession’. He raised concerns about Nationalist atrocities in Spain and damned Hitler’s ally, Franco, as ‘no statesman... [with]...little or no experience of war’ leading a party that was ‘purely reactionary and military’.⁹¹ Nonetheless, Hitler and Lloyd George’s shared interests were wide with detailed discussions ranging from the Great War to the new road programme and the optimum speed for the *autobahn* (80 kph).

As Sylvester recorded, Lloyd George returned from the meeting ‘in great form, very delighted with his talk and obviously very much struck with Hitler’.⁹² Megan facetiously greeted her father with the *Hitlergruß* which he returned in all seriousness insisting ‘he is really a great man’.⁹³ The distinguished medic prescribed a lie down and a whisky and soda for his over-excited patient while Jones met with Conwell-Evans and Schmidt to draft a short press communiqué. Separately, Jones ‘persuaded Evans to sit down and dictate ... there and then what had taken place. Ribbentrop [having] objected to his taking notes at the interview’.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, back in his Eagle’s Nest, Hitler was, according to Schmidt, similarly pleased with the encounter and ‘quite enchanted by his visitor’.⁹⁵

The next day Lloyd George’s whole party was invited to tea to meet Hitler. They were joined by State Secretary Otto Meissner, ‘fat and jolly in a grey knickerbocker suit,’ Joachim and Annelise Ribbentrop, her brother Stefan Henkell (a DEG founder

⁹¹ Conwell-Evans, ‘Notes of a conversation between Mr Lloyd George & Herr Hitler’, CONWELL.

⁹² Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 148.

⁹³ Paul Schmidt, *Hitler Interpreter*, (1951), p. 59.

⁹⁴ Jones, *Diary*, p. 244.

⁹⁵ Schmidt, *Hitler Interpreter*, p. 58.

member), Baron Geyr and Schmidt. The party were served ‘tea and coffee and slices of cold ham and halves of hard-boiled eggs’ by white-gloved waiters with Hitler provided with his own supply of Zwiebacks and *petit beurre* biscuits.⁹⁶ Conwell-Evans recalled that everyone present realised the historical importance of ‘the great War Leader of the British Empire and the great Leader who had restored Germany to her present position... meeting on common ground’. Hitler presented his guest with a signed photograph and was asked if he would mind it being placed alongside Foch, Clemenceau and President Wilson. He agreed but admitted he would object if it were ‘put next to Erzberger and Bauer’ (German Socialist political leaders at the time of the Armistice). As the party prepared to leave, Conwell-Evans was admiring the scenery with Hitler when Lloyd George came up to propose that Hitler should visit England where he would be ‘acclaimed by the British people’. In response Hitler ‘threw up his hands in a gesture expressing he wished it might be true’.⁹⁷ (This was presumably the last time any senior British political figure invited Hitler to London echoing Baldwin who had proposed the same through Ribbentrop and Tennant back in 1933.) Hitler insisted he ‘was passionately interested in the furtherance of Anglo-German understanding and in proof of that he had sent his best man to England’.⁹⁸

The next morning, Jones urged Lloyd George to brief the prime minister and the foreign secretary before speaking to the press while Dawson pressed him to publish in the more upmarket *Daily Telegraph* and not Beaverbrook’s *Daily Express* as planned. While a public relations coup for Ribbentrop, it is wrong to consider the visit an unmitigated propaganda success for the National Socialists. Nor was the stage management wholly under Nazi control. On the German side, Geyr and Schmidt were both old-school German Foreign Ministry, subsequently shown to be close to the conservative resistance to Hitler. Ribbentrop was strangely passive during the trip; challenged by Lloyd George on Russia he was, according to Schmidt, ‘a shadow; during the whole talk he scarcely uttered a word’.⁹⁹ Despite remaining in Germany for ten days after the tea party, Lloyd George refused Ribbentrop’s entreaties to attend the *Parteitag*, choosing instead to listen on the radio. Credited by some for political astuteness in not dignifying it with his attendance, his reason may have been more mundane; Tennant

⁹⁶ Jones, *Diary*, p. 249.

⁹⁷ Conwell-Evans, ‘Notes of a conversation between Mr Lloyd George & Herr Hitler’, CONWELL.

⁹⁸ Jones, *Diary*, p. 20.

⁹⁹ Schmidt, *Hitler’s Interpreter*, p. 56.

had warned him it was ‘complete pandemonium, incredibly tiring and uncomfortable’ and did not think ‘Mr L.G.’s exalted rank would prove any safeguard’.¹⁰⁰ Lloyd George also took the opportunity to meet leading German Baptists and several of Conwell-Evans’s German contacts each of whom was nervous of the new regime.

The aftermath

Foolishly ignoring Dawson’s counsel, Lloyd George published his controversial article entitled ‘... I talked to HITLER’ in the *Daily Express* and was also interviewed by the *News Chronicle* a week after his return from Germany. Hyperbolic in its enthusiasms, the article compares Hitler with George Washington calling him a ‘born leader of men... a magnetic, dynamic personality with a single-minded purpose, a resolute will and a dauntless heart’. Ever the egalitarian, Lloyd George was impressed by the new social structures in Germany such that ‘provincial and class origins no longer divide the nation’. The long shadow of the Great War - especially the 700,000 who ‘died of sheer hunger in those dark years’ - hangs over his wider message with a strong dose of *mea culpa*. He accepted that Germany was in breach of the Treaty of Versailles but suggested no worse than the other European countries. Despite these effusions that have troubled his biographers and been frequently quoted by commentators, it is wrong to parse the speech as naively uncritical. Lloyd George acknowledged that the ‘restraint on liberty’, especially the censorship of the press, was ‘repellent’ and insisted that along with ‘every well-wisher of Germany’ he ‘earnestly prays that Goebbels’s ranting speeches will not provoke another anti-Jewish manifestation’. Despite having claimed no interest in Germany’s military preparedness, he highlighted German rearmament concluding that ‘three years of feverish preparation’ had ‘so strengthened the defences of Germany as to make them impenetrable to attack except at a sacrifice of life which would be more appalling than that inflicted in the great war’.¹⁰¹ Naïvely suggesting such preparations were defensive, he nonetheless deplored German hostility to Russia, and vice-versa. Similarly, in the *News Chronicle* interview, he emphasised that he ‘deplored Hitler’s political and religious repression, a terrible thing to an old Liberal like myself’ insisting he was ‘no advocate of the immuring of political opponents in

¹⁰⁰ Tennant to Stevenson, 3 July 1936, LG.

¹⁰¹ *The Daily Express*, 17 September 1936.

concentration camps' and that the persecution of the Jews was a 'grave and deplorable thing'.¹⁰²

Despite the controversy, Tennant and Conwell-Evans were delighted with the success of the visit so met for a celebratory lunch at the Travellers Club on 17 September. That same day an 'overjoyed' Tennant wrote to Lloyd George congratulating him on the article explaining that 'having been regarded with great suspicion by most of my friends ever since 1931 when I first became convinced that Hitler could and would save Germany I feel immensely encouraged to find such emphatic confirmation from someone as famous as you are'. Hitler and Ribbentrop had told him at Nürnberg that they had derived 'great and much-needed encouragement' from the visit.¹⁰³ Lloyd George was pleased with Conwell-Evans's role and sent him a thank you letter enclosing a 'token of his appreciation' (probably the signed photograph that became a treasured possession along with other mementoes of the trip). Conwell-Evans reported back to Sylvester that 'the effect of the visit in Germany has been tremendous' explaining how Lloyd George was especially popular with the German youth who admire 'his energy, youthfulness and great broadness of mind,' and that 'his sense of fair play for Germany [was] the talk of the country'. He confirmed that Hitler now had Lloyd George's photograph on his mantelpiece and 'now understands the meaning of the English phrase "grand old man"'.¹⁰⁴

Ribbentrop's biographer concluded that the meeting had 'filled Hitler with a renewed burst of anglophile enthusiasm' while Lloyd George's biographer saw it as 'the rhetorical climax of inter-war appeasement'.¹⁰⁵ Tennant, writing in his memoirs after the war, reflected ruefully that 'unfortunately nothing came of the visit' and that 'the newspaper article aroused such a stream of abuse and reproaches against Lloyd George that he decided for his health's sake to winter abroad and went off almost at once to Jamaica'.¹⁰⁶ Writing with the benefit of hindsight, Churchill opined that 'no one was more completely misled than Mr. Lloyd George, whose rapturous accounts of his

¹⁰² Lentin, *Lloyd George*, p. 103.

¹⁰³ Tennant to Lloyd George, 17 September 1936, LG.

¹⁰⁴ Conwell-Evans to Sylvester, 21 October 1936, LG. The Lloyd George family hung Hitler's signed photograph in their downstairs lavatory. Author's 2013 interview with Lloyd George's great-grandson.

¹⁰⁵ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 105 and Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Germany', p. 764.

¹⁰⁶ Tennant, *TA*, p. 195.

conversations make odd reading to-day' and concluded 'there is no doubt Hitler had a power of fascinating men, and the sense of force and authority is apt to assert itself unduly upon the tourist'.¹⁰⁷

Otherwise admiring of Lloyd George's judgements and achievements, historians such as Churchill default to what might be called 'the momentary lapse of judgement' school of analysis. Some drip with self-righteous disapproval as 'one more British politician trundled into Hitler's presence'¹⁰⁸ while others have a more nuanced interpretation of Lloyd George's Anglo-German game plan and therefore implicitly whatever role the Fellowship may have played in it. Commenting on the notorious newspaper article, Morgan wrote 'despite this wild eulogy, which added to the suspicions widely entertained about the ageing statesman's judgement, it would be wrong to see him as just an uncritical advocate of appeasement of Germany' recognising his 'unrivalled knowledge of the aggressive aspects of German nationalism, and its urge to acquire territory in the East'. Like Londonderry, Lloyd George had urged 'simultaneously with efforts to reach diplomatic agreement with Germany, [for] a steady build-up of British armed strength, especially the air force, so that Britain could confront the dictators from a position of strength'.¹⁰⁹ Parker emphasised that he 'seldom limited his political manoeuvres to one line' and Lentin challenged orthodoxy by asking 'who fooled whom in this Alpine encounter?'¹¹⁰ It is notable that Lloyd George was promiscuous in his praise of dictators. Hoping to protect his friend Maisky from falling victim to Stalin's purges, he sent a 'warm message of admiration to Stalin, as the greatest statesman alive!'¹¹¹ Whatever else, it seems unfair to paint Lloyd George as the Führer's dupe. Hitler himself in 1942 suggested that, had Lloyd George had been in power, there might have been an Anglo-German understanding in 1936 - albeit with Britain as a junior partner in his adventures. Given its role in bringing the two men together that year, the Fellowship would have been able to take some credit for having fostered such improved relations.

¹⁰⁷ Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, pp. 224-225.

¹⁰⁸ Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, pp. 222-224.

¹⁰⁹ Kenneth Morgan, *Lloyd George*, (Worthing, 1974), p. 188.

¹¹⁰ Parker, *Chamberlain*, p. 316; Lentin, *Lloyd George*, p. 99.

¹¹¹ Ivan Maisky, (ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky), *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's, 1932-1943*, (New Haven, 2015), editor's note, p. 113.

Chapter 4

For King and Country: the Fellowship and the Establishment

Having profiled the businessmen and financiers who founded and funded the Anglo-German Fellowship and introduced the politicians and diplomats who supported it, this review widens into the other social elites into which it successfully embedded. The rediscovered 1937 annual report reveals that membership extended beyond the stereotypical fellow travellers and backwoodsmen into the 'Establishment' to a degree underappreciated by earlier chroniclers and which distinguishes it from other contemporary pro-German organisations.¹ Henry Fairlie's 1955 definition of the Establishment as 'the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised' is helpful here as it encapsulates the royal, military, academic and sporting elites into which the Fellowship's tentacles reached.² Unsurprisingly, alumni from Oxbridge, Sandhurst, Eton and other leading public schools predominate. Woven into the story are three controversial royal dukes, respectively heads of the Anglo-German royal houses of Coburg, Hanover and Windsor. Separately, three of the twentieth century's *causes célèbres* - the Cambridge spies, Rudolf Hess's flight to Scotland and the 'Cliveden Set' cloud the picture with their notoriety. The exclusive settings for these overlapping stories range from stately homes, especially Lord Mount Temple's Broadlands in Hampshire, Lord Lothian's Blickling Hall in Norfolk and Lord Astor's Cliveden on the Thames, to the great interwar London hotels, Grosvenor House, the Dorchester and Claridge's.

During the first two years of the Fellowship's existence - its golden age - Hitler made a 'concerted effort to secure British friendship and continued along this path even when the offers produced less than he hoped'.³ In order to woo influential British visitors, he donned ill-fitting white tie to attend social events that were far from his natural milieu. The new German leadership vacillated between envy of Britain's success internationally and admiration for her Anglo-Saxon royal, military and social traditions tempered by a deep distrust of her free press, democratic institutions and diplomatic links to France. Separate from discussions with politicians, diplomats and

¹ AGF, *Annual Report 1936/37*, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Germany.

² *The Spectator*, 23 September 1955.

³ Steiner, *Triumph*, p. 18.

businessman, the NSDAP leaders courted the British establishment through other elites, especially royal, aristocratic and military, using Anglo-German royals and aristocrats to build better connections between the two countries. Their forums were coffee with Hitler, banquets, tours of Germany and, most spectacularly, attendance at the 1936 Berlin Olympics - in all of which the Fellowship and the DEG played central roles.

Three royal cousins loom large in this history, giving patronage and prestige to the sister societies that elevated them well above other pro-German organisations. Each was born an English royal prince of German blood. The eldest, Queen Victoria's grandson, Charles Edward, was born the Duke of Albany, with George V, Kaiser Wilhelm II and Czar Nicholas of Russia as cousins and became the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha ('Coburg') in 1899.⁴ Immediately below his name on the list of DEG founding members was Prince Ernest of Cumberland, the Duke of Brunswick (*Braunschweig* in German). Another of George V's cousins, he was head of the royal house of Hanover, a prince of the United Kingdom and heir to his father as Duke of Cumberland. He married the Kaiser's daughter, Princess Viktoria Luise of Prussia, herself a great-granddaughter to Queen Victoria. The third prince was George V's son and heir, later to be Prince of Wales, King Edward VIII, and to end his life as the Duke of Windsor. The three princes had known each other well since before the Great War, but it was Ribbentrop who coordinated their support for the sister friendship societies to further Hitler's plans for Anglo-German alliance.

Coburg was the enthusiastic president of the DEG, frequently representing it at Fellowship events and hosting Fellowship visitors in Germany. However, he was emphatically never the president of the Fellowship as reported by several historians.⁵ He spoke directly, if not always intelligently, on Hitler's behalf, with the Führer contributing to the drafting of his speeches.⁶ Born and raised in England until the age of fifteen, he had to leave Eton early to take up the dukedom in Germany but remained close to his British royal cousins - Edward VII made him a knight of the Garter and

⁴ For more on Coburg see Urbach, *Go-betweens* and Harald Sandner, *Hitlers Herzog*, (Aachen, 2010).

⁵ Eg. Frances Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, (1986) p. 198; Peter Padfield, *Hess, Hitler & Churchill*, (2013), p. 344; Charlotte Zeepvat, 'Charles Edward, Prince, second duke of Albany', *ODNB*; A. C. Brown and C. B. MacDonald, *On a Field of Red*, (1982), p. 408; and William E. Duff, *A Time for Spies*, (Nashville, 1999) p. 116.

⁶ See Steiner, *Triumph*, p. 706.

stood as godfather to his eldest son, while his sister, Princess Alice, married Queen Mary's brother, the Earl of Athlone.

The hand of friendship

Edward, Prince of Wales, held no official role within the Fellowship but his sympathetic pronouncements gave it the greatest fillip, as did his welcoming his cousin Coburg to London to promote its cause. He had enjoyed his holidays in Germany up to 1913, was 'genetically... almost pure German' and his mother, Queen Mary, was born German and spoke English with a German accent.⁷ Like Tennant he had visited Germany immediately following the First War and so saw the country at its lowest ebb. Fear of Bolshevism certainly played its part, as with Coburg and Mount Temple, and 'by the end of the 1920s his thinking was dominated by sharp fear of the communist threat from Russia, sympathy for Germany in its economic and political woes, and doubts about the good judgement of the French'.⁸

The prince had been a successful and popular patron of the Royal British Legion (the 'Legion') since its inception in 1921 and agreed to continue in the role once king. His speech to its annual general meeting on 11 June 1935 was both sensational and pivotal. A clarion call to improve Anglo-German friendship, it brought the fourteen-year old Legion and the new Fellowship into a partnership that has been largely ignored by students of both. The timing was significant, coming only a week before the signing of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty. In front of representatives from 4,000 branches, he proposed that a deputation from the Legion go to Germany insisting that 'there could be no more suitable body or organisation of men to stretch forth the hand of friendship to the Germans than we ex-servicemen, who fought them in the Great War, and have now forgotten all about that'.⁹ The heat and noise created by this speech surprised both the prince and the Legion as the concept of such friendship visits was already well-understood Legion policy.¹⁰ *The Times* reported that Ribbentrop, Hess and Göring were delighted and suggested that the speech had prompted Hitler to prioritise 'the

⁷ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 45.

⁸ Ziegler, *Edward VIII*, p. 205.

⁹ Harding, *Keeping Faith*, p. 149.

¹⁰ Despite full coverage at the time and by historians of the Legion, it still surprises the press see 'Royal British Legion's shameful Hitler visit revealed after 75 years', *Daily Mail*, 31 October 2010.

development of Anglo-German relations in general'.¹¹ The prince received a dressing down from his father and there were hostile questions in the House of Commons. Nonetheless, an invitation was issued and, in July 1935, a delegation led by the chairman, Major Fetherston-Godley, was greeted by 'cheering crowds [and] a most cordial reception'.¹² Included was Captain Hawes, a former naval attaché in Berlin, who represented the Fellowship and supplied a confidential report on the visit to the British Foreign Office.¹³ The group met Hitler who quizzed them on the Great War and his translator remembered 'but for the difference in language, it might have been a typical meeting of old comrades'.¹⁴ Ribbentrop emphasised that these visits had patronage from both heads of state and noted that the King had 'taken an interest resulting in several more mutual visits'.¹⁵

While historians have analysed the overlap between the Fellowship and far right organisations such as The Link and the Right Club (see chapter five), this liaison with the Legion has been ignored. It is significant because the Legion lent the Fellowship additional military respectability to its anti-war tendencies and royal gloss to its social aspirations. Coburg was president of both the DEG and the German ex-servicemen's associations seeking affiliation with the Legion. Mount Temple had been a founder and chairman of the Comrades of the Great War, one of the Legion's predecessor organisations. The Legion shared both members and social events with the Fellowship and four of its senior officials joined it - Lieutenant-Colonel Crosfield, chairman; Captain Donald Simson, another founder; the Earl of Airlie, chairman of the Scottish division and Admiral Sir Henry Bruce, the metropolitan president. Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, its president, came to at least two Fellowship dinners with his wife, while the chairman, vice chairman and general secretary, all also enjoyed the Fellowship's hospitality.

The Germans, especially Coburg and Ribbentrop, saw Edward as an ally in building better relations at critical moments. Writing immediately after the reinvasion of the Rhineland, the *Berliner Tageblatt* reported that 'the King is taking an extraordinarily

¹¹ *The Times*, 13 June 1935.

¹² *Ibid.* 15 July 1935.

¹³ 'Report of a visit by a British Legion Delegation to Germany, 14-23 July 1935', FO 371/18882, TNA.

¹⁴ Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter*, p. 37.

¹⁵ Joachim Ribbentrop, *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, (1954), p. 68.

active part in the whole affair' and 'won't hear of there being a danger of war'.¹⁶ While there is no evidence of any attempt to anoint Edward patron of the Fellowship, royal blessing was assumed whenever possible. The staunchly royalist Fellowship timed its fixtures to coincide with British royal events with delegations sent from Germany to George V's silver jubilee in 1935 and his second son's coronation in 1937. Ribbentrop was convinced these visits were beneficial as they 'helped to make more effective the societies, the German-English Society in Berlin, which [he] had founded... and the Anglo-German Fellowship in London'.¹⁷ Coburg's efforts were effective, building on both his kinship with the British royal family, especially through his supportive sister, and the *alma mater* he shared with so many of England's elite. At Eton, he had been a contemporary of Fellowship members including Tennant, lords Hollenden, Esher and Barnby as well as senior politicians and mandarins such as Neville Henderson, Duff Cooper and Alec Cadogan. In December 1935, Coburg made his first visit to London on Fellowship business to attend a dinner in honour of the German sports leader, Herr von Tschammer und Osten. A month later in Berlin, he hosted a DEG dinner with British guests including Mount Temple, Phipps the ambassador and Basil Newton the minister. In his speech, he compared the British empire with the Third Reich, noting that 'just as their English guests were proud to be subjects of the Sovereign of a Great Empire... so were they (the hosts) proud to be followers of the Führer and Chancellor'.¹⁸

Days later, Coburg returned to London, briefing the press that his mission was 'strengthening the Fellowship arrangements and extending them to other countries' and the extent of cooperation between Fellowship and Legion becomes increasingly evident.¹⁹ Simultaneously, a party of German veterans visited London, placed a swastika-emblazoned wreath at the Cenotaph before visiting the poppy factory in Richmond. At a dinner hosted by the Legion, General Maurice was handed a telegram with Lord Dawson's famous line that 'the King's life is moving peacefully towards its close'. Lunch with the Fellowship the next day was hurriedly postponed and the delegation returned home early. Coburg stayed to attend his cousin's funeral, ridiculous in German field uniform and tin hat but nonetheless seated at the new king's table at

¹⁶ *DGFP*, series C, vol. V, no. 147.

¹⁷ Ribbentrop, *Memoirs*, p. 68.

¹⁸ *The Times*, 13 January 1936.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 16 January 1936.

the funeral dinner. Staying with his sister at Kensington Palace, he entertained to dinner Anthony Eden, Duff Cooper, Neville Chamberlain and JJ Astor (the proprietor of *The Times*), attended a state dinner at Buckingham Palace, took tea with the widowed Queen and had several conversations with the King. Reporting back to Hitler in an ‘unctuous and conspiratorial’ memorandum, he claimed that Edward VIII wanted an alliance between the two countries, thought the League of Nations a ‘farce’, disliked the Russians, and wanted to meet Hitler in person.²⁰ The King planned to ‘concentrate the business of government on himself’ and had asked his cousin to ‘visit... frequently in order that confidential matters might be more speedily clarified’.²¹

Coburg returned in October 1936 with another delegation of German veterans to complete the itinerary. Addressing the Legion’s national executive committee, he explained that Hitler ‘hated war from the bottom of his heart’.²² Following dinner *chez* Sir Ian Hamilton, chairman of the late Anglo-German Association, and tea with Fellowship Council member Lord Hollenden, colonels Brown and Heath took Coburg to see the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace. Hearing that his cousin was outside, the King spontaneously welcomed them into the palace, a gesture showing his affection for Coburg, which when reported back to Berlin ‘must have impressed the German leadership’.²³ The party went on to lunch as guests of the Fellowship at the Holborn Restaurant, where Mount Temple toasted his guests with the hope that ‘aggressive war should be made impossible by ex-servicemen’s organisations’.²⁴

Soldiers, sailors and airmen

Support for the Fellowship from the three services extended beyond this harmonious cooperation with the Legion and, again, has been overlooked by commentators. Andrew Roberts has made the pointed distinction that the leading appeasing politicians had not seen battle while the ‘senior anti-appeasers all had fine records’.²⁵ With the exception of the pacifist Conwell-Evans, the Fellowship’s leadership and membership

²⁰ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 198.

²¹ *DGFP*, Series C, Vol IV, 5482/E382057-78.

²² Wootton, *British Legion*, p. 198.

²³ Harding, *Keeping Faith* p. 158.

²⁴ *AGF, Annual Report, 1936-7*.

²⁵ Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians*, p. 12.

(and, of course, those of the Legion) should not all be tarred with that same brush. Mount Temple had been invalided out of the South African War but served in France during the Great War, before becoming parliamentary private secretary to the financial secretary to the War Office. Tennant served in military intelligence despite his 'old lung trouble and lion bites'.²⁶ Most of the Fellowship's Council served in the military, many with distinction. Major Ball and Colonel Christie were each awarded both DSO and MC, Julian Piggott had an MC, Frank D'Arcy Cooper was wounded on the Somme and Arthur Guinness was wounded at Ypres.

Of the wider male membership, at least a fifth used military title (implying they were in the services or had retired with senior rank) and at least two hundred of the Fellowship's identified supporters had served in the forces. Those born in the late nineteenth century would have had little choice but to serve in the Great War and, if too old, have any adult sons serve. Support for the Fellowship's cause ranged across the officer class, boasting five full generals, eight major-generals, two brigadiers, seventeen colonels, twenty-five lieutenant-colonels, supported by several dozen majors and captains. The most senior serving soldier to attend a Fellowship dinner was Field-Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, chief of the Imperial General Staff, and therefore the highest-ranking officer in the British army.

These were no battle-shy appeasers, with at least 21 MCs and 32 DSOs between them. Many were indeed the stereotypical 'retired military men', including Major-General Sir John Duncan (Boer War and Gallipoli) and Brigadier General Sir Frederick Gascoigne (DSO in Khartoum and mentioned in dispatches in the Dardanelles, Egypt and Palestine).²⁷ Current and future stars of the military firmament also attended, including General Sir Edmund (later Lord) Ironside, supposedly the inspiration for Buchan's Richard Hannay and considered by Churchill 'the army's finest military brain'.²⁸ He met Hitler in 1937 and went on to be appointed chief of the Imperial General Staff in September 1939 and then commander-in-chief, Home Forces in May 1940. His friend Major-General JFC Fuller was also a member. Another veteran of South Africa and the Great War, Fuller was described as 'one of the greatest military thinkers of our

²⁶ Tennant, *TA*, p. 71.

²⁷ Blakeway, *Last Dance*, p. 79.

²⁸ John C. Cairns, 'Ironside, (William) Edmund, first Baron Ironside', *ODNB*.

century', albeit his 'flirtation with fascism blighted his career', as he befriended Mosley and attended Hitler's fiftieth birthday celebrations in May 1939.²⁹

Representation from the Navy was no less distinguished, albeit fewer in number, with four full admirals, a vice admiral, a brace of rear admirals, and a host of distinguished naval captains as members and dinner guests. Council member and honorary secretary, Captain Hawes, had been naval attaché in Berlin, while Vice-admiral Sir Barry Domvile (the pro-Nazi founder of The Link) served on the Council for part of 1938. Other naval members included Admiral Sir Aubrey Smith, who had served as naval attaché in Russia, Sweden and Norway and represented the British navy at the League of Nations; Rear-Admiral Sir Murray Sueter, a pioneer of submarine warfare; Admiral Wilmot Stuart Nicholson, chief of the submarine service in the early 1920s; and Admiral Mark Kerr, previously naval attaché in Italy, Austria, Turkey, and Greece.

The development of powered flight in the early twentieth century had thrown into doubt Britain's self-imagined invincibility as an island nation protected by a wave-ruling navy while overseeing a globe-spanning empire. Aircraft attracted the aristocratic and wealthy, catching the public imagination just as the railways had in the previous century. That these aviation elites tended towards the right wing of politics and affinity towards Germany is well-understood, but, as Edgerton has argued, sympathy with appeasement did not mean 'being against rearmament... in most cases the two enthusiasms in fact went together'.³⁰ The Fellowship attracted support from 'air-minded' politicians. Mount Temple had been chairman of the parliamentary aerial defence committee, while its most senior aristocrat, the Marquess of Londonderry, was secretary of state for air and qualified as a pilot at the age of fifty-six. Credited with preserving 'the core of the RAF at a time when even this was under threat from the Treasury', he had encouraged 'the planning of vital new fighter aircraft such as the Hurricane and Spitfire' and the development of radar.³¹ Younger Fellowship members went on to serve with distinction in the RAF in the Second World War. Council

²⁹ Brian Holden Reid, 'Fuller, John Frederick Charles', *ODNB*.

³⁰ David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation*, (1991) p. 77; see also Patrick Glenn Zander 'Right modern: technology, nation, and Britain's extreme right in the interwar period (1919 – 1940)', PhD thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, (2009); Colin Cook, 'A fascist memory: Oswald Mosley and the myth of the airman', *European Review of History*, vol. 4, (1997), pp. 147-61.

³¹ Alvin Jackson Stewart, 'Seventh Marquess of Londonderry', *ODNB*.

member Norman Hulbert MP served as British liaison officer with the Free Polish Forces, while Peter Calvocoressi served in RAF intelligence decrypting Enigma messages at Bletchley Park before reaching the rank of wing commander. Loel Guinness MP was mentioned in dispatches five times, flew in the Battle of Britain and bought a petrol station near his aerodrome to bypass petrol rationing.

Lord Sempill was another flying aristocrat who joined the Fellowship and attended at least two events and the Ribbentrops' reception. He had been involved with earlier Anglo-German organisations and, as explored in the next chapter, joined The Link and was a warden of the Right Club. He served in the various precursors to the RAF in the First War before retiring from it in June 1919. He advised the Japanese air force between the wars and was alleged to have shared national secrets with them. In 1932 he arranged for the German airship *Graf Zeppelin* to fly to England to pick up passengers on a goodwill mission. A former president of the Royal Aeronautical Society, he re-joined the naval air service in 1939.

Amongst the most prominent aviators within the Fellowship were the Douglas-Hamilton family. The Duke of Hamilton (the Marquess of Clydesdale until the death of his father in 1940) and his family had been associated with the Fellowship for at least five years before the startling arrival by plane of the deputy Führer, Rudolf Hess, at their ancestral home in Scotland in May 1941. A Conservative MP, Clydesdale was a famous aviator having been first to fly over Everest in 1933, bringing him celebrity in both Britain and Germany. As his son explained, 'aviators in those days were regarded in much the same way as the early astronauts, and aviation was looked upon as a top priority by the leaders of the Third Reich'.³² Clydesdale was a friend of Londonderry and through him had met Ribbentrop with whom he maintained friendly relations, spending the weekend with him at the Londonderrys' County Durham house and inviting him and Annalise to his wedding. Two of his three brothers were members of the Fellowship and with him they attended the dinner for the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick in July 1936. The youngest brother, David, also a distinguished pilot, had married Prunella Stack, the 'perfect girl' who led the Women's League of Health and Beauty, and invited Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the leader of the National Socialist

³² David Stafford (ed.), *Flight from Reality: Rudolf Hess and His Mission to Scotland. 1941*, (2002), p. 80.

Womanhood, to a dinner in London in 1939 co-hosted with the Fellowship, the significance of which will be explored in chapter seven. Clydesdale's wife was the eldest daughter of the Duke of Northumberland, an enthusiast for right wing and anti-Semitic causes, but MI5 confirmed there was no evidence he shared his father-in-law's views.³³

Whether Clydesdale joined the Fellowship and whether he met Hess in Germany have been subject of debate and, indeed, litigation. His son, echoing Londonderry's daughter, has seemed keen to distance Clydesdale from the Fellowship.³⁴ In 1942, when membership was a heightened cause of embarrassment, Hamilton sued for libel several British communists who had published a pamphlet alleging that he and Hess were friends, insisting, inter alia, that he had never joined the Fellowship. In February 1936, the secretary had sent a membership application form and a receipt for the right amount survives in the Hamilton papers, but his name was never included in the membership lists and the receipt may have been for an entertainment. Of the illustrious figures associated with the Fellowship, Clydesdale is significant in that Rudolf Hess chose his home rather than others associated with the pro-German lobby, such as Brocket Hall or Cliveden.

The Cliveden Set

Any analysis of the Fellowship's social milieu needs to explore its connections with the famous Cliveden Set. The idea of a group of superbly well-connected, pro-German appeasers meeting regularly at Waldorf and Nancy Astor's Thames-side mansion to direct Britain's foreign policy covertly was the mischievous invention of Claud Cockburn. A journalist and passionate opponent of appeasement who had founded and edited a communist-sympathising news sheet, *The Week*, he had written an article criticising 'those in high places who were working, sincerely perhaps, but as it seemed to [him] disastrously, for the "appeasement" of Adolf Hitler'. This article was initially ignored until he coined the catchy moniker that became such an international sensation that 'within a couple of weeks it had been printed in dozens of newspapers, and within six had been used in almost every leading newspaper of the Western world' and,

³³ Statement of Wing Commander the Duke of Hamilton', 11 March 1941, KV2/1684, TNA.

³⁴ See James Douglas-Hamilton, *The Truth about Rudolf Hess*, (Edinburgh, 1993) p. 71.

following which, ‘no antifascist rally in Madison Square Gardens or Trafalgar Square was complete without a denunciation of the Cliveden Set’.³⁵

The Cliveden Set has been better studied than the Anglo-German Fellowship including an authoritative portrait by Norman Rose, Vansittart’s biographer.³⁶ As a journalistic phenomenon this scrutiny is well-deserved as Cliveden’s role within the appeasement debate has echoed for eighty years. As David Astor ruefully noted, ‘the only thing most people seem to remember about our family is the Cliveden Set and the Profumo scandal. Both stories were untrue but I think they’ll be there for ever’.³⁷ Rose, other leading historians, and even Cockburn himself, all agree with him - the Cliveden Set was a chimera, a will-o’-the-wisp, an ‘unkillable myth’.³⁸ As Cockburn remembered ‘within a year or so, the Cliveden set had ceased to represent, in anybody’s mind, a particular group of individuals. It had become the symbol of a tendency, of a set of ideas, of a certain condition in, as it were, the State of Denmark’.³⁹ Roberts has pointed out that the Astors’ visitors’ book included a broad church of opinion on appeasement such that ‘the myth of Cliveden being a nest of appeasers, let alone pro-Nazi, is exploded by the regular return to its pages of the signatures of Eden, Macmillan, Duff Cooper and... Boothby’, all well-known anti-appeasers. Fox agreed that ‘the most convincing refutation of the “Cliveden Set” myth is that the inner circle of regular guests at Cliveden, all powerful and influential, were divided almost exactly down the middle on this issue’.⁴⁰ Roberts went further, alleging the myth served as ‘a fantasy required by a later age to shift blame and excuse itself’.⁴¹ The same could be said of the myths surrounding the Fellowship.

It is evident that the two entities, the illusory Cliveden Set and the Fellowship, a registered company, were nonetheless confused and conflated, especially by the Germans and the Russians, as an umbrella term for that part of British society sympathetic to Germany. If we accept that the Fellowship has been neglected by

³⁵ Claud Cockburn, *Cockburn sums up: an autobiography*, (1981), p. 130.

³⁶ Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set: Portrait of an Exclusive Fraternity*, (2000); see also: Patricia Cockburn, *The Years of The Week*, (1968); Roberts, *Holy Fox*; James Fox, *The Langhorne Sisters*, (1998).

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 506.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 486.

³⁹ Cockburn, *Sums up*, p. 131.

⁴⁰ Fox, *Langhorne Sisters*, p. 488.

⁴¹ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, pp. 52-3.

historians, we might lay some blame on the over focus on the Cliveden Set. Several of those alleged to be Clivedenites were also associated with the Fellowship. The leaders, dubbed by Cockburn the ‘Cagoulords’ (a mischievous play on *les Cagouards*, the 1930s French fascist inclined terrorist group), were named as lords Halifax, Londonderry, Lothian and Astor. Other names in the mix include Thomas Jones, the former deputy cabinet secretary and several past members, alongside Lothian, of Lord Milner’s famous ‘Kindergarten’ of young imperial administrators in South Africa including Lionel Curtis, Robert Brand and Geoffrey Dawson many of whom were also alumni of New College and All Souls in Oxford. Of these, only Lothian and Londonderry joined the Fellowship, but Brand was chairman of Lazards, a corporate member. Neither Nancy nor Waldorf joined but their son, William Waldorf, did. Halifax addressed the December 1937 Fellowship dinner fresh from his return from Germany. Curtis was the founder of Chatham House, backed by Astor money, where Lothian, Christie and Conwell-Evans were frequent and active participants. Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times* (Astor-owned) sent his journalists to Fellowship events and published the speeches and attendees in detail. Jones had accompanied Conwell-Evans and Lloyd George to meet Hitler.

So, the two entities shared some constituency but more significant is whether they shared philosophies, *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*. Rose’s description of the Cliveden Set as ‘an establishment group par excellence’ could just as equally apply to the Fellowship. His explanation of how ‘its pedigree impeccable, its social standing beyond reproach, its persuasive powers permeated the clubs and institutions of London, the senior common rooms of Oxbridge colleges, the so-called quality press, in particular its correspondence columns, and the great country houses of England’ resonates around each. Both groups were ‘concerned almost exclusively with imperial and foreign affairs’ and ‘carried on a disparate, irregular “ginger group” soliciting “a revolution by dinner party”’ operating ‘within not against or outside, the parameters of conventional political behaviour’.⁴²

⁴² Rose, *Cliveden Set*, p. 6.

The courts of three kings

Where the Fellowship surpassed the Clivedenites was in its enthusiasm for royalty. While the German royal houses were well-represented on the DEG, the only British royal to join the Fellowship was Alexander Mountbatten, the Marquess of Carisbrooke, who attended the Brunswick dinner. The son of Princess Beatrice, Queen Victoria's youngest daughter, he was first cousin to George V, Coburg and Louis Mountbatten and served in the Royal Navy before the Great War and in the RAF in the Second World War. The senior ranks of the Fellowship mixed easily in these royal circles. Edward VIII, as Prince of Wales, had served as best man to Louis Mountbatten when he married Edwina, Mount Temple's daughter. Her grandfather, Sir Ernest Cassel, had been one of Edward VII's closest friends and the King attended her parents' wedding. The Fellowship included a court circle who had served the monarchy as far back as Queen Victoria with privy councillors, lords-in-waiting, ADCs, gentlemen ushers and equerries to various monarchs and lesser royals joining.

The Duke of Brunswick, the third princely cousin, and his wife were an intriguing double act. According to her self-exculpatory post-war memoirs, they had been introduced to Hitler by Ribbentrop in 1933 specifically 'to discuss Anglo-German relations'. Committed supporters of both the Fellowship and the DEG, the Duchess claimed that they had both 'worked extensively for rapprochement between England and Germany' during the 1930s.⁴³ Their wedding in 1913 had reunited the estranged houses of Hohenzollern and Hanover and was notably the last family gathering of European sovereigns before the Great War. Their privileged position in both British and German royal families had been shattered by that war so the Nazi regime offered the opportunity for of a restoration to influence which they embraced with an enthusiasm shared by other German aristocrats.

Ernest Tennant had befriended the couple through Ribbentrop and cultivated them as a prestigious bridge between the sister organisations. The Brunswicks were often *chez* Ribbentrop when Tennant came to stay and, rather than the customary flowers, he was in the habit of bringing the duchess 'a couple of Finnan haddock or some kippers' to her delight.⁴⁴ Both Brunswicks were close to their British royal cousins and

⁴³ Viktoria Luise, *The Kaiser's daughter*, (1977), p. 180; see also Urbach, *Go-betweens*, p. 168.

⁴⁴ Tennant, *TA*, p. 183.

comfortable in English society having sent their son to Oxford and their daughter to an English boarding school. Having deposited the princess there in 1934, they paid a visit to George V, the Duke and Duchess of York as well as the ‘old aunts’, including Princess Beatrice, at Kensington Palace. The Brunswicks and the Tennants joined the same party at the rain-sodden 1935 Nürnberg rally where Tennant reported admiringly to Mount Temple that – ‘the duchess must have been an antelope in a previous existence; the speed at which she ran through the crowd in the rain was incredible’.⁴⁵ The Brunswicks were particularly hospitable to Fellowship, Legion and other English visitors. The Tennants were entertained to tea while Conwell-Evans stayed at their castle at Blankenberg in June 1936, where, ever the astute historian, he was struck that ‘their flag is practically the same as the Royal Standard which flies from St James’ Palace’. This was heady stuff for a tailor’s son from Carmarthen who found them ‘overwhelming in their kindness’ and was especially touched that the duke drove him personally to the railway station.⁴⁶

Back in London in July 1936 for the Fellowship dinner in their honour, hospitality was reciprocated. The royal couple spent the weekend as guests of Fellowship member Sir Archibald Weigall near Ascot, and went on to stay with another member, Lord Mottistone, in the Isle of Wight. The dinner at the Dorchester was attended by nearly four hundred guests including the Marquesses of Londonderry, Carisbrooke and Zetland, an extensive contingent from the Legion and the Bishop of Salisbury. Mount Temple presided and Lord Rennell proposed the toast emphasising ‘the many ties of family and old associations which they had with this country’.⁴⁷ Lothian and Maurice from the Legion also spoke while Prince Otto von Bismarck proposed the chairman’s health. One guest, diarist and former spy Robert Bruce Lockhart, shared Tennant’s enthusiasm for the duchess’s physique noting that she looked ‘browned and athletic’.⁴⁸ In his speech, Brunswick remembered a ‘very kind’ letter from George V when his father died, expressing ‘the wish that friendship and understanding between the two countries would lead to the feeling which brought about 1914 disappearing for ever’.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Tennant report to Mount Temple, September 1935, BR.

⁴⁶ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 25 June 1936, KERR/SNR.

⁴⁷ *The Times*, 15 July 1936.

⁴⁸ Sir Robert H. Bruce Lockhart, *Diaries*, (1973), 15 July 1936.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 15 July 1936.

While Hitler saw the vestigial German royal family as a propaganda tool for his overtures to Britain, from the British perspective it offered an alternative to National Socialism and the Führer. According to the duchess, Lloyd George had explained to her nephew, Louis Ferdinand, Prince of Prussia, that ‘had your House in Germany remained in government, then we wouldn’t need to give ourselves such headaches now about Herr Hitler’. Similarly, Churchill agreed that the loss of the German monarchy had left ‘a yawning gap... in the national life of the German people... it was into this gap that Hitler stepped’.⁵⁰

Eton, Oxbridge and the third man

Biographical investigations into the lists of members and dinner attendees underpin the extent to which the Fellowship drew from those inter-war elites most accustomed to this royal and aristocratic milieu. Given its openly elitist recruitment philosophy, it is unsurprising that its members should have been educated at the leading public schools and universities, but detailed analysis adds colour. To the extent that educational credentials for particular members can be confirmed, it is evident that the majority of the men had been educated at the leading British public schools. Over a quarter were Old Etonians while the alumni of Harrow, Charterhouse, Wellington, Shrewsbury, St. Pauls and Winchester each feature significantly on the membership lists. A university degree was not required for advancement within these elites, with many opting for Sandhurst instead, but where pursued, over two-thirds did so at Oxbridge. Each of the better-known colleges was represented with over a dozen alumni from each of Trinity College Cambridge and Balliol College Oxford.⁵¹

The two graduates of Trinity College Cambridge most infamously involved with the Fellowship were Kim Philby and Guy Burgess. However, their precise involvement is hard to verify and has been surprisingly cursorily covered in the voluminous secondary literature.⁵² There is no dispute that Philby was a Fellowship member - his name appears in both published annual reports - but the status of Burgess is less clear. Philby’s name is on neither of the typed lists dated January 1936 suggesting he joined

⁵⁰ Viktoria Luise, *Kaiser's daughter*, p. 127.

⁵¹ Tertiary education confirmed for 114 and secondary education confirmed for 126.

⁵² Eg. the Fellowship is only mentioned once in Richard Davenport-Hines’s recently-published and exhaustive study of the Cambridge Spies, *Enemies Within*, (2018), p. 246.

the membership sometime between February and the summer of that year when he appeared in a photograph of the guests at the July 1936 Brunswick dinner published in *The Tatler & Bystander* and the corresponding list of attendees in *The Times*.⁵³ It has been widely assumed that for both he and Burgess, whose involvement with communism at university had been no secret, joining a pro-Nazi organisation was a neat ‘somersault in their politics’ to bury their communist pasts.⁵⁴ If we accept a more nuanced interpretation of the Fellowship - pro-German rather than pro-Nazi - their purpose in joining needs to be reassessed. It is implausible that their Soviet handlers, whose objective was to penetrate the British establishment, would have wanted them to join an extremist, fringe or eccentric organisation. Rather, it was the Fellowship’s respectability, its political and diplomatic access and its elitism that attracted these social-climbing intelligence agents. As Philby recollected in his KGB memoir, his handler Andre Deutsch had told him to reinvent himself ‘not in the image of a Nazi’ but as ‘an independent thinking Englishman who perceives Hitlerite Germany as a fact of middle European life in the mid-1930s and who is trying to derive from it economic as well as cultural benefit for his own country’.⁵⁵ These were important early steps in the career of what MI5’s official historian has called the first of ‘the ablest group of British agents ever recruited by a foreign intelligence service’.⁵⁶

Several commentators have suggested Burgess introduced Philby to the Fellowship, presumably on the basis that his vocal pro-German enthusiasms pre-dated that of his friend but there is no evidence to confirm this.⁵⁷ Philby joined ‘the expanding propaganda department of the AGF’ late in 1935 having apparently tired of his work as a sub-editor on the *Review of Reviews* previously edited by Sir Roger Chance. Chance was an old friend of Philby’s father who had proposed his son for work at the *Review*. He appears on the January 1936 membership list so more probably he introduced Philby to the Fellowship, rather than vice-versa or, indeed, Burgess. Another old Etonian, Chance had had a ‘good’ war, having been awarded the MC, mentioned in dispatches twice and wounded twice and went on to be press attaché in Henderson’s embassy in Berlin in 1938. An enthusiastic Fellowship member, he came to at least three dinners.

⁵³ *The Tatler & Bystander*, 19 July 1936.

⁵⁴ Davenport-Hines, *Enemies Within*, p. 210.

⁵⁵ John Costello and Oleg Tsarev, *Deadly Illusions* (1993), p. 161.

⁵⁶ Andrew, *MI5*, p. 169.

⁵⁷ Eg. Duff, *Time*; Andrew Boyle, *The Climate of Treason*, (1979) p. 145.

Philby claimed he was introduced to the publisher of the failing *Anglo-Russian Gazette*, which he proposed to reposition as an Anglo-German equivalent. Philby 'did much of the legwork involved in an abortive attempt to start, with Nazi funds, a trade journal designed to foster good relations between Britain and Germany'. The extent to which this came under the aegis of the Fellowship is unclear. As Philby remembered, 'in spite of my best efforts, this strange venture failed, because another group got in ahead of us'.⁵⁸ This was almost certainly Carroll's *Anglo-German Review* that quickly established itself as the leading periodical on Anglo-German relations. Tim Milne remembered that his sister Angela had assisted Philby on the failed journal, and prepared material for the first number but, as it was never published, 'she and Kim spent much of their day doing crosswords and the like'.⁵⁹

The involvement of the Cambridge spies with the pro-German lobby, and the Fellowship in particular, resurfaced in the 1950s as having a particular significance in confirming Philby as the 'Third Man'. In the security services files only released in October 2015, *The Report on Enquiry* pointed to the 'strikingly similar' career paths of the men in that 'all three were Communists at Cambridge; all three at or about the same time purport to drop their Communist affiliations' following which Burgess 'renounces his membership of the Party and does so with the maximum of ostentation' to associate with the right wing, while simultaneously Philby 'becomes associated with the Anglo-German Fellowship... at a time when he had just married a Jewess who was a Communist and who, there are the strongest possible grounds for thinking, was continuing to act as a Communist agent'.⁶⁰

Philby joining the Fellowship was certainly more than a smoke screen. The concept of an Anglo-German alliance alarmed the Russians and Philby called it 'the beginning of my actual work for the Soviet Union'. He explained that 'no one has so far suggested that I had switched from Communism to Nazism. The simpler, and true, explanation is that overt and covert links between Britain and Germany at that time were of serious concern to the Soviet Government'.⁶¹ Philby had visited Germany in 1933 with his friend Tim Milne, where they had seen Hitler speak. He spoke German, was a good

⁵⁸ Kim Philby, *My Silent War*, (1968), p. 14.

⁵⁹ Tim Milne, *Kim Philby*, (2014), p. 42.

⁶⁰ 'Report on Enquiry', 13 December 1951, FCO 158-28, TNA.

⁶¹ Philby, *Silent War*, p. 14.

writer, clever, well-connected and socially adept and, therefore, an ideal candidate to work for the Fellowship.

The files detailing Philby's interrogation provide further clues as to the chronology of his involvement with the Fellowship. In November 1951, when suspicion was building that Philby had tipped off McLean, SIS provided the Foreign Office with a *curriculum vitae* for Philby.⁶² This runs from his education at Westminster School in the late 1920s through to his appointment as the SIS representative in Washington for two years in 1949. There is no explicit mention of his work for the Fellowship. The only gap in the chronology is between his leaving the *Review of Reviews* in early 1936 and his appointment as War Correspondent of *The Times* in February 1937 when he left for Spain to cover Franco's army - so this was the latest point that any executive role with the Fellowship could have ended.

By the summer of 1936, his biographers have agreed that Philby was spending an estimated one week per month in Germany on behalf of the Fellowship.⁶³ For a young man of only twenty-four, he was given significant responsibility and excellent access to the German leadership meeting both Ribbentrop and Goebbels. His work with the Fellowship had already provided valuable contacts in Germany that he used for the next stage of his career as an agent. The German embassy in London supplied him with credentials and he was also accredited to Karl Haushofer's journal, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*. This was indeed a 'blue ribbon training for a young Soviet agent in the process of learning his trade'.⁶⁴ Despite protesting distaste for fellow members, Philby enjoyed some of the Fellowship's social activities as he dated Lady Margaret Vane-Tempest-Stewart, the second daughter of Lord Londonderry whom he had met at the Brunswick dinner.

It has been widely reported that Burgess was a member of the Fellowship and had been introduced to it by 'leading member' John ('Jack') Macnamara for whom he worked as secretary.⁶⁵ A sometime soldier and intelligence agent, Macnamara was a socially well-

⁶² Martin to Carey-Foster, 2 November, 1951, FCO 158/27 266, TNA.

⁶³ Duff, *Time*, p. 58; see also Knightly, *Philby*, p. 52; Boyle, *Climate*, p. 146; Ben Macintyre, *A Spy Among Friends: Kim Philby and the Great Betrayal*, (2014), p. 43.

⁶⁴ Duff, *Time*, p. 118.

⁶⁵ Boyle, *Climate*, p. 135; see also Brown and McDonald, *Field*, p. 461; Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, *Philby: the long road to Moscow*, (1973), p. 105; Andrew Lownie, *Stalin's Englishman: The Lives of Guy Burgess*, (2015), p. 61; Michael Bloch, *Closet Queens*, (2015), p. 176; John Costello, *Mask of Treachery*, (New York, 1988), p. 301.

connected homosexual, an MP and a friend of Winston Churchill and Harold Nicolson.⁶⁶ However, neither Macnamara nor Burgess features on any of the membership lists nor does *The Times* report their attending any dinners. In Philby's published memoir there is no mention of Burgess being a member in the text but there is a publisher's footnote explaining that 'Philby was covering up for his early enthusiasm [for Communism]; Burgess who was also a member of the Fellowship appears to have been doing exactly the same thing'.⁶⁷ Published in 1968, and obviously a starting point for any Philby scholar, it seems likely this initiated the myth of Burgess joining the Fellowship.⁶⁸ Macnamara was active in Anglo-German circles and was on the executive council of the, wholly separate, Anglo-German Club (see introduction) which has more likely added to this confusion.

While not a member, Burgess may, as Boyle suggested, have done some paid work for the Fellowship. Boyle reported him passing his controller Samuel Borisovitch Cahan 'regular summaries on the AGF's political activities and personalities, a task to which he brought his customary insight and flair for selective reporting'.⁶⁹ Duff claims Arnold Deutsch had tasked Burgess to 'develop data on German influence in Britain' and he had soon become 'engaged in writing a pamphlet for the Anglo-German Fellowship'.⁷⁰ Michael Straight, the American publisher, novelist and fellow Soviet agent, has suggested the Rothschild family, to whom Burgess had been providing some 'financial advice', sponsored his penetration of the Fellowship.⁷¹ Costello concurred, pointing out that 'information about threats to the House of Rothschild resulting from secret deals between British sympathisers and the Third Reich would more than justify the hundred guineas a month paid to Guy Burgess'.⁷² This is an intriguing suggestion and would explain why both he and Philby became involved with the Fellowship. It is consistent with the interest in the Fellowship taken by the wider Jewish community

⁶⁶ For more on Macnamara see Bloch, *Closet Queens*, p. 175-7 *et passim* and J. R. J. Macnamara, *The Whistle Blows*, (1938).

⁶⁷ Philby, *Silent War*, p. 14 fn.

⁶⁸ The wider editorial comments are unreliable. The chronology lists Burgess joining the Fellowship in 1934, a year before foundation. Anthony Blunt mentions it in his memoir written in the 1970s by which time the myth had taken hold. *Manuscript Memoir of Anthony Blunt*, BL MS 88902/1 (I am grateful to Andrew Lownie for drawing this to my attention).

⁶⁹ Boyle, *Climate*, p. 120.

⁷⁰ Duff, *Time*, p. 117.

⁷¹ Michael Straight, *After Long Silence*, (New York, 1983), p. 95.

⁷² Costello, *Mask*, p. 305.

represented by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. As will be explored further, the involvement of the Cambridge spies, while a sideshow, is significant in the myth-building around the Fellowship that would influence contemporary Russians and later historians.

Dons, quacks and hacks

Beyond businessmen, politicians, diplomats, servicemen and spies, it is striking how many distinguished doctors, academics and journalists also supported the Fellowship. Their range of enthusiasms included liberalism, pacifism and Germany and there is evidence of a handful (explored in the next chapter) embracing National Socialism with unhealthy gusto. From the dons and schoolmasters this included Sir Raymond Beazley, the retired professor of history at the University of Birmingham who undertook lecture tours in Germany ‘on historical subjects relating to Anglo-German relations’ with the Fellowship’s blessing.⁷³ He later joined The Link as did Professor Laurie, the distinguished chemist who pioneered the scientific analysis of paintings and helped develop chemical weapons in the Great War and was for nearly thirty years president of the Heriot-Watt College in Edinburgh. There is no evidence that the Fellowship’s other donnish supporters shared such views. Professor William Adams, like Lothian a former private secretary to Lloyd George, was warden of All Souls Oxford throughout Hitler’s era and a distinguished political scientist. The Reverend AJ Costain was headmaster of Rydal School, Colwyn Bay for over thirty years and his pupils at that time included the historian GR Elton. Some had an obvious academic interest in Germany long predating the rise of Hitler. Hermann Fiedler was born in Germany and had been tutor to the Prince of Wales immediately prior to the First War. The Taylor professor of German at Oxford for thirty years he donated £20 to the Fellowship and published, bravely perhaps, *The Oxford Book of German Prose* in 1943. Another specialist in Germany was Professor Leonard Willoughby, the Fielden professor of German at University College London from 1931 to 1950. Founder and editor of the journal *German Life and Letters*, he had published *The Classical Age of German Literature* in 1926.

⁷³ AGF, *Annual Report*, 1936-7.

The membership lists and dinner attendees include eminent names from the wider worlds of letters, publishing and journalism, many with liberal and anti-war bents. Beverley Nichols was a famous author, playwright, poet and journalist and had published *Cry Havoc!* advocating pacifism in 1933. Richard Lambert was another prolific author, historian and broadcaster. As a conscientious objector, he had served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in the First War. He worked for the BBC and was the founding editor of *The Listener*, a founding governor of the British Film Institute and published *Propaganda* in 1938.

The fourth estate was well represented at Fellowship dinners with some journalists presumably attending in a professional capacity. Ralph Deakin, the foreign editor of *The Times*, came to the Olympic dinner. The irrepressible Harry Brittain combined journalism with parliament and was a former president of the British International Association of Journalists and the patron of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists. Robert Bruce-Lockhart attended the Brunswick dinner while on the editorial staff of the *Evening Standard*. Frank Newnes, the chairman of *Country Life* was one of the Fellowship members that attended the 1936 NSDAP rally at Nürnberg. Philip Gibbs had been a journalist since 1902, serving as literary editor of the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Chronicle*, and the *Tribune*. Berkeley Ormerod described himself as a 'soldier, sportsman, journalist, financier, diplomat, and sometime propagandist with British Information Services' and wrote for the *Financial Times*, *Investor's Chronicle* and *Barron's*. Douglas Jerrold stands out from this crowd as he vocally supported fascism in Spain and Italy having been involved in General Franco's coup in 1936. Firmly on the right of the Conservative Party, he was editor of *The English Review* in the early thirties and joined Oswald Mosley's January Club.

The Fellowship attracted a dozen distinguished doctors to its ranks including three medical knights. Most notable was Sir Henry Dale who attended the Halifax dinner. Chairman of the Wellcome Trust and director of the National Institute for Medical Research, he had shared the Nobel prize for medicine the previous year. Sir Milsom Rees, the royal laryngologist for twenty-five years, was a member as was Sir John Atkins, who had been deputy director of medical services during the First War and physician-in-ordinary to the Duke of Connaught. Frederick Williamson-Noble, a leading ophthalmic surgeon and author of *A handbook of ophthalmology* also joined as did Arthur Dickson Wright, a renowned surgeon, treasurer of the Imperial Cancer

Research Fund and father to the television chef, Clarissa. Phoebe Chapple was a pioneering Australian female doctor who had been awarded the military medal for her heroism in the First War and was an official guest at George VI's coronation. The younger generation of doctors and surgeons also supported the Fellowship including another Australian, Eric Horning, who had been Rockefeller Foundation fellow for medical research at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin, then worked at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and became professor of experimental pathology at the University of London after the war. Gordon Mitchell-Heggs became a leading post-war dermatologist and the author of *Modern Practice in Dermatology* (1950).

Mayfair rushing Hitlerwards

International sport is perhaps a surprising focus for the Fellowship but, then as now, sport played a role in international diplomacy and, perhaps unsurprisingly, tended towards appeasement. The Olympic winter games were held a few months before, and the summer games a few months after Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland in blatant contravention of the Versailles Treaty. The highpoint of the British social engagement with the National Socialist regime - 'Mayfair rushing Hitlerwards' - was the summer Olympiad in Berlin in August 1936. Though the Games have been widely studied by historians, only limited analysis has been undertaken on the British contingent of over one hundred peers, peeresses, MPs and their wives that came to the Berlin Olympics.⁷⁴ Many were Fellowship members including Lords Aberdare, Barnby, Clydesdale, Decies and Rennell, as well as its most notorious member, Unity Mitford.

The Fellowship's engagement with the XI Olympiad had started in December 1935 with its inaugural dinner at the Hotel Victoria with Hans von Tschammer und Osten, the German Sports Leader, as guest of honour. Mount Temple presided, and Coburg represented the DEG while Leopold von Hoesch, the ambassador, led the German diplomatic contingent. The previous day had seen a controversial football game played

⁷⁴ See e.g. Guy Walters, *Berlin Games: How Hitler Stole the Olympic Dream* (2006); David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936*, (2007); Duff Hart-Davis, *Hitler's Games: The 1936 Olympics*, (1986); Christopher Hilton, *Hitler's Olympics: The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games*, (2006); Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, (Illinois, 1971); Blakeway, *Last Dance*, pp. 236-254.

between England and Germany at White Hart Lane in north London. The first international between the two countries since 1930, it was an event of political, diplomatic and sporting significance - not least because the swastika flew above the home ground of Tottenham Hotspur, a team then (as now) proud of its sizeable support from the Jewish community.⁷⁵ The Germans had been invited by the British Football Association and 10,000 German supporters were given subsidised transport by their government to spectate. Here was an opportunity to show the supposedly civilised face of Hitler's regime and a foretaste of the Olympics. (Unusually, given subsequent form, England won three goals to nil.⁷⁶) The timing and success of the game were critical as the British Olympic Association was considering a boycott of the Summer Olympics and discussing such with its American counterpart.

In his speech of welcome, Mount Temple applauded the good nature at the game which he saw as 'the turning point in the good feeling between the two countries' and rebuked its critics' 'attempts to sow discord'. In response, Coburg identified 'widespread sympathy in Germany for the English people, the depth of which was not yet fully understood in Britain'.⁷⁷ This, the Fellowship's first major banquet, established the template for its larger social gatherings. Each would have a theme and guests of honour that elevated the proceedings above the routine work of the organisation to attract elites from beyond its then still predominately business membership. The theme, key speeches and leading guests would all be written up in broadly glowing terms by *The Times* and other newspapers. Notwithstanding the still cautious attitude in Whitehall, these were planned as significant diplomatic events rather than closed meetings of a single-issue pressure group.

Given that the Fellowship had no formal role in international sport, the sporting credentials of the attendees that night were impressive. Two of Britain's three International Olympic Committee representatives were present. Lord Aberdare was an active Fellowship member attending at least four of the major dinners. Described by his obituarist as 'a brilliant player of ball games and one of the best-known sportsman of his time', he excelled at cricket, rackets and real tennis.⁷⁸ Sir Noel Curtis-Bennett

⁷⁵ See: Stephen G. Jones, 'State Intervention in Sport and Leisure in Britain between the Wars', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 22, no. 1 (January 1987), pp. 163-182.

⁷⁶ See *The Observer*, 1 December 1935.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, 6 December 1935.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 5 October 1957.

was vice-president of the British Empire Games in 1934 and held senior posts in numerous sporting bodies ranging from the English Rugby League to the National Amateur Wrestling Association. They were joined by successful British Olympians including Douglas Lowe, honorary secretary of the Amateur Athletic Association and a gold medallist at both Paris and Amsterdam Olympics; Sir Stenson Cooke, who competed as a fencer in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics; and Robert Bourne, the MP for Oxford, who won silver rowing at Stockholm. The German contingent included Dr Carl Diem, secretary-general of the organizing committee for the Games; Prince Otto von Bismarck, the chargé d'affaires at the embassy; Graf von Duerkheim from the Dienststelle Ribbentrop; and General Baron von Sweppenbergh, the military attaché.

Ribbentrop took the lead in issuing invitations to his English friends especially those from the Fellowship but Hitler, Göring and Goebbels also saw the opportunity offered by the Olympics to woo the British elite so joined in welcoming the British visitors. This was in the same month that the Germans introduced two-year military service and a month later launched Göring's four-year plan to put the German economy on a war footing. Whatever the regime's ultimate intentions, as Steiner emphasized, Hitler at this stage still desired an amicable working relationship with England.⁷⁹ The Ribbentrops' gala dinner was followed by even more extravagant rival parties hosted by Göring and Goebbels. The Fellowship members and other British visitors to the Olympics benefited from access to the DEG clubhouse in Berlin which Ribbentrop noted 'proved very popular with English visitors' and the Fellowship recorded deep appreciation for 'the efforts made by members and staff to promote the enjoyment of so many British visitors, whether members or not'.⁸⁰

Into this bacchanalia of Anglo-German affability, swept the anti-appeasing Sir Robert Vansittart. The head of the Foreign Office had decided to use the Olympics to familiarise himself with the regime in person and was then still at the heart of power, albeit damaged by the fallout from the Hoare-Laval Pact which he had promoted enthusiastically. Two aspects of his visit are striking: that it was Vansittart who came and that it was unofficial. The arrival of such an ardent critic of the Germans (he thought them a 'very crude people, who have very few ideas in their noddles but brute

⁷⁹ Steiner, *Triumph*, p. 298 et passim.

⁸⁰ Ribbentrop speech at Anglo-German Fellowship dinner, 15 December 1936, BR; AGF, *Annual Report*, 1935-6.

force and militarism’) alarmed his hosts.⁸¹ Von Neurath, the foreign minister, admitted his surprise directly to Vansittart who concluded ‘the tale of a hostile Foreign Office had evidently gone deep, and one cannot blame the German press when one has seen and suffered so much of our own’.⁸² Notwithstanding his Cassandra-like warnings of a second war with Germany, he was still searching for a diplomatic solution as well as primary intelligence on the regime.

While damning of other ‘ambulant amateurs’, Vansittart had insisted his own visit was ‘purely private and should be treated as such by the Press’, albeit each step was diligently reported in *The Times*.⁸³ He claimed to need a holiday and that his wife, Sarita, was required to substitute for her indisposed sister (married to Phipps, the ambassador) as hostess at the British Embassy. During this supposed holiday, he held private meetings with Hitler, Ribbentrop, Göring, Goebbels, Hess, Dieckhoff, von Krosigk and with von Neurath no less than six times. He also spoke with various bankers and industrialists and was guest of honour at a dinner hosted by the Führer. Sensitive to the comic aspects of this charade, his lengthy report on his visit is entitled ‘A Busman’s Holiday’. This reluctance to make visits by British statesmen official was a continuing pattern - Lloyd George’s tour of Germany a few weeks later was ‘private’ as was Lord Halifax’s visit in November 1937, under the unconvincing cover of his attending a hunting exhibition as master of the Middleton Hunt. This strangely amateur approach to foreign affairs puzzled both experienced German diplomats such as von Neurath and von Hoesch as well as their internationally-gauche National Socialist masters.

With impressive chutzpah, Vansittart used his visit to build his contacts with the nascent German resistance to Hitler that, as will be explored further, he later nurtured with Christie and Conwell-Evans. He met ‘the three most intelligent journalists’ each with links to the resistance: Karl Silex, editor of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* who was later associated with the July 1944 group; Paul Scheffer, well-respected editor of the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt* and a friend of Lothian’s protégé, Adam von Trott; and Rudolf Kircher, Berlin correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the respected liberal

⁸¹ Minutes of 6 May 1933, VNST.

⁸² ‘Account by Sir Robert Vansittart of a visit to Germany in August 1936: “A Busman’s Holiday”’, 10 September 1936. *DBFP* 2/XVII p. 757.

⁸³ *DGFP*, Series C, Vol V, p. 852.

newspaper that Carl Bosch and IG Farben had acquired. He also met secretly at the British embassy with Wilfrid Israel who asked for help to repatriate persecuted German Jews.⁸⁴ Israel was another friend of von Trott and would have inherited the famous Israel's department store in Berlin had it not been seized by the Nazis. From a distinguished Anglo-German Jewish family, he benefited from a British passport and played a leading role in evacuating Jews from Germany up to the eve of war at which point he escaped to England to work with Chatham House and the Foreign Office.

Having lobbied through the Fellowship for better engagement with the British leadership, Hitler and Ribbentrop were unnerved by the over six-foot-tall Vansittart - not least as Hitler had been told to expect a 'small man of Jewish appearance' and was wrong-footed by his fluent German.⁸⁵ Vansittart despised Ribbentrop but recognised in von Neurath 'a comfortable squirearchic South German' who was not always 'at ease with the present régime'. He was amused by Göring, whom he thought enjoyed life with 'the gusto of Smith minor suddenly possessed of unlimited tick at the school stores', but was most impressed by Goebbels who had sent Lady Vansittart a bowl of orchids and whom he described as a 'limping, eloquent, slip of a Jacobin'.⁸⁶

The first extravaganza was a gala dinner held by the Ribbentrops, on the day of his appointment as ambassador to London, with six hundred guests. Count Baillet-Latour, president of the Olympic committee was a guest of honour and Göring, Coburg and Hess attended. The English guests included the Rennells, Vansittarts, Aberdares, Kemsleys, Camroses, Lord Barnby and Unity Mitford. Two days later, Ribbentrop was outdone by Göring's party that left the eight hundred guests, including the Brunswicks and two Douglas-Hamiltons, 'gaping at the display and the splendour' and reminded Chips Channon of the 'fêtes of Claudius, but with the cruelty left out'. Goebbels invited two thousand to a party on an island that was 'the most impressive though it lacked the elegance and chic of Ribbentrop's and the extravagance of Göring's'. By comparison, the British embassy party for Empire Olympians with a thousand guests echoed the country's underwhelming performance on the track and field and was damned by Channon as 'boring, crowded and inelegant'.⁸⁷ Overall, as one historian has concluded:

⁸⁴ See Naomi Shepherd, *Wilfred Israel: German Jewry's Secret Ambassador*, (1984).

⁸⁵ Ian Colvin, *Vansittart in Office*, (1965), p. 109.

⁸⁶ Vansittart, 'A Busman's holiday', pp. 757-8.

⁸⁷ Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Chips: The diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, (1967), pp. 108-11.

‘if lavish hospitality alone could have forged a link between Germany and Britain, the Olympic fortnight would have done the trick, for the entertainments were on a prodigious scale, and carried out with a degree of taste which agreeably surprised even the most critical of visitors’.⁸⁸

Vansittart extended his ‘holiday’ to attend the sumptuous dinner thrown in his honour by the Führer in the grand dining room at the Reich Chancellery. As well as the British and Polish ambassadors, the Hungarian minister of finance and Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia, the bejewelled and bemedalled guests included a gaggle of Fellowship stalwarts including the Rennells, Aberdares, and Lords Barnby and Clydesdale. Hitler, in ill-fitting evening tails and dining on spinach, eggs and water courted his neighbour, Lady Vansittart, admitting that, while he struggled to communicate with her brother-in-law the ambassador, he found her husband easier.

Historians have written of an ‘Olympic pause’ lasting into 1937 and Vansittart recollected that ‘an Olympic truce lay thick above the city, and had its effect on Herr Hitler’s mood’.⁸⁹ Ribbentrop was pleased by Vansittart’s attendance and hoped for ‘a certain change in his attitude towards Germany’.⁹⁰ Writing to the foreign secretary, Basil Newton, the minister in Berlin, agreed it was ‘an extraordinary success for Germany and for National Socialism’ but suggested the training of German athletes had pushed the boundaries of the amateur tradition.⁹¹ Vansittart was similarly critical of the ‘over specialisation of athletics’ and warned, presumably thinking of more than sport, that ‘these intense people are going to make us look a C3 nation, if we elect to continue haphazard’.⁹² Fellowship members returned home with varying perspectives. Lord Rennell, an eminent diplomat and scholar, wrote to *The Times* with glowing appreciation for ‘the remarkable man of vision who directs the destinies of Germany’.⁹³ Lord Decies, the long-retired soldier and noted horseman, was also critical of the German bending of amateurism and, equating sport with militarism, warned of ‘a new race of energetic, virile young people... ready to go anywhere under the orders of the

⁸⁸ Hart-Davis, *Hitler’s Games*, p. 203.

⁸⁹ Vansittart, ‘Busman’s holiday’ p. 758.

⁹⁰ Ribbentrop minute for Fuhrer, ‘Vansittart’s Visit’, *DGFP Series C Vol V*, pp. 900-1.

⁹¹ Newton to Eden, 18 August 1938, *DBFP series C Vol V* p. 114 C5983/306/18.

⁹² Vansittart ‘Busman’s holiday’, p. 769.

⁹³ *The Times*, 27 August 1936.

Führer... fully armed, equipped with the best of war material, and an air force second to none'.⁹⁴

Within two months of Mayfair's return from Berlin, Britain was consumed with the abdication crisis. A pivot point for both the Fellowship and Ribbentrop's diplomatic mission to London, it robbed the former of its *de facto* royal patron as the king was distracted from foreign affairs during his short reign. Similarly, the prime minister, Baldwin, who had cautiously welcomed Tennant's overtures, now had little time for Anglo-German subtleties as the crisis unfolded. It threw into hard relief Ribbentrop's flawed judgement on Britain - he misunderstood British constitutional monarchy and was convinced the King would never have to abdicate. His dream of Edward as an English Hitler took him into the realms of fantasy that undermined his credibility as an arbiter of Anglo-German diplomacy making him the subject of mockery - Nancy Astor called him a 'damned bad ambassador' to his face.⁹⁵ Ribbentrop used Edward's abandonment of his throne as evidence that the British were no longer committed to Anglo-German relations to convince Hitler that rapprochement was impossible. He portrayed Vansittart's 'promotion' to chief diplomatic adviser as signalling increased government hostility to the German regime. Of course, the reverse was true - Vansittart had been 'kicked upstairs' to a toothless role because of his opposition to appeasement and vocal Germanophobia. The abdication was followed by the premiership of Neville Chamberlain, Ribbentrop's former landlord and the architect of appeasement, such that, as Weinberg has concluded, 'ironically in view of Hitler's opinions, the circumstances of the constitutional crisis in England helped open rather than close the way to a British approach to Berlin'.⁹⁶

Therefore, in the two years between the Prince of Wales's rallying call to the Legion and his brother's coronation, the Fellowship established itself deep into British court, social, military and sporting elites, in addition to all it had achieved in the business and political spheres. The number and influence of those individuals indicates that the Fellowship should not be dismissed as a fringe group of eccentrics but rather a respected, or at least accepted, institution embedded within society. Its involvement with prestigious public events in both countries - banquets, visits by veterans, the

⁹⁴ Ibid. 19 August 1936.

⁹⁵ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 117.

⁹⁶ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 335.

Olympics, ambassadorial receptions and the Coronation gave the Fellowship a public profile, social status and wider influence far higher than any other pro-German organisations. While outwardly achieving little, the social events hosted by the Fellowship and DEG in London and Berlin allowed aristocrats, politicians, businessmen, soldiers, sailors, spies and fanatics to rub shoulders under both Union flag and swastika. They gave succour to the appeasers while celebrating the exchange of ambassadors, the crowning of the King, the fragile maintenance of peace and the natural kinship of the British and the German peoples.

Notwithstanding their failings as individuals, the three royal princes gave the Fellowship and the DEG a regal glamour achieved by few other organisations on which they capitalised. The involvement of the armed forces, and especially the collaboration with the Legion, bestowed a military blessing on the Fellowship's anti-war sentiments of which other appeasing or anti-war pressure groups could only dream. Importantly, this social profile resonated internationally and not necessarily as the Council might have liked. The overlap with the Cliveden Set caused confusion internationally then and subsequently, especially in the US. The connection with the Douglas-Hamilton family laid grounds for Rudolf Hess's decision to choose their Scottish estate above which to bail out of his plane. The infiltration of the Fellowship by Kim Philby and his subsequent role in reporting the Hess affair to Stalin fuelled the Russian leader's concerns about an Anglo-German axis turning towards Soviet Russia.

Chapter 5

Sharks in the shallows: the Fellowship, anti-Semitism and the far right

As explored in the earlier chapters, while attracting wider support from politics, business and society with a shared interest in better relations with Germany, the Fellowship certainly harboured some members motivated by a nasty cocktail of anti-Semitism and admiration for National Socialism of whom the Mitfords were especially controversial. Leading scholars and other commentators¹ in almost all of the relevant literature have followed Richard Griffiths in characterising this group as being significant - 'a large number of sharks lurking in the shallows'.² These 'sharks', he has asserted in an awkward mix of metaphors, were given an 'umbrella' by the Fellowship.³ The implication is that they, at some point and to some extent, drove the Fellowship's agenda and defined its character as an organisation. Several commentators have labelled the Fellowship an organisation explicitly both 'pro-Nazi' and anti-Semitic and have cited membership as primary evidence of anti-Semitic leanings on an individual basis. In his third book on the subject, recently published under the Routledge *Studies in Fascism and the Far Right* series, Griffiths reconfirms his thesis that 'it is, however *significant* that many *apparently moderate* people in high positions in government, commerce and industry could belong to a body which *clearly went over and beyond* the mere desire for Anglo-German friendship'.⁴ While the book thereafter concentrates expertly on the activities of the 'sharks' following the outbreak of war, the implication is clearly that the remainder of the Fellowship's membership should have known better.

In fact, recently-discovered correspondence in the Pitt-Rivers archive allows us to understand how and why the sharks, unhappy with the Fellowship Council's equivocal attitude towards the National Socialist regime from the outset, did try to wrest control of the organisation in 1937 and 1938. They were successfully rebuffed and migrated

¹ See Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 144; Pugh, *We danced all night*, p. 362 and *Hurrah for the Blackshirts* p. 269; Seymour, *Noble Endeavours*, p. 383; James Hinton, 'Militant Housewives: the British Housewives' League and the Attlee Government', *History Workshop Journal*, issue 38, (1994), p. 152; Arthur McIvor 'A Crusade for Capitalism: The Economic League, 1919-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1988) p. 642; Stephen M. Cullen, 'Strange Journey: the life of Dorothy Eckersley', *The Historian*, (Autumn 2013); G. C. Webber, 'Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 19, No 4, October 1984, p. 579; Macintyre, *A Spy Among Friends*, p. 22 and p. 43; McDonough, *Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 143-5.

² Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, pp. 185-6 and *What did...*, p. 3.

³ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 37.

⁴ Griffiths, *What did...*, p. 3 (emphasis added).

to deploy their pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic energies with other organisations that more closely shared their beliefs. By their own admission, the sharks had never held sway over the Fellowship's ideology nor its strategy towards Hitler's Germany and were aggressively at odds with its leadership.

Nonetheless, the outspoken early admiration for the new Germany from the Fellowship and its leaders was often both uncritical and susceptible to far-from-subtle National Socialist propaganda. Particularly disturbing is Tennant's contribution of a chapter (based on a speech written in 1933) on Hitler to a 1934 book, *The Man and the Hour: Studies of Six Great Men of Our Time* (edited by the lauded popular historian and noted Nazi apologist Sir Arthur Bryant⁵) in which he argued that the newly-elected Chancellor was better than the communist alternative despite his movement's 'cruelty and brutality'. However, Tennant was not wholly star-struck. While he noted Hitler's 'striking dark blue eyes, kindly and intelligent', he was less than impressed by the 'very unfortunate moustache, close clipped and square, making a blob covering the whole of his lip between his nose and his mouth'.⁶ In a report to JCC Davidson, he described Hitler as 'very temperamental' and 'so easily roused to a condition of excitement' that any future negotiations would be difficult.⁷

Certainly, the leadership of the Fellowship, while not necessarily heroic, was repeatedly and quietly vocal in its determination to persuade the Nazis to moderate their behaviour and policies. This was both practical - in the sense that they were clearly 'bad for business' - as well as motivated by more noble and ethical impulses. From the outset, there is evidence that this polite criticism antagonised and frustrated the Nazis who had hoped that the Fellowship would docilely toe the party line. Indeed, it was criticised on several occasions as having 'alleged Jewish sympathies' by both the National Socialists and some of their British supporters such as Admiral Sir Barry Domvile who went as far as to allege it was funded by Jewish business interests.⁸ Consequently, while certainly sheltering anti-Semites of the worst kind, the Fellowship itself was never, in modern parlance, 'institutionally racist' and those views were not held by its

⁵ See Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians*, pp. 287-322 and Julia Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant and National History in Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Lanham, Maryland, 2005).

⁶ Sir Arthur Bryant (Ed), *The Man and the Hour: Studies of Six Great Men of Our Time*, (1934), pp. 129-130.

⁷ Tennant to Davidson, 13 November 1933, DAV.

⁸ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

Council as a body. Tennant was realistic as to how his and the Fellowship's legacy would be recorded: 'as was to be expected, at the outbreak of war, the Fellowship was attacked from certain quarters as having been a Nazi organisation' but doggedly insisted that 'this was absolutely untrue... we were nothing of the sort' – a claim met with scepticism by historians ever since.⁹

Elwin Wright

Central to Griffiths's assertion that the harbouring of these sharks gave the Fellowship a 'rather ambiguous status', is his assessment of Elwin Wright and his importance within it.¹⁰ He characterised Wright as 'the AGF's secretary and main spokesman, until 1937... who was later to show his true colours as an outspokenly anti-Semitic member of the Nordic League', an interpretation often repeated by subsequent commentators. Though acknowledging that Wright's activities with the Fellowship were essentially harmless, he suggested this was a facade masking a covertly pro-Nazi elitist enterprise that could 'attract the great and the good', quoting Wright telling *The News Review* that 'it isn't numbers that matter... we want "Names", otherwise how can we have any influence with the Government or the Foreign Office?'¹¹

Wright was appointed as the salaried secretary in summer or autumn of 1935 and served in that role for eighteen months until he was replaced in May 1937 by Conwell-Evans, who had previously been on the Council and then one of two unpaid honorary secretaries. Wright was never the 'main spokesman' for the Anglo-German Fellowship. Apart from the one interview in *The News Review*, a minor news magazine, much re-quoted by historians (taking their lead from Haxey, Griffiths or both) there is no evidence of Wright having any role as spokesman. His duties were administrative - arranging events, filing documentation at Companies House and chasing members for their subscriptions.¹² He had neither the social status nor the social skills to allow him to sit at the Fellowship's top table. As an employee of Thomas Cook, the travel agency that sponsored the Fellowship, he had been seconded by his employer as it looked to

⁹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 204.

¹⁰ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 35.

¹¹ *News Review*, 23 January 1936, quoted by Haxey, *Tory MP*, p. 199.

¹² Eg. Wright to Lothian, 20 May 1936, KERR/NRS.

reduce headcount during the recession. Living in a modest red-brick terraced house in South Harrow backing onto the Piccadilly railway line, his social milieu was a far cry from Mount Temple and Lothian's stately homes, Tennant's country house and even Conwell-Evans's Kensington bachelor flat.

During Wright's period in office, the main spokesmen for the Fellowship were Tennant and Conwell-Evans. It was they who communicated with public figures such as MacDonald, Baldwin, Lloyd George and Lothian, liaised with the foreign ministries, dined at the embassies in both countries, wrote letters to *The Times* and travelled often to Germany on Fellowship business.¹³ As chairman, Mount Temple typically presided at dinners while other Council members took active outward-facing roles with, for example, Piggott leading discussions with the Ministry of Overseas Trade and Mason presiding at the 1938 reception. Wright was never on the Council nor the executive committee and had not been at the founding meeting. Nor was he reportedly good at his job even with its limited responsibilities. Tennant persuaded Mount Temple to remove Wright from the role, ostensibly not for his political beliefs, but because he was 'not a good organiser of the daily work... easily loses his head and never stops talking' albeit acknowledging that he had 'worked most loyally and energetically'.¹⁴

Recently identified correspondence shows that Wright was unhappy with the Fellowship's equivocal attitude towards the Nazi experiment and was himself unapologetically anti-Semitic. He agitated for the Fellowship to take an aggressive stance against the British Press in support of the regime, writing to Conwell-Evans in May 1937 accusing the Council of being 'supine' and highlighting 'a grave state of unrest amongst members of the Fellowship'.¹⁵ He had close links to Germany, with a brother-in-law in the SS, but did downplay his beliefs for tactical reasons, explaining to a fellow traveller that his National Socialist friends in Germany realised that it would 'not be in their interests, let alone ours, for the Fellowship to be purely or mainly identified with National Socialism itself, even if that were possible'.¹⁶

Despite Tennant's efforts to smooth his departure, Wright took his redundancy badly, sending furious letters to Council members claiming that Conwell-Evans's appointment

¹³ Eg. Conwell-Evans to *The Times*, 20 March 1935 and 5 April 1935.

¹⁴ Tennant to Lord Mount Temple, 18 February 1937, BR.

¹⁵ Wright to Conwell-Evans, 10 May 1937, PIRI.

¹⁶ Wright to Sharpe, 16 February 1937, PIRI.

was unconstitutional (as he had previously served on the Council) and was unlikely to save money.¹⁷ Tennant, rightly nervous of Wright falling into the ambit of the sharks, wrote hoping that he would remain loyal and ‘never divulge any information’ to any ‘group of members who may have other views as to what the policy of the Fellowship should be’.¹⁸ Wright’s anti-Semitism was never far below the surface. He wrote an extraordinary letter to the Fellowship’s solicitor, Le Blount Kidd, asking on behalf of a member of the German embassy whether Kidd had any ‘Jewish blood in [his] veins’.¹⁹ Conwell-Evans challenged Wright as to whether he was an anti-Semite to which he replied defending the Nürnberg laws as a ‘stern necessity in [the German government’s] treatment of the Jewish minority’.²⁰ Cut adrift from the Fellowship, Wright dropped any pretence at moderation, launched a campaign of harassment against the Fellowship and, sometime later, called for the Jews to be executed.²¹ As will be shown from both their actions and words, such views were intolerable to Tennant, Conwell-Evans and Mount Temple.

Polite protests from sorrowing friends

The accepted scholarly and popular orthodoxy has been that the Fellowship and its leadership were, at best naïvely and at worst sinisterly, ‘turning a blind eye to the darker side of the Nazi regime’ right up to Kristallnacht.²² The Board of Deputies of British Jews was both puzzled and frustrated by the Fellowship’s apparent silence on the subject of Nazi persecution, complaining that ‘no one would gather from the speeches given at its dinners or meetings that there is such a thing as persecution in the world’.²³ However, from the start, the Fellowship was never the obedient propaganda poodle which the National Socialists hoped it to be. While less antagonistic to Hitler’s party than the AGA in its dying days, the Fellowship did not exclude critics of the regime from its membership recruitment. Conwell-Evans tried to persuade Sir Horace

¹⁷ see Wright to Ball 23 March 1937; Wright to Hunter, 3 April 1937; Wright to Mount Temple, 15 May 1937, PIRI.

¹⁸ Tennant to Wright, 29 April 1937, PIRI.

¹⁹ Wright to Kidd, 7 May 1937; PIRI.

²⁰ Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

²¹ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, p. 82.

²² McDonough, *Neville Chamberlain*, p. 144. See also Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians*, p. 300, and Waddington, ‘Aspects’ p. 65.

²³ Solomon to Wartski, 29 April 1937, ACC.

Rumbold to join despite his removal as ambassador because of his alarm at National Socialism. Wright aside, the Council and executive of the Fellowship were troubled by the regime's behaviour from the outset and said so. In early September 1935, Tennant had persuaded Mount Temple to 'give up two good days' shooting' to visit that year's Nürnberg rally and meet Hitler when reports in *The Times* suggested that 'important new anti-Jewish laws will be promulgated'. Tennant immediately wrote to Ribbentrop explaining that he considered 'Herr Streicher... the world's public enemy No. 1 and far and away the main obstacle to better Anglo-German relations'.²⁴ He went on to threaten that 'without exception, the whole Council of the Anglo-German Fellowship is very strongly disapproving of Herr Streicher and his activities', explained that if Mount Temple and he had been involved in 'any big anti-Jewish demonstration' the result might be to 'bring the Fellowship to an end.' Tennant shared the contents of this letter widely within the Fellowship and was perturbed some weeks later when Wright showed him a list of DEG members that now included both Goebbels and Streicher.²⁵ Despite Ribbentrop telephoning Tennant to insist 'there was no danger of any anti-Jewish trouble',²⁶ the Mount Temple visit was indeed postponed till October.

These efforts by the Fellowship's leadership were not out of character. Mount Temple had focused on the Jewish issue in Germany soon after Hitler's assumption of power and therefore long before he became chairman. The secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews noted in 1937 that he had 'never himself been an anti-Semite, and indeed more than once has identified himself with Jewish causes'.²⁷ These remained a focus for him and his senior colleagues up until his resignation as chairman on the issue in 1938. As his biographer noted he regarded Hitler's anti-Jewish policy as 'a major stumbling block to a better understanding' having presided at the April 1933 meeting at the Whitechapel Art Gallery protesting at the treatment of Jews in Germany.²⁸ This was one month before Lord Reading, himself Jewish, resigned as chairman of the traumatised Anglo-German Association and only two months after the National Socialists came to power. The meeting had been called to launch a Jewish Emergency Committee in response to the news of atrocities from Germany. In his speech, Mount

²⁴ Tennant to Ribbentrop, 7 September 1935, BR.

²⁵ See Wright to Budding, 25 April 1937, PIRI.

²⁶ Tennant to Mount Temple, 9 September 1935, BR.

²⁷ Solomon to Wartski, 29 April 1937, ACC.

²⁸ E. J. Feuchtwanger 'Ashley, Wilfrid William, Baron Mount Temple (1867–1939)', *ODNB*.

Temple referenced the long history of British protests against mistreatment of Jews (for example in Russia in the 1880s and 1905). He deplored ‘what is taking place in Germany’ and applauded ‘the disproportionate contribution of the relatively small population of Jews (‘630,000 out of 64 millions’) to ‘the progress that has been made in the cultural life of the Fatherland’. He insisted ‘it is impossible as human beings and Christian men and women to look on in silence, while an important section of Germany’s population, namely the Jewish section, is gravely threatened in its very existence’. Arguing that ‘it is a sacred duty of humanity to offer these persecuted people a shelter’ he called for Britain to ‘open the gates of Palestine as wide as possible’ under the Balfour Declaration.²⁹ The speech resulted in hate mail from Germany.

Also, in early 1933, Tennant had sent a letter to *The Times* following a trip to Germany, sounding ‘a note of warning’, emphasising the youth and idealism of the Nazis while insisting that ‘hard they are, ruthless they may be, but they know exactly what they want, and a war is no part of that program’. He confidently (and indeed correctly) predicted that ‘nothing can now dislodge the Nazis from a long period of control in Germany’, so suggested that ‘a friendly hand stretched out now would be the best and quickest way of helping the Jews and others in Germany who are entitled to our sympathy and deserve our help’.³⁰ Recent evidence has emerged of Tennant trying to use the Fellowship to facilitate the rescue of a Jewish man from Germany. Documents in the Pitt-Rivers papers identify an anonymous donation of £100 (c £6,000 in 2017 values) as an ‘act of gratitude’ from a Jewish refugee whose brother Tennant had tried to have released through Ribbentrop’s office.³¹ However, these words and acts notwithstanding, anti-Semitism was a feature of the Tennant household as his wife, Eleanora, moved further to the political right and, as will be explored, later voiced extreme views including attacks on the Jews.

Meanwhile, in October that year, Conwell-Evans gave a talk on his ‘impressions of Germany’ at a gathering at Lord Noel-Buxton’s house in London the text of which he sent to Ramsay MacDonald and Lord Lothian. He insisted he had been arguing to German ministers that friendship with England required ‘the rehabilitation in some form of the Jews as a race’ explaining that ‘the apparent condemnation of the Jews as

²⁹ Mount Temple draft speech, 1 April 1933, BR.

³⁰ *The Times*, 20 March 1933.

³¹ Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

a race appears to English opinion to be equivalent to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes'. Also calling for the abolition of concentration camps and the restoration of the Reichstag, he did, however, defend the regime and suggest that English newspapers exaggerated the atrocities in Germany that were limited to 'a very small minority of roughs [who] bring the movement into disgrace'. Echoing Tennant, he reminded his audience of the blockade of 1918 and 1919 'in order to force on Germany the unjust treaty of Versailles... which in its entirety was responsible for the death of at least 750,000 men, women and children.'³²

Of the three, it seems, especially from his correspondence with MacDonald and his personal secretary Rose Rosenberg, that Conwell-Evans had the closest connections with prominent Jewish figures in both Germany and Britain and was, at least in one case, successful in effecting the emigration of one prominent Jewish family to England. Such efforts were appreciated by AL Kennedy, leader writer at *The Times*, who recommended him to his editor as the paper's next Berlin correspondent, noting that Conwell-Evans 'hates the Jew-baiting and the persecution of the Church etc'.³³ His history professor in Königsberg, Hans Rothfels, was born into a wealthy Jewish family but had converted to Lutheranism before the First War.³⁴ Conwell-Evans lauded him to Rose Rosenberg as 'a most delightful noble character of the first type' and enjoyed cycling and walking trips with the family.³⁵ Though a reactionary nationalist historian, the professor's Jewish ancestry could not be ignored so Conwell-Evans arranged his emigration to Britain in 1938. The British Consul in Berlin had been angry and unhelpful telling Conwell-Evans 'see what your Anglo German friendship has led to... you should hang your head in shame'.³⁶ Bypassing official channels, he therefore asked Lothian and Vansittart to intervene with Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, who arranged for Rothfels, his wife and three children to be given permits for entry into the UK.³⁷ Conwell-Evans then enlisted support from his old mentor James Brierly, Chichele Professor of International Law and Diplomacy at Oxford, William Adams, a

³² Conwell-Evans, 'Report of an address on impressions of Germany given at a private gathering in London', October 1933, KERR/NRS.

³³ Kennedy to Dawson, 12 March 1936, CONWELL.

³⁴ see Klemens von Klemperer, 'Hans Rothfels, 1891-1976', *Central European History*, vol. IX, no. 4, (December 1976), pp. 381-3.

³⁵ Conwell-Evans to Rosenberg, 22 April 1934, PREM1.

³⁶ Conwell-Evans memoir, CONWELL.

³⁷ See Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 27 February 1939, CONWELL.

Fellowship member and warden of All Souls, and Ernest Barker, professor of political science at Cambridge which resulted in a two-year post for Rothfels at St John's College Oxford at £250 a year.³⁸

Conwell-Evans was friendly with other prominent Jewish (or part-Jewish) figures such as Professor Arnold Bergstraesser, the political scientist who had to leave Germany due to his ancestry, whom he tried to introduce to Ramsay MacDonald in 1933. Similarly, four years previously, he had been keen to bring together Alfred Zimmern and MacDonald and had lobbied the prime minister to recommend him for an honour. One of the founders of the Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), an internationalist and supporter of Zionism, later the first secretary-general of UNESCO, Zimmern's family were Liberal German Jews who had emigrated to Britain.

Conwell-Evans's correspondence with Rose Rosenberg gives us the most personal insight into his attitudes to the Jewish question and is particularly pertinent as Rosenberg was one of the most prominent and successful Jewish women in British public life at the time. Born in the East End of London in 1892, she was (like Conwell-Evans) the child of a tailor, in her case a Jewish migrant from Russia. Known as 'Miss Rose of No. 10', she was MacDonald's personal secretary from 1924 to 1937 and was the first woman to be allowed in the Strangers' Dining Room of the House of Commons. As a breathless American journalist wrote at the time: 'she knows more of the inside dope on home politics and world politics than anyone in the kingdom outside of MacDonald and King George'.³⁹ While Conwell-Evans's sexual orientation may be open to debate, he seems to have developed a *tendresse* for Rose. Keen to impress his sincerity on her both as the gatekeeper to his friend MacDonald and as a Jew, as early as October 1933, he wrote offering 'some hopeful things to say [to MacDonald] about the possibility of Hitler changing his attitude towards the Jews'.⁴⁰ Writing again in April 1934, he personalised the issue for Rose, asking 'can I do anything for the cause which doubtless you personally have at heart? I need hardly tell you that I have been doing my utmost for the Germans of Jewish extraction.' He insisted 'I have passionately pleaded in Berlin with important Nazis – again and again for the German Jews... I shall

³⁸ On outbreak of war Rothfels refused to work for the British government and was interned. He later published *The German Opposition to Hitler, An Appraisal*, (Chicago, 1948).

³⁹ *Pittsburgh Press*, 27 July 1930.

⁴⁰ Conwell-Evans to Rosenberg, September 1933, PREM1.

go on doing so'.⁴¹ There is no hint that Rosenberg, an evidently shrewd judge of character, doubted Conwell-Evans's sincerity and she replied 'you cannot imagine how deeply I feel on the whole subject. I do appreciate all you are doing, nevertheless, and urge you to continue your good efforts.'⁴²

Tennant also challenged the regime on the Jewish question albeit he admitted with little effect. He had asked to meet Himmler, so Ribbentrop arranged a dinner in his garden, surprisingly on the eve of the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934, when presumably the NSDAP high command had more pressing concerns than charming a British businessman. At the dinner, Tennant boldly badgered Himmler to authorise the release of certain concentration camp prisoners, proffering a list of names supplied by his cousin, Margot, widow of HH Asquith, the Liberal prime minister. Tennant remembered 'quite a scene' and that Himmler 'nearly choked' before shouting 'I don't remember that during the South African war the Germans were invited to inspect your concentration camps – I don't remember that when Hitler was in prison any of you English showed any interest in how he was treated – you ought to go down on your knees and thank God we have got those scum under control'.⁴³

Finally reassured by Ribbentrop, Tennant did make the journey with his wife to the Nürnberg Reichsparteitag but without Mount Temple. At a lunch hosted by Hitler, Tennant sat next to Alfred Rosenberg, the leader of the NSDAP Foreign Policy Office, and pointed out that the anti-Jewish policy was 'alienating world public opinion through their insults to the whole Jewish race'. He and Conwell-Evans were both so 'profoundly disturbed by the new anti-Jewish legislation' that they had asked to see Ribbentrop that Monday morning. Tennant's analysis of Ribbentrop's justification of the persecution makes difficult reading to the post-Holocaust reader: 'while many people will admit the Germans have justification for wishing to curtail the influence on German life and culture acquired by certain sections of the Jewish community... it is deplorable that they fail to realise how seriously the cruel and vulgar anti-Jewish campaign being carried on by Julius Streicher and his obscene newspaper 'Der Stürmer' is damaging Germany in the eyes of the outside world'. Nonetheless, he was determined to persevere and hoped that 'we are doing nothing to worsen the position

⁴¹ Conwell-Evans to Rosenberg, 22 April 1934, PREM1 (emphasis in the original).

⁴² Rosenberg to Conwell-Evans, 24 April 1934, PREM1.

⁴³ Tennant, *TA*, p. 175.

of the Jews in Germany and some day we may be able to help them.’⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Conwell-Evans reported back to Lothian in similar terms on the meeting with Ribbentrop. He had been boyishly excited to be invited to ride in the car behind the Führer and ‘fearfully bucked’ when picked out for a conversation by Hitler at the reception. However, this was all before the announcement about the new anti-Jewish legislation on which, as he reported to Lothian, he had lectured Ribbentrop till he was ‘black in the face’ but without effect.⁴⁵

A month later, criticism of the NSDAP by members of the just-incorporated Fellowship created a crisis that nearly strangled it at birth. The Council hosted a private dinner at the Dorchester Hotel in honour of Ambassador von Hoesch to include his deputy, the charmingly-mannered, but ardent Nazi, Prince Otto von Bismarck (grandson of the Iron Chancellor) and Karlfried Graf von Dürckheim-Montmartin, the energetically Anglophile head of the English section of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop. Lord Eltisley, in his speech following Mount Temple, made what Wright characterised as a ‘violent attack’ on the German government around the ‘Jewish question’.⁴⁶ Von Hoesch reported more calmly the next day to Berlin that ‘several of the English guests had voiced their disapproval of Nazi internal policy and had expressed misgivings about its long-term effect upon Anglo-German relations’.⁴⁷ Hitler reacted angrily, demanding the immediate recall of those Germans just arrived in London for the Fellowship’s inauguration celebrations and was only dissuaded by Ribbentrop playing down the accuracy of von Hoesch’s report.

Nor was the Jewish issue allowed to drop. At a Council meeting ahead of the DEG inauguration trip in January 1936, it was suggested that Hitler should be persuaded to receive a deputation from the Council which would make ‘strong representations about the alleged mistreatment of the Jews by the German government’. The leading banker, Frank Tiarks, had told Wright that he was going to tell Hitler that ‘this treatment of the Jews has got to stop’. A further meeting was held in Mount Temple’s rooms at the

⁴⁴ Tennant, *Nuremberg Report*, September 1935, BR.

⁴⁵ Conwell-Evans to Lothian, 25 September 1935, KERR/NRS.

⁴⁶ Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

⁴⁷ Waddington, ‘Aspects’, p. 64.

Kaiserhof in Berlin at which Wright approvingly noted the chairman ‘resisted an attempt to stampede him into heading a delegation to the Fuhrer’.⁴⁸

The next summer, Lothian used his widely-reported speech at the Fellowship dinner in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick as a public warning about German behaviour, albeit without direct reference to the Jews. There is no suggestion that Lothian was anti-Semitic. He had made clear to the trustees of the Rhodes Trust in August 1933 that he ‘detested totalitarianism of any kind’ and ‘opposed the Nazis’ anti-Semitism’.⁴⁹ While full of appeasing sentiment, he warned of ‘aspects of the internal policy of the National Socialist State which are a serious obstacle to the establishment of cordial relations between the British and the German people’ and concluded ‘everyone knows what they are’. Alarmed by ‘the speed and extent of Germany’s rearmament’ he begged the Germans ‘not to underrate the influence these things exert on British policy or the weapon they give to those elements, here and abroad, which are opposed to Anglo-German reconciliation’.⁵⁰

By May 1937, German sensitivity to the Fellowship’s truculence created another diplomatic crisis following Lothian’s visit to Berlin and the dinner to welcome Ribbentrop as the new ambassador. The latter had received a letter from Berlin accusing the Fellowship of being ‘hostile to National Socialism’ and referencing ‘the alleged Jewish sympathies and aim of the Fellowship’. Also mentioned was an incident when Conwell-Evans had asked Wright to remove the ‘great blatant swastika’ he had hung without permission beside the Union Jack in the great hall at Grosvenor House arguing that they would be ‘branded as Nazis’.⁵¹ Tennant and Conwell-Evans had gone to the embassy to discuss it with Ribbentrop who, keen to avoid embarrassment around his brainchild, decided they ‘should take no more notice of the affair’.⁵² Taken together, these challenges to the regime’s anti-Semitism should not have surprised the Germans. Aware of Mount Temple’s high profile Jewish connections and sympathies, Ribbentrop went so far as to crack an inept and unfunny joke that ‘this temple should not be destroyed in spite of the Jewish wife because its usefulness was not yet exhausted’.⁵³

⁴⁸ Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

⁴⁹ Kenny, *History of the Rhodes Trust*, p. 391.

⁵⁰ Lothian speech to AGF Dinner, 14 July 1936, KERR/NRS.

⁵¹ Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

⁵² Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

⁵³ Paul Schwartz, *This man Ribbentrop: his life and times*, (New York, 1943), p. 207.

Similarly, as the secretary of the Board of Deputies noted, Lord Londonderry had at least one Jewish son-in law.

Patriotic societies

To the extent studied by scholars, the Fellowship has typically been analysed alongside organisations pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic that would have shared none of Conwell-Evans's squeamishness about the swastika.⁵⁴ This ragbag of organisations includes the British Union of Fascists, its affiliate the January Club, the Nordic League, the Right Club, The Link, the Imperial Fascist League, the White Knights of Britain, the Militant Christian Patriots, the British Vigil, the English Array, the Britons and the Nationalist Socialist League. Although several historians have acknowledged that it was less 'nasty' than these, the Fellowship has been damned guilty by association and implicitly assumed to be the 'gateway drug' to harder stuff. The most relevant comparators are The Link, the Right Club and the January Club.

The January Club was founded in early 1934 with Fellowship member Captain HW (Billy) Luttmann-Johnson as secretary. Intended as 'the "respectable" cover organisation to attract middle-class supporters to the BUF,'⁵⁵ it seems fair to conclude its membership 'reflected the fascist sympathies of the right-wing Conservatism' but it failed to gain momentum and went out of existence in 1935.⁵⁶ Both The Link and the Right Club were energetically pro-Nazi organisations that offered a welcoming home to those fellow travellers who found the Fellowship disappointingly moderate. Both were creations of the late 1930s, when Hitler's intentions were increasingly clear, so several years after the Fellowship was founded, and in a different climate vis-à-vis Anglo-German relations. Importantly, the Fellowship was never a secret society like the Right Club or the Nordic League and was licenced by the Board of Trade and formally incorporated with articles of association filed at Companies House. It published an annual report and membership list, audited by Price Waterhouse, while the attendees and speeches at its dinner were reported in *The Times*. It made its mission and goals clear to government and sought to liaise with ministers and civil servants

⁵⁴ E.g. Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted* covers the Fellowship in a chapter titled 'The Extremists: Pro-Nazi and Anti-Semitic Groups', pp. 35-9; see also Stone, *Responses to Nazism*, p. 186.

⁵⁵ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 187.

⁵⁶ Pugh, *Hurrah*, p. 146 et passim.

wherever possible. Contemporary analysts recognised the Fellowship's moderate decency better than their successors. The extensive British secret service surveillance agreed that the Fellowship was generally moderate and sincere in its Germanophilia. An MI5 report on the 1937 Nürnberg rally damned the British delegation as 'with a few exceptions... composed of nonentities, race-purity maniacs, and undeveloped mental cases, with one or two really dangerous individuals', but excepted 'a few members of the Anglo-German Fellowship with a real and impartial interest in Germany'.⁵⁷

Further evidence that the Fellowship does not deserve a place in this pantheon of far right organisations is the degree to which it disappointed both these supposed equivalents as well as its NSDAP sponsors. Writing in 1947 following his release from prison, Barry Domvile emphasised that, despite serving on the Fellowship's Council, he was 'never very happy about this Association'. He deemed it elitist, overly-focused on business interests, and, as such patronised by 'Judmas, and its offshoots in British social and business circles'.⁵⁸ Judmas was his term for an imagined Jewish-Masonic alliance which he and his disciples believed was overtaking global politics, business and media. A latecomer to the Fellowship's Council, he was appointed in January 1938 apparently with a mission to build a working relationship between the Fellowship and The Link. His appointment (along with that of Elwin Wright) is often held up as evidence of the Fellowship's successful penetration by the 'sharks'. But there was tension between Domvile and the Fellowship from the outset and his appointment was immediately controversial. Conwell-Evans wrote to Mount Temple before a meeting with the Admiral, explaining, with some snobbery and a feeble pun, that he was hesitant about the Fellowship 'linking' up too closely with The Link which he damned as 'so indiscriminate, and its members without influence and standing'.⁵⁹ Tennant and the Council were similarly dubious; he remembered that they 'strongly disapproved of any of our members joining The Link'.⁶⁰ Domvile called Conwell-Evans a 'dirty little twister' for attacking The Link before resigning (along with Beazley) on April Fools' Day in 1939.⁶¹

⁵⁷ NSDAP Party Congress Nürnberg 1937, MI5 report, September 1937, KV5/6 C492109, TNA.

⁵⁸ Barry Domvile, *From Admiral to Cabin Boy*, (1947), p. 65.

⁵⁹ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 January 1938, BR.

⁶⁰ Tennant, *TA*, p. 204.

⁶¹ Domvile to Pitt-Rivers, 27 January 1939, PIRI.

Despite such mutual disapproval, there was overlap in membership between the two organisations. The Link, founded in July 1937, was, in contrast to the Fellowship, populist, developing a national network of regional offices with membership reaching 4,300 in June 1939, more than six times that of the Fellowship. CE Carroll, the editor of the *Anglo-German Review*, differentiated it as ‘a mass organisation with a small initial subscription of a shilling or two’ from the two-year old Fellowship which restricted membership to ‘a certain class of people’.⁶² Only a handful were also Fellowship members but these were prominent Link supporters including Domvile and his wife, Lords Redesdale and Sempill, Professor Laurie, Sir Raymond Beazley, CE Carroll, Major-General JFC Fuller and WJ Bassett-Lowke.

The Right Club recruited on an elitist basis similar to the Fellowship with a membership of less than 250. Formed in May 1939, four months before the outbreak of war, it offered a refuge for those for whom the rising crisis pulled them towards the Nazi cause rather than away. Like the Fellowship, it had roots in the Conservative Party but was specifically anti-Semitic – ‘the main objective was to oppose and expose the activities of organised Jewry’.⁶³ Of its 244 members, 17 (or seven per cent) were also members of the Fellowship and again included prominent names including Sir Ernest Bennett, Princess Blucher, Domvile, Lord Galloway, Lord Sempill, the Duke of Wellington, Fuller and Alexander Walker, the whisky magnate, who contributed £100.

Looking at the Fellowship’s wider membership, of the 700 identified members and 340 named guests who attended dinners or receptions, biographical data has been tracked down for nearly forty per cent. Of these, 55 have been cross-referenced to published scholarly research as being known to have held extreme views.⁶⁴ This large shoal of sharks should not be underestimated but nevertheless represents only about five per cent of the total. (By comparison, a greater percentage were Old Etonians - albeit with some overlap...) More may well have quietly shared such views and failed to be noted for posterity - but this data still would not support the thesis that the Fellowship was institutionally pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic. Additionally, as we have seen, the rest of the

⁶² Carroll to Beazley, 13 July 1937, PIRI.

⁶³ Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, pp. 354-5.

⁶⁴ See especially: Gottlieb, *Feminine fascism*; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*; Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers, Patriotism Perverted and What did...;* Robin Saika, *The Red Book - The Membership List of the Right Club - 1939* (2010); Pugh, *Hurrah*.

membership included prominent individuals from respectable backgrounds and professions - the 'great and the good' - who would have had no obvious reason to join an extremist organisation had they not already made clear they held such extremist views.

While the Fellowship was successful in attracting pro-German British aristocrats to its membership, it is a step too far to portray it as the natural forum for aristocratic and other British friends of Hitler. Many Nazi-supporting aristocrats are notable for *not* having joined the Fellowship including the Dukes of Westminster, Buccleuch and Northumberland, the Marquesses of Tavistock and Graham, Viscount Lyminster, the Earls of Erroll and Mar and Lord Ronald Graham despite being eminently socially qualified to do so. Archibald Ramsay, the founder of the Right Club, the publication of whose infamous Red Book exposed pro-Nazi sympathies of so many aristocratic and society figures in the 1930s, never joined but rather forged links with the Nordic League, The Link and Oswald Mosley. There was surprisingly little fellow-travelling between the Fellowship and the British Union of Fascists. Although his wife's family were stalwart members and his background both aristocratic and parliamentary, there is no evidence that Mosley or his party ever engaged meaningfully with the Fellowship.⁶⁵ Rather, they used the January Club as their means to charm the British social elite.

Bernard Wasserstein, a respected scholar of Jewish history, has recently argued, in response to the furore caused by the film of members of the Royal Family giving the Hitler salute, that we risk exaggerating the fascination for Fascism within the British aristocracy. He pointed out that 'for the most part the British aristocracy was no more inclined to fascism than any other segment of the population'. He explained that the BUF attracted members from 'all classes, including proletarian racists from the East End of London' and argued that 'the limited extent of British upper-class support for fascism stands out in an international comparison', especially with the French, where the 'great majority of families with aristocratic handles were sympathisers with the far right'.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Jocelyn Lucas was a guest at a dinner with Mosley, Burton-Chadwick had been a member of the British Fascists in the 1920s and Viscountess Downe joined the BUF.

⁶⁶ Bernard Wasserstein, 'How far did the UK aristocracy's love of the Nazis really go?', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 22 July 2015.

Lady sharks

In January 1940, a private ambulance was waiting by the dock at Folkestone to transport the injured Unity Mitford ('Bobo' to her family), the most infamous member of the Anglo-German Fellowship.⁶⁷ Of all of Hitler's British admirers, it was she who had become closest to the Führer. Her immediate response to Britain's declaration of war against her beloved Germany was reportedly to settle her affairs in Munich, go to the *Englischer Garten* and shoot herself in the temple with the gun given her by the Führer.⁶⁸ The bullet lodged in her brain leaving her incontinent and mentally impaired but took eight years to end her life. Despite the priorities of his just-launched war, Hitler visited her in hospital, arranged for her to receive Germany's best medical treatment, put her furniture into storage and, once she could travel, sent her in a special ambulance train to Berne in Switzerland – all at his own expense. There she was met by her anxious mother, Lady Redesdale, and youngest sister, 'Debo' (later to become the Duchess of Devonshire), who accompanied her back to Britain. The exploits of the six Mitford sisters and their no less eccentric parents, who were active members of the Fellowship, have supported the publishing industry ever since. Unity's return from Germany provoked intense interest from both British and American media, with the invalid's sad party being mobbed by journalists seeking pictures and interviews with 'The Girl who loved Hitler'.

Examining the sharks in the shallows of the Fellowship, one surprise is that the female seems deadlier than the male. The Council were all men as were, apart from the redoubtable Betty Pomeroy and her stenographers, the executive. While most of the membership was male, there were over 300 lady members and women who attended events as guests. From this pool was drawn the innocent-sounding Ladies Advisory Committee, set up in early 1937 under the chairmanship of Lady Domvile, offering help 'with the functions and providing luncheons, sightseeing tours and weekends at country houses for German tourists'.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See David Pryce-Jones, *Unity Mitford: A Quest*, (1995) and Mary S. Lovell, *The Mitford Girls* (2001)

⁶⁸ A recent study has suggested that the gunshot wound was not self-inflicted, see Michaela Karl, "*Ich blättere gerade in der Vogue, da sprach mich der Führer an.*": *Unity Mitford. Eine Biographie*, (Hamburg, 2016).

⁶⁹ AGF, *Annual Report 1936-37*, p. 4.

In contrast to the male leadership, several within this group held extreme pro-Nazi views and played prominent roles in the far-right movement in the 1930s. Nine women attended the preliminary meeting of the committee: Lady (Alexandrina) Domvile, Miss Margaret Bothamley, Miss Alida Brittain, Countess de la Field, Mrs Dorothy Eckersley, Miss Susan Fass, Mrs Arthur Findlay, Mrs Hawes and Mrs Bruce Wilson. Of these, the chairwoman would be interned with her husband during the war under Defence Regulation 18B, another two would escape to Germany just before its outbreak to work for the Germans and a fourth had known Fascist links. Lady Domvile enthusiastically supported her husband's founding The Link and joined him in various meetings with Mosley and Archibald Ramsay, founder of the Right Club, right up to the eve of war.

Margaret Bothamley was amongst the most extreme of the lady sharks with an impressively wide involvement with far right (and often secret) societies.⁷⁰ Secretary of The Link's 'violently pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic' central London branch, she was also a founder of the Imperial Fascist League and a member of the Nordic League, the British People's Party and the Right Club.⁷¹ As well as attending at least one Fellowship banquet, she was the speaker at an informal dinner held in April 1937 where she spouted pure Nazi propaganda on 'The Position of Women in Germany'.⁷² She wrote to Mount Temple in May 1937 complaining that the Fellowship had failed to counter the 'thinly veiled derision towards Germany' then prevalent in the British press, especially following Guernica. She urged it to do more than hold 'social functions and pleasant speeches' and claimed the Council was dominated by 'interests... furthering business activities of their own'.⁷³ She was on holiday in Germany when war was declared and remained there for the duration 'assisting the enemy' by broadcasting twice weekly to Britain on the joys of Germany and the evils of Bolshevism.

Her friend Dorothy Eckersley was the wife of Peter Eckersley, considered 'British radio's most important technical pioneer', and both Eckersleys were members of the Fellowship.⁷⁴ Dorothy was a pro-German fascist who came to dinners in 1936 and 1937 and the 1938 reception and had stalked the Führer with Unity Mitford at his

⁷⁰ see Griffiths, *What did...*, pp. 143-9 et passim; Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*, p. 286.

⁷¹ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 41.

⁷² AGF, *Monthly Journal*, May 1937.

⁷³ Bothamley to Mount Temple, 15 May 1937, PIRI.

⁷⁴ Zander, 'Right Modern Technology', p. 131.

favourite restaurant, the *Osteria Bavaria*.⁷⁵ Also a member of The Link, the Right Club and the Imperial Fascist League, her most significant contribution to Nazi propaganda was recruiting William Joyce, better known as Lord Haw-Haw, for a career in German wartime radio for which he would be hanged in 1946. She undertook radio propaganda work for the Germans in the war with her son and they were imprisoned by the British in October 1945 for a remarkably lenient one year for assisting the enemy. Her husband Peter had been a supporter of Mosley but from 1937 worked for MI6 setting up radio propaganda systems deployed against the Germans.

Mrs Bruce Wilson was the wife of Colonel HC Bruce Wilson who had been involved with both the British Fascists and the British Union of Fascists.⁷⁶ Mrs Hawes was the wife of Captain Hawes, who served on the Council and had been the naval attaché in Berlin in the early 1930s while Alida Brittain was the daughter of the ebullient MP, Harry Brittain. There is no evidence of either of them nor indeed Countess de la Field, Susan Fass and Mrs Arthur Findlay sharing the extreme views of their peers on the Ladies Advisory Committee.

Lady Domvile's reign over the Ladies' Committee was short-lived in any event. By December 1937, the lady members had been 'most active' and had 'resolved themselves into various committees' with the main one reformed under the chairmanship of Lady Helen Nutting, the famous campaigning feminist, with Lady Hollenden and Mrs Haslam as Vice-Chairmen and Mrs OM Mallard and Tennant's wife as members.⁷⁷ Three sub-committees were established: the Hospitality Ladies' Committee under Lady Swann, the Social Functions Committee under Mrs Tennant and the Visits to Germany Ladies' Committee under Mrs Haslam with the ever-resourceful Mrs Pomeroy acting as secretary. It is not clear whether Domvile, Bothamley and Eckersley were purged from the committees because of their extremist views or voluntarily decided that other groups offered better 'umbrellas' for their pro-Nazi ambitions.

Other prominent aristocratic female fascists joined the Fellowship. Most notorious was the 'young and beautiful' Unity Mitford who Tennant noted at the time 'really believes that Hitler is divine in the Biblical sense' and whose infatuation with Hitler has

⁷⁵ See Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*, p. 300 and Griffiths, *What did...*, pp. 149-55.

⁷⁶ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, pp. 56-59.

⁷⁷ AGF, *Monthly Journal*, December 1937.

fascinated commentators ever since.⁷⁸ Her anti-Semitism was far and above the aristocratic norms of the day: Harold Nicolson recorded in his diary that she wanted ‘the Jews to be made to eat grass’.⁷⁹ She joined the Fellowship with her parents, the Redesdales, who also ardently admired Hitler and were regular attendees. Their son Tom joined them at the 1937 Christmas banquet, while their eldest daughter, the estimable author Nancy, was then married to Peter Rodd whose parents, Lord and Lady Rennell of Rodd were both prominent members. Another aristocratic fascist and anti-Semite, Viscountess Downe, was a former lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary (who is supposed to have queried her joining the Blackshirts - ‘is that wise, Dorothy, is that wise?’) and had been involved with the British Fascists since the 1920s.⁸⁰

This strand of ‘feminine fascism’ has been expertly dissected by Julie Gottlieb. Quite why the female sharks penetrated the Fellowship deeper than the male is open to speculation. Whatever their political views on fascism, the male membership was mostly involved in politics, business or the military and therefore had professional reasons for joining the Fellowship that may have meant that ideology played less part in their thought processes.

The attempted palace coup

In the spring and summer of 1937, the tension within the Fellowship between the sharks of both genders and its more moderate leadership escalated into a battle for control of the Council and through it, the organisation’s philosophical and strategic direction. The ejected and indignant Elwin Wright found allies in the form of George Pitt-Rivers and his secretary and lover Catherine (a.k.a. ‘Becky’) Sharpe. The twice married Pitt-Rivers was the wealthy landowning grandson of the founder of the eponymous Oxford museum of anthropology. As well as inheriting an interest in anthropology, he was also an enthusiast for eugenics, anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism and a noted admirer of Hitler and Mussolini. A published author, he had written articles for the *Anglo-German Review* and his activities would later earn him detention in the Tower of London under Regulation 18B. The attractive and seductive 23-year-old Sharpe, a cousin of Unity

⁷⁸ Tennant to Mount Temple 24 Sept 1935, BR.

⁷⁹ Nicolson, *Diary*, 30 June 1938.

⁸⁰ See Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*, p. 296 and Griffiths, *What did...*, pp. 209-12.

Mitford who had introduced her to Hitler, was a member of the Fellowship. Pitt-Rivers, to his indignation, had been refused membership in February 1937 following a spat at the Ribbentrop dinner between him and the Fellowship's solicitor, le Blount Kidd, who considered Pitt-Rivers unsuitable for membership because of his extremism. The Council had concurred, with Mount Temple telling the meeting that Pitt-Rivers was 'mad... all his family are mad', and that his famous grandfather had been 'notoriously mad'. Weigall explained that the Athenaeum Club had 'deeply regretted' admitting Pitt-Rivers to the membership while Colonel Sir Thomas Moore recollected that Pitt-Rivers had 'once shot a man in a hotel in Johannesburg'.⁸¹ Consequently, his application for membership was rejected.

Spotting the opportunity for deep-pocketed aristocratic patronage for his grievances against the Fellowship, Wright befriended Pitt-Rivers and Sharpe and supplied them with copies of confidential Fellowship correspondence, especially around the circumstances of his dismissal and Pitt-Rivers's being blackballed. Their war of attrition started in early 1937 with Sharpe's attempt to get her lover elected to the Fellowship, before expanding into a broad attack on the leadership and ideology of the Fellowship that ran into the summer of 1938. The surviving correspondence on the matter is voluminous, vindictive, tedious and repetitive but sheds light on this critical aspect of the Fellowship's history and politics that has been previously obscure to historians. With Wright's support, the couple refused to accept the Council's rebuff and lobbied to get Pitt-Rivers elected. They enlisted the help of a small clique of sharks within the membership. Pitt-Rivers joining the Fellowship had been first suggested by Luttmann-Johnson and his close friend, Richard Findlay, who had formally proposed him for membership.⁸² Findlay was later a member of the council of the Nordic League, vice chairman of The Link's central London branch and a steward of the Right Club. Luttmann-Johnson had been secretary of the January Club and was imprisoned under Regulation 18B during the war. Other supporters included familiar names from the far right including Yeats-Brown (Hitler's favourite British author), Margaret Bothamley, General Fuller and Carroll, the virulently anti-Semitic editor of the *Anglo-German Review*.

⁸¹ Wright signed statement, 11 May 1938, PIRI.

⁸² See Findlay to Conwell-Evans, 1 February 1937, PIRI.

From late 1936, Pitt-Rivers had attended several Fellowship events as Sharpe's guest provoking letters from Conwell-Evans insisting it was inappropriate to bring rejected applicants for membership. Over the summer, the campaign developed into an attempt to reshuffle the Council and specifically to deprive Mount Temple, Tennant and Conwell-Evans of their tight control over the organisation. Prone to both conspiracy theorising and exaggeration, the agitators accused the leadership of: representing Jewish business interests, especially with Tennant as the 'only non-Jewish director' of Palestine Potash Ltd; seeking to undermine the National Socialists; developing and exploiting undue influence over Ribbentrop as ambassador; failing in its supposed duties as a channel for German propaganda; and of ignoring the interests of its membership.⁸³ Mount Temple tried to calm the situation by inviting Pitt-Rivers to Broadlands for lunch and maintained a civil correspondence with Wright well after he and Tennant had fallen out.⁸⁴ His efforts failed and, in June, Sharpe tried to enlist the support of the ten percent of the membership needed to call an extraordinary general meeting to change the leadership. Sharpe contacted Bottomley, Sir Raymond Beazley and Domville and a draft letter (dated 3 June 1937) was prepared with General Fuller, Arthur Kitson (a member of both the Britons and the Imperial Fascist league) and Bottomley as signatories. They complained that the Fellowship was failing to counteract the 'gross misrepresentation and distortion of facts in the reporting of German news', accused the Council of being 'overweighted by city interest and company directors' and bemoaned the improper removal of Wright, the blackballing of Pitt-Rivers and the failure to rotate Council membership as required by the articles. It is not clear whether this was ever sent, or an extraordinary general meeting held.

In parallel, and more damagingly to its interests, they raised similar grievances and allegations with the Fellowship's German associates. Pitt-Rivers sent a package of relevant correspondence to Ribbentrop in February. In May, Wright wrote to Ribbentrop, sent a fourteen-page letter to Carl Budding (a DEG founding member and Prussian civil servant) and, most seriously, sent a letter in German to Goebbels. While this campaign damaged relations with the Germans, the agitators failed to unseat the elite controlling the Fellowship. By spring 1938, they were still trying to rally ten percent of the membership, even going as far as to claim it was in the 'virtual control'

⁸³ Wright to Budding, 25 May 1937, PIRI.

⁸⁴ see Mount Temple to Pitt-Rivers, 24 May 1937, and Pitt-Rivers to Mount Temple, 1 June 1937, PIRI.

of ‘Zionist forces’ and that the true aim of Mount Temple, Tennant and Conwell-Evans was to ‘corrupt or crush National Socialism in Germany’.⁸⁵

Two scholars have characterised this power struggle within the Fellowship as a fundamental change of regime and a corresponding shift in approach over time. Griffiths concluded that ‘there is no doubt the leadership of the Anglo-German Fellowship had changed its stance by early 1939’ and emphasised that, by then, ‘its Council was almost entirely made up of the great and the good of industry and commerce, with almost no trace of the pro-Nazis who had graced it up to November 1938’.⁸⁶ The distinctions may be subtle but are important for a fuller understanding: the Council had been dominated by this ‘great and the good’ since the founding meeting. Accepting the inclusion of Domvile for just over a year, there was never a period in the Council’s existence when it was ‘graced by pro-Nazis’, albeit its concerns about the regime only reached crisis point with Kristallnacht. Similarly, Hart, writing about the Fellowship’s activities in 1937 (having wrongly assumed the *Anglo-German Review* was the Fellowship’s ‘own periodical’) determined a doctrinal shift, with it ‘rapidly splitting between its pro-business and pro-Nazi factions’.⁸⁷ While right to highlight the distinction between the two groups, the latter never held sway nor dictated ideology, it was always little more than a noisy, nasty minority that failed in its attempted coup.

Kristallnacht

The Kristallnacht pogrom against the Jews in Germany and Austria in November 1938 ignited a crisis for the Fellowship that was a culmination of tensions that dated back to its foundation. This was not, as commentators have suggested, the point at which the leadership *started* to question Hitler’s regime. On 18 November 1938, barely a week later, the Council met to discuss the crisis. HR (‘Gert’) Schlottmann, chairman of the Berlin branch of the DEG, had been sent specially from Berlin to investigate on behalf of the NSDAP. He was given a ‘long tale of woe’ by Conwell-Evans who ‘informed him that the recent persecutions in Germany were having a disastrous effect on the

⁸⁵ Pitt-Rivers to Beazley, 28 September 1937, PIRI.

⁸⁶ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 38.

⁸⁷ Hart, *Pitt-Rivers*, p. 117.

Fellowship and its work'. Schlottmann returned to Germany 'extremely depressed and very shocked' at both the 'narrow-minded views of the British public' and 'the repercussions which the persecutions have had on the Fellowship itself'.⁸⁸

Lord Mount Temple resigned as chairman (but remained a member of the Fellowship) 'as a protest against the treatment of the Jews by the German Government',⁸⁹ while the Council published a formal announcement in *The Times* and wrote to the membership explaining that it deeply regretted 'the events which have set back the development of better understanding between the two nations.'⁹⁰ (It was still not yet ready to abandon the cause completely and promised to maintain its efforts to support the prime minister's appeasing efforts.) These announcements brought Fellowship concerns about German anti-Semitism into the public domain. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Mount Temple's resignation; he was, as Bruce-Lockhart noted spikily in his diary, 'father of two half-Jewesses in Lady Louis Mountbatten and Mrs Cunningham-Reid by his first wife, Cassel's daughter'.⁹¹ *The Evening Standard* pointed out that 'were Lord Mount Temple a German subject, this non-Aryan connection would be enough to make him ineligible for chairmanship of the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft in Berlin'.⁹² The Jewish community, previously not unreasonably suspicious of the Fellowship, was pleased, setting this new vocalism in the context of broadening public condemnation of Jewish persecution. The *American Jewish Yearbook* noted both Mount Temple's resignation and the Council's resolution concluding that 'even the most ardent advocates of Anglo-German friendship had finally become convinced that the persecution of the Jews was more than an internal German problem and much more than a sentimental obstacle in the way of cooperation with the Nazi state'.⁹³ Mount Temple's personal archives include an impassioned letter of appreciation from a Jewish correspondent who insisted that 'now that we can see the animal in its true uniform' and begged Mount Temple to use his 'good offices' against the spread of 'Jew-baiting' in Britain.⁹⁴ Another Council member, DM Mason, the former Liberal MP who had met both Hitler and Goebbels in September 1936, wrote to

⁸⁸ Report by Gaertner on the AGF, 23 November 1938, KV5/3, TNA.

⁸⁹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 November 1938.

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 22 November 1938; AGF letter to membership, 18 November 1938, KV5/3, TNA.

⁹¹ Bruce-Lockhart, *Diaries*, 5 October 1935.

⁹² *Evening Standard*, 19 November 1938.

⁹³ Moses Moskowitz, *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 41, pp. 233-237.

⁹⁴ Bloomfield to Mount Temple, 19 November 1938, BR.

The Times challenging Goebbels's insistence that 'England shall take no interest in the way we in Germany solve the Jewish question' and argued rather it was of legitimate interest to Britain because of 'its worldwide appeal to our common humanity, and... because the refugee question very directly concerns us as a nation and as individuals'.⁹⁵ Not all the members admired Mount Temple's principled stand - CE Carroll wrote sarcastically to Pitt-Rivers that it would be a 'big blow' for the Fellowship asking 'what will their tea parties be without him now!'⁹⁶

Some historians have downplayed the seriousness of this crisis citing an *Evening Standard* article (reproduced by Haxey) that reported only twenty of the members as having resigned in sympathy with Mount Temple's protest.⁹⁷ The MI5 file paints a very different picture. In a detailed report, Friedl Gaertner (codenamed Gelatine or M/G), one of the security service personnel who had successfully infiltrated the Fellowship, confirmed a full-blown crisis. There is no reason why she would have been inclined to exaggerate or dissemble. She recorded that 'it is reliably reported that the Fellowship has lost nearly 50 per cent of its membership in the last few weeks. Subscriptions have fallen to a deplorably low level and the few remaining members are, to quote Mrs Pomeroy, "only a lot of useless fanatics"'. Attitudes towards the National Socialists had hardened within the Fellowship in that 'so many of their influential hosts and hostesses have announced their intention of refusing to officiate at any Anglo-German Fellowship function at which a member of the NSDAP is present'. Gaertner described Pomeroy as a 'very intelligent and sincere woman who she thinks is genuinely horrified at the recent turn of events'.⁹⁸ A second MI5 note three months later reported the disappointment with the Fellowship of the Nazis, noting that 'Berlin have been counting very considerably on the influence which the AGF might exert during a crisis and it is considered that they completely failed in this in September'.⁹⁹ German diplomats in London were under no illusion as to the damage done. Just a week after Kristallnacht and only a month after he had been guest of honour at a Fellowship dinner at Claridge's, Herbert von Dirksen, the German ambassador in London, sent an agitated report to the German Foreign Ministry. In this, he explained

⁹⁵ *The Times*, 13 November 1938.

⁹⁶ Carroll to Pitt-Rivers, 10 December 1938, PIRI.

⁹⁷ See Griffiths, *Travellers*, p. 340 and *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 37; *Evening Standard*, 13 January 1939; Haxey, *Tory MP*, p. 198; Kershaw is however spot on, see: *Friends* p. 263 and p. 428 n. 36.

⁹⁸ Report by Gaertner on the Anglo-German Fellowship, 23 November 1938, MI5 files, KV5/3, TNA.

⁹⁹ MI5 note, 17 February 1939, KV5/3, TNA.

that the ‘anti-Semitic wave in Germany’ was disastrous to the morale of ‘those sections of the British public who actively supported Anglo-German friendship’ and ‘grist to the mill’ to the anti-German lobby resulting in a ‘loss of prestige’ for Chamberlain.¹⁰⁰

It is essential not to confuse Germanophile myopia within the Fellowship with bright-eyed Nazi fanaticism fuelled by rabid anti-Semitism. Despite progress in setting 1930s pro-German sentiment into a subtler context, in the reappraisal of Lord Londonderry for example, the popular association between the Anglo-German Fellowship and the far right has survived into the twenty-first century. Richard Ingrams, the former editor of *Private Eye*, has been forced to defend his late father against a supposed ‘reputation for anti-Semitism, based on his alleged membership of the Anglo-German Fellowship’.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in 2002, the eighth Duke of Wellington (by then an MC-awarded veteran of el Alamein in his late eighties) was ambushed by an interviewer from *The Times* with claims that his uncle Charlie’s (the fifth Duke) being a member of the Fellowship put him ‘alongside the traitor William Joyce, also known as Lord Haw-Haw’.¹⁰²

Despite a willingness to promulgate Nazi propaganda in its publications, the Fellowship’s leadership was, from the outset, effective and often brave in communicating criticism of NSDAP policy to the heart of German government. That this riled both the German leadership and its most ardent British supporters, such that both lost faith in the Fellowship as a tool to bring Britain closer to National Socialism, suggests it does not deserve its casual reputation as a pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic institution. That around one in twenty of the members held and expressed views that chimed with the worst ideologies of National Socialism should not be dismissed, but that minority having been such a focus of scholarly attention has distracted historians from the other nineteen. It was this majority that defined the Fellowship and led it through the three years leading up to the outbreak of war in September 1939 and the story of which forms the backbone of the next two chapters.

¹⁰⁰ Von Dirksen to German Foreign Ministry, 17 November 1938, No. 269, *DGFP*.

¹⁰¹ John Harris and M. J. Trow, *Hess: The British Conspiracy*, (2011), p. 134.

¹⁰² *The Times*, 6 June 2002.

Chapter 6

The 'brink of peace': from Coronation to Munich

Having assessed how the Fellowship garnered support from the political, military, social and business elites in Britain by 1937, this and the following chapter develop the narrative in the three years leading up to the outbreak of war. The celebration of George VI's coronation, following the constitutional crisis of his brother's abdication, opens this second act as the Fellowship matured into a credible intermediary and forum for diplomacy. During the period, the Fellowship's Council doubled the membership and developed its close association with the NSDAP leadership, especially Ribbentrop and Göring, such that it became a valuable conduit for the previously hostile British Foreign Office. In parallel to this acceptability as an intermediary, it became entangled with the most significant pre-war attempt to de-throne Hitler. Several historians have argued that the German opposition in 1938, and specifically the 'Oster conspiracy', was 'well planned and had reasonably good prospects for success'.¹ This chapter seeks to explain how the Fellowship used its unique, eccentric and often contradictory status in both countries to advance the cause of these resisters. That they failed is a greater tragedy than acknowledged to date because historians have underestimated the determination, coordination and credibility of the Fellowship and its friends within the German resistance.

By January 1937, the Fellowship had been established for nearly two years and had recruited 450 members with prestigious commercial and political backing. The new year brought it a new king, a new prime minister, a new ambassador to Berlin and a new full-time secretary when Conwell-Evans took over from the increasingly extremist and less than competent Elwin Wright. Each appointment was pivotal for Anglo-German relations and contributed to a 'happy and memorable year' for the Fellowship, especially as Britain's prime minister and his ambassador to Berlin were committed to appeasing Germany.² Hitler had professed peace in a speech on 30 January, insisting that Germany did not want to be isolated and calling for international cooperation, better trade, the return of German former colonies, and restrictions on armaments,

¹ Terry Parssinen, *The Oster Conspiracy Of 1938*, (2004), p. xv; see also Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 79 *et passim* and Peter Hoffman, *The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945*, (1977), p. 82 *et passim*.

² AGF, *Annual Report 1936-37*, p. 1.

especially for the air force. These were sentiments ‘soon to prove even more cynical than it appeared at the time’, especially given Ribbentrop’s disenchantment with Britain and his influence over Germany’s foreign policy.³ As Conwell-Evans’s friend Christie reported from Germany, German ‘armament production... was proceeding at an astounding rate and the supply of raw materials could barely keep abreast of the demand’. His local sources confirmed Hitler’s increasingly aggressive foreign policy and speculated, with impressive foresight, that armed conflict was likely with ‘the end of 1939 as the probable date when the Nazis would launch the war’. He explained that the Germans had four immediate aims: to separate France from Russia; to separate Great Britain from France; to ‘pave the way for the early conquest of Austria and Czechoslovakia’ and to rearm aggressively, especially the Luftwaffe.⁴ His intelligence cast shadows of doubt over Chamberlain’s appeasement strategy.

The Fellowship’s chairman, Mount Temple, at this stage, did not share Christie’s cynicism around Hitler’s ability to deceive ‘his credulous neighbours’.⁵ In the House of Lords a few weeks after Hitler’s speech, Mount Temple criticised the Franco-Soviet Pact and the British Foreign Office’s hostility to Germany, asking his fellow peers: ‘why should we always do what the French ask us to do and never do anything to placate and to help the Germans?’ Referencing Hitler’s speech, he reassured his audience that the Germans ‘bear us no ill will for the War, and all they want is to resume the old relationship which existed between our two countries before the War in 1914’.⁶ Ribbentrop wrote a letter of thanks.

Preaching brotherly love to a rogue elephant

As 1937 progressed, cooperation between the British embassy in Berlin and the Fellowship moved from polite but irritable tolerance to a warm welcome that fuelled its evolution from a ‘ginger group’ to quasi-governmental body. In May, Chamberlain appointed Sir Nevile Henderson to replace Sir Eric Phipps who, having struggled to

³ Kershaw, *Nemesis*, p. 27.

⁴ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 24 February 1937, vol. 104, col. 309.

engage with National Socialist Germany, had accepted the Paris posting.⁷ Henderson was well-disposed to the Fellowship from the outset and the admiration was initially mutual with Conwell-Evans describing him to Mount Temple as ‘so different from his predecessor’.⁸ Henderson had met and befriended Mount Temple on the *SS Cap Arcona* as they travelled back to Europe from the US in March 1937. The Fellowship’s Council gave a private dinner for Sir Nevile in London in May 1937 to wish him *bon voyage*. A month later, the DEG hosted a dinner at its clubhouse in Berlin to welcome the new ambassador underpinning how the twin societies now claimed a role on the diplomatic circuit. Mount Temple, Major Ball and Tennant represented the Fellowship while Henderson and Tennant’s schoolfriend, Coburg, played host as president of the DEG. Mount Temple used the opportunity to meet Hitler for the first time followed by a separate ‘exchange of views’ with the German foreign minister, von Neurath.⁹ Conwell-Evans had arranged this through Ribbentrop, bypassing the British Embassy, having explained that ‘he alone on the German side is able to put the thing through’.¹⁰

Over the next two and a half years, the respective assessments by the Fellowship and the ambassador of Hitler’s intentions and how best to manage him increasingly diverged. Henderson, ‘taking advantage of the license granted [him] by Mr. Chamberlain’ used the occasion of the DEG dinner to give his maiden speech as ambassador - just as Ribbentrop had done six months earlier at a Fellowship banquet in London. This was the first of his three speeches at DEG dinners that resulted in his appeasement strategies being reasonably, but wrongly, associated with the Fellowship. The widely-reported speech resulted in accusations of his pro-Nazi bias in the House of Commons and earned him the sobriquet ‘our Nazi British Ambassador at Berlin’.¹¹ Henderson quoted a verse of ‘American pacifist doggerel’ from the Great War that included the line: ‘who dares put a rifle to his shoulder to kill another mother’s darling boy?’ An appalled Christie pointed out that to recite this before an audience of ‘tough militant German leaders’ that included: Himmler, chief of the Gestapo; Victor Lutze, commander of the SA; Christie’s friend General Milch, secretary of state at the Air Ministry; Frantz Seldte, Reich minister for labour and Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk,

⁷ See Nevile Henderson, *Failure of a Mission: Berlin 1937-1939*, (1940); Nevile, *Appeasing Hitler and Hitler and Appeasement*.

⁸ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

⁹ AGF, *Monthly Journal*, June 1937.

¹⁰ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

¹¹ Henderson, *Failure*, pp. 19-20.

the finance minister, was ‘about as appropriate as to try to preach brotherly love to a rogue elephant’.¹² Flattering his hosts, Henderson emphasised how the sister societies had contributed ‘so much to a better understanding between nations’. After praising the Nazi regime, he suggested English critics should ‘lay less stress on Nazi dictatorship and much more emphasis on the great social experiment which is being tried out in this country’, a sentence he later ruefully admitted had given ‘most offence to the Left wing and others in England’.¹³ Ivan Maisky, the alarmed Russian ambassador in London, advised Vansittart that the speech had caused ““amazement” in Moscow, not to mention more definite emotions’.¹⁴

Both the Fellowship and the DEG celebrated their relationships with these senior diplomats. Replying to Henderson’s speech, Coburg was delighted that ‘the highest representative of Great Britain in our Fatherland has the fullest sympathy for our work, just as the German Ambassador in London gives his warmest interest and fullest support in the pursuance of its aims to our sister society’.¹⁵ Less flattering parallels between Ribbentrop and Henderson were made by Oliver Harvey, personal private secretary to the foreign secretary, who hoped nervously in his diary that ‘we are not sending another Ribbentrop to Berlin’.¹⁶

1937 was a transition year for Anglo-German relations, following the post-Olympic glow of late 1936, as the ‘foreign policy drift’ under Baldwin’s premiership was replaced by Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement and rearmament.¹⁷ Now we see the Fellowship gaining confidence and credibility as it coordinated effectively with the Foreign Office, the Berlin embassy and 10 Downing Street, despite the disagreement between the three over foreign policy. The Fellowship also developed its links with opponents of Chamberlain’s appeasement beyond Vansittart including Winston Churchill and Lloyd George. Ironically, as the British government firmly embraced appeasement, the Fellowship’s doubts about the German regime will be shown to escalate. As such, it diverged ideologically from the British government - just as it achieved respectability as an institution.

¹² Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 93.

¹³ *The Times*, 2 June 1937; Henderson, *Failure*, p. 23.

¹⁴ Maisky, *Diaries*, 9 June 1937.

¹⁵ AGF, *Monthly Journal*, June 1937.

¹⁶ Harvey, *Diaries*, p. 41.

¹⁷ Fleming, *Londonderry*, p. 189.

Lothian and Hitler meet again

The Germans remained enthusiastic to arrange meetings between their politicians and British counterparts. Ribbentrop was doggedly determined to lure Baldwin to meet Hitler in Germany. Now installed in London as ambassador, and only a week before Baldwin started his long-anticipated retirement, Ribbentrop still had his name atop a list of ‘influential Englishman’ whom he claimed would ‘visit Germany in the course of the summer, and... be received by the Führer’.¹⁸ In fact, it was Lothian and Conwell-Evans, each worried about the deterioration in Anglo-German relations, who returned to Berlin in May 1937 for coffee with Hitler. Keen to improve the situation, the duo met Göring on 4 May for two and a half hours in the morning, followed by a similarly long meeting with Hitler in the afternoon. The next day they met Hjalmar Schacht, president of the Reichsbank, still seen as an Anglophile and moderating influence. After the meeting, Conwell-Evans remarked to Lothian that Hitler seemed ‘to have changed’ and now claimed to be ‘*schwe verbittert*’ (very embittered) against England.¹⁹ Lothian felt that the ‘situation was both more dangerous and more soluble’ and, in a report sent to the prime minister, the Foreign Office and the dominion prime ministers, argued for a series of concessions to prevent Germany resorting to force with ‘terrifying strength, decision and violence’.²⁰ This was condemned as naive by senior Foreign Office mandarins and Vansittart complained his visit ‘was being mischievously and unintelligently misused, particularly at the Imperial Conference’ where it fuelled Dominion demands for disengagement from European commitments.²¹ Chamberlain was more positive. Horace Wilson reported to Theo Kordt that the prime minister had been pleased to hear that Hitler saw England and Germany as ‘two pillars upon which the European social order could rest’.²² Lothian sent a copy of the report to his friend Norman Davis, president of the US Council on Foreign Relations and Roosevelt’s sailing companion, emphasising that it was ‘for your own eye and that of the President alone’.²³ This started Lothian’s engagement with the American president and his

¹⁸ *DGFP*, no. 277, 18 May 1937.

¹⁹ Vansittart to Halifax, 4 January 1939, CONWELL.

²⁰ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 218.

²¹ Vansittart minute, 2 June 1937, PRO C4047/4047/18, TNA.

²² Peden, ‘Wilson’, p. 995.

²³ Lothian to Davies, 7 May 1937, KERR/NRS.

advisers on the German problem that built on his experience as a prominent appeaser under the auspices of the Fellowship and the guidance of his friend Conwell-Evans.

This increased familiarity between the sister societies, the Berlin embassy and the German leadership, following the replacement of Phipps with Henderson, frustrated Vansittart. Following a request from Mount Temple to debrief the prime minister on his meeting with Hitler, Vansittart fired off an irate memorandum insisting that ‘the P.M. should certainly not see Lord Mount Temple – nor should the Secretary of State. We really must put a stop to this eternal butting in of amateurs – and Lord Mount Temple is a particularly silly one... Sir E. Phipps rightly complained of these ambulant amateurs’.²⁴ In similar vein, a Foreign Office note recorded that ‘the prime minister had not much opinion of Lord Mount Temple and that he was not at all anxious to encourage the intervention of these amateurs into foreign policy and in particular into Anglo-German relations’ and suggested he see the foreign secretary instead.²⁵ As Middlemas has noted, ‘there is here and elsewhere evidence of how the unofficial visitors to Germany were resented - reflection both of the pride of the Office and its normally superior expertise’.²⁶ These memoranda are often cited as evidence of the British government’s dismissive attitude to the ambulant amateurs and the Fellowship but, as will be shown, cooperation between the Office and the Fellowship improved soon after Vansittart’s outburst.

Tea with the Archbishop of Canterbury

That spring brought the Coronation, a national event offering social opportunities in London for Anglo-German enthusiasts, as had the Olympics in Berlin the summer before, to which the Fellowship contributed with gusto. Although the Germans entered into the celebrations with outward enthusiasm, the exercise seems somewhat flat compared to what might have been if Edward VIII had had his day in Westminster Abbey. Hitler sent as his representative, Field-Marshal von Blomberg, the German minister of defence, in place of Göring and von Neurath who had each volunteered but been vetoed by Ribbentrop. Neither ever did visit Britain and it is intriguing to

²⁴ Vansittart minute, 2 June 1937, C4047/4047/18, TNA.

²⁵ Hoyer Miller minute, 5 June 1937, C4047/4047/18, TNA.

²⁶ Keith Middlemas, *Diplomacy of illusion: the British Government and Germany, 1937-39*, (1972), p. 74.

speculate that, if they had, whether Ribbentrop's dead hand on diplomatic relations might have been loosened. The previous month, Göring had sent his chief of personal staff, Colonel Karl Bodenschatz, on a reconnaissance during which he visited Oxford and took tea at the Plough Inn, near High Wycombe. There were separate plans to invite Göring, the country sports enthusiast, to shoot pheasants at Chatsworth or Sandringham or watch the Grand National, which the Foreign Office noted 'excites great interest in Germany', as well as a last-ditch proposal for him to visit Britain in August 1939, just days before the invasion of Poland.²⁷

Capitalising on the visit by such a senior German to a landmark royal event, the Fellowship held a tea reception for Blomberg at the May Fair Hotel where he 'warmly welcomed the work of the Anglo-German Fellowship to foster good relations'.²⁸ Meanwhile, Mount Temple contributed a foreword to a Coronation supplement of the *Hannoverscher Kurier* 'showing the close bonds between the two people, both racial and historical'.²⁹ The Fellowship's own commentary on the Coronation in its *Monthly Journal* nicely illustrates both its appreciation of royalty and its preoccupations in the spring of 1937. Underscoring the Fellowship's loyalty to the British Crown, it celebrated that 'the peoples of his Majesty [are] at peace with their neighbours in all the five continents' and insisted that there is nothing disloyal 'in promoting relations of friendship with the most powerful nation on the Continent of Europe, a nation akin to the British peoples, and led by a Chancellor whose bedrock policy is co-operation with Great Britain'.³⁰

Conwell-Evans was honoured to act as 'English ADC' to von Blomberg. They drove down to the Kent house of Lord Astor and were received *en route* by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who showed them the 'beauties of the cathedral'.³¹ Meanwhile, keen to capitalise on the celebratory mood to burnish their social credentials in London, the Ribbentrops threw a lavish house warming reception at the newly refurbished German embassy on the day after the Coronation. Billed by the *News Chronicle* as 'one of the biggest diplomatic receptions held in London for many years' with around 1,300 guests,

²⁷ Kirkpatrick to Strang, 26 January 1938, FO371/24660, p. 3; see Haslam, *Neighbours*, p. 103 and Urbach, *Go-betweenes*, p. 209.

²⁸ AGF, *Annual Report*, 1936-7.

²⁹ AGF, *Monthly Journal*, May 1937.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, June 1937.

³¹ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

the Duke and Duchess of Kent were the guests of honour with ‘the Duke in scarlet tunic uniform and the dark blue ribbon of the Garter, and the Duchess in white satin with a necklace of sapphires and diamonds and a tall tiara to match’.³² The Fellowship proudly reported that its Council fielded eighteen members including Mount Temple, Tennant, Conwell-Evans and D’Arcy Cooper. Three of the Fellowship’s marquesses (Clydesdale, Londonderry and Lothian) and four of its lords (Rennell, Redesdale, Noel Buxton and McGowan) attended, as did Gwyllim Lloyd-George and British Legion friends including Maurice and Crosfield. Following the blow of the abdication this was on the face of it a social triumph for Joachim and Mrs Ribbentrop whose ‘frock was of softly falling chiffon of a light blue which might be termed duck’s egg or light periwinkle (a colour also worn by Mrs Eden on this night)’.³³

However, fracture lines were showing in Anglo-German circles with even the Fellowship’s enthusiasts voicing concern. Ribbentrop had received a letter from Berlin alleging that the Fellowship was ‘hostile to National Socialism’ and harboured ‘alleged Jewish sympathies’. Conwell-Evans reported that ‘objection was taken to Lord Lothian’s visit to Berlin’ and to his ‘having wished to take down the Nazi flag at the Ribbentrop dinner’.³⁴ The background to this were a mystery until the historian Bradley Hart found the relevant correspondence in the Pitt-Rivers archive.³⁵ Conwell-Evans’s predecessor as secretary, Elwin Wright, taking his enforced early retirement badly, had mounted a concerted and malicious campaign against the Fellowship’s leaders. The day before Hitler’s meeting with Lothian and Conwell-Evans, Wright had written a poisonous letter to Joseph Goebbels in which he urged the minister for propaganda to intervene to cancel the meeting. He recounted the drama around the removal of the Nazi flag arguing that it showed Conwell-Evans to be no longer a friend of Nazi Germany. Reporting an ideological split between the leadership and the membership, he alleged financial impropriety, conflicts of interest and that the leadership was secretly planning to push towards the re-establishment of Jewry in Germany.³⁶ Quite how seriously these allegations were taken by the Germans is hard to assess but it was sufficient to warrant a special communiqué to Ribbentrop who was

³² *The News Chronicle*, 15 May 1937; *The Sunday Times*, 16 May 1937.

³³ *The Sunday Times*, 16 May 1937.

³⁴ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

³⁵ See Hart, *Pitt-Rivers* and PIRI.

³⁶ Wright to Goebbels, 3 May 1937, PIRI.

irritated that Wright had written to Goebbels directly.³⁷ Conwell-Evans and Tennant met Ribbentrop in person to discuss the allegations but the ambassador agreed they should ‘take no more notice of the affair’.³⁸

Despite his *sang-froid* in relation to the letter, this was when Ribbentrop fell out of love with Britain and the British. As his biographer concluded, ‘during the late spring and summer of 1937 Ribbentrop, the former Anglophile, the man on whom Hitler had counted to bring home rapprochement, suddenly emerged as a violent antagonist of Great Britain, and would henceforth represent her to Hitler as Germany’s ‘most dangerous enemy’ and therefore the ‘main obstacle to her ambitions’.³⁹ As Conwell-Evans noted in his handwritten memoir, ‘Ribbentrop had an inferiority complex’ as he was ‘treated like a commercial traveller by the British aristocracy’.⁴⁰ Tennant confirmed to Chamberlain in July 1939 that Ribbentrop’s ‘state of mind of seeking friendship with this country’ had ended in early 1937.⁴¹ This was a pivotal point for the Fellowship’s leadership as it lost its crucial German patron. The conundrum is why it continued its mission for two further years.

The von Neurath visit

Conwell-Evans, whose contacts within the German Foreign Ministry gave him a shrewd understanding of its personalities and power plays, had complained to Ribbentrop about the cancellation of von Neurath’s proposed visit to London arguing that it would have offered an ‘opportunity of getting down from the general to the concrete’.⁴² Eden, the foreign secretary, had instructed Henderson to invite the German foreign minister and he had accepted, only to cancel at short notice blaming the alleged Spanish submarine attack on the German warship *Leipzig*. Henderson believed it was Ribbentrop who had forced the cancellation just as he had blocked Göring joining the Coronation. The Chamberlains had been excited about a visit, with Neville telling his sister Ida they were planning a ‘cocked hat lunch... with enormous zeal and capacity’ and publicly expressed regret at the cancellation of the visit in a speech at the Albert

³⁷ Wright to Ribbentrop 20 May 1937, PIRI.

³⁸ Conwell-Evans to Mount Temple, 18 May 1937, BR.

³⁹ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 131.

⁴⁰ Conwell-Evans, *Memoir*, CONWELL.

⁴¹ Tennant to Chamberlain, 1 July 1939, TNA.

⁴² Record by Vansittart of a conversation with Conwell-Evans, 16 August 1937, DBFP.

Hall and ten days later in the House of Commons.⁴³ Christie berated Göring for the cancellation, explaining that ‘much good work had been undone’ as ‘Neurath’s presence in London might have led to a most helpful discussion of all kinds of existing questions and obstacles’.⁴⁴ Although Eden was sceptical, the prospect of von Neurath visiting London had become totemic for the British government, now fully committed to improving Anglo-German relations, feeding the belief that face-to-face meetings could build bridges across the choppy waters of international diplomacy. Its cancellation was toxic just as had been Baldwin’s failure to reach German soil.

The diary of the Russian ambassador, Ivan Maisky, corroborates this tension between the British ambulant amateurs and their National Socialist friends. Having noted as early as December 1936 that Lothian’s ‘Germanophilia had faded’, four months later he reported that ‘even Lothian treats Germany with suspicion’.⁴⁵ By December 1937, Maisky sensed that Lothian’s support for the Cliveden set appeared to have been ‘wavering’, and by August 1938, he reported that Lothian had explicitly refused Halifax’s request to intercede with Hitler following Ribbentrop and Henderson’s furious row and that he disapproved of the British ‘capitulatory policy’.⁴⁶ Jan Masaryk, the Czech ambassador, confirmed Lothian’s disaffection, reporting to his government in July 1938 that having previously been ‘the most dangerous, because the most intelligent friend of Germany’, the ‘recent events in Austria and the whole cynical cruelty of the regime’ had convinced him he was ‘on the wrong road’.⁴⁷

In *None So Blind* Conwell-Evans dated his own Pauline conversion to the summer of 1938 admitting ‘like the great majority of my fellow countrymen [he was] sadly late in perceiving the real nature of the Nazi German menace’.⁴⁸ Contemporary correspondence shows that his discontent with the regime, like Lothian’s, had been growing for at least a year, and so, well before Munich. In August 1937, he had a disturbing meeting in London with Ribbentrop ahead of the ambassador’s return to Germany on leave. Conwell-Evans had gone straight round to the Foreign Office to warn Vansittart who briefed the prime minister, Halifax and Eden that this encounter

⁴³ Chamberlain to sister Ida, 20 June 1937, Robert Self, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, vol. 4, (Aldershot, 2005); *Hansard*, HC Deb, 19 July 1937, vol. 326, col. 1783.

⁴⁴ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 82.

⁴⁵ Maisky, *Diaries*, 1 December 1936; 18 April 1937.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 1 December 1937; 6 August 1938.

⁴⁷ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 237 fn.

⁴⁸ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. xi.

had ‘evidently somewhat shaken the Professor’. In his note, he emphasised that Conwell-Evans was ‘one of the leading influences’ on the Fellowship and that he was ‘in reality a great deal more... Ribbentrop’s principal guide and adviser in this country’.⁴⁹

Inspector Morse and ‘M’

As the Fellowship matured as an intelligence gathering forum working with the Berlin embassy, 10 Downing Street and the Foreign Office, it attracted the attention of the security services hunting fellow travellers, intelligence risks and even traitors. Ironically, as the overt organs of government became more trustful of the Fellowship’s aims and intelligence, the covert departments became more suspicious. MI5 had opened a file on the Fellowship in the spring of 1935, even before it was legally incorporated. Inspector Morse and Superintendent Canning of the Metropolitan Police’s Special Branch had produced a report in April 1935. Morse was a leading Nazi hunter tasked with monitoring espionage risk among pro-Germans in London while Canning later investigated Wallis Simpson and accompanied George VI and Queen Elizabeth to the US in 1939. Their report, sent to Guy Liddell, deputy director of counter-espionage at MI5, had noted correctly that, while sponsored by leading National Socialists, the Fellowship was not under their direct control as it did not admit German members. However, it was not until the summer of 1937, a full eighteen months later than Russian agents, that the security services visited its headquarters in Chelsea. The agents were impressed by the building - ‘a large block of about 250 modern high class flats’ - and estimated the rent at ‘probably not less than £350 per annum’. With a surprising interest in interior decoration, they noted that the ground floor flat had six rooms, including one for visitors and admired the ‘expensive modern style fittings’.⁵⁰ There is no escaping the irony that within that well-appointed flat had, until recently, worked certainly one (and possibly two) of the most successful Soviet spies of the twentieth century. While finding no evidence of illegal behaviour, MI5 did complain that the Fellowship’s activities were ‘wholly directed towards making English people friendly towards Germany and not towards making Germans friendly towards

⁴⁹ Record by Vansittart of a conversation with Conwell-Evans, 16 August 1937, *DBFP*.

⁵⁰ MI5 report on AGF, 16 August 1937, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

England'.⁵¹ This was patently unfair given its extensive social activities with its German counterparts and the many thousands of German tourists it had welcomed to Britain.

In October 1937, MI5 increased their surveillance and arranged for an agent, Jimmy Dickson (codenamed M/3) to apply to join as a member, having supplied him the subscription of one guinea (about £63 in 2018 prices).⁵² He met Conwell-Evans who 'went out of his way to be very charming' and, with presumably unintended irony, had explained that he liked to meet new members as there had been people trying to join the Fellowship with the 'intention of causing friction'. Dickson promised his employers he would 'take as active a part in the proceedings of the Fellowship as it is possible for him to do'.⁵³ Whether he was successful is unclear but, about six months later, MI5 employed a second agent to infiltrate the Fellowship, again under false pretences. The Austrian twenty-six-year-old sometime model and cabaret singer, Friedl Gaertner, codenamed GELATINE (because her male colleagues thought her a 'jolly-little-thing'), had been introduced to MI5 by a Stuart Menzies (later head of MI6) whose brother was married to her sister. She was interviewed by Maxwell Knight (known as 'M'), head of section B.5b, in charge of monitoring fascists and communists in Britain.⁵⁴ Knight assessed her an 'extremely level-headed and intelligent person' noting lasciviously 'her very considerable personal attractiveness'.⁵⁵ Gaertner is significant because her perceptive reports give us first-hand, and probably objective accounts of the frictions as the Fellowship faced the drama of Munich and the atrocities of Kristallnacht. She is of wider interest to historians of British intelligence for her later roles in the Wolkoff/Kent spying case and the Double XX deceptions. Infiltrating the Fellowship was her first assignment and proved her mettle as an intelligence agent, just as it was and did for Kim Philby working for Russian intelligence.

⁵¹ Report following Home Office Warrant on the Dienststelle Ribbentrop, 16 October 1937, KV5/6 C492109, TNA.

⁵² For more on Dickson see Henry Hemming, *M: Maxwell Knight, MI5's Greatest Spymaster*, (2017), p. 229.

⁵³ MI5 report on AGF, 22 November 1937, KV5/3 C440756, TNA.

⁵⁴ For more on Knight see Alex Masters, *The man who was M: the life of Maxwell Knight*, (1984) and Hemming, *M*.

⁵⁵ MI5 report, 30 May 1938, KV2/1280 C503281, TNA.

Sending a curate to visit a tiger

Following the success of the Fellowship visits to the Berlin Olympics and the 1936 party rally, a delegation including Tennant was sent to the 1937 ‘Rally of Labour’ (*Reichsparteitag der Arbeit*) at Nürnberg. Invitations were issued by Ribbentrop’s office and signed by Walther Hewel, the charming anglophile and Ribbentrop’s liaison with Hitler who was ‘far more liked by the Dictator and everyone else than the preening Foreign Minister himself’.⁵⁶ One of the Führer’s few personal friends, having been imprisoned with him at Landsburg in 1923, he was a founder member of the council and sometime treasurer of the DEG in Berlin. Tennant considered him the ‘best friend England has among Hitler’s immediate entourage’ and developed a rapport with him in the months leading up to war.⁵⁷ The British guests were escorted by an impressive team of five ‘courteous, helpful and always charming’ German hosts including Gert Schlottmann, the Berlin secretary of the DEG and Baron von Geyr, who had supported Lloyd George the previous summer.

Controversially, and in contrast to his predecessor, Henderson attended without the blessing of the British Foreign Office and sent back glowing reports. He concocted a plan with Göring for Halifax to visit Germany as the Reichsmarschall saw Britain as increasingly perceived as an enemy in Germany. His biographer has rightly identified the famous pilgrimage to Berchtesgaden as another proxy for a visit by Stanley Baldwin.⁵⁸ As Tom Jones, who had accompanied Lloyd George and Conwell-Evans on their trip to the Berghof in 1936, advised Ribbentrop ‘if the attempt to secure SB failed, the sooner Halifax met the Führer the better’.⁵⁹ Eden and his Foreign Office preferred the meeting to be held in Berlin, recognising the psychological advantage the Führer engineered by receiving visitors at his country retreat near the Austrian border. One hundred and fifty kilometres south-east of Munich, it was an arduous journey from Berlin, equivalent to the British prime minister inviting foreign statesmen to meet him at a fishing lodge in Loch Lomond.

The political and diplomatic sands had shifted in the fourteen months since Lloyd George’s visit and the styles of the two British politicians could hardly have been more

⁵⁶ Kershaw, *Nemesis*, p. 199.

⁵⁷ Tennant, *TA*, p. 223.

⁵⁸ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 64.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Diary*, p. 215.

different. The charming and wily Great War prime minister had flattered and charmed Hitler more effectively than any other British visitor. They found common ground on Frederick the Great, Great War reminiscences and had even talked of the Führer visiting London. By contrast, the meeting with the patrician former viceroy of India was tense and awkward with Halifax famously mistaking the unprepossessing Hitler for a footman. As Churchill wrote after the war, ‘one could hardly conceive two personalities less able to comprehend one another’ contrasting the ‘High Church Yorkshire aristocrat and ardent peace-lover’ with ‘the demon-genius sprung from the abyss of poverty, inflamed by defeat, devoured by hatred and revenge, and convulsed by his design to make the German race masters of Europe or maybe the world’.⁶⁰ Lloyd George was similarly sceptical, comparing the enterprise to ‘sending a curate to visit a tiger’.⁶¹

The Fellowship had no role in the clumsily choreographed visit by the lord president of the council (he did not become foreign secretary for another three months) so it is notable how he soon after began to rely on Conwell-Evans for counsel on German affairs. As Andrew Roberts has evidenced, contrary to later mythologizing, the British Foreign Office, including Eden, was intimately involved in the decision for Halifax to go. While Ribbentrop had helped organise the earlier British visits, von Neurath and Henderson took the lead and the German ambassador was, at Halifax’s request, kept in the dark. In an attempt to give the visit the least degree of British governmental blessing - what Lloyd George called ‘an innocent, though amusing and rather ridiculous pretext’ - Halifax, as master of the Middleton Foxhounds, was invited to the Berlin Hunting Exhibition.⁶² The invitation was delivered through the offices of *The Field*, then as now a periodical favoured by the hunting and shooting set, from Göring as *Reich Jägermeister* (the game warden of the Reich). A meeting with the vegetarian, animal-loving Führer was admitted as being under consideration but only if both men’s schedules allowed. While something similarly fanciful had been floated with the Lloyd George visit, the mismanagement of the press and the consequent chaos was far more damaging. Plans leaked to *The Evening Standard*, which speculated that Hitler was looking for a ten-year truce on the colonial issue and a ‘free hand in Central Europe’.⁶³

⁶⁰ Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 224.

⁶¹ Robert Lloyd George, *David & Winston: How a Friendship Changed History*, (2005) p. 220.

⁶² *The Times*, 3 December 1937.

⁶³ *Evening Standard*, 13 November 1937.

Meanwhile, Vansittart leaked it to *The Week*, Claud Cockburn's political gossip sheet, which described it as an 'extraordinary and somewhat sinister affair'. Thereon, the public relations continued to be chaotic as 'the fiction of the Exhibition as the main reason for the visit had to be adhered to, despite its looking mangier by the day'.⁶⁴ So this was 'ambulant amateurism' at its most amateur - neither an official visit properly organised through the foreign offices and embassies nor an unofficial, plausibly deniable, meeting arranged by the Fellowship. Those visits that the Fellowship had arranged for Lloyd George, Lothian, Allen, Stamp, Mount Temple *et al* may have achieved little, but did, at least run smoothly.

Despite the controversy, the Fellowship's *Monthly Journal* reported breathlessly that its members 'greatly welcome the fact that Lord Halifax paid a visit to the German Chancellor' and optimistically claimed that 'German circles regarded the conversation as having been a promising first contact between the British and German Governments'.⁶⁵ Chamberlain was pleased, judging it had 'gone well' as Halifax had reiterated the invitation for von Neurath to visit Britain.⁶⁶ Writing during the war, Conwell-Evans recollected dejectedly that 'the visit achieved little; Hitler interpreted this friendly approach as an expression of British timidity'.⁶⁷

Less than two weeks after his return from Germany, Halifax attended the Fellowship's Christmas banquet, his first recorded engagement with the organisation. Halifax was the most senior government figure to attend a dinner and his speech notable as he had been Chamberlain's emissary and would be appointed foreign secretary two months later. This cemented the much-improved relationship with the British government and gave the Fellowship confidence that it had 'taken its place, young though it is, as one of the institutions of the country'.⁶⁸ Nearly five hundred guests joined Halifax at Grosvenor House with the Duke of Coburg as 'chief guest' and Ribbentrop, only two months away from being appointed foreign minister in Berlin, also in attendance. Vansittart, then in the last month of his eight-year career as head of the Foreign Office, came with his wife. Mount Temple praised the duke's work with war veterans before reporting that membership had reached seven hundred including 'citizens drawn from

⁶⁴ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, pp. 65-7.

⁶⁵ AGF, *Monthly Journal*, December 1937.

⁶⁶ Chamberlain to Hilda, 21 November 1937, Self, *Chamberlain*.

⁶⁷ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 103.

⁶⁸ AGF, *Annual Report 1936-37*.

all parts of the British Isles, with important groups in the North and the Midlands', emphasis presumably designed to mitigate any suggestion it was a metropolitan elite.⁶⁹ Both *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Times* reported laughter when Halifax wryly reminded his audience that his trip to Germany had been 'for the purpose of visiting the great hunting exhibition'. Echoing Henderson in Berlin, Halifax praised his hosts' work emphasising that 'the understanding between nations which the Anglo-German Fellowship existed to promote was without any doubt the greatest necessity with which the world today stood confronted'.⁷⁰

Despite having been excluded from the arrangements, Ribbentrop claimed credit for Halifax's visit on behalf of the sister societies on the grounds that they had created a 'better atmosphere' in Anglo-German relations. Meanwhile, the Germany embassy in London reported to Berlin that the dinner had been a success and that the press had covered it in a 'satisfactory way'.⁷¹ Halifax's enthusiasm survived the dinner - writing to Conwell-Evans that he was 'sure it will have a good effect' and was 'glad to make such contribution as [he] could to its success'.⁷²

The brink of peace

On New Year's Day 1938, Vansittart relinquished his post as permanent undersecretary. Determinedly keeping his office next to the foreign secretary, he was given the grand-sounding title of chief diplomatic adviser to the Government but was stripped of his executive authority such that the Germans remained puzzled as to whether the infamous Germanophobe had been promoted or demoted.⁷³ The next day, Ribbentrop sent his painstakingly-crafted and absurdly-misleading memorandum to Hitler that signalled the changing fortunes of Anglo-German relations. Both a letter of resignation as ambassador, the role he now hated, and application for the post of foreign minister, he argued that Britain, backed by France, would never allow German

⁶⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 December 1937.

⁷⁰ *The Times*, 3 December 1937.

⁷¹ Selzam to German Foreign Ministry, 22 December 1937, A5577 No 89, *DGFP*.

⁷² Halifax to Conwell-Evans, 6 December 1937, CONWELL.

⁷³ See David Dilks (ed), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, OM, 1938-1945*, (Littlehampton, 1971), p. 28.

expansion in Eastern and Central Europe and that Chamberlain's appeasement was merely the British playing for time.⁷⁴

Meehan has defined 1938 as the year 'the world went to the brink of peace' and this applies to the Fellowship as it processed the sequence of events: the *Anschluss* in April, the May Crisis over Czechoslovakia, escalating diplomatic tensions over the summer, growing resistance to Hitler's regime and meetings between statesmen in the autumn that culminated in the Munich agreement.⁷⁵ In March, Christie reported to Vansittart the increasing split on foreign affairs among Hitler's paladins with the moderates (Neurath, Blomberg and Göring) still favouring 'a working understanding with Great Britain' while the radicals (Himmler, Goebbels, Rosenberg and Ribbentrop) preferred 'to go the whole hog with Italy and Japan'. He saw Hitler leaning towards the latter but reported that Ribbentrop's influence had waned not least because of 'Adolf's irritation' over the Halifax meeting.⁷⁶ A month later, Ribbentrop was finally appointed Reich foreign minister which Christie reported had come 'rather as a surprise' even to Ribbentrop.⁷⁷ Hitler also dismissed Blomberg, another moderating influence and the Fellowship's guest at the Coronation, whose 'imprudent marriage with a woman of questionable character gave the High Command the pretext which they desired'.⁷⁸ The next day, Hitler held his last ever cabinet meeting and assumed direct control over the offices of government. Despite these shifting sands, the strength of both Conwell-Evans and Tennant's friendship with the new foreign minister, coupled with the close bonds formed with his far-from-loyal senior staff, meant that the Fellowship maintained vital access to the NSDAP leadership up to the outbreak of war. Eden, frustrated by what he saw as Chamberlain's craven attitude to the dictators, resigned as foreign secretary and was replaced by the unflappable Halifax supported by Sir Alexander Cadogan, his 'resourceful, straightforward and emollient' permanent under-secretary.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ See Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, pp. 146-7.

⁷⁵ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 114.

⁷⁶ Christie report, early 1938, CHRS.

⁷⁷ Christie, 'German Foreign Policy', March 1938, CHRS.

⁷⁸ *NSB*, p. 115.

⁷⁹ Cadogan, *Diaries*, p. 19.

Austria

While Tennant and Conwell-Evans, despite frustrations, nurtured their bonds with Ribbentrop and his staff, Christie continued to exploit his decades-long friendship with Göring who, despite losing influence to his rival Ribbentrop, stubbornly kept a hand in German foreign policy. This connection was especially valuable to British intelligence because, as Ferris has asserted, between 1933 and 1938, ‘the SIS had no direct access’ to Göring.⁸⁰ His biographer has acknowledged how Christie was exceptionally well-briefed on Germany’s attitudes and plans by the Reichsmarschall himself. During lengthy discussions in 1937, they covered the ‘ideas expressed by Hitler’ at the secret November 1937 conference recorded in the ‘Hossbach memorandum’.⁸¹ Three months later, Christie reported on a secret lecture given by Göring on 8 February to senior Luftwaffe and army officers as well as ‘high officials of the War Industries Department’. In his authoritative report, Christie laid out Hitler and Göring’s plans and dejectedly predicted a feeble British response. As it was ‘not yet practicable to get at Great Britain or France’ he predicted ‘the immediate (*sofortige*) annexation of Austria, and the conquering (*Eroberung*) of Czechoslovakia’ following which ‘Hungary and the Balkan states would automatically come under Germany’s economic dictatorship’. Göring, he continued, had proposed an early ‘lightning’ war against Czechoslovakia. Christie noted that Göring’s talk had been received with ‘much applause by the air officers and economic experts’ but ‘less heartily by the army staff’, reminding the reader that Germany was in ‘no condition to sustain any protracted war’ as the astute soldiers knew well. He urged the British government to encourage the ‘reasonable elements’ in Germany on the basis it would help the army leaders ‘avoid a disastrous war and... prevent foreign policy being carried on by a series of adventures’.⁸²

The current priority of German foreign policy was now the incorporation of Austria into a greater Germany. In January 1938, Christie had reported ‘rumours of a forthcoming putsch’ to be staged so it appeared to be ‘the spontaneous wish of the Austrian people, and thus avoid coming to cross purposes with Mussolini again’.⁸³ Further warnings followed in February and, on 12 March, Hitler’s troops did march into

⁸⁰ Ferris, *Strategy and Intelligence*, p. 69.

⁸¹ Richard Overy, *Göring*, (1984), p. 77.

⁸² Christie report, March 1938, CHRS.

⁸³ *NSB*, p. 121.

Austria to achieve the long-awaited *Anschluss*. The news of the invasion reached London as the Ribbentrops were enjoying a farewell lunch hosted by the Chamberlains at 10 Downing Street. Embarrassingly for Ribbentrop, he had been excluded from the enterprise so was as bewildered by events as his hosts. Tennant sent Mount Temple a report following the plebiscite to ratify the union of Germany and Austria that was sympathetic to the cause of a greater Germany and shared his German friends' frustration at the negativity of the British press. Still convinced that the 'probability of war with Great Britain does not come into the calculations of the Germans', he reported that his informant had argued that Britain had nonetheless 'ridden Germany for 20 years with a very tight curb' and must now recognise that the Germans were 'equals with equal rights to zones of influence around [their] frontiers'. Tennant recommended returning 'a couple of colonies as a safety valve... if only to prevent the autarkists gaining complete control'.⁸⁴ Christie, in contrast, reported prophetically that 'the invasion of Austria is, however, only one small step toward other and bigger events'.⁸⁵ Despite Tennant's acquiescence, the Fellowship's Council as a group was alarmed enough by events (according to one disgruntled Fellowship member) to send a letter to Ribbentrop 'criticising the German government's action in effecting the *Anschluss*'.⁸⁶ This is unlikely to have pleased the Reich's foreign minister. Lothian, who had positively excused the re-invasion of the Ruhr, similarly accepted the *Anschluss* but 'deplored the use of force'.⁸⁷

The May Crisis

The implications of the *Anschluss* had been barely absorbed when attention was distracted by a rumoured invasion of Czechoslovakia sparked by mistaken reports that Germany was massing troops on its border. Prompt action by the Allies resulted in an embarrassing climb-down for Hitler and Ribbentrop but crystallised their plans for an autumn 1938 invasion of Czechoslovakia codenamed 'Operation Green'. Vansittart saw the May crisis as evidence that standing up to Hitler was effective, indeed essential, while his disastrous appointee as ambassador, Henderson, believed that it should never

⁸⁴ Tennant to Mount Temple, April 1938, BR.

⁸⁵ Christie report, March 1938, CHRS.

⁸⁶ Catherine Sharpe to Conwell-Evans, 7 May 1938, PIRI. The letter to Ribbentrop has not been traced.

⁸⁷ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 222.

be repeated for risk of provoking the Führer's ire. While his foresight about Austria was impressive, Christie showed poor judgment on one key aspect as the Czechoslovakian situation escalated. On 13 May, he brought Konrad Henlein, the leader of the German Sudeten Party in Czechoslovakia (SdP), to lunch with Winston Churchill in what appears the first engagement by one of the Fellowship's leading lights with the future prime minister. The respected Czech historian, JW Bruegel, writing in the 1960s, chronicled the two men's dealings and concluded that the 'mysterious' Christie was 'commissioned by someone in London to sound out Henlein'.⁸⁸ Also present at the lunch were Sir Archibald Sinclair, the leader of the Liberal Party, and Professor Lindemann, Churchill's scientific adviser. Writing to thank him for lunch, Christie flattered his host, saying Henlein thought Churchill represented 'the *real* strength of the British' in stark contrast to 'those wretched defeatists whose gutless attitude encourages both ends of the Axis to rev up their demands relentlessly'.⁸⁹ Christie arranged for Henlein to give a talk at Chatham House (where he, Conwell-Evans and Lothian were active members) at which he claimed the Prague government's link with Moscow made Czechoslovakia 'Russia's aircraft carrier'.⁹⁰ Christie arranged for MP Harold Nicolson to host a tea party to introduce him to other young MPs, similarly suspicious of Germany, all of whom seemed convinced of the Sudeten leader's reasonableness. Subsequently, Henlein was to throw his support comprehensively behind Hitler, but as Faber has concluded, 'the government's faith in Henlein was hardly surprising, given that he had successfully pulled the wool over the eyes of even Churchill and Vansittart'.⁹¹ Vansittart, Conwell-Evans and Christie were each later coy about this wool-pulling. Henlein is barely mentioned in *None so Blind* and, when Bruegel contacted Christie in 1964, he 'expressed himself unable to help clarify the matter' because of 'age, illness and loss of memory' while Vansittart was selective in remembering his dealings with Henlein after the war in his memoirs.⁹²

Amid the crisis, on 18 May, the Fellowship held an afternoon reception for Ribbentrop's successor as ambassador, Herbert von Dirksen. The party included heavyweight Foreign Office guests including Vansittart and his wife; RA Butler, under-secretary of

⁸⁸ J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, (Cambridge, 1973), p. 133.

⁸⁹ Christie to Churchill, 18 May 1938, reproduced in Martin Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. v (companion), p. 1032.

⁹⁰ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, pp. 104-5.

⁹¹ Faber, *Munich*, pp. 174-5.

⁹² Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 133n; Robert Vansittart, *Black Record*, pp. 222-26.

state; Alec Cadogan, Vansittart's successor as permanent undersecretary, and nearly 150 others including Sir Josiah Stamp, Lords Lothian and Londonderry, Brigadier Hotblack, the military attaché in Berlin, as well as Christie, Conwell-Evans and Mount Temple. The guest lists at these events hosted by the Fellowship demonstrate how effectively it had proven itself as the forum for co-mingling between the professional diplomatists as well as the ambulant amateurs from the two countries.

By June, Conwell-Evans, demonstrating his particular faculty for befriending politicians and diplomatists had won the trust and admiration of the new foreign secretary. Now we see Halifax, civil servants and official minutes (including those of Cabinet meetings) referencing Conwell-Evans, the Fellowship and the DEG as authoritative sources.⁹³ Conwell-Evans had frequent, prompt and privileged access to the innermost corridors of British political and diplomatic influence including Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's closest confidante. He had briefed Wilson (who briefed Cadogan) as far back as March 1938 that Göring was urging Ribbentrop to be 'forthcoming' with the British.⁹⁴ Now, the Fellowship's communications with the British government were verifiable, credible and valuable intelligence rather than the obviously pro-German public relations material, which some would class propaganda, that was typical of the earlier period.

Summer with Ribbentrop

As spring slipped into summer, the sense of chaos within Anglo-German relations continued. Despite Ribbentrop changed attitude towards Great Britain, his mood swings and undiplomatic outbursts, Tennant and Conwell-Evans maintained cordial relations with, and perhaps some affection for, him well into 1939. Ribbentrop suffered twin humiliations in May with the pantomime of the German state visit to Italy followed by the Czech mobilisation. Soon after, Tennant, while visiting Berlin, received a call

⁹³ See eg: Cabinet minutes 22 June 1938, CAB/23/94; Cabinet memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 'British Propaganda in Germany', 8 December 1938, CP 284; Minutes of 35th Meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy, 23 January 1939, CAB 27/624; Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 'Possible German Intentions', 19 January 1939, FP (36) 74; Halifax to Conwell-Evans, 19 March 1939; TNA and CONWELL.

⁹⁴ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 8 March 1938. For more on Wilson see G. C. Peden, 'Sir Horace Wilson and Appeasement', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 53, no. 4 (2010) pp. 983-1014.

from Ribbentrop, whom he had not seen for a year, inviting him to tea. A car was sent, and Tennant met the foreign minister at the front steps of an 'immense Schloss' at Sonnenberg 'dressed in white cotton plus-fours' to play golf on the adjoining nine-hole course. Despite not having played for thirty years, Tennant won the first five holes whereupon Ribbentrop 'lost his temper, hit all the balls... into a distant wood and stalked home in rage'.⁹⁵

Conwell-Evans's dealings with his sometime friend were no less disturbing. Recently discovered handwritten notes, presumably prepared in collaboration with Martin Gilbert, and draft typescript, presumably for *None so Blind* but never used, give insight into the conversations between them at this time. At a lunch, also attended by his friend Erich Kordt, Conwell-Evans was insistent that Hitler and Ribbentrop's foreign policy would lead to war. Conwell-Evans told him his policy was 'quite unreasonable' and that his aggression would 'lead to the destruction of Germany', to which Ribbentrop responded 'words, words, words...' Conwell-Evans appealed to his old friend's humanity asking whether he wanted to see 'those young men – just mutilated bodies – die?' to which Ribbentrop responded by raging about the Czechs for mobilising in May and threatening to 'massacre the whole lot, seven millions of them'.⁹⁶ Furiously, Conwell-Evans insisted that Britain and France would respond to any aggression against Czechoslovakia with force and stalked out of the building. Returning home, he recognised that Ribbentrop was too craven to Hitler to give cogent counsel and contrasted him with Göring who would have given better advice.⁹⁷ He warned Halifax about the dangers of other Britons, especially Lord Brocket, feeding Ribbentrop flawed advice to fuel his delusions.

By now, Ribbentrop was extending tentative feelers of friendship towards Soviet Russia, and the NASDP's loathing for communism could no longer 'stand in the way of a revival of good relations with Russia'.⁹⁸ The British Foreign Office files include a 'very secret' letter from one of Vansittart's informants within Hitler's 'immediate entourage' forwarded by him to Halifax and by Oliver Harvey to the prime minister. This confirmed that 'the blow delivered to the Führer's schemes' by the May crisis had

⁹⁵ TA, p. 206.

⁹⁶ Conwell-Evans, 'Lunch with Ribbentrop', typescript, p. 56, CONWELL.

⁹⁷ See Conwell-Evans, Memoir, CONWELL.

⁹⁸ Harvey to Cleverly, 8 July 1938, FO C7007/1180/18, TNA.

resulted in ‘a complete muddle and lack of direction’ within the German government, that it had ‘seriously damaged [Hitler’s] personal authority and prestige’ so he was ‘moved by a wild desire for revenge’ and prone to ‘brutal outbursts’ and ‘long Sphinx-like silences’.⁹⁹

But, despite Ribbentrop’s hostility to Britain and the rising crisis, the sister societies he sponsored continued to expand their activities. Tennant remembered that ‘a desperate urge to make friends with Britain seemed to spread over Germany during 1938 and 1939’ resulting in the DEG’s causing the Fellowship ‘great embarrassment by wanting to open branches in far more towns than we could cope with’.¹⁰⁰ The Berlin clubhouse was overstretched having welcomed 13,000 visitors in 1937 alone, so a nineteen-roomed house had been acquired on 83 Fasanenstrasse in the affluent Charlottenburg neighbourhood for development as a larger clubhouse. John Carvell, the British consul-general, briefed Henderson on a plan to open a Munich branch of the DEG which he suggested might ‘give English visitors a chance of meeting and talking with Germans who although ardent national socialists, are not primarily high-pressure professional propagandists’. Henderson concurred and authorised him to give it ‘discreet encouragement and support’ by attending meetings.¹⁰¹

The Oster conspiracy and the Kordt brothers

During that summer of 1938 the Fellowship began to build connections with those in Germany who offered a potential alternative to Hitler’s regime. Desperate that they should understand that Hitler planned to invade and subdue *all* of Czechoslovakia and that protecting the downtrodden Sudetens was an excuse, the resisters urged the British and French to take a firm stance and not try to bluff Hitler. They insisted there was a credible opposition to Hitler behind the conspiracy led by Major General Hans Oster.¹⁰² Oster, deputy head of the *Abwehr*, planned to overthrow Hitler should he attack Czechoslovakia and install a replacement government that would be acceptable to

⁹⁹ Vansittart to Halifax, 8 July 1938, FO C7007/1180/18, TNA.

¹⁰⁰ Tennant, *TA*, p. 200.

¹⁰¹ Carvell to Henderson 12 July 1938; Henderson to Carvell, 22 July 1938, FO 371/217182, TNA.

¹⁰² For more on the Oster conspiracy and the German resistance to Hitler see: Parssinen, *Oster*; Nicholas Reynolds, *Treason was no Crime*, (1976); Klemperer, *German Resistance*; Meehan, *Unnecessary War*; Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler*, (1961); Hoffman, *History of the German Resistance*; A. P. Young, *The ‘X’ Documents*, (1974).

Britain and her allies. It was Conwell-Evans's flat at 31 Cornwall Gardens, a quiet tree-lined square in residential Kensington, that became the meeting place for a series of meetings between British government mandarins and the German conspirators supporting Oster. Tennant identified the military leaders supporting the conspiracy as including Colonel-General Ludwig Beck (chief of the General Staff), Colonel-General Franz Halder, Admiral Canaris, (Oster's boss as chief of the *Abwehr*), General von Witzleben, Count Erich von Brockdorff-Ahlefeld and others.¹⁰³ The civilians supporting the conspiracy included Conwell-Evans's friends in the German Foreign Ministry centred on the Kordt brothers. Rightly or wrongly these men and women saw the Fellowship as a secure channel for communication with the British government.

Aside from Ribbentrop, and obviously for different reasons, Conwell-Evans's most important contacts in Germany were the Kordt family. He formed a close association with brothers Erich and Theodor, Theo's wife and their cousin Suzanne Simonis that developed into a focused intelligence cell and survived into the war. The 'brilliant and sceptical' Erich was assigned to work for Ribbentrop by State Secretary von Bülow in 1934 as an 'official aide and unofficial watchdog'.¹⁰⁴ Despite many frustrations, for seven years he stuck close to his master who relied on him to 'repair his fractured prose and to tidy up his various messes'.¹⁰⁵ In 1936, Erich was made first secretary when Ribbentrop was appointed ambassador to London from where he reported back discreetly to von Neurath. He encouraged Ribbentrop to appoint Ernst von Weizsäcker, with whom he had worked closely in Switzerland, to be head of the German Foreign Office and became his 'closest confidant' there.¹⁰⁶ In early 1938, when his master became foreign minister, Erich was made chef de cabinet, a 'position which gave him unique access to the machinations of the Führer and his foreign minister'.¹⁰⁷ Anxious to maintain a trusted ally in the German embassy on Carlton House Terrace, Erich arranged for his brother Theo to be moved from Athens to London as councillor. The two brothers enlisted the support of their cousin Suzanne, a reporter for *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, to travel between Berlin and London with sensitive messages from the German resistance using her journalistic credentials as cover.

¹⁰³ Tennant, *TA*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁴ Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 155; Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ Parssinen, *Oster*, p. 52.

¹⁰⁶ Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Memoirs*, (1951), p. 145.

¹⁰⁷ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 33.

Erich's status as a founding member of the DEG gave him cover for frequent meetings with his friend Conwell-Evans and he attended at least two of the Fellowship's banquets in London. He had been responsible for assigning as Hitler's personal interpreter Paul Schmidt, who translated for the Führer during the visits by Lloyd George, Halifax and Chamberlain and was sympathetic to the resistance. He also installed von Dirksen, who disliked his predecessor, as Ribbentrop's successor as London ambassador. Meehan goes as far as to characterise these manoeuvrings as the establishment of an effective opposition group within the German Foreign Office and credits Erich's influence for putting the players in place by March 1938. While there remains a wider debate (well beyond the scope of this study) about the extent to which the German Foreign Office harboured 'good' Germans, there seems little doubt as to the brothers' commitment to remove Hitler which included an aborted assassination attempt.

In July, General Beck, whom Conwell-Evans admired as 'perhaps the ablest, certainly the most respected of the old school', sent Erich Kordt to meet Conwell-Evans secretly in Cornwall Gardens. Parssinen ventured this was Erich's first engagement with the resistance.¹⁰⁸ As Kordt remembered, they had decided to warn the British government of Hitler's plans to invade Czechoslovakia and hoped to 'influence the British at the proper time which position to take in the event of a German-Czech crisis'. He explained that 'a firm declaration by Britain' would allow Beck to 'incite the Army to active revolt against the regime should Hitler go to war against Czechoslovakia'.¹⁰⁹ The two men met again for lunch in early August at the Travellers' Club where Kordt challenged Conwell-Evans's faith in Lord Runciman's mission to Prague given what they both now knew of Hitler's thinking. Christie also met Halifax to discuss the 'Central European situation' urging the mobilisation of the navy and air force. He warned Vansittart that the National Socialists were 'in full war cry' and would invade Czechoslovakia in September despite the 'growing fear of war amongst German people'.¹¹⁰

The following months brought an intensity of engagement between German intelligence sources and the British government choreographed by Fellowship Council members to a degree previously unacknowledged by historians. In the middle of

¹⁰⁸ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁹ Parssinen, *Oster*, p. 200.

¹¹⁰ Christie to Vansittart, 10 August 1938 and 19 August 1938, CHRS.

August, Christie (signing himself as ‘Colonel Blimp’) wrote to Vansittart that his sources had confirmed that ‘Japan had already joined the German-Italian military alliance’ and that Ribbentrop and the Japanese ambassador had signed the document. Two days later, Theo Kordt, deputising for Ribbentrop, met Horace Wilson at Conwell-Evans’s flat, their host having just returned from a holiday with Christie ‘scrambling around in the Jura mountains’.¹¹¹ Theo detailed Hitler’s war plans and urged the need for a consistent policy from the British government. Conwell-Evans rushed back to Berlin the next day where he stayed for five days.

On 29 August, Christie reported intelligence from Otto Abetz, Ribbentrop’s adviser on France, confirming the planned Czech invasion while Conwell-Evans warned Wilson, with a copy to Vansittart, on similar lines. The next day, Chamberlain recalled his colleagues from holidays for a secret meeting of the cabinet. Eighteen ministers attended and were joined by Henderson who was recalled from Berlin. Halifax spoke for an hour followed by the ambassador who argued against antagonising Hitler. Vansittart précised Conwell-Evans’s intelligence in a memorandum for the foreign secretary detailing the German threat to Czechoslovakia, rather than just the Sudetenland, and explaining that Hitler ‘dismisses all the objections of his Generals and of the Moderates with the statement that France and Great Britain will remain neutral’. He explained Conwell-Evans’s Damascene conversion: how, despite being ‘the most ardent Germanophil [sic] in this country’ and Ribbentrop’s ‘bosom friend’, now the ‘scales have dropped from his eyes in regard to the Nazis’.¹¹²

The next day, Conwell-Evans gave Halifax his ‘personal impressions of Berlin’ and, like Christie, recommended mobilising the British fleet. He met Theo Kordt and Vansittart at his flat and penned another letter to Halifax urging him not to try to bluff Hitler, explaining that the Führer had ‘a strange, uncanny and prophetic instinct of distinguishing bluff and realities’. Before leaving that evening to return to Berlin, he assured the foreign secretary: ‘I have devoted my life to Anglo German relations and am still doing so to the end’ but begged him not to reveal his name in correspondence to protect his German informants.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Christie to Vansittart, 21 August 1938, CHRS.

¹¹² Vansittart memorandum to Halifax, 30 August 1938, VNST.

¹¹³ Conwell-Evans to Halifax, 31 August 1938, HALIFAX.

Also, that August, Lothian was secretly offered and accepted the ambassadorship to Washington opening a channel between the Fellowship and the US government including the president. The appointment marked his transition from ardent appeaser of Germany to leading champion of improved Anglo-American relations with the specific mission to secure US support in any European conflict. Before he left for a trip to Australia on Rhodes Trust business, he telephoned the Czech ambassador to confirm that he had ‘ceased to be a Germanophile’.¹¹⁴

September 1938

As the crisis deepened, September saw many in the Fellowship’s story - Conwell-Evans, Tennant, the Kordts, Henderson, Christie, Horace Wilson and, of course, Chamberlain - shuttling back and forth between London and Germany in the search for peace. Although familiar to historians, the chronology of this fevered period is worth reviewing to illustrate the central, albeit frustrated, role played by the Fellowship’s *dramatis personae*.¹¹⁵

On 3 September, the German resistance made another direct approach to the Fellowship when its military leadership - General Halder, General Beck and Colonel Oster - sent a retired army colleague, Lieutenant-Colonel Hans-Werner Böhm-Tettelbach to London. Fluent in English, the colonel came to meet Julian Piggott, one of the Fellowship’s founding Council members, whom he had known as British high commissioner of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission at Cologne immediately after the Great War. Piggott had ‘arranged subsequent introductions’ to other senior British figures. On 6 September, Theo Kordt visited Wilson at 10 Downing Street on behalf of Erich and secretary of state Weizsäcker for a two-hour meeting. According to Tennant, this meeting had been arranged by ‘a leading member of the Fellowship Council’ - presumably Conwell-Evans.¹¹⁶ Theo, putting ‘conscience before loyalty’ warned Wilson that Hitler planned to invade Czechoslovakia on the 19 or 20 September. Wilson briefed Cadogan on the meeting who understood the personal risk being taken by ‘Herr X’, noting in his diary that ‘the man’s life is at stake, and I can’t jeopardise it

¹¹⁴ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 237 fn.

¹¹⁵ For detailed chronologies of the Munich crisis see David Faber, *Munich* (2008); Roberts, *Holy Fox*; Cadogan, *Diaries*; Harvey, *Diaries*; Middlemas, *Diplomacy*.

¹¹⁶ Tennant, *TA*, p. 199.

by putting the name on paper'.¹¹⁷ Wilson and Cadogan judged the credibility of this intelligence sufficient to warrant again recalling the prime minister from holiday in Scotland and for the foreign secretary to cancel his imminent trip to the League of Nations. Kordt recommended the British government should take a firm stance and issue a warning radio broadcast to Germany. As Faber concluded, this was more than grumblings from the marginalised resistance as Kordt was 'not some little-known emissary from within Germany, but was the officially accredited second-in-command at the German embassy, and was a respected figure in diplomatic circles'. A further meeting between Kordt and Halifax followed the next day with Kordt required to arrive surreptitiously through the garden entrance at Downing Street to evade the press corps. Given Kordt's authority, Faber has argued that 'it seems extraordinary in hindsight that, because his suggested course of action was so out of step with British policy at the time, no further action was taken or advice sought'.¹¹⁸

By the second week of September, Conwell-Evans was back in Germany for meetings with Ribbentrop and others and to attend the Nürnberg Rally. Erich had arranged a room for him at the Grand Hotel, an honour as one British journalist present noted usually reserved for 'guests of honour' and 'the Führer's personal friends'.¹¹⁹ His German Foreign Ministry friends reported that Henderson had alarmed Weizsäcker with his naivety in swallowing Hitler's protestations of peace and were frustrated by the ambassador's failure to 'speak plainly to Ribbentrop' so urged Conwell-Evans to warn him in person.¹²⁰ That year, to celebrate the *Anschluss*, the Parteitag was billed as 'The Party Day of Greater Germany' (*Reichsparteitag Grossdeutschland*). As in previous years, the Fellowship fielded senior representatives including Brocket, Conwell-Evans and Tennant, who remembered it as 'an alarming and depressing experience, with Hitler and Goering screaming threats at the Czechs and defiance at the rest of the world'.¹²¹ Henderson attended the rally, which he admitted he was unlikely to 'forget in a hurry' and which historians agree was 'the low-water mark of his career'.¹²² He was supported by an attentive and observant DEG member, SS-Untersturmführer Baumann, who detailed Henderson's activities in a sixteen-page

¹¹⁷ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 6 September 1938.

¹¹⁸ Faber, *Munich*, p. 238.

¹¹⁹ Leonard Mosley, *Down Stream*, (1939), p. 147.

¹²⁰ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 141.

¹²¹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 206.

¹²² Henderson, *Failure*, p. 145; Faber, *Munich*, p. 257.

memorandum to the German Foreign Office.¹²³ Conwell-Evans met Henderson, by now seriously ill with throat cancer, in the train provided as accommodation for foreign diplomats from the democratic nations in contrast to Conwell-Evans's comfortable billet at the Grand Hotel. Early on the sunny morning of 8 September, the two men walked between the railway tracks for ninety minutes where Conwell-Evans explained that 'Hitler himself had taken the decision to invade Czechoslovakia in a fortnight or so'.¹²⁴ Deeply frustrated, Conwell-Evans was unable to convince the ambassador but did get his authorisation to return at once to London to brief the foreign secretary. Baumann, who knew Conwell-Evans by reputation as a leading light in the Fellowship, arranged a car to deliver him back to town and noted the visitor was 'striving to conceal a great shock'.¹²⁵

Meanwhile at 10 Downing Street on the same day, Theo Kordt had again met Halifax and Wilson following which Halifax sent direct and unambiguous instructions to Henderson to deliver an explicit message to Hitler and Ribbentrop about Czechoslovakia. This was widely trailed in the British Press with the *Daily Mail* trumpeting 'BRITAIN WARNS GERMANY TODAY – WILL NOT STAND ASIDE IF CZECHS ARE ATTACKED – INSTRUCTIONS SENT TO AMBASSADOR'.¹²⁶ With extraordinary disobedience, Henderson refused to deliver the message, arguing that it would be 'ill-timed and disastrous in its effect'.¹²⁷

By Saturday, Conwell-Evans was back in Germany at a tea party given by Ribbentrop for Hitler and three hundred guests where he managed a 'hurried talk' with Weizsäcker that was 'under the eyes of Hess, but removed from his ears'. Weizsäcker and Erich Kordt urged Conwell-Evans to persuade Chamberlain to write a letter to Hitler proposing a plebiscite in Czechoslovakia which Weizsäcker said would secure popular German support so Conwell-Evans at once left Nürnberg for Downing Street. At the same tea party, a far less critical Lord Brocket was delighted to be sat next to the Führer to whom he talked for half an hour. Also on Hitler's table were Lords Stamp and McGowan, while other members attending included Lord and Lady Hollenden and Norman Hulbert. A wealthy landowner and former Conservative MP who attended at

¹²³ *DGFP*, Series D, Vol II, pp. 765-80, 15 September 1938.

¹²⁴ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 142.

¹²⁵ *DGFP*, Series D, Vol II, pp. 766, 15 September 1938.

¹²⁶ *The Daily Mail*, 10 September 1938.

¹²⁷ *DBFP*, 3/II No 818 p. 279.

least three Fellowship dinners, Brocket's enthusiasm for the National Socialist regime survived longer than Tennant's and Conwell-Evans's. To the latter's frustration, Brocket, having won the confidence of Chamberlain, reported his conversation to Wilson insisting that the Führer had 'no intention whatever of attacking England at any time, or of going to the West or attacking France' and had joked that he was as likely to want to conquer China. Brocket had urged the Führer to meet Chamberlain in person to which he had responded: 'I cannot leave my country, and meet him in a foreign country, he cannot leave his country and come here, we can not meet in aeroplanes in the air, and I am always very seasick on the sea!'¹²⁸

Back in London the next day Conwell-Evans had his second meeting in a fortnight with the foreign secretary and urged him 'for heaven's sake [to] mobilise the Navy' as Hitler was planning an attack between 20 and 29 September and was confident Britain and France would not go to war over Czechoslovakia.¹²⁹ Conwell-Evans emphasised the opposition within the German Foreign Office to Operation Green and explained that they would therefore welcome a 'more explicit warning' from Britain. He admitted that he doubted 'whether the ambassador fully appreciates the position' but had graciously allowed him to canvass Halifax directly.¹³⁰ Given the Fellowship's chequered track record with the Foreign Office, the immediacy and frankness of his dialogue with foreign secretary and ambassador are noteworthy. He followed the meeting with a memorandum and letter emphasising the widening gulf between the German government and the German people, arguing that a 'plebiscite would most effectively defeat [Hitler's] policy'.¹³¹ Circulated to Vansittart, Halifax and Chamberlain, his memorandum explained that Hitler had decided to launch an attack on Czechoslovakia and was now 'bordering literally on the insane' such that the links established with the German Resistance were vital as never before in history had 'the highest members of the foreign office of the great power, and other leading personalities of the state... made appeals through trusted intermediaries to a foreign government to save them from war'.¹³²

¹²⁸ Brocket report to Wilson, 10 September 1938, PREM 1/249/65-70, TNA.

¹²⁹ Conwell-Evans memoir, CONWELL.

¹³⁰ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, pp. 143-4.

¹³¹ Conwell-Evans to Halifax, 11 September 1938, HALIFAX.

¹³² Conwell-Evans memorandum to Vansittart, Halifax and Chamberlain, 11 September 1938, CONWELL.

Hitler ended the Nürnberg Rally with a speech demanding self-determination for the *Sudetendeutsch* that attracted international coverage, especially in ever-more-nervous London and Paris. A crowd of 10,000 gathered outside Downing Street, the *Evening Standard* printed 150,000 copies of the speech while the BBC interrupted its programmes to broadcast it live. Two days later, Theo Kordt again met Wilson at the Travellers Club for lunch, while Conwell-Evans, confirming information from Christie, briefed Vansittart on Germany's preparedness for war. She had only two months' reserves of petrol and 'the Siegfried Line was far from complete, some parts consisted practically only of barbed wire'. Christie had also hurried back to Britain to brief the government on information supplied by Captain Fritz Wiedemann. Wiedemann, Hitler's adjutant and former commanding officer, confirmed the Führer had declared: 'we must over-run Czechoslovakia as soon as possible... next year is France's turn... the year after (1940) we have to settle Britain and then my world Empire will be completed'.¹³³ Christie warned of the 'provocations' that would be arranged in Czechoslovakia by the Germans to justify their invasion and which gave Hitler (rightly as it turned out) the confidence that Britain and France would not come to their ally's aid.

Henry IV going to Canossa again

Despite the now established formula for British politicians visiting Germany (as facilitated by the Fellowship and explored in earlier chapters) and the thinner trail of German politicians leaving the Fatherland to visit England, the idea that Neville Chamberlain should fly to Germany to meet the Führer seems to have originated from the prime minister alone. Writing to his sister Ida from Balmoral, Chamberlain outlined 'Plan Z', a plan 'so unconventional and daring that it rather took Halifax's breath away'.¹³⁴ He had proposed it to, no doubt, startled colleagues at a meeting including the foreign secretary, his parliamentary undersecretary and the chancellor of the exchequer. On hearing the plan, Halifax insisted Vansittart join the meeting and the unsurprisingly appalled chief diplomatic adviser became 'thoroughly worked up and fought the idea tooth and nail' arguing it was 'Henry IV going to Canossa again'.¹³⁵

¹³³ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 144. For more on Wiedemann see Urbach, *Go-betweens*, p. 234 et passim.

¹³⁴ Chamberlain to Ida, 3 September 1938, Self, *Chamberlain*.

¹³⁵ Thomas Inskip diary, 7 September 1938, INKP and Cadogan, *Diaries*, p. 95.

Undaunted Chamberlain presented it as a *fait accompli* to his cabinet less than a week later and, despite some misgivings, the idea gained momentum and approval. The next day, armed with his umbrella, the sixty-nine-year-old Chamberlain left Heston aerodrome to make his maiden aeroplane flight to meet the forty-nine-year-old German dictator. Waved off by Theo Kordt, the Halifaxes and Fellowship stalwarts, Lords Brocket and Londonderry, he was met in rainy Munich by Ribbentrop and the ambassadors Henderson and von Dirksen. Hearing of this trip, many miles away in Australia, an alarmed Lothian wrote to Nancy Astor that, while Chamberlain was ‘heroic and courageous’, the venture seemed ‘terribly liable to lead to another Hoare-Laval plan’.¹³⁶ Exactly a week later, Chamberlain was again seen off by Kordt and Halifax for a second meeting at Godesberg. On 30 September, he returned from his third visit after the Munich conference with his celebrated piece of paper and Tennant was one of forty guests invited to meet him on his ‘triumphal return’.¹³⁷ By then, the British government had finally mobilised the fleet as advocated by Conwell-Evans and Christie back in August. Returning to Germany in the middle of October, Conwell-Evans was advised by a German Foreign Ministry official that it was, indeed, this mobilisation that had prevented Hitler from launching his planned attack on the Czechs.

While it has proved possible to piece together, for the first time, the activities of the Fellowship’s principals in both Britain and Germany during the crisis that culminated in the Munich conference, it remains harder to determine if they made any difference. In this regard, Halifax’s place in the Fellowship’s story deserves sharper focus. Perceived as one of the ‘Guilty Men’ firmly aligned with his master Chamberlain, especially in contrast to the mercurial Eden, Halifax’s attitude to Hitler and the National Socialists shifted during the Munich crisis. Specifically, he balked at the degree to which the British were required to coerce the Czechoslovak government to accede to Hitler’s unreasonable demands and was convinced of the need for accelerated rearmament. His biographer traced this ‘almost Damascene conversion from appeaser to resister’ to an uncharacteristically sleepless night of 24 September 1938, fuelled by Halifax’s own moral code that had been sparked by a firm talking-to from Cadogan that evening. However, it can be inferred that the repeated, considered and consistent intelligence he had absorbed from Conwell-Evans, Christie and Vansittart contributed

¹³⁶ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 225.

¹³⁷ Tennant, *TA*, p. 207.

to this changing heart. Ferris has argued convincingly that in late 1938, both Cadogan and Halifax had ‘drifted towards Vansittart’s views of Germany’ and that consequently the non-confrontational foreign secretary had challenged Chamberlain in Cabinet the morning after his sleepless night.¹³⁸ Apologetically (‘I feel a brute’) he led a successful revolt against the prime minister’s position urging him to call Hitler’s bluff by threatening a military response.¹³⁹ By 29 September, Oliver Harvey was confiding in his diary that Halifax had ‘lost all his delusions about Hitler and now regards him as a criminal lunatic’.¹⁴⁰

After Munich

While the leadership of the Fellowship no doubt shared the sense of relief felt around Britain when Chamberlain returned with his famous piece of paper, they had consistently urged a stronger line with the German leadership over Czechoslovakia. Under no illusions that Hitler could be pacified by the Sudetenland on its own, the intelligence they supplied to the British government was mostly impeccable with the notable exception being their assessment of Heinlein’s *bona fides*. Far from being a marginal ‘ginger group’ of ideologues struggling to influence events, the Fellowship had by now secured astonishingly direct and quick access to the leaders of the British government including the prime minister; his special adviser, Wilson; the foreign secretary; his parliamentary undersecretary, Cadogan; the chief diplomatic adviser, Vansittart and the ambassador, Henderson. On the German side, the intelligence Christie and Conwell-Evans garnered from senior and loyal military sources such as Göring and Milch was balanced by that from the military leadership then conspiring against Hitler. Combined with the information emanating from the resistance within the upper ranks of the Foreign Ministry centred on the Kordts, this was extraordinary by any measure. Given how well they understood his failings and prejudices, their interpretations of Ribbentrop’s dangerous counsel to the Führer added powerfully to this mix.

Barely a week after Chamberlain’s return, Christie reported back to London the effect of ‘Munich’ on German policy and the personal disdain felt by both Hitler and

¹³⁸ Ferris, *Intelligence*, p. 53.

¹³⁹ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁰ Harvey, *Diary*, 29 September 1938.

Ribbentrop for Chamberlain. He reported that Ribbentrop had gleefully remarked to General Keitel that Chamberlain had signed the 'death warrant of the British Empire' which, he told others, Germany would inherit 'as easily as one inherits the estate of an old aunt during her lifetime, piece by piece, merely by coaxing with persuasive words'.¹⁴¹ Christie later learned that Hitler, at a meeting with his press chiefs on 6 November 1938 had 'made jeering remarks about foreign statesmen, chiefly directed at Daladier, Benes, Chamberlain and Halifax' and claimed that he had 'tapped the cables between Prague and Paris, and Prague and London, during the recent crisis'.¹⁴² Any reassurance Conwell-Evans may have drawn from Munich presumably faded as quickly as for Christie and he secretly met Theo Kordt in late October in Lausanne, Switzerland as travelling in Germany was no longer considered safe. Whatever else Chamberlain signed at Munich, it was certainly the death warrant for the Oster conspiracy as his concessions to Hitler had frustrated his plans to invade Czechoslovakia thereby mitigating the immediate threat of a European war which would have given the conspirators their *casus belli*.

Amidst all this, the Fellowship continued its outward social whirl with a dinner held on 19 October at Claridge's to honour Ambassador von Dirksen. Whatever the misgivings of Christie, Lothian and Conwell-Evans, the dinner was still bathed in a post-Munich glow. Mount Temple, speaking publicly only a month before his resignation in protest at the treatment of the Jews and, despite the reservations of his colleagues, said that 'never since the Anglo-German Fellowship started had they met under fairer circumstances' despite having 'come within an ace of war'. Von Dirksen suggested that 'the recent time of great strain and crisis had proved a blessing in disguise, as it had served to bring the two peoples nearer together and to create a better understanding'.¹⁴³ Friedl Gaertner, reporting back to her masters at MI5, was appalled by this collective self-delusion, and 'amazed that this collection of British people of the middle and upper classes could display the pathetic ignorance of foreign affairs, and German affairs in particular'. She was particularly unimpressed by Lord Brocket, who in introducing the guest speaker General Tholens (deputy chief of the German public service camps), had attacked Germany's critics including Duff Cooper, Eden and

¹⁴¹ Vansittart memorandum to Halifax, 19 October 1938, FO C12655, TNA and Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 157.

¹⁴² Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 166.

¹⁴³ *The Times*, 20 October 1938.

Churchill as being ‘impotent’, the *Evening Standard* for publishing extracts from *Mein Kampf* and its cartoonist David Low for facetious disrespect. Tholens replied for over an hour, which Gaertner reported as being ‘so dry and so boring that even the most enthusiastic member of the AGF ceased to listen’.¹⁴⁴ A few weeks later, the Fellowship held a cocktail party at the Hans Crescent Hotel for over one hundred people with Dr Karl Silex, a journalist from the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, as guest speaker. Again, Gaertner was present on behalf of MI5 but this time was struck by the contrast between the cocktail party and the previous dinner in that the guests were ‘of a far more intelligent type’. Unlike General Tholens, Silex made a first-class speech ‘significantly free from bombast’ and so was considered by her much more dangerous.

Exactly a week after the Silex drinks party, the cause of Anglo-German relations suffered the devastating blow of Kristallnacht when the SA and civilians attacked Jews, their homes, businesses and synagogues in an orgy of violence in both Germany and Austria. Kristallnacht was impossible to ignore even for Hitler’s most enthusiastic supporters within and without the Fellowship. As Conwell-Evans’s friend and literary executor, Martin Gilbert, later wrote, ‘no event in the history of the fate of the German Jews between 1933 and 1945 was so widely covered by the newspapers while it was taking place’.¹⁴⁵ The day after the pogroms, Conwell-Evans returned to Berlin to meet his German Foreign Ministry informants secretly. They told him the attacks had been arranged to ‘harden and brutalise the German people, so as to make them less unwilling to go to war’.¹⁴⁶ Conwell-Evans reported that they had caused ‘as great a revulsion of feeling among the German people as they have done in England, and Hitler and the régime have suffered a further loss of prestige’.¹⁴⁷ As Steiner emphasised, Kristallnacht was ‘specifically intended to stifle the euphoria in Germany created by Munich’.¹⁴⁸ It was triggered by Chamberlain’s short-lived success at appeasing Hitler and, not long after, contributed to the rapid erosion of popular support for his policy in Britain. As detailed in the earlier chapters, Kristallnacht was the catalyst for the Fellowship’s existential crisis among the wider membership with crisis meetings, letters of condemnation and Mount Temple’s resignation.

¹⁴⁴ MI5 report on AGF dinner at Claridge’s, 24 October 1938, KV 5/3 C440756, TNA.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction*, (2006), p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 157.

¹⁴⁷ Vansittart to Halifax, 4 January 1939, TNA.

¹⁴⁸ Steiner, *Triumph*, p. 679.

As 1938 ended, the Fellowship had evolved from an amateur business-backed pressure group irritating the professional diplomats and politicians into a respected forum for the promotion of Anglo-German relations. It had never been better-placed with the British government and yet retained its access to the NSDAP elite, despite its *bona fides* having been challenged. Despite their loyal pronouncements, its leaders had failed to embrace Chamberlain's brand of appeasement and had highlighted the folly of his and Henderson's handling of the German leadership. Chamberlain's Plan Z ignored their carefully-crafted advice and undermined the trust built with the resistance in Germany that arguably represented the 'last chance for Europeans to stop Hitler from taking the path that would lead to the loss of fifty million lives'.¹⁴⁹ As Griffiths has rightly concluded 'it is ironic that Conwell-Evans, who had been ignored by Baldwin when he had put forward pro-German views, was ignored by Chamberlain when his views changed; it is equally ironic that the Foreign Office, which opposed him in 1933-5, had been trusted by Baldwin, but that the same Foreign Office, backing his views in 1938, should have been mistrusted by Chamberlain'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Parssinen, *Oster*, p. xvi.

¹⁵⁰ Griffiths, *Travellers*, p. 302.

Chapter 7

Fading into war: the failure of appeasement

On about 28 August 1939, as he recorded in his hand-written memoir, Conwell-Evans was summoned by AJ Sylvester, Lloyd George's long-suffering private secretary, to the House of Commons for a meeting with his master.¹ Arriving at the room, he found Lloyd George accompanied by Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden. Presumably with tongue in cheek, the former prime minister Lloyd George introduced Conwell-Evans to the two future prime ministers as 'my Nazi'. Churchill asked about the Germans' intentions, whether war could be avoided and whether Hitler could be 'bought off'. Conwell-Evans replied that war was inevitable but 'might be postponed for six months by concessions – but no longer'. Churchill then asked for his view on the leading Nazis, to which he responded that they were 'all a bad lot – except perhaps Göring... he was the nearest thing to a gent', at which Churchill and Lloyd George burst out laughing.²

This chapter continues the Fellowship's story during the final year culminating in that meeting and details its frantic, last ditch attempts to leverage its influences in Germany to preserve peace. It has been generally assumed that the Fellowship shamefacedly abandoned its activities in the months immediately following Mount Temple's resignation in protest at Kristallnacht in November 1938.³ In reality, in the twelve months leading up to war, Conwell-Evans had been, as he told Lloyd George, 'in almost daily contact' with the British Foreign Office.⁴ While his close working relationship with Christie and Vansittart has been acknowledged, the intensity and frequency of his direct communications with Lord Halifax (evidenced in their surviving correspondence) indicate a closer relationship with the foreign secretary than previously appreciated. Halifax's biographer has claimed that the foreign secretary had ordered the Fellowship's 'indefinite closure' in March 1939.⁵ In fact, a letter dated 19

¹ To date, no independent source has been identified corroborating Conwell-Evans's account of this meeting. However, both Churchill and Lloyd George were in London at the time as the House of Commons had been recalled and were meeting together both in and out of the Commons. See Harold Nicolson recording the two men plotting Chamberlain's removal in the smoking room in *Diary*, 24 August 1939; Channon, *Diary*, 24 August 1939; Victor Cazalet, *Diary*, 25 August 1939 and Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol 5, part 3, pp. 1596-7.

² Conwell-Evans, *Memoir*, CONWELL. (On the way out, TPCE asked Lloyd George if he thought Eden a great man. Lloyd George replied 'have another plum'.)

³ See eg. Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, pp. 37-38.

⁴ Conwell-Evans to Lloyd George, 7 September 1939, LG.

⁵ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 145.

March from Halifax in the Conwell-Evans papers - three days after the invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia - indicates a more nuanced stance. Conwell-Evans had asked the foreign secretary for guidance on what to do with the Fellowship and Halifax was elegantly gentle in his advice. He did not 'wish to see anything done which would break down all the bridges between the two peoples' and, echoing a frequent theme of Christie's advice, wanted to retain 'such means as we can of showing that the British people have no quarrel with the German people'. However, given the tensions between the two governments, he suggested deferring any further meetings of the Fellowship 'for another month or two' until the situation was clearer.⁶ Conwell-Evans did finally suspend the Fellowship's activities on the day Germany invaded Poland and the last Council meeting was held in the Unilever boardroom on 6 October 1939 - more than a month after war had been declared. Even then, the register of members was kept in the hopes of a resurrection 'when peace comes' and the Fellowship was not formally dissolved as a company until 1949.⁷

Halifax certainly valued the intelligence he and his Foreign Office received from Vansittart, Christie, Conwell-Evans and their network of German informants. This stream of intelligence continued right up to and beyond the outbreak of war. According to Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the patrician foreign secretary had previously taken a 'gentlemen-don't-read-one-another's-mail-attitude' to intelligence. Now, as his biographer noted, he had changed his views following the Sudeten crisis.⁸ On 14 November 1938, he shared confidential reports with the Cabinet Foreign Policy Committee from intelligence sources, especially Conwell-Evans and Kordt who used their association with the sister societies as cover to gather and communicate their intelligence.

Similarly, Halifax now embraced another vulgar tool of modern diplomacy: propaganda. Again, the sister societies had a role to play. Rather than seeking to close the Fellowship, Halifax now proposed to use the DEG as a conduit to increase and improve British propaganda in Germany (this was appropriate given how the NSDAP had always hoped it would promulgate German propaganda to Britons). In a wider plan presented to Cabinet in December 1938, he estimated Germany was spending £5

⁶ Halifax to Conwell-Evans, 19 March 1939, CONWELL.

⁷ Conwell-Evans to Buxton, 13 October 1939, CONWELL.

⁸ See Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 134.

million a year on 'skilfully done' propaganda but reported that the Germans were fearful of British counter propaganda. Consequently, he proposed a coordinated effort involving the BBC, personal business contacts, a Berlin version of the British Library of Information in New York and targeted pamphlets from the British Council. Under the heading 'long-term policy', he suggested further cultural and educational propaganda by the British Council as well as 'sending lecturers, especially scientists, to Germany, both to the Deutsch Englische Gesellschaft and to German universities'.⁹

That same month the Fellowship reported to Companies House that it now had exactly 900 members. This was its highest recorded membership and followed the recruitment of 200 new members since February that year, so an average of twenty new joiners per month.¹⁰ Any celebration would have been short-lived, no doubt, as so many members were now withdrawing their support in protest at Kristallnacht. Thus, in charting the Fellowship's recruitment efforts, it would be reasonable to determine late 1938 as both its apex and its nadir. On the 8 December, the Fellowship held a meeting in Mayfair attended by 150 to 200 people. This was the first social event since the crisis meeting held immediately following Kristallnacht and was similarly infiltrated by Friedl Gaertner on behalf of MI5. The guest speaker was Colonel TP Etherton, an author and explorer who had recently toured Germany and the Sudetenland. He had challenged Göring about Goebbels's 'ill-advised attacks on Great Britain and the British press' and how he regretted seeing 'notices in shops and on windows and walls attacking the Jews'. Gaertner reported that such explicit criticism of the German regime meant that 'the whole tone of the meeting was utterly different' from its predecessor and had caused 'extreme surprise' to many present. She presumed that Berlin had sent instructions that 'the AGF should be given a more British outlook and that propaganda should be less blatant'. She suggested as much to Betty Pomeroy, the Fellowship's membership secretary, who acknowledged that it had 'a choice between adopting an entirely new line or running the risk of its extinction'.¹¹

⁹ Cabinet memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 'British Propaganda in Germany', 8 December 1938, pp. 3, CP 284, TNA.

¹⁰ 'Notice of Increase in Number of Members', 8 December 1938, BT 31/33916/305554, TNA.

¹¹ M/G Memorandum, 'Anglo-German Fellowship meeting', 13 December 1938, KV 5/3 C440756, TNA.

The New Year memorandum

Also that month, Vansittart commissioned Conwell-Evans and Christie to compile a 'fairly comprehensive account of their impressions of German policy... gathered in recent weeks'.¹² Vansittart's memoranda were traditionally criticised for their circumlocutory style but this one, though detailed, could not have been clearer. It ran to eighteen pages, professionally printed as numbered copies, labelled 'Most Secret' and stamped 'The Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government' with instructions for it to be 'kept under lock and key', all presumably to encourage it to be read by anyone who saw it. Early in the New Year, Vansittart sent it to Halifax with a note explaining it had been written 'by the two Englishmen who know Germany best' and were 'strong and pronounced Germanophils', in contrast to he himself who had been 'unjustly... attacked as a Germanophobe'. Shrewdly, Vansittart used his colleagues' previous enthusiasms for the National Socialist regime to add credibility and balance to those voices (such as his own) who had been critical of the regime since the outset. This document confirms the definitive volte-face by both Conwell-Evans and Christie on the National Socialist regime that had been gestating since 1937. Conwell-Evans admitted that 'the early promise' which he had 'endeavoured at first to claim for the National Socialists was deceptive in the highest degree'.¹³ Christie had similarly acknowledged to Vansittart that he had believed 'in the sincerity and applicability of national socialism'.¹⁴ Now both realised Nazism was characterised by 'aggressive and fanatical nationalism, racial intolerance and arrogance, idolatry of man, the worship of physical might [and] contempt for everything humane'.¹⁵

Halifax included the full memorandum in the briefing papers he sent to the Cabinet Foreign Policy Committee for its 23 January meeting. It included a detailed critique of Hitler's regime and predicted its direction while urging the British government to take a firmer stand against Germany. Hindsight shows it to have been remarkably accurate. Conwell-Evans opened his section with the blunt warning that 'our country and empire are faced by a greater peril that has yet threatened them in their history'. He explained that Hitler felt thwarted by Chamberlain as he had planned to conquer Czechoslovakia

¹² Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 161.

¹³ Vansittart memorandum to Halifax, 4 January 1939, CONWELL.

¹⁴ Christie to Vansittart, 10 April 1938, CHRS.

¹⁵ Vansittart memorandum to Halifax, 4 January 1939, CONWELL.

and concurrently invade Romania. The Sudeten Germans were merely the ‘pretext with which he hoped to induce the German people to make war’. Hitler was ‘little better than a monster in his ruthlessness and cruelty’ and was now driven by a ‘hatred and envy of England which amount to an obsession’. In fact, Conwell-Evans reported that, were he to update *Mein Kampf*, the only revision would be to remove the proposed friendship with England. He predicted that 1939 was ‘going to be the most menacing year both in internal and external affairs’ and that one informant had explained Hitler would push forwards ‘on a vast and rapid scale eastwards, and... in 6 or 12 months... would turn westwards and proceed to reduce England to the position of a second-rate Power’. During the year, ‘the German people, whose humane sentiments [were] not yet crushed, [would] be treated to continuous campaigns of propaganda about the essential criminality of Jews, the worthlessness of democracy and the ideas of a decadent and weak England’. Hitler’s conquest of Eastern Europe would be rapid: ‘the revision of the Polish frontiers, the setting up of the Ukraine and giving Germany control of the Black Sea coast, the conquest of the Baltic states, ending with an alliance between Russia and Germany, may be accomplished in 1939’. Conwell-Evans urged the British government to ‘distinguish between the regime and its victims’, emphasised that the German people were still shocked by Kristallnacht and that ‘Hitler has felt the pressure of German public opinion in regard to his latest treatment of the Jews’ and warned ‘if we do not at once pull ourselves together and take the most drastic measures, the year 1940 may witness the collapse of the British Empire’.

Meanwhile in his supporting addendum, Christie detailed how the German economy was now on a war footing, with the confiscation of Jewish property, attacks on private enterprise, sourcing of essential materials and the introduction of state-controlled barter. Christie was sanguine about the seriously-weakened opposition to the Reich who were ‘practically gagged’. He hoped that they might engender popular support in Germany if Hitler did attack France and Great Britain, but warned that ‘the strength of the opposition inside Germany should not be overrated’. The German army was broadly supportive of Hitler as he offered better job prospects than the alternatives. Christie predicted Russia’s pivotal role in a future war and anticipated the German failure to overwhelm the Russians: ‘obviously if things went awry in the invasion of Soviet Russia, if the bulk of the red Army remained intact, adopted the tactics of retreat and refused to desert Stalin or form a Germanophil government, then the vigorous

intervention or mediation of Great Britain and France might cause the downfall of the Nazi government and its replacement by saner men of reason'. Characteristically pulling no punches, he concluded that Britain's 'salvation depends upon the adroitness of our statesmen' particularly in separating Mussolini from Hitler, and explained that his German friends were 'praying that Great Britain and France will no longer yield an inch to the threats of force and violence'.

Vansittart needed these credible alternative messengers to counteract the opinions promulgated by Henderson and accepted by Chamberlain and Wilson in particular. The widening gulf between the British ambassador in Berlin and the leadership of the Fellowship is central to understanding the stance of each in 1939. Conwell-Evans politely explained in his memorandum how Henderson failed to understand the German regime because Soviet-style monitoring of his embassy by the German secret police meant he was isolated and therefore 'frequently deceived'. Vansittart was characteristically more blunt, telling Halifax that he, Conwell-Evans and Christie were 'in complete disagreement' with the ambassador.¹⁶

Whether anyone in authority listened to these warnings that so starkly contrasted with Henderson's sanguinity is open to debate. In *None So Blind*, completed in 1941 as Britain stood alone in the darkest days of the war, Conwell-Evans ruefully acknowledged that his and Christie's advice fell on deaf ears and, 'as late as March 1939, British ministers apparently still refused to believe that Britain had been marked down as an ultimate victim'. He was frustrated that Henderson was so naïvely confident that Hitler was now 'satisfied with his achievements abroad, wished to settle down, and devote attention to home affairs', and disappointed that the government, including Halifax 'apparently placed the fullest confidence in Henderson's reports'.¹⁷ However, this is almost certainly unfair on Halifax (if not his Cabinet colleagues) whose biographer has argued was the 'first politician in the government to see what was happening and the major force in steering the way from an appeasing to a resisting tack'.¹⁸

¹⁶ Vansittart to Halifax, 21 February 1939, FO 371/23006, TNA.

¹⁷ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 169.

¹⁸ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 145.

Careful analysis of the surviving documentation would indicate that Conwell-Evans and Christie were taken more seriously than they themselves believed. The foreign secretary respected the New Year Memorandum (and other secret intelligence including suggestions that Germany might attack Holland) and welcomed alternative opinions on Germany to the blandishments emanating from his ambassador. Calling a meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee to consider 'Possible German Intentions', he emphasised that these sources had 'in the summer and early autumn of last year... so unhappily proved, on the whole, accurate and correct'.¹⁹ He warned committee members bluntly that the secret sources risked 'liquidation' if any material leaked. Alec Cadogan (by now Vansittart's replacement as permanent undersecretary and still sceptical of his predecessor's Cassandra-like warnings) noted that the committee 'didn't pooh-pooh' these warnings and shared the intelligence with the American government immediately.²⁰

The next day, Cadogan drafted a telegram to Washington based on Vansittart's secret intelligence, signed by Halifax and approved by Chamberlain, that echoed the memorandum in explaining how Hitler was 'bitterly resentful' about Munich, humiliated by Great Britain, and planning a 'further adventure for the spring of 1939'. It explained that 'His Majesty's Government have no wish to be alarmist' but the sources included 'highly placed Germans of undoubted sincerity who are anxious to prevent this crime'. As Dilks has explained (writing only a couple of years after Conwell-Evans had died) 'the telegram to Washington is noteworthy not only because it indicates the difficulties of assessing secret Intelligence but also because it disposes of the legend of a bemused administration awakened from roseate dreams only by the events of March.'²¹

Other voices within the Foreign Office corroborated Christie and Conwell-Evans's interpretation of German intentions. In early February, George Ogilvie Forbes, the chargé d'affaires in Berlin deputising for the seriously-ill ambassador, wrote to Halifax predicting that 'the turn of the year can also be regarded as the turn of the tide of National Socialism from the East to the West'.²² He reported a build-up of military

¹⁹ Minutes of 35th Meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy, 23 January 1939, CAB 27/624, TNA.

²⁰ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 23 January 1939.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 141-4.

²² Ogilvie Forbes to Halifax, 1 February 1939, Telegram no. 139, TNA.

resources in ‘preparation for action either physical or spiritual in the West in aid of [Hitler’s] Italian ally’ that would likely involve a direct threat to France and therefore to war involving Britain. Cadogan remained sceptical, noting that ‘our sources of information have lately become so prolific (and blood curdling) that I am beginning to regard them with a degree of suspicion’.²³

Lothian and Roosevelt

While the US government benefitted from Conwell-Evans and Christie’s intelligence on the German threat embedded in the Halifax/Cadogan telegram, that same month, Lord Lothian visited the US for a seven-week tour. He wanted to see his many friends among the political leadership to discuss Hitler and National Socialism and to emphasize how Britain urgently needed America’s help to control the seas. As his biographer has emphasised, Lothian was ‘probably more nearly in touch with American thought than any other man in British public life’ and he went on to be lauded as one of Britain’s most successful ambassadors to Washington despite his premature death.²⁴

In this context, his direct knowledge of the German leadership, which had been facilitated by the Anglo-German Fellowship and Conwell-Evans, seems relevant to any analysis of his effectiveness as an envoy. On the 2 January he met with the President. The two men had first met at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and Lothian had last visited three years previously when he made clear his support for appeasement of Germany. He visited as a private citizen rather than as the British ambassador designate, having insisted his appointment, agreed the previous August, not be disclosed even to the President until the spring of 1939. Initially intended as a fifteen-minute courtesy call, the meeting ran to an hour and evidently involved heated debate between the two men. There Lothian started the long and complex process of persuading the highly sceptical Roosevelt that Britain had the mettle (if not the metal) to resist Hitler but needed and deserved American support. As explored by Barbara Farnham, Roosevelt had been quick to grasp how Munich and its aftermath had been a victory for Germany who ‘had gained a distinct psychological advantage due to the

²³ Cadogan minute, 2 February 1939, FO 371/22963, TNA.

²⁴ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 258.

emergence of considerable scepticism about the will of Britain and France to withstand pressure from the dictators'.²⁵

Lothian's *volte-face* on the National Socialists mirrored that of his friend Conwell-Evans and his previous public enthusiasms were embarrassing. As explored above, he had been having doubts about the regime for several years, but by early 1939, was in no doubt, as he told the President, of the German threat and assured him that appeasement was dead in England. Roosevelt recollected (in late 1939) that he had taken this 'with a grain of salt and [had] wanted more proof'.²⁶ Struck by the future ambassador's seismic shift on Germany, at the same meeting, Roosevelt had 'twitched Lord Lothian with his confidence in Hitler 2 years ago'. Lothian now insisted that 'no one could talk with Hitler' which the President later repeated to Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, who noted it in his diary.²⁷ Rising to his theme, an impassioned Lothian advised Roosevelt that 'Britain has defended civilisation for 1000 years' and portentously (but as it would turn out accurately) that now 'the spear is falling from her hand and it is up to you to take it and carry on'.²⁸ According to FDR's recollection of the January meeting, he had asked Lothian if he still believed 'Herr Hitler is a gentleman with whom you can negotiate?' to which Lothian had 'thrown up his hands and said he had been wrong'.²⁹ So just as Vansittart enlisted former apologists for National Socialism to strengthen his arguments that the regime was now beyond redemption, Lothian had no hesitation in using his own history of appeasement and subsequent Damascene conversion to underpin the urgency of the situation. As the author James Fox has perceptively summarised, 'it was Halifax who appointed Lothian, shrewdly calculating that someone who had gone the last mile trying to get on with Hitler would be the right person to persuade an insuperably cautious, neutral America, entrenched in isolationism, that it was in its own vital interest to support Britain'.³⁰

²⁵ Barbara Rearden Farnham, *Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis*, (Princeton, 1997), p. 151.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 152.

²⁷ Butler, *Lothian*, p. 227.

²⁸ Farnham, *Roosevelt*, p. 162.

²⁹ David Reynolds, 'FDR on the British: A Postscript', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, series 3, vol. 90, (1978), p. 109.

³⁰ Fox, *Langhorne Sisters*, pp. 507-8.

‘Completely bewitched by his German friends’

While Lothian was completing his US trip, in February 1939 Conwell-Evans made his last pre-war visit to Germany. Vansittart had soon after warned him he could ‘no longer safely travel in that country’ as he was ‘under observation’ given concerns in Berlin about his ‘political reliability’ and his increasingly evident links to the German resistance.³¹ He stayed for eight days and attended the annual dinner of the DEG in Berlin at which Sir Nevile Henderson and Lord Brocket gave speeches. The German guests included State Secretary von Weizsäcker, SS Obergruppenführer Lorenz representing Ribbentrop, and other ‘representatives of Reich ministries, the Party, and the Armed Forces’. Ambassador Henderson used the DEG’s hospitality, just as he had in 1937, as an opportunity to give a widely-reported speech to promote his views on appeasement. These, Conwell-Evans (and subsequently others) have assumed, came directly from the prime minister rather than the Foreign Office which was increasingly uncomfortable with Chamberlain’s policy.³² It was such a heartfelt plea for the two countries to ‘reach an understanding and become firm friends’ that *The Times* dryly considered it delivered with a ‘frankness and directness unusual for an ambassador’. Apparently ignoring the wider diplomatic perspective and the interests of Britain’s allies and potential allies, he called for ‘Anglo-German understanding based on actual respect for the vital interests of Germany as a continental and Great Britain as an oversea power’. This thereby offered Hitler what he had always wanted – a free hand in continental Europe in return for Britain’s empire remaining unmolested. Consequently, *The Times* noted it ‘aroused great interest in political circles in Berlin’³³ while a furious Vansittart reported to Halifax that it ‘created the impression that we are again inclining to be duped’.³⁴ A clearly shocked Conwell-Evans saw that Henderson’s tone and messaging had alarmed the moderates and industrialists present who avoided the ambassador as it would be ‘dangerous to communicate anything to him’.³⁵

³¹ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 173 and Memoir, CONWELL. For more on German suspicions of Conwell-Evans see Ritter, ‘*Die erste DEG*’.

³² See Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 72.

³³ *The Times*, 16 February 1939.

³⁴ Vansittart to Halifax, 21 February 1939, FO 371/23006, TNA.

³⁵ Conwell-Evans Memorandum, 21 February 1939, C2762/53/18 TNA.

In his speech in reply, the Duke of Coburg quoted Hitler's aspiration (from his 30 January speech) that 'our two peoples' could 'co-operate in full confidence with one another' before welcoming the recently signed Anglo-German coal agreement. He concluded with the hope that 'a new and fruitful element in the cooperation between the two nations has been established' and then announced that Sir Nevile Henderson had accepted honorary membership of the DEG.³⁶ Henderson soon after briefed Chamberlain that Coburg's speech had, at the last moment been re-written 'under higher authority' and had the 'personal approval of Herr Hitler himself'. Chamberlain was hugely encouraged by this, sending his sister Hilda a précis of the duke's speech and writing that 'all the information I get seems to point in the direction of peace and I repeat once more that I believe we have at last got on top of the dictators'.³⁷ Chamberlain responded positively in a speech in Blackburn the next week emphasising the benefits to trade, industry and employment if international tension could be reduced so plans were put in place for Oliver Stanley, the president of the Board of Trade, to visit Germany to advance the cause of economic appeasement.

While in Berlin, Conwell-Evans also lunched with Ribbentrop at what was to be his last meeting with his erstwhile friend. Also present were: Lord Brocket; Hewel, Ribbentrop's liaison with Hitler; and Lorenz. Ribbentrop (whom Conwell-Evans had 'never found so difficult'), now 'rapidly succumbing to a type of megalomania', launched abuse at Roosevelt as the 'mouthpiece of Judah and the instrument of the Comintern'. Hitler, he said, knew the US president was 'the only statesman who sees through him' and was 'making preparations to bring about the Chancellor's defeat'.³⁸ Now, not even pretending to tolerate the Jews, he insisted that 'every Jew must leave Germany'. Conwell-Evans also took the opportunity of his visit to meet his German Foreign Ministry friends discreetly in a suburb of the city where they updated him that 'the decision had been taken two or three days previously to finish off Czechoslovakia'.³⁹ Having always moved comfortably in senior National Socialist circles, he was now deeply alarmed by his experiences. He noted the increasing takeover of the Foreign Ministry by Himmler's SS officers such that 'an atmosphere of terror' was hanging over its conservative members. He also highlighted the gulf

³⁶ Chamberlain to Hilda, 19 February 1939, Self, *Diary Letters*, p. 381.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 381-5.

³⁸ Conwell-Evans memorandum, 21 February 1939, C2762/53/18 TNA.

³⁹ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 173.

between Ribbentrop and Göring being widened by ‘personal jealousy and bitter rivalry’.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Ambassador Henderson had sent a telegram to Halifax following a tête-à-tête with Göring. Just like his two DEG speeches, this directly contradicted the stance taken by Vansittart, Christie and Conwell-Evans in all their reports to the Foreign Office since and including the New Year Memorandum. Despite having been away from Berlin for four months on sick leave, Henderson had reassured Göring that he did not anticipate ‘any immediate serious international trouble unless Italy made it’ and that ‘a preventative war, attributed to some British politicians, carried no weight at all with the great mass of British public opinion’. Even the arch dissembler Göring dryly commented that ‘he wished that he was as confident’.⁴¹ Clearly keen to foster calm in the Foreign Office, Henderson, less than a month before the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, confidently reassured his London masters that ‘Hitler did not ‘contemplate any adventures at the moment’ and explained that, while ‘Czechoslovakia may also be squeezed’, Hitler would not ‘force the pace unless his own hand is forced’. A furious Vansittart noted “‘squeezed” is not the word’.⁴² This gulf between the ambassador and the chief diplomatic adviser would define the debate for the rest of the year; as Cadogan noted in his diary ‘Nevile H is completely bewitched by his German friends... Van, on the contrary, out Cassandras Cassandra in a kind of spirit of pantomime’.⁴³

On 21 February Vansittart sent Halifax a memorandum from Conwell-Evans reporting on his final Berlin trip. In the covering note he insisted the latter’s advice was more credible than the ‘dangerous rubbish’ promulgated by the ambassador as ‘Professor Conwell-Evans knows Herr von Ribbentrop at least ten times as well’.⁴⁴ Conwell-Evans confirmed Hitler and Ribbentrop’s enduring hostility to Britain and their low opinion of the strength of the Anglo-French alliance. He reported on the very real economic challenges facing Germany (echoing similar reports from Christie) that had resulted in the very public nervous breakdown of Rudolph Brinckmann, vice-president of the Reichsbank. These included wage inflation and a breakdown of the national

⁴⁰ Conwell-Evans memorandum, 21 February 1939, C2762/53/18 TNA.

⁴¹ Henderson telegram no. 64, 18 February 1939, FO371/23006, TNA.

⁴² Vansittart to Halifax, 21 February 1939, FO 371/23006 TNA.

⁴³ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 24 February 1939.

⁴⁴ Vansittart to Halifax 21 February 1939, FO 371/23006, TNA; *NSB*, p. 173.

railway system. The General Staff were frustrated by Hitler's frequent changes of foreign policy. Plans to invade the Ukraine and Holland had been dropped and now 'the complete incorporation within the Reich of Bohemia and part of Moravia' resulting in the 'wiping out of Czechoslovakia as an independent state' was the highest priority.

Critically, while the sense of confusion within the Foreign Office is evident from any reading of the files, the warnings from Vansittart and others finally seemed to be gaining audience such that, as Ferris concludes, 'right or wrong, over coming months all this intelligence drove the Foreign Office, Halifax and some other ministers away from Chamberlain's policy and towards a tougher line'.⁴⁵ Unlike several of Vansittart's more hectoring memoranda that were filed but appear to have been little read, this one was clearly taken seriously. Cadogan read and annotated it carefully, particularly endorsing the criticisms of Lord Brocket. A few days later he prepared a minute on Conwell-Evans's report accepting that Hitler's intentions were 'strictly dishonourable' but questioning the value of the intelligence given Hitler's frequent changes of plan and suggesting Conwell-Evans may have been used by the Germans to spread misinformation.⁴⁶ Thus, while Vansittart was making progress in getting his interpretation of the German regime accepted, not all his colleagues were convinced all the time. In an apparent attempt to dilute the impact of Conwell-Evans's messaging, Frank Roberts (then a relatively junior official in the Foreign Office's Central Department who would later serve as British ambassador to the USSR) added a minute to the file pointedly directing his colleagues to Brocket's 'different account of the views expressed' by Ribbentrop at the lunch. This more optimistic interpretation was adopted by the prime minister who briefed the parliamentary press correspondents privately - without liaison with either foreign secretary or his office - on 9 March. It appeared the next day as press reports opining that 'the situation was brighter than it had been for some time' which Cadogan characterised as a 'rainbow story' and as 'much too optimistic' while Halifax wrote the prime minister a letter of rebuke.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, it was the well-publicised social activities of the Fellowship and the DEG during that spring that have defined its legacy more than anything from the previous years. While Conwell-Evans had, following his February visit, abandoned any attempt

⁴⁵ Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, p. 97.

⁴⁶ Cadogan Minute, 26 February 1939, FO 371/23697, TNA.

⁴⁷ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 10 March 1939.

to persuade the National Socialists to negotiate with Britain, Ernest Tennant continued his own dogged shuttle diplomacy right through to the late summer of 1939. In March, he attended a banquet in Cologne given by the city's *Bürgermeister*, Dr Schmidt, to mark the opening of the DEG branch in that city. Frank Tiarks, a director of the Bank of England, senior partner at J Henry Schröder and one of the founders of the Fellowship (see chapter one), accompanied him. Other guests included Ambassador Henderson and Count Schwerin von Krosigk, the German finance minister. Tiarks's speech, delivered in German and then translated and printed for distribution, emphasised his own close connections with the country and those between the City of London and Germany, especially the Hanseatic cities. His themes provided a convincing historical context for the economic appeasement that had driven the founding of both the Fellowship and DEG back in the Baldwin years and which, given the failure of diplomatic appeasement as practised at Munich, now seemed worthy of revival. On a different tack, Henderson's speech (which *The Manchester Guardian* noted was 'widely reported in the German press'), echoed his pacific theme at the DEG dinner in Berlin the previous month and emphasised that Britain's rearmaments were 'for defence purposes only' with no question of Britain 'using them aggressively, or to attack Germany'.

The perfect German woman

Three days later and back in London, the Fellowship welcomed Frau Scholtz-Klink, Hitler's 'perfect Nazi woman'.⁴⁸ In his New Year memorandum, Conwell-Evans had emphasised the role of Germany's womenfolk in the rise of National Socialism, crediting them with both bringing Hitler to power (as they hoped 'employment would follow for their workless husbands and sons') and also being the 'first to be critical of Hitler when the mobilisation of their menfolk was ordered in September'.⁴⁹ Now, he had assisted in the arrangements for the last major social event hosted by the Anglo-German Fellowship, a dinner at Claridge's welcoming Scholtz-Klink, the leader of the National Socialist Women's League. She had been invited to London by Lady David Douglas-Hamilton (formerly Prunella Stack) head of the Women's League of Health

⁴⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 March 1939.

⁴⁹ Vansittart memorandum to Halifax, 4 January 1939, CONWELL.

and Beauty that had been founded by her mother in 1931. Stack had the previous year married Lord David Douglas-Hamilton, scion of an enthusiastic Fellowship family headed by the Duke of Hamilton.

Scholtz-Klink was accompanied by Frau von Dirksen, the wife of the German ambassador, as well as Theo Kordt and his wife. The dinner was attended by an impressive range of predominantly female British guests (according to the *Daily Telegraph*⁵⁰) many of whom were not members of the Fellowship but were involved in leading British women's organisations. This included a selection of aristocrats including Lady Halifax, wife of the foreign secretary, the Countess of Leitrim, (representing the London Lock Hospital for Women), the dowager Countess of Airlie, (former vice-president of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service), the dowager Marchioness of Reading (chairman of the Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence and widow of the chairman of the long defunct Anglo-German Association), Lady Cynthia Colville (president of the Townswomen's Guilds), and Lady Violet Astor (controller of the County of London Auxiliary Territorial Service). The British Red Cross was represented by Dame Beryl Oliver while a host of other women's organisations sent representatives ranging from the Mothercraft Training Society and the Women's Gas Council to the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene. Scotland Yard's women's police were represented by Dorothy Peto, Britain's first female police superintendent.

Scholtz-Klink opened her speech (in German) with a pointed attack on the press, introducing herself sarcastically as the woman who 'in the opinion of various international journalists, is the leader of the most oppressed women in the world'.⁵¹ She continued by extolling the healthy virtues and employment of German womanhood under National Socialism before attacking the Weimar period and the evils of Bolshevism. Her themes were soundly Nazi, and the dinner gave her a prominent platform in central London with the cream of British society as her audience only six months before the outbreak of war. Florence Horsbrugh, the Conservative MP for Dundee (and later minister of education in Churchill's 1951 government) gave a speech

⁵⁰ *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 1939.

⁵¹ Scholtz-Kink speech at AGF Dinner, 7 March 1939, translation by Anglo-German Information Service, March 1939, Wiener Library.

in reply commending the work of women's organisations in the country, while Lady David Douglas-Hamilton spoke of those devoted to women's physical fitness.

Unusually, this Anglo-German Fellowship swansong has benefited from recent scholarly scrutiny. In an important article titled 'Peace at any Price', Julie Gottlieb and Matthew Stibbe have examined the significance of her visit in the context of 'internationalism between the wars and specifically the role of women in appeasement and pacifism'.⁵² Rightly, they have labelled the visit as 'poorly timed and highly contentious'. Indeed, the timing seems odd from both German and British perspectives. Hitler's army was days away from invading Prague and Anglo-German relations were, as explained above, at a low ebb following Kristallnacht and the evaporation of post-Munich optimism. They have suggested that Scholtz-Klink's invitation dated from December 1938 – so two months after Munich and Kristallnacht. They detailed debates among the German authorities as to whether it should go ahead in March 1939 given that the Fellowship was out of favour with the National Socialists and such soft propaganda in Britain was no longer a priority. It is now clear (from correspondence unearthed in the Pitt-Rivers archive) that the dinner had been originally scheduled for the spring or early summer of 1938 - so well before Munich - when Anglo-German relations were generally rosier. Catherine Sharpe, Pitt-Rivers's secretary and mistress, having sent a cheque for 12s 6d for the dinner in May 1938, had asked for it to be returned when notified it had been postponed (for reasons unspecified) to November.⁵³ While there is no other mention in the surviving Fellowship correspondence, the visit was evidently further postponed to March 1939. Consequently, it is now clear that this event was nearly a year in planning so was conceived in a less contentious diplomatic atmosphere from that in which it was hosted – albeit still surprising that it went ahead at all.

In the weeks following the Scholtz-Klink dinner, Anglo-German relations were redefined by a series of diplomatic events that would shape the deteriorating global situation for the remainder of the year. Following his emphatic warnings of the threats to Czechoslovakia in February, Christie met his German friends on the continent on 10

⁵² Julie V. Gottlieb and Matthew Stibbe: 'Peace at any Price: the Visit of Nazi Women's Leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink to London in March 1939 and the Response of British Women Activists', *Women's History Review*, (2016). See also Gottlieb, 'Guilty Women', pp. 61-3.

⁵³ See Sharpe to Conwell-Evans, 8 June 1938, PIRI.

March who warned him that ‘the German army would occupy Bohemia and Moravia at some suitable hour during the week March 12 to 19’.⁵⁴ He rushed back to London to deliver his report in person on 12 March. Three days later, the German army invaded the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Despite his litany of evidently poor advice, the British government (at least publicly) supported its hapless ambassador. The chancellor of the exchequer insisted in the House of Commons that same day that ‘it is no reflection on our very competent ambassador that he was unable to predict this very sudden action which depended upon the decision of a single man’.⁵⁵ Privately, Cadogan now admitted Vansittart had been right and changed his own view.⁵⁶ Two weeks later, Chamberlain announced to the House of Commons that Britain and France would guarantee protection to Poland. A week after that, Erich Kordt came to London to see his brother and, on Easter Saturday, they met Vansittart. Erich warned them about the negotiations of an alliance between Italy and Germany which was to result in the ‘Pact of Steel’ between the two countries announced three weeks later.

No Happy Returns

The elaborate celebrations of Hitler’s fiftieth birthday in April were ‘a mammoth display of the might and power of the Third Reich, calculated to show the Western powers what faced them if they should tangle with the new Germany’.⁵⁷ This was the second event that contributed to the mythology of the Anglo-German Fellowship because of the particular prominence of one visitor - Lord Brocket. Given the political mood following the occupation of Prague, attendance at Hitler’s birthday - barely a month later - was understandably controversial and provocative. France and Britain were not represented as the ambassadors of both countries (and that of the US) remained withdrawn in protest at the invasion of Prague. The British foreign secretary had instructed the chargé d’affaires not to contribute to a corps diplomatique birthday present for the Führer. Cadogan had arranged that the King would send customary congratulations but pointedly not wish the Führer ‘happy returns’.⁵⁸ Sensibly, having

⁵⁴ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 181.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 183.

⁵⁶ See Cadogan, *Diaries*, 26 March 1939.

⁵⁷ Kershaw, *Nemesis*, p. 184.

⁵⁸ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 20 April 1939.

accepted Halifax's guidance to soft-pedal the Fellowship and Vansittart's not to risk travelling to Germany, neither Conwell-Evans nor any member of the Council attended the celebrations. The two members of the Fellowship who did attend were the irrepressible Brocket (whose misreading of Hitler had so infuriated Conwell-Evans the previous September) and Major General Fuller, a noted pro-Nazi, whom were invited as 'private guests of Herr Hitler'.⁵⁹

Reporting on the celebrations, *The Manchester Guardian* described Brocket as 'vice-president of the Anglo-German Fellowship' clearly implying he was representing the Fellowship in an official capacity. While he may have assumed this title, he was never entitled to it and was not representing the Fellowship. There is no record of him ever having served on the Council nor of him (or anyone else) having the title of 'vice-president'. There is evidence of Brocket self-promoting within the Fellowship so he himself may have wilfully misled *The Manchester Guardian's* correspondent. A month previously, the Duke of Coburg had written to his sister, Princess Alice, mentioning that he had seen Brocket and that the latter was 'now Chairman' of the Fellowship.⁶⁰ Several leading historians have picked up on this presumption of office with one going so far as to describe Brocket as having 'taken over' the Fellowship.⁶¹ Given his fluent German, passion for appeasement and powerful connections - especially his friendship with the prime minister - it is certainly credible that Brocket may have been considered for a senior role in the, by now, fading Fellowship. However, aged 34, he would have been the youngest on the Council whose membership ranged in age (where known) from 36 to 74 and averaged over 56.⁶² Therefore, he would have been improbably young to be asked to preside over it. A notification about his appointment in the Fellowship's file at Companies House would have been required but was never filed. Nor is there any reference to it in the MI5 file which covers the 1938-9 period reasonably thoroughly as its agent, Friedl Gaertner, was by then well embedded. Given Halifax's guidance to Conwell-Evans, both men's dim view of Brocket and the secretary's close control over the Fellowship right up to the outbreak of war, it seems ever more unlikely.

⁵⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 April 1939.

⁶⁰ Urbach, *Go-Betweens*, p. 206.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 295. See also Self, *Diary Letters*, p. 409; Cadogan, *Diaries*, p. 168 fn; Parker, *Chamberlain*, p. 375.

⁶² Data analysis based on DOB data identified for 20 of 24 members (i.e. over 83%).

Clarifying this point is critical in assessing the Fellowship's reputation in 1939 because any of its leaders attending Hitler's birthday party would have been so provocative given the diplomatic mood. It would also imply a huge disconnect with the British government when, in fact, Council members were working closely and effectively with ministers and civil servants.

Brocket had wilfully ignored the highest British authorities by attending Hitler's party. Two weeks earlier, Alec Cadogan, head of the Foreign Office, having consulted the prime minister, had instructed him not to 'junket with Hitler on his birthday' and to advise Theo Kordt not to issue invitations to others. Undaunted and ignoring these instructions, Brocket flew out on 15 April with the Duke of Buccleuch, whose pro-Hitler enthusiasms had so embarrassed George VI. They were armed with an eccentric proposal (that had appalled Halifax) from a society vicar, the Rector of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, that Hitler should summon an international conference on his birthday. A clearly furious Cadogan noted in his diary: 'Ye Gods and little fishes! Is the world upside down?... those 2 ... must make it perfectly clear that they have no sort of official approval of any kind'.⁶³

As he reported to his sister Ida, Chamberlain was briefed by Brocket and Buccleuch on their return from Berlin. They had been 'received in the most friendly fashion' and everyone was 'cheerful and calm'. The Germans 'denied that they had broken the Munich agreement', Hitler still 'considered himself bound by the declaration' he had signed with Chamberlain at Munich and they were pleased that Henderson was being returned to Berlin as ambassador following his temporary withdrawal. Even Chamberlain was unsure he could accept this German propaganda at face value but hoped that 'Hitler has realised that he has now touched the limit and has decided to put the best face on it'.⁶⁴

Questions in the House

Possibly inspired by the negative publicity surrounding both the Scholtz-Klink dinner and Hitler's birthday, during March and April 1939, hostile questions about the Anglo-

⁶³ Cadogan, *Diaries*, 15 April 1939.

⁶⁴ Chamberlain to Ida, 23 April 1939, Self, *Diary Letters*, p. 409.

German Fellowship were for the first time asked in the House of Commons. These attempted to establish it as a 'pro-Nazi' organisation promoting German propaganda and may have seeded similar interpretations later that year in *Tory MP* and thenceforth in wider historical analysis. On the day the German army marched into Prague, William Gallacher, the only British communist MP, accused the government of betraying Czechoslovakia. He called for the government's removal, and drew the House's attention to 'the list of Members of the House, and the list of bankers and big insurance company directors who are associated with the so called Anglo-German Fellowship'.⁶⁵ A month later, Geoffrey Mander, the Liberal MP for Wolverhampton East (and later a Gollancz author of *We were NOT all wrong*) pointedly asked Sam Hoare, the Home Secretary, about German support for 'pro-Nazi organisations' such as the Fellowship and called for a committee of enquiry.⁶⁶ Hoare firmly dismissed the idea of a committee and was broadly supportive of the Fellowship. He emphasised its 'genuine object... to promote better understanding between British subjects and the German people' but did acknowledge the risk of it being 'used for other purposes' so assured Mander (truthfully, given MI5's engagement) that it was being monitored carefully. Unconvinced, Mander asked whether its 'main object' was 'pro-Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitism' provoking a furious response from two MPs who were also members of the Council - Sir Assheton Pownall and Sir Thomas Moore.

The next day, the Conservative MP Vyvyan Adams, an anti-appeaser who had opposed the Munich agreement, asked the home secretary whether the Fellowship's activities might 'result in injury to our national interests' and 'serve as a channel for Nazi propaganda?' Four days later, he asked if the home secretary had a list of its members and whether 'any surviving members of the Anglo-German Fellowship [would be] vigilantly encircled?' Sir Arnold Wilson, the Conservative MP for Hitchin (noted as an admirer of Franco and Hitler but never a member of the Fellowship) was outraged at such use of 'the Privileges of this House in order to cast innuendoes on a body which includes Members of both Houses of Parliament and a large number of men of known repute throughout the United Kingdom'. Adams's interventions were reported in both *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 15 March 1939, vol 345, c562.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 19 April 1939, vol 346, c356.

⁶⁷ *The Times*, 21 April and 25 May 1939; *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 April 1939.

Widening contacts with the Resistance

While the Fellowship was coming under attack in the House of Commons and Conwell-Evans now felt excluded from his beloved Germany, he and Christie were prioritising lines of communication between their friends in the German resistance and the British government. Between April and September 1939, as Conwell-Evans detailed in *None So Blind*, Christie's 'well-placed informants' in Germany supplied him and Vansittart with 'much detailed information about the progress of Hitler's plans'. This focused on three main themes: the Germans were convinced that Britain would not go to war to honour her diplomatic commitments in Eastern Europe given her 'many years of armed weakness and surrender to force'; Hitler planned to attack Poland in the late summer before the weather worsened; and there were very real negotiations between Germany and Russia.⁶⁸ Vansittart harassed the Foreign Office to take seriously the threat of such an alliance and to build relations with the USSR instead as urged by the 'ubiquitous Christie'.⁶⁹ As Klemperer documented, in June 1939 'the members of the German Opposition once again went into top gear in search of a dialogue with London' with Conwell-Evans central to that dialogue.⁷⁰

The intensity of these activities should put paid to any lingering suggestion that Conwell-Evans was a traitor to his country. On 15 June, he hosted a meeting between the Kordt brothers and Vansittart at his flat in Kensington. This was one of a series of clandestine meetings hosted by the secretary of the Fellowship between the Kordt brothers representing the German resistance and the British government represented by either Vansittart from the Foreign Office or Horace Wilson from 10 Downing Street. Leonard Mosley (a journalist and author who would later be the *Sunday Times* special war correspondent) interviewed Erich Kordt, Wilson and leading National Socialists for his 1969 narrative account, *On Borrowed Time: How World War Two Began*. The German opposition feared the Polish and other guarantees would provoke Hitler's paranoia of being encircled and feared the talks between Britain and the Soviets were desultory. Kordt broke the news of 'the Führer's intention to enter into a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union' and explained that, 'if the British got to the Russians first,

⁶⁸ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, pp. 192-8.

⁶⁹ Rose, *Vansittart*, p. 235 see eg. FO 371/22972, TNA.

⁷⁰ Klemperer, *Search*, p. 118.

the Führer would not move... if, however, the British failed, Hitler would feel safe'.⁷¹ Vansittart reassured the brothers that the British government was definitely concluding the agreement with the Soviet Union and they believed him.⁷²

The Fellowship's web of connections with fragmented German opposition extended beyond the Kordts. Tennant claimed he was 'never directly involved in any of the conspiratorial negotiations' but did admit he had been 'occasionally used as a sort of liaison' and that Erich Kordt had stayed at his country house. He noted ruefully that 'all these schemes and plots came to nothing because the policy decided upon by the French and British government was that of appeasement and not defiance, and when Hitler's intuition once again proved right, the most powerful opposition to him inside of Germany melted away'.⁷³ Nonetheless Conwell-Evans doggedly engaged with the German resistance supporting Christie's full-time intelligence gathering from his well-established network that has been better chronicled by historians. In June, Colonel Oster, bruised by Chamberlain's Project Z having undermined his attempted coup the previous year, sent Gerhard von Schwerin, a German General Staff officer in the Intelligence Department to reconnect with the British government and urge a stronger line with Hitler. He met influential figures in the British establishment, including the Fellowship, and secretly with Germans in London sympathetic to his cause such as the German ambassador.⁷⁴ He was monitored by the British Security Service who noted a telephone conversation with Paul Rykens of Unilever, a member of the Fellowship's Council and an intelligence source for the Foreign Office. Conwell-Evans arranged for him to meet Lord Londonderry and he also saw Lord Lothian and various MPs including RA Butler.

While Christie provided so much intelligence to Vansittart while operating in Germany under his own cover as a Germanophile businessman and distinguished airman, Conwell-Evans used the sister societies as his means of access. He remembered in his memoir that he collected 'anti-Nazis in Germany under the aegis of the Anglo-G Fellowship' even using transport kindly supplied by the Gestapo to meet contacts. One informant was Eugen Diesel, son of the eponymous engine inventor, who provided

⁷¹ Ibid; Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 226.

⁷² See Erich Kordt, *Nicht aus den Akten*, (Stuttgart, 1950), pp. 313-6.

⁷³ *TA*, p. 200.

⁷⁴ For more on the Schwerin mission see Klempner, *Search*, pp. 120-2 and Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, pp. 205-6.

Conwell-Evans with a personal profile of the regime in late 1938 which he passed to Vansittart.⁷⁵ Another friend was Eduard Brücklmeier, who had been at the London embassy with Ribbentrop and returned to Germany in 1938. He gave Conwell-Evans a debrief on the regime's post mortem on Munich and was later executed following the 1944 plot against Hitler's life.⁷⁶ Similarly, Lothian maintained close contact with the resistance through his patronage of Adam von Trott whose mission to Britain that summer has been the subject of much scholarly interest.⁷⁷

The Tennant mission

Though wary of the intelligence world, Tennant was still keen to deploy his talents as an ambulant amateur diplomat so undertook a bizarre, secret, but officially sanctioned, mission to Germany in July 1939.⁷⁸ His final attempt to secure lasting peace with Germany shows how, unlike Conwell-Evans and Christie, he still naïvely hoped that Hitler and Ribbentrop were 'anxious for friendship with this country', a claim even Horace Wilson found improbable.⁷⁹ He later explained that, 'as one of Ribbentrop's oldest friends', he had been urged by friends in Germany and Britain to attempt a final 'personal approach to see whether anything could be done to relieve the tension'. He wrote to the prime minister (with whom there is no evidence of a previous connection) enclosing an unnecessarily-detailed 23-page report on his relationship with Ribbentrop offering to try to get the German foreign minister 'away from his present feeling of hostility to Britain and back nearer to his state of mind of seeking friendship with this country which existed until the beginning of 1937'.⁸⁰ The prime minister read both letter and report and swiftly authorised a meeting between Tennant and Horace Wilson who recognised that Tennant had 'a very clear appreciation of the situation as between ourselves and Germany' but instructed him to 'make it perfectly clear' to Ribbentrop

⁷⁵ See Donald E. Thomas, Jr., 'Diesel, Father and Son: Social Philosophies of Technology', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 19, no. 3 (July 1978), pp. 376-393.

⁷⁶ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 162.

⁷⁷ See eg. Klemens Von Klemperer, 'Adam von Trott zu Solz and Resistance Foreign', *Central European History*, vol. 14, no. 4 (December 1981), pp. 351-361; Giles MacDonagh, *A Good German*, (1989).

⁷⁸ Tennant's mission has received little attention from historians but is referenced in Parker, *Chamberlain*, p. 265.

⁷⁹ See Wilson minute, 10 July 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

⁸⁰ Tennant to Chamberlain, 4 July 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

that Britain would 'fulfil its obligations' if there were any further 'attempts at over-running other States'.⁸¹

Tennant duly arrived on Wednesday 26 July and spent the afternoon and evening with Ribbentrop in an old castle about twenty-five kilometres from the Nazi summer capital at Berchtesgaden. His host, looking 'well and alert' in his customary outfit of 'white cotton knickerbocker suit and brown stockings', dispelled Tennant's concerns based on rumours circulating in London that he was out of favour with Hitler. The next day, Tennant noted the crowds gathered at train stations to watch the foreign minister and concluded he was 'much more popular' there than in London where he had become a figure of fun. Ribbentrop courteously avoided reference to world affairs until after tea but then subjected Tennant to a four-hour harangue against the Poles - 'insects who could be crushed by a small portion of the German army'.⁸² He threatened that 'if Britain wants war...she can have it at any time - Germany is ready' to which his guest responded that Britain 'was also ready and vastly stronger at sea and equal to Germany in the air'. A shaken Tennant concluded that 'war has almost been decided upon although Germany will not be the one to declare it' and travelled with the foreign minister by train to Berlin in two special coaches. They were accompanied by Walter Hewel whom Tennant had known and liked for several years and who enjoyed closer contact with the Führer that summer than most other paladins.⁸³ Hewel reassured Tennant that 'nothing is likely to happen in August' but anticipated 'a stormy autumn unless the Poles come to their senses'. He insisted Hitler still harboured 'hopes and plans for friendship with England' but required the return of former German colonies and a settlement on Poland while acknowledging that Germany was not self-sufficient in cereals and therefore a bad harvest would be economically destabilising.

This was a poignant swansong for the two friends' shared vision in founding the Fellowship. Ribbentrop acknowledged to their fellow diners Tennant's championing of 'Anglo-German understanding since 1931' and role in introducing him to Baldwin. Over dinner he explained how the Führer was excited about a factory being built to 'make wool out of potato peelings' and two secret power plants, one of which 'expects to get its power by splitting the atom'. Ribbentrop's last words to Tennant as they

⁸¹ Wilson memorandum, 10 July 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

⁸² Tennant Report to Wilson, 31 July 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

⁸³ See Kershaw, *Nemesis*, p. 199.

parted on the platform in Berlin were ‘Goodbye, and let us remember your English proverb: it is never too late to mend.’

How useful the British Government found this intelligence is hard to judge and Tennant makes no comment in his memoir. Notwithstanding the rising prospect of a European war, like most of the British Cabinet, Civil Service and the service chiefs, at this crucial point Tennant went on holiday for August (in France) leaving his contact details with 10 Downing Street.⁸⁴ By 20 August, alarmed by ‘international affairs... slowly moving towards a climax’, he wrote to RA Butler, the undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, offering to intervene with Hewel by meeting him at the upcoming party rally. Explaining they were ‘old friends’ and that Hewel wanted ‘peace as much as we do’, he pointed out that through Hewel ‘anything could be passed on unofficially to both H + von R as he is the main liaison with him’. Modestly, he admitted his offer was unlikely to be of the ‘slightest use at this late stage’. Butler seemed to agree but passed it to Wilson should he wish to follow up.⁸⁵

However, while Tennant’s influence in Downing Street had, by his own admission, faded that August, Conwell-Evans and Christie suffered no such marginalisation at the Foreign Office and remained at the centre of events up to the declaration of war. While Tennant was meeting Ribbentrop in Salzburg, Conwell-Evans, now avoiding Germany, was monitoring the Germans in London. Still welcome at the German embassy, he attended a party given by General Wenninger, the air attaché, in late July. An assistant told him bluntly that ‘the Germans would not be satisfied with Danzig’ and spoke of a ‘Fourth Partition of Poland’. Conwell-Evans warned him that would mean war, but the young German derided British military preparedness relative to the Nazi war machine. Conwell-Evans noted increased Gestapo surveillance at the embassy with a man wearing ‘the golden badge of the party’ evidently keeping a watch on Ambassador Dirksen and the others. He asked Vansittart to brief Halifax on this and emphasise the ‘extraordinary difficulties under which our friends work, and the terrible ruthlessness of the German government’ and insisted that ‘only overwhelming force can stop them’.

⁸⁴ See Tennant to Horace Wilson, 1 August 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

⁸⁵ Tennant to R. A. Butler, 20 August, 1939, PREM 1/335 C497340, TNA.

Vansittart sent this to Halifax calling it ‘foam straight from the horse’s mouth - and a horse with a red bow in its tail too!’⁸⁶

On Friday 18 August, Cadogan heard from ‘C’ (head of SIS) that Hitler had prioritised Germany’s scarce railway transport resources for the upcoming Party Rally rather than the widely rumoured mobilisation for war.⁸⁷ Any reassurance derived therefrom was undermined when Vansittart appeared at the permanent undersecretary’s house that night after dinner. He was in such a ‘high state of excitement’ that Cadogan noted he had never ‘seen a man nearer nervous collapse’. Van’s source in Germany had told him that Hitler had decided to launch his war between 25 and 28 August.⁸⁸ While suspicious of Van’s source, Cadogan realised he could not ignore it and recalled Halifax from his holiday in his beloved Yorkshire. The next day, a Saturday, Cadogan drafted a detailed letter for Halifax to send to Chamberlain based on this latest information and recalled the chief of the Air Staff, the first sea lord and the Cabinet secretary from their various holidays. The prime minister was due to return from fishing in the north of Scotland on the Monday, so the letter was dispatched to meet him en *route*. It confirmed that Hitler had been irritated by Mussolini’s counsel of calm and had now ‘pretty well decided... to take action against Poland any day after the 25th’ of that month and believed the British would not fight and, even if they did, he could ‘crush Poland before we can come in’. Halifax proposed a personal letter from Chamberlain to Hitler appealing for calm. On 22 August, news reached London of the planned treaty of non-aggression between Germany and the USSR. That day Vansittart was called in to 10 Downing Street for the first time since Cadogan’s appointment as his replacement to assist in the escalating crisis. This marked his return into the Downing Street fold and signalled the official acceptance that his advice had been broadly right for months. That night Lothian dined with Cadogan ahead of his departure finally to take up his post in Washington. Two days later, Vansittart cabled Conwell-Evans to ‘return at once’ from Switzerland where he was presumably meeting German contacts on neutral territory.⁸⁹ On 26 August the ‘ever resourceful’ Christie sent Vansittart what the latter’s biographer

⁸⁶ Conwell-Evans to Vansittart, 27 July 1939, (emphasis in the original), C10644/415/18, TNA.

⁸⁷ This was likely disinformation. See Kershaw, *Nemesis*, p. 197.

⁸⁸ This intelligence was, at the time, accurate to within hours. See Kershaw, *Nemesis*, pp. 205-15 and Rose, *Vansittart*, pp. 237-8.

⁸⁹ Telegram Vansittart to Conwell-Evans, 24 August 1939, CONWELL.

acknowledged were 'precise details about Germany's operational plans against Poland'.⁹⁰

A few days later Conwell-Evans briefed Lloyd George, Churchill and Eden at the House of Commons on the Germans' intentions. On 30 August, Theo Kordt met Vansittart at Conwell-Evans's flat for the last time bringing the document detailing the latest plans for Poland. Their meeting was interrupted by a telephone call from Theo's wife reporting that Hitler had outmanoeuvred Poland such that war was now days away and the proposals redundant. When the furious Vansittart had calmed down, the three men agreed to keep open a channel of covert communication even after the outbreak of hostilities. Kordt would send Vansittart a postcard from neutral Switzerland bearing a verse from Horace - '*Si fractus illabatur orbis impavidum ferient ruinae*' ('If the world should fall and break he will stand serene amidst the crash')⁹¹ - with the postmark indicating the location where Conwell-Evans should meet Kordt exactly two weeks after the date stamp. Four days later, Hitler's army invaded Poland. Two days after, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. Conwell-Evans immediately suspended the Fellowship's activities and, a week later, wrote to Lloyd George: 'well the worst has happened, as I feared, I only regret that we did not take a stronger line last year, as I begged the government to do' before concluding grimly that 'now we have to work to defeat the enemy'.⁹²

The wavering fortunes of the Anglo-German Fellowship in these twelve months preceding the outbreak of war set the tone for its reputation thereafter as a far-right, pro-Nazi and therefore both misguided and unpatriotic organisation. These themes would develop during the war, especially with the publication of *Tory MP*, followed by *Guilty Men* and the wider Churchillian interpretation of the appeasement years. As argued in the introduction, this reputation has dogged the Fellowship and has formed the basis for most historical interpretation ever since. Two events during the first half of the year had tainted the Fellowship's reputation in particular - the March dinner for Scholtz-Klink and the fiftieth birthday celebrations for Adolf Hitler, held a month later and attended by two leading members of the Fellowship. Henderson's two speeches at DEG dinners (in Berlin in February and Cologne in March) had been listened to by

⁹⁰ Rose, *Vansittart*, p. 238; Christie to Vansittart, 26 August 1939, CHRS.

⁹¹ Horace, *Odes*, Book III, Ode iii, l. 7.

⁹² Conwell-Evans to Lloyd George, 7 September, LG.

representatives of the Fellowship and leading members of the German government. Widely covered by the Press of both countries, both speeches were highly placatory towards Hitler at a time when support for Chamberlain's policies was falling away among both the British Cabinet and the wider public. While not responsible for the British ambassador's views, unsurprisingly his approach to appeasement was assumed to be shared by the Fellowship given the platform provided him by its sister organisation. By April 1939, questions were being asked in the House of Commons of the home secretary casting aspersions as to the purpose and loyalties of the Fellowship and its members. Despite vigorous responses from its supporters in the House, there seems little doubt that this mud stuck.

Meanwhile, most commentators have overlooked both the core activities of the Fellowship's leaders at the time and their significant ideological dislocation from the appeasement favoured by the prime minister, his closest adviser, Wilson and the ambassador Henderson. Rather than organising or attending social events, Conwell-Evans, Christie and (more clumsily) Tennant were focused on continuing to provide real, mostly accurate and timely intelligence to the heart of the British government from credible German sources especially arch-rivals Ribbentrop and Göring and their respective entourages. Between them, Conwell-Evans and Christie correctly predicted, to within days, Hitler's two greatest initiatives of the year - the invasions of Czechoslovakia in March and Poland in September - while also warning the British government of Germany's diplomatic outreach to Japan and Russia. There were, of course, other noises off predicting Hitler's next steps but none seems as accurate nor offered the quality of background analysis and colour on the National Socialist regime. In parallel, the two friends were keeping close to the struggling German resistance to Hitler and exploring opportunities with them to avoid a total war. Given the Fellowship's crumbling reputation, what is surprising is the currency this intelligence was now achieving with the British and US governments, up to and including President Roosevelt, and the extent to which Conwell-Evans, Christie and Tennant remained in the 'thick of things' right up to the outbreak of war.

So, 1939 was the defining year for the Fellowship both reputationally and because, just as for the wider policy of appeasement, its efforts reached denouement with the outbreak of war. As an agent of peace, the Fellowship had clearly failed but, as an agent of intelligence and persuasion, it can be argued it had greater success. Realising

the true nature of Hitler's regime before Kristallnacht and the consequent seriousness of the global situation, the Fellowship's leading lights had helped re-educate Halifax, Cadogan and, months later, Chamberlain and Wilson. They had influenced, albeit to no practical effect, certain of Hitler's close circle, notably Göring and Hewel, who still tentatively counselled caution to their leader as late as that August. Even Ribbentrop had taken time to listen to his old British friends from the Fellowship that year albeit he ignored all he heard. Meanwhile in the US Lothian had the president's ear and, it seems, greater credibility on German matters than has been typically acknowledged to help bring the US into the European conflict. In the centre of all this confusion stood Vansittart whose influence was, as Ferris has argued convincingly, greater following Munich than commentators including his own biographer had assumed. In the final analysis, Van had 'helped to change minds about Hitler' and, in that process, used the Fellowship's leadership, network and credibility most effectively.⁹³ The British government may not have been ready for this war with Germany but perhaps was less ill-prepared than otherwise it might have been.

⁹³ Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, p. 98.

Conclusion

War and legacy

In March 1940 during a week's sick leave with German measles, the writer Peter Fleming (elder brother to James Bond's creator Ian) wrote a short humorous novel, *The Flying Visit*, that was published that July. The story imagines the German Führer parachuting into the Oxfordshire countryside following the explosion of a 'time-bomb in a thermos flask' that had 'completely destroyed Herr Hitler's aeroplane with all of its occupants save one'.¹ Unable to speak a word of English, his only knowledge of Britain gleaned from maps, he realised he was tantalisingly close to Hymper Hall, the stately home of Lord Scunner, an ardent admirer of the Führer who had visited him in Germany a few years previously. While the conceit of a muddled and bruised Hitler stumbling through the British countryside encountering drunk party goers and fierce terriers provides splendid comic entertainment, the book's satirical twist (and prophetic insight) develops as the British government, despite enlisting Churchill's assistance, faces a propaganda dilemma as to what to do with the captured German leader.² Lord Scunner, 'more florid and less astute than his father' and also a 'bigger snob', is the stereotypical member of the Anglo-German Fellowship that had been originated by Haxey in *Tory MP* and developed by Wintringham as Major Patriot in *Your MP* and by Ishiguro as Lord Darlington in *The Remains of the Day*.³ It is this stereotype of aristocratic British support for Hitler that survived in the perception of both the British public and leaders in Germany and Russia, particularly Rudolf Hess and Joseph Stalin.

The closure of the Fellowship on 11 October 1939, six weeks following the declaration of war, marked its demise as an organisation. As Griffiths acknowledged, unlike several 'patriotic' societies that continued to operate underground, it was 'definitively disbanded' and 'none of the members of the Council appears to have undertaken pro-German activity thereafter'.⁴ In Britain, any previous association with appeasing Hitler's regime, including membership of the Fellowship, was an embarrassment. As his biographer concluded, Lord Londonderry's dealings with the Nazis left him

¹ Peter Fleming, *The Flying Visit*, (1940) p. 30.

² For more on the prophetic nature of *The Flying Visit* see Duff Hart-Davis, *Peter Fleming*, (1974), pp. 220-1 and Jo Fox, 'Propaganda and the Flight of Rudolf Hess, 1941-45', *The Journal of Modern History*, 83, March 2011.

³ Fleming, *Visit*, p. 51.

⁴ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, pp. 172-3.

‘exposed to public ignominy and without political friends, other than the few, like him out in the cold, who shared his views’.⁵ Similarly, the once cocksure Lord Brocket suffered a nervous breakdown as a consequence of the opprobrium directed at him and, too unwell to serve in the military, he spent the war on his estates. Lord Redesdale, Unity Mitford’s father, was so irked by the publicity around his daughter’s return from Germany, the letters of abuse and the restrictions on his movements, that he felt it necessary to insist in a letter to *The Times* that he wanted Britain to win the war and was not, ‘nor, never have been and not likely to become a Fascist’.⁶

The Fellowship’s shutters coming down and the scramble by former champions of Anglo-German harmony to distance themselves from such enthusiasms do not fully explain how its legacy faded so quickly and why any surviving reputation has been so distorted. During and after the war, reference to the Fellowship, including in the House of Commons, became an easy shorthand to describe pro-German appeasers with allegedly dubious motivations. In a 1944 debate on ‘war and the international situation’, Sir Geoffrey Mander, Liberal MP and author, warned the House that ‘there are other Germans who will come along with their smiles saying in a friendly spirit, "after all, we are relations... let us be good friends"’. He reminded his colleagues that ‘they tried that before the war with some success with Members of this House who were taken in and with others who were not’ before remembering ‘the Anglo-German Fellowship, which was *nothing but a weapon of German propaganda and has now been exposed to the world*’.⁷ Nearly sixty years later, in the House of Commons debate on Iraq and the controversial weapons of mass destruction, Mike Gapes, a Labour MP, echoed Mander’s theme by using it as justification for the military intervention. He reminded the House that ‘we no longer quibble about whether it was right to go to war in Poland... in the 1930s, *140 Tory MPs lined up with Adolf Hitler in the Anglo-German Fellowship*’.⁸

Despite the insinuations levelled in both houses of parliament and elsewhere, the Fellowship was never credibly accused of treachery, disloyalty to the Crown nor of harbouring a fifth column. Nonetheless, although its pro-German social events ceased

⁵ Kershaw, *Making Friends*, p. 302.

⁶ *The Times*, 6 March 1940.

⁷ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 28 September 1944, vol 403 c510 (emphasis added).

⁸ *Ibid.* 4 June 2003, vol 406 c216 (emphasis added).

immediately, those other activities undertaken by its principal players that defined it over the previous two years continued well into the war. Those arguing for peace continued to argue, those supporting the Nazi cause continued to support and those conspiring with the German resistance continued to conspire. The real-world inspirations for lords Scunner and Darlington were galvanised into action by the declaration of war. Several members of the House of Lords pressed their fellow peer, Lord Halifax, to sue for peace with Hitler. This aristocratic ‘peace lobby’, while neither focussed nor precisely defined, centred on the Duke of Westminster who, in September 1939, hosted meetings at Bourdon House, his Mayfair home, to promote the cause of a negotiated peace.⁹ Several ennobled Fellowship alumni, including lords Londonderry, Arnold (a former Council member), Brocket, Noel-Buxton, Mottistone and Sempill attended alongside such a sweep of aristocratic non-members, including the Duke of Buccleuch, that Halifax’s biographer wryly concluded that ‘it is hard to escape the conclusion that a pro-peace Cabinet might have been the most aristocratic in composition since that of the Duke of Grafton’ in the 1760s.¹⁰ Londonderry tried to persuade the retired Stanley Baldwin to intervene with Hitler to propose peace terms possibly by travelling to Berlin. While far-fetched, the suggestion (ignored by Baldwin as before) seems less eccentric than it might, given Hitler’s fascination with the former British prime minister and the extensive efforts over the previous seven years, detailed in chapters three and six, to affect a meeting between the two statesmen.

Regulation 18B

In parallel to these peace-mongering lords, the other group campaigning for the cessation of hostilities were the fellow-travelling sharks examined in chapter five. Griffiths has chronicled their ‘immediate flurry of disorganised activity’ with a frantic round of secret meetings and furtive communications that were monitored by MI5.¹¹ These sought to bring together the relics of various pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic groups including Mosley’s BUF, Domvile’s The Link and Ramsay’s Right Club. Attendees

⁹ See Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 200-215 *et passim*; Kershaw, *Making Friends* p. 208; Urbach, *Go-Betweens*, p. 294.

¹⁰ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 179.

¹¹ Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 217.

included former Fellowship members such as Major-General Fuller, Major Yeats-Brown, Lady Redesdale, Professor Laurie and Richard Findlay.

These activities, at best unpatriotic, at worst treasonous, ended abruptly with the widespread arrests initiated under Defence Regulation 18B in late May 1940. The emergency powers allowed for the suspension of *habeas corpus* and the indefinite detention of people suspected of being sympathetic to National Socialism. Membership of the BUF was the most common reason for detention. A total of 1,769 individuals were detained, the majority between May and July 1940.¹² Past membership of the Fellowship was not, in itself, grounds for detention but prominent members whose pro-Nazi activities had taken them beyond the Fellowship were detained. Barry Domville and his wife were well-publicised detainees in July 1940 (and he the only former Council member to be arrested) and were incarcerated for three years. CE Carroll, the secretary of The Link and editor of the *Anglo-German Review*, was detained that summer and only released in November 1943. The trouble-makers that plotted against the Fellowship's leadership in 1937 were rounded up, including Pitt-Rivers, his two sponsors for membership (Luttman-Johnson and Findlay) along with Elwyn Wright, its hate-fuelled former secretary. Catherine Sharpe (Pitt-Rivers's girlfriend and Conwell-Evans's scourge) avoided detention having left Pitt-Rivers in mid-1939 and married a doctor she had had met on the boat to South Africa. Margaret Bothamley and Dorothy Eckersley, prominent lady 'sharks', avoided detention by escaping to Germany.

Other members included Viscountess Downe, Queen Mary's former lady-in-waiting and friend, General Fuller and Sir Jocelyn Lucas MP, fall into a grey area of avoiding detention, while perhaps deserving it, because of their establishment credentials. Griffiths identified 'considerable reluctance... to imprison prominent, usually titled people', but quantifying how much enthusiasm for National Socialism merited detention was an imperfect process and several of the best-connected were detained including Mrs Winston Churchill's two cousins (Pitt-Rivers and Diana Mosley) much

¹² For more on 18B see Simpson, *Odious* and Aaron L. Goldman, 'Defence Regulation 18B: Emergency Internment of Aliens and Political Dissenters in Great Britain during World War', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2 (May 1973), pp. 120-136.

to the amusement of her children.¹³ There had even been rumours in the House of Lords that Londonderry might be detained.¹⁴

Vansittartism

Conwell-Evans, Christie and their patron Vansittart had nothing to do with either the aristocratic peace initiatives floating around the House of Lords nor the manoeuvrings of the so-called patriotic societies. With the conviction of the convert, Conwell-Evans was furious with his old boss Noel-Buxton, writing angrily that ‘how anybody can talk of negotiating with Hitler passes [his] comprehension’ and insisting that a truce would give the Germans, who are ‘bullies in victory, and whine in defeat’, the respite needed to launch an attack on Britain.¹⁵ The next day he wrote in similar vein to Lloyd George (who had just called in the House of Commons for a negotiated peace) insisting that ‘Hitler’s chief aim is to bring down the British Empire’ and arguing that the former prime minister’s attitude would only help Hitler ‘undermine that resolution of the British and French peoples to defeat him’.¹⁶ In 1940 he burned his once-treasured signed photograph of the Führer.

Conwell-Evans’s fury with former clients underscores his conversion from Britain’s ‘most ardent Germanophil’ to passionate proponent of ‘Vansittartism’.¹⁷ Defined by Van’s biographer as ‘an extreme and obsessive anti-Germanism’, this ideology blamed the war not just on National Socialism and Hitler’s leadership, but on an innate German, or more precisely Prussian, bellicosity that dated back over centuries.¹⁸ Christie, who had lived in Germany since the 1920s, now defined National Socialism as the ‘last and most hideous manifestation of the Prussian Militarism’ and Vansittart was convinced that ‘eighty percent of the German race are the political and moral scum of the earth’ insisting that it was necessary to ‘eradicate not only Hitlerism, but Prussianism’.¹⁹

¹³ Griffiths, *What did...*, p. 218; see Colville, *Diaries*, p. 303.

¹⁴ See Simpson, *Odious*, pp. 207-9.

¹⁵ Conwell-Evans to Buxton, 13 October 1939, CONWELL.

¹⁶ Conwell Evans to Lloyd George, 14 October 1939, LG.

¹⁷ Vansittart memorandum to Halifax, 30 August 1938, VNST.

¹⁸ Rose, *Vansittart*, p. 247.

¹⁹ Christie note, 26 September 1939, CHRS; Rose, *Vansittart*, pp. 240-2.

Vansittartism reached a wide audience when the chief diplomatic adviser was invited by Duff Cooper, the minister of information, to broadcast a series of lectures on the BBC Overseas Programme that was successfully published by Hamish Hamilton as *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* in early 1941. Though reflecting and fuelling popular anti-German sentiment, contemporary commentators were disturbed by the splenetic tone of his attack and there were hostile questions in the House of Commons and pamphlets published questioning the implications of his argument after the cessation of hostilities and the propriety of a senior civil servant making such charged broadcasts.²⁰

Vansittartism contributed both to the Fellowship's fast-fading legacy and to its historiography as developed through the Gollancz and Churchillian interpretations. Conwell-Evans and Christie made no mention of the Fellowship in *None so Blind* and Vansittart distanced himself - albeit still loyal to his friends behind it. In a House of Lords debate on enemy propaganda in February 1945, following the Yalta Conference and against the background of rising Allied military successes, he disparaged the Fellowship 'as if this organisation had been a dangerous one, and as though all those belonging to it should come under suspicion'.²¹ Stung by this assertion, Tennant wrote to *The Times* pointing out, correctly, that the future of the Fellowship had been reviewed after Munich but claiming, incorrectly, that Vansittart had advised against closure. Having checked with Conwell-Evans, Vansittart explained that it was Halifax, as foreign secretary, who had given the stay of execution. While factually correct, Van's posturing seems pusillanimous given how closely he had worked with the Fellowship's leaders, between Munich and the invasion of Poland, to leverage its networks to gather intelligence on the German regime.

The outbreak of war had done little for the employment prospects of the Fellowship's most vocal supporters. Lord Lothian was a notable exception, arriving as ambassador in Washington on 29 August to news of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and absorbing himself in bettering relations with President Roosevelt, the State Department and the American press. *The New York Times* credited him with substantial success concluding that

²⁰ Eg. Parliamentary Peace Aims Group, *Germany's Record: A reply to Lord Vansittart* (ND) and Heinrich Fraenkel, Fabian Society, *Vansittart's Gift for Goebbels: A German Exile's Answer to Black Record* (1941).

²¹ Tennant to *The Times*, 28 February 1945.

‘American sentiment [in September 1939] was generally favourable to the cause he advocated, yet without Lothian’s earnestness and ability, the confidences he won and the energy he expended tirelessly, America’s contribution might have been substantially less’.²²

While Lothian was settling into Washington, Christie proposed to Vansittart the establishment of a ‘German Advisory Committee’ to focus their shared expertise and intelligence on Germany to support the British war effort and salvage something from the ashes of the networks he, Conwell-Evans and Vansittart had nurtured. Suggesting it could be accommodated at the Fellowship’s now redundant offices in Chelsea, its purpose was to design propaganda that should be ‘tuned flawlessly to the different moods and mentalities of all classes in Germany’ and would operate under complete secrecy. He proposed staffing it with one or two Germans of ‘proved ability and reliability’ (paid no more than £50 per month) overseen by a ‘mixed committee of British and Germans’ with Conwell-Evans as the obvious candidate as secretary and Vansittart as chairman.²³ From the Germans, he recommended Dr Hermann Rauschning and Dr Otto Strasser. Rauschning was a conservative former president of the Danzig Senate who had fallen out with the NSDAP in 1934 and was then living in Paris. Christie thought he had a ‘first class brain’ and a ‘close personal knowledge of Hitler and the Nazi Party’. An early member of the NSDAP, Strasser had been prominent within its left wing but was expelled in 1930. His brother had been murdered during the Night of the Long Knives in July 1934. The scheme seems never to have gone past concept stage although Vansittart later advised Hugh Dalton, the minister of economic warfare, and the two Germans became prolific propagandists against Hitler with Rauschning publishing *Hitler Speaks: a Series of Political Conversations with Adolf Hitler on his Real Aims* in 1940 and Strasser publishing *The Gangsters around Hitler* in 1942.

Evidently anxious to find a wartime role, three weeks previously Conwell-Evans had written to Lloyd George asking to be recommended for a job with Winston Churchill who was ‘so keen and imaginative’ and ‘ought to have a political secretary who is an expert on contemporary Germany’. He reminded Lloyd George that there was ‘hardly

²² *The New York Times*, 13 December 1940.

²³ Christie to Vansittart, 28 September 1939, CHRS.

anyone in England who knows more about the inside of things in Germany’, an immodest but not ridiculous claim to which Vansittart would be able to testify.²⁴ Similarly, Tennant persuaded his cousin Margot (widow of the former prime minister Asquith), for whom he was a trustee, to write to ‘dearest Winston’ two weeks after he was appointed prime minister to find a role for Tennant.²⁵ In October 1939, Tennant was sent by the Ministry of Supply to Norway to report on the ferro-alloy industry, on which Britain was dependent for the manufacture of steel and armaments. The trip was not without drama as the German legation heard of his mission, so he went home by sea under an assumed name. He returned in March 1940 by plane a fortnight before Hitler invaded Norway and Denmark.

October in Switzerland

While the German Advisory Committee came to nothing, Conwell-Evans and Christie’s liaison work with the German resistance stepped up a gear once war was declared. Still under the direction of Vansittart, whose star in the Office had risen now his worst fears had proven well-founded, their efforts had the prime minister’s blessing. Though convinced there should be no negotiated peace with Hitler, their German network, especially the Kordt brothers and the ‘South German’ group cultivated by Christie, now became the conduit for intense discussions around ‘the possibility of getting rid of Hitler and coming to terms with an anti-Nazi Government under Goering on the basis of restoring independence to Poland and Bohemia, disarming all round, and agreeing to leave inviolate the unity and boundaries of Germany proper’.²⁶

Having accepted Britain’s declaration of war in person, Theo Kordt had left Carlton House Terrace for Berlin with a letter from Christie offering ‘deeply felt *Auf Wiedersehens*’, thanking him ‘a thousand times for all your noble work’ and assuring him ‘come what may, we shall regard you always as a great gentleman and a great Christian’.²⁷ The maintenance of a secure channel of communication between the resistance and London being his highest priority, Kordt had arranged to be posted to

²⁴ Conwell-Evans to Lloyd George 7 September 1939, (emphasis in the original), LG.

²⁵ Oxford to Churchill, 25 May 1940, (emphasis in the original), CHAR.

²⁶ Colville, *Diaries*, 25 October 1939.

²⁷ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 246.

Bern in Switzerland barely a week after the declaration of war. Here, his ‘primary object [was to] to find out what the British attitude would be in the event of an internal *coup*’.²⁸ So, following the protocol agreed with Vansittart and Conwell-Evans at their final peacetime meeting at Cornwall Gardens, his wife sent Lady Vansittart a postcard of the *Zum Weissen Kreuz*, a small hotel in Interlaken, with a message quoting Horace.

This was the signal for Conwell-Evans to find his way to Switzerland. As Halifax’s biographer drolly concluded, there were, by then, ‘so many amateur and professional contacts between the protagonists in the various neutral countries that one is left with the impression that it must have been hard to get to the bar in any Swiss café during the Phoney War for all the spies discussing peace terms with one another’.²⁹ However, it is reasonable to suggest that the series of meetings held by Conwell-Evans and Christie with the plotters in Switzerland had a greater chance of fruition than most of these amateur intelligence enterprises. Although Conwell-Evans’s account made no mention of Christie joining his trip to Switzerland, it is now clear from recently-opened MI5 files that the two friends travelled together with Conwell-Evans staying in Lausanne to meet Kordt and Christie meeting up with his South German group including Prince Max von Hohenlohe. Their joint enterprise was sponsored by Vansittart and watched closely by 10 Downing Street with Jock Colville, then an assistant private secretary to the prime minister, recording their progress in his diary. Intriguingly, given that the source of funding for his numerous peacetime trips to the Continent remains unclear, Conwell-Evans noted in his handwritten memoir that his expenses were paid by HM Government albeit with officials grumbling to Vansittart that he was overspending.

Much to Vansittart’s annoyance, their first attempt to board an Air France flight from Heston Aerodrome to Paris on 23 October was frustrated by Police Sergeant Ashwell-Cooke who detained them and confiscated their papers as they did not have clearance from the security services. Interestingly, given that his association with the Fellowship has received so little attention then or since, the authorities noted that Christie was ‘a member of Chatham House and Anglo-German Fellowship’. They noted to MI5 that the purpose of his visit was ‘to discuss some sort of *coup d’état* in Germany which would result in the settling up of a Government from which the leading Nazis would be

²⁸ Hoffmann, *German Resistance*, p. 119.

²⁹ Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 182.

excluded'.³⁰ Presumably after intervention by Vansittart to confirm their official clearance, the pair were granted leave the next day for a three-day trip. Conwell-Evans stayed in a hotel in Lausanne for a series of clandestine meetings with Kordt in Berne. He had brought a hurriedly-handwritten note that was later produced as evidence at the Nürnberg trials and reproduced in facsimile in Kordt's book. This included extracts from a recent speech by Neville Chamberlain copied out from Chamberlain's handwritten original in Vansittart's room at the Foreign Office. Assured by Van that it 'had been specially written... with the conspirators in mind', Conwell-Evans still thought it 'too vague' but it nonetheless convinced the plotters that the British government would negotiate peace terms with a future German government led by moderates.³¹ Probably overestimating the extent of prime ministerial blessing, Theo's wife took the note to brother Erich in Berlin. Recognising it as a 'trump card which would remove the inhibitions of the General Staff', Erich shared it with fellow conspirators, Colonel Oster and General Beck, whose attempted coup in autumn 1938 had been so frustrated by Chamberlain's direct intervention with the Führer.³²

Meanwhile, Christie had admitted to the airport police that the purpose of his visit was to meet with Prince Max von Hohenlohe (codenamed 'Vanloo') and Vansittart's biographer assumed he also met others from his South German group including: Dr Joseph Wirth, the former German Chancellor; Fritz Thyssen, the industrialist; Hermann Rauschnig, whom he had proposed for the German advisory committee; and his most valued informant, Hans Ritter (aka 'Kn'), all of whom had sought refuge in neutral Switzerland. Hohenlohe made specific peace proposals and while the Foreign Office was (according to Colville) 'rather defeatist about the prospect of securing peace', Chamberlain was prepared to accept most of his nine-point plan, subject to Hitler playing 'no part in the proposed new order' and the addition of 'some safeguards for the Jews and the Austrians'.³³ A few days later, Colville recorded further discussions with Hohenlohe who had wanted to come to England but Christie was sent to Holland instead. Now the barrier to progress was Vansittart and Halifax who refused to negotiate with Christie's friend Göring. Two months later, Colville remained

³⁰ Memorandum by P. M. Burke, 23 January 1943, KV2 3289, TNA.

³¹ Conwell-Evans handwritten memoir, CONWELL.

³² See Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, pp. 256-8.

³³ Colville, *Diaries*, 29 October 1939.

cautiously optimistic that ‘all hope of engineering an internal *coup d'état* does not seem to have been abandoned’.³⁴

Emboldened by the messaging from Conwell-Evans, Erich had embarked on a plan for he himself to assassinate Hitler with a bomb supplied by his friend Oster, who had access to the counter-intelligence explosives laboratory. Of the several assassination attempts on the Führer, this ranks amongst the less hare-brained and might have succeeded but for two events in early November. A bomb attack at a Munich beer cellar where Hitler was celebrating the 1923 putsch resulted in a tightening of his personal security. The disastrous Venlo Incident when two British intelligence agents, believing they were negotiating with the German resistance, were duped by undercover Gestapo agents and abducted into Germany, marked the end of the Foreign Office’s patience with such Continental adventures. Leading historians have agreed that Erich’s assassination plan, ‘by virtue of the total unexpectedness of such an assault inside Hitler’s heavily-guarded inner sanctum’ had stood ‘every chance of succeeding.’³⁵

Despite the many peace proposals that found their way to the sceptical British Foreign Office, there had been an openness to those connected with the ‘moderates’ represented by the Kordts through Conwell-Evans and Christie, who remained respected by the Office and Downing Street. Halifax told Lothian in late 1939 that it would be advantageous if the British government ‘could formulate objectives that would be acceptable to any “moderate” section in Germany that might have any chance of overthrowing the present regime’.³⁶ Kordt and Conwell-Evans had further clandestine meetings in December, January and February with a fourth planned for April 1940 but cancelled following the German invasion of Norway. Meanwhile, Conwell-Evans continued to have access to the foreign secretary, supplying him with intelligence following his final trip to the Continent with Christie in March 1940.³⁷ None of these intelligence missions bore fruit but the two friends remained in close touch with their spymaster, Vansittart. A year later, reflective ahead of retirement, he wrote to Conwell-Evans to celebrate his becoming ‘a free man, able to speak and to write... without the handicap which officialdom necessarily imposes’. Admitting that having his ‘advice

³⁴ Ibid. 29 December 1939.

³⁵ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 259. See also Hoffmann, *German Resistance*, p. 136 and pp. 255-7.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 263.

³⁷ See Conwell-Evans to Halifax, 21 March 1940, FO 800/312, TNA.

rejected for eight years and neglected for three' had not been pleasant, he insisted he would continue 'more than ever' to need Conwell-Evans and Christie's collaboration.³⁸

And, despite their differences dating back to before Munich, Conwell-Evans remained in touch with the discredited, and now ill, Neville Henderson. In June 1940, a few days after German troops marched into Paris, the former ambassador wrote to Conwell-Evans concluding that 'France is on the verge of collapse and surrender, and it is Britain alone at last'. Having just completed *Failure of a Mission*, his *mea culpa* autobiography, and still seeking to justify his diplomatic strategies in Berlin, he offered to meet his critic and insisted that it had been 'useless to try to prevent a certain measure of German predominance in Eastern Europe' and that 'by turning German eyes eastward we should keep her from turning them westward'.³⁹

The Flying Visit

Of all the nobles calling for a negotiated peace with Hitler, it was the Marquess of Clydesdale whose involvement with the Fellowship and entanglement in the Hess affair is most pertinent to the Fellowship's wartime legacy especially in German, American and Russian eyes. A month after the outbreak of war, Clydesdale had laid out his assessment of the situation in a letter published in *The Times* and broadcast on German radio that night. It has been claimed Lord Halifax advised on the drafting but, either way, his biographer concluded that 'for all its good intentions, [it] betrayed a certain naivety'.⁴⁰ Speaking on behalf of his generation (he was thirty-six), he started on a firm line: 'if Hitler is right when he claims that the whole of the German nation is with him in his cruelties and treacheries... then this war must be fought to the bitter end'. But offering an appeasing olive branch, he acknowledged the 'injustices done to the German people... after the last war' and proposed a 'just and comprehensive peace', including territorial concessions, 'provided that *Lebensraum* is not made the grave of other nations' and that 'no race will be exposed to being treated as Hitler treated the Jews on November 9 of last year'.⁴¹

³⁸ Vansittart to Conwell-Evans, 29 May 1941, CONWELL.

³⁹ Henderson to Conwell-Evans, 16 June 1940, CONWELL.

⁴⁰ Mark Peel, *The Patriotic Duke*, (2013), p. xiv.

⁴¹ Clydesdale to *The Times*, 6 October 1939.

Eighteen months later, on the night of 10 May 1941, Clydesdale was paid a visit as extraordinary as Fleming's comedy, with the arrival by parachute of 'Hauptmann Alfred Horn' soon identified as Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, at a farm just south of Glasgow. As in *The Flying Visit*, the German leader asked his captors to take him to the nearby stately home of an aristocratic sometime friend of Germany - in this case, Dungavel House, seat of the Douglas-Hamiltons. A few days later, Kim Philby, by then working for both MI6 and Soviet intelligence, was the first to report the incident to the Russian authorities.

The far from fully-explained Hess affair suggests how the legacy of the Anglo-German Fellowship, despite it being defunct for two years, still resonated in both Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR. Some commentators have acknowledged echoes of the Fellowship, but again it has not been properly explored. While attention has focussed on its connections with Ribbentrop and Göring, the Fellowship also had a powerful friend in Rudolf Hess. Scribe for *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's most constant companion, Hess was appointed deputy Führer in 1933 and was third in the NSDAP hierarchy after Göring and Hitler. He befriended Tennant, who had proposed that he should visit Britain back as 1934 and supported the establishment of both the DEG and the Fellowship.⁴² Unlike most of the German leadership, Hess was an internationalist. His parents, whom Tennant also met, had lived in Egypt where Rudolf had been born, so he was not as 'completely lacking in knowledge of conditions outside of Germany as were most of the Nazis'.⁴³ He had met most of the Fellowship's leaders and supported meetings between Hitler and British visitors including Lothian in January 1935 and Londonderry when attending the Winter Olympics. Guest of honour at the DEG opening ceremony in January 1936, photographs show him leading the party into dinner alongside the Duke of Coburg and the British ambassador, Sir Eric Phipps.

Clydesdale and his family had been associated with the Fellowship for at least five years before Hess's startling arrival at their ancestral home. He came to Berlin for the Olympics with two brothers and a sister (with each being provided with a chauffeured car by the German government) keen to investigate the rearming of the German air force. There, he befriended Albrecht Haushofer, lauded by MI5 as 'the greatest

⁴² See Memorandum by J. V. Perowne for the Foreign Secretary, 19 December 1934, TNA.

⁴³ Tennant, *TA*, p. 235.

authority in Germany on the British Empire’, and the son of Karl Haushofer, Hess’s former professor at the German Academy.⁴⁴ As the inventor of ‘Geo-Politics’, Haushofer senior has been credited with developing the intellectual framework of *lebensraum* as explored in *Mein Kampf*. A long-term admirer of Britain, Karl was a founding board member of the DEG and was awarded honorary life membership of the British Legion. By 1934, Albrecht was Hess’s personal adviser and special adviser to both Hitler and the Dienststelle Ribbentrop.

During the Berlin Olympics, Albrecht had introduced Clydesdale to Göring who arranged for General Milch to give the marquess a tour of the Luftwaffe allowing him to size up Germany’s air power covertly. Albrecht thereafter stayed with Clydesdale when he visited England and a friendship blossomed between the two men that was monitored by British intelligence for four years before Hess’s arrival in Scotland. Clydesdale introduced Albrecht to the foreign secretary who arranged for the Foreign Office to include him as an intelligence asset.

Whether or not formally a member of the Fellowship, Clydesdale attended Anglo-German events including the von Blomberg reception and Ribbentrop’s housewarming. In early 1939, the Fellowship, with ‘strong support’ from the British Council, approached him to give a series of lectures on ‘aviation and physical training and the Everest flight’ in Germany. The chief of the Air Staff advised Clydesdale that ‘there is no objection to your giving these lectures, in fact we welcome the idea’ and offered to second the director of intelligence to assist.⁴⁵ Abandoned due to escalating diplomatic tensions, the proposal indicates nonetheless how the RAF and the British Council still saw the Fellowship as an appropriate conduit for a propaganda exercise masquerading as a friendship visit.

In July 1939, Albrecht, acting ‘clandestinely for von Hassell’s opposition circle’, sent Clydesdale a letter that he showed first to his friend Winston Churchill and then to Halifax and the prime minister.⁴⁶ Both ardent anglophiles, the Haushofers had been sceptical of Hitler from the outset and Albrecht had used the Olympics to recruit sympathetic British friends. He was convinced that war loomed and that ‘any date after

⁴⁴ MI5 Notes, 22 November, 1940, KV-2-1684, p. 3, NA.

⁴⁵ James Douglas-Hamilton, *The Truth about Rudolf Hess*, (Edinburgh, 1993) p. 90.

⁴⁶ Padfield, *Hess, Hitler & Churchill*, p. 148.

the middle of August may prove to be the fatal one'. Convinced that Germany 'cannot win a short war and... cannot stand a long one.' Bravely and perceptively, he had advised Ribbentrop and Hitler over a year before that the British suspected 'a new imperialism' behind National Socialism and predicted that their government would 'have the whole nation behind it' to launch 'a crusade for the liberation of Europe from German militarism'.⁴⁷

Among the Britons that Hess had encountered, both from the Fellowship and elsewhere, the obvious question is why he choose Clydesdale. By then Duke of Hamilton and a senior RAF officer on active service, he was no longer an MP and had no direct association with 'men such as RA Butler, Sir Samuel Hoare or Lord Halifax, the sort of high ranking politicians who believed it would be best to make peace with Germany'.⁴⁸ Beyond Hamilton's involvement with the Fellowship, it was the duke's wider social and political connections, coupled with his friendship with the Haushofer family, that explains the choice. Albrecht had proposed Hess approach Hamilton with peace feelers, albeit he suggested first trying ambassadors sympathetic to appeasement such as Hoare and Lothian. He emphasised the duke's royal connections to Hess who, like Ribbentrop, underestimated the limitations of the British constitutional monarchy and confused social standing with political power. In fine 'ambulant amateur' tradition, by choosing Hamilton rather than the ambassadors, Hess was seeking 'to bypass the diplomatic circles serving Churchill's government which had proved impervious to all previous peace feelers'.⁴⁹ Hamilton had been appointed lord steward of the royal household in 1940, following the dismissal of the Duke of Buccleuch for joining Hitler's birthday party, and was hereditary keeper of Holyroodhouse, the monarch's official residence in Scotland. On hearing of Hess's arrival, George VI warily noted the irony of the situation, wondering: 'perhaps the post of Lord Steward is bewitched or is it Germanised? Hess might have landed two miles from Drumlanrig [Buccleuch's castle] instead'.⁵⁰

In the fortnight following Hess's arrival, Hamilton's involvement brought unwelcome attention from the British press and questions in the House of Commons. The US press

⁴⁷ Stafford, *Flight*, p. 81.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 129.

⁴⁹ Padfield, *Hess, Hitler & Churchill*, p. 100.

⁵⁰ Deborah Cadbury, *Princes at War*, (2015) p. 195.

had no hesitation in connecting Hess, Hamilton and the Fellowship. *The New York Times* 'revealed' that the duke had 'belonged to the now condemned Anglo-German Fellowship Association [sic]' albeit accepting that there was no indication that he was 'connected in any way with a peace movement'.⁵¹ Two years later, in a sensationalist article alleging his flight was authorised by the Führer and no surprise to the British authorities, *The American Mercury* explained that his intended audience was not the British government but 'a group of influential Britishers, among them the Duke of Hamilton, who belonged to the since discredited Anglo-German Fellowship Association [sic]'.⁵²

So, while an odd choice, the young duke did have the access for which Albrecht and Hess hoped. In his *History of the Second World War* Churchill remembered the call from Hamilton on the evening of Sunday 11 May and, once assured 'the matter was one of the urgent cabinet importance', agreed for him to come at once.⁵³ Similarly, Albrecht's confidence that Hamilton could arrange an audience with the monarch proved merited, as he lunched with the king five days later to discuss the recent arrival.

The Russian Reaction

The reaction of the Russians to Hess's flight to Scotland offers the opportunity to draw together these loose threads connecting the Fellowship, Hess, the Haushofers, Hamilton and Philby for the first time. As Gorodetsky has summarised, 'the outstanding and lasting feature of Soviet foreign policy in the interwar period... was a pathological suspicion that Germany and Britain might close ranks and mount a crusade against Russia'.⁵⁴ *The New York Times* reported that 'British sources' had 'intimated that Herr Hess in deciding to fly to the enemy, felt that Germany should make peace with Britain rather than cooperate with the Bolsheviks'.⁵⁵ Stafford has emphasised it was the Russians who originated the conspiracy theories about Hess, 'running strongly ever since', but it was Philby who, as the first to report to Moscow the arrival of the deputy

⁵¹ *The New York Times*, 14 May 1941.

⁵² *The American Mercury*, May 1943.

⁵³ Churchill, *Second World War*, vol 3, p. 43.

⁵⁴ Gabriel Gorodetsky, 'The Hess affair and Anglo Soviet relations on the eve of "Barbarossa"', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 101, no. 399 (April 1986), p. 405.

⁵⁵ *The New York Times*, 14 May 1941.

Führer in Scotland, promoted the spectre of Anglo-German alliance that so influenced Stalin's thinking for several years.⁵⁶ As Haslam has concluded in his recent history of Soviet intelligence, 'all too conscious that perfidious Albion was perpetually up to no good, Stalin became obsessed with uncovering the truth behind the Hess affair'.⁵⁷

Philby, whose analysis of the Fellowship had, as Urbach has argued, 'raised fears in Moscow', prodded his masters in Moscow by telling them that Hess 'might become "the centre of an intrigue" to conclude a compromise peace, one serving both the peace party in England and Hitler'.⁵⁸ Lord Beaverbrook, the press baron, further fuelled Stalin's paranoia at a dinner in October 1941, supplying a transcript of his interview with Hess that developed into an article in *Pravda* that was broadcast on Moscow radio. Both contemporaries and historians typically associated this pro-German element with Cliveden, which can, as argued in chapter four, in this context be taken as a proxy for the Fellowship. Maisky, the Russian ambassador, had been tasked with watching 'the so-called "Cliveden" elements in the government while encouraging the anti-appeasers, notably Eden and Churchill' while Oleg Tsarev, the former KGB officer turned historian, similarly associated Hamilton with the 'so-called Cliveden set'.⁵⁹

Intentionally or not, the Germans had also helped to promote this bogey of an Anglo-German alliance even after war had been declared. Valentin Berezhkov, the Soviet first secretary, was astonished to see 'the reappearance of pre-war pamphlets entitled "German-British Friendship"' in the waiting room at the German Foreign Ministry. Meanwhile, the British Foreign Office used Hess's flight to manipulate the Russians: 'a whisper was made to the Russians through covert channels that Hess's flight indicated growing dissatisfaction in Germany over Hitler's policy of collaboration with the Russians'.⁶⁰

From such mischief-making are myths built. Churchill, during his visit to Russia in 1944, was 'astonished to find Stalin still convinced that Hess had been involved in organising a joint British-German crusade against Russia which had "miscarried"'.⁶¹ Back in Britain, the Communist Party was able to use these Soviet-inspired conspiracy

⁵⁶ Stafford, *Flight*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Jonathan Haslam, *Near and Distant Neighbours*, (Cambridge, 2015), p. 113.

⁵⁸ Urbach, *Go-Betweens*, p. 202; Stafford, *Flight*, pp. 41-2.

⁵⁹ Stafford, *Flight*, p. 39; Gorodetsky, 'The Hess Affair', p. 410.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 413-4.

⁶¹ Churchill, *Second World War*, vol. 3 p. 49.

theories for its own purposes. As Jo Fox has revealed, British communists ‘sought to keep the Hess mystique alive since it served their own interests or those of their political masters and allowed them to connect home-front rumour with propaganda abroad’. They accused the aristocracy of ‘close association with the Nazis, contending that they were united by the forces of imperialism, plutocratic governments, and capitalism’.⁶² Taken in tandem with the Gollancz interpretation outlined in the introduction, these at best partial truths underline how a substantially left-wing interpretation of the Fellowship has prevailed ever since. When stirred into the orthodoxies and conspiracy theories surrounding appeasement, the Guilty Men, the Cliveden Set, Rudolf Hess and the Trinity Spies, such biases and distortions have dominated the historical interpretation of the Fellowship ever since.

Post war legacy

Following the end of war in Europe, the legacy of the Fellowship (closed since October 1939 but only formally dissolved in 1949) and its champions faded from embarrassment into irrelevance. Any status it may have achieved within the pre-war British Establishment was quickly forgotten. The trials of the major war criminals at Nürnberg sealed the fates of the Fellowship’s German champions. Their verdicts confirmed that, as the chief US prosecutor had alleged, they had ‘planned and prepared for... an aggressive war... over a long period of time with no small skill and cunning’ which had correspondingly ‘condemned those in the democracies’ including the Fellowship ‘who had failed to perceive and foil the conspiracy’.⁶³ At his trial, Ribbentrop had asked to call distinguished Britons including King George VI, Nancy Astor, Winston Churchill and lords Dawson, Vansittart and Londonderry as defence witnesses. Included in his application were his two closest associates within the Fellowship, Tennant and Conwell-Evans. Tennant was asked to confirm that he had indeed introduced Ribbentrop to Baldwin, MacDonald and Davidson over a decade previously in the search for Anglo-German harmony. To Tennant’s relief, the British prosecutor, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe (later attorney general, home secretary and lord chancellor) rejected this request as the ‘acme of irrelevance’.⁶⁴ With similar disdain, Maxwell-Fyfe

⁶² Fox, ‘Propaganda’, pp. 104 – 105.

⁶³ Finney, ‘The romance of decline’.

⁶⁴ Tennant, *TA*, pp. 243-4.

dismissed Conwell-Evans's suitability as a witness on the grounds that he was 'not even in *Who's Who*'.⁶⁵ Without any benefit from Fellowship leaders appearing as character witnesses, Göring, Hess and Ribbentrop, each sponsors of the sister societies and the three most senior Nazis on trial, were in any event found guilty. Ribbentrop was hanged on 16 October 1946, two days after Göring had committed suicide, and Hess was sentenced to life imprisonment. Just before his execution, Ribbentrop had written to Sir Alexander Walker, his former business associate and Fellowship member, asking him to employ his son Rudolf.

The war trial that particularly contributed to the Fellowship's fading legacy was *The USA vs. Ernst von Weizsäcker, et al.* (also known as the 'Ministries' or 'Wilhelmstrasse' trial). While historians of German diplomacy continue to question the extent of 'good' Germans opposing Hitler's regime from within the German Foreign Ministry (and Weizsäcker's mercurial attitude to resistance specifically), Meehan has catalogued how the British Foreign Office downplayed its contacts with those Germans (good or bad), keen to avoid any suggestion that war might have been prevented or shortened had its engagement been less grudging.⁶⁶ Vansittart's behaviour in connection with this trial does him no credit. Weizsäcker's supporters, led by the Kordt brothers, had asked Vansittart and others to confirm that their former chief had worked to restrain, and even undermine, Ribbentrop's disastrous foreign policies. The now retired chief diplomatic adviser damned Weizsäcker as 'the chief executant of Ribbentrop's policy' and, while admitting that the brothers were 'anti-Nazi', wrote that 'neither of them, so far as I know, ever did anything to demonstrate the fact'. Given the secret meetings in Downing Street, Cornwall Gardens and Switzerland, their bravery in gathering intelligence for him (detailed in chapters six and seven) this is shockingly disingenuous. He even suggested that, to be truly brave, Theo should have stayed in London at the outbreak of war despite having encouraged him to go to Switzerland having devised the Horace-quoting postcard routine with Conwell-Evans.⁶⁷ Halifax's response to the same request puts him in far better light. The former viceroy of India, foreign secretary and ambassador to Washington, now retired to his estates in Yorkshire, supplied an affidavit explicitly contradicting Vansittart. He

⁶⁵ Conwell-Evans memoir, CONWELL.

⁶⁶ Especially Eckart Conze, Norbert Frei, Peter Hayes and Moshe Zimmermann, *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik* (Munich, 2010).

⁶⁷ Theo served from 1953 as ambassador to Greece for the new Federal Republic of Germany.

confirmed that Weizsäcker had been a ‘convinced opponent of Nazi ideals and policies’ and had used his position to obstruct Ribbentrop by supplying relevant intelligence to Britain through intermediaries such as the Kordts and Conwell-Evans.⁶⁸

Halifax was exceptional within the British establishment as his former subordinates ignored or denigrated the efforts of their German diplomatic counterparts. Nor was such selective memory limited to the diplomatists. Leading historians at the time were quick to rubbish any suggestion that the German resistance might have deserved better support. Namier, Trevor-Roper and Wheeler-Bennett (himself a former diplomat) created an orthodoxy that prevailed until the work of Peter Hoffman and others from the 1970s.⁶⁹ Such debates are beyond the scope of this study but help answer why any legacy the Fellowship may deserve was lost. The intensity of this vilification of the opposition to Hitler, and by extension, its support from the Fellowship’s Council, implies that, had they instead been ‘heeded and responded to with goodwill, and their warnings acted upon, the consequences for the benefit of all might have been immeasurable’.⁷⁰ Infuriated by the attitudes of Vansittart and others, Erich Kordt (by then professor of international law at the University of Cologne having spent the war in Japan and Shanghai) published his version of events as *Nicht Aus Den Akten* (‘Not from the files’) (Stuttgart 1950).

The other German players in the Fellowship’s story fared less well than the Kordts. Eugen Lehnkering, who had introduced his business partner Tennant to Ribbentrop in 1932 and served as treasurer of the DEG, had ‘turned anti-Nazi’ following the outbreak of war.⁷¹ Sent to dig trenches in Holland, he had escaped to the American lines but had died soon after war ended. The Duke of Coburg, president of the DEG throughout, had remained loyal to the Führer and was also president of the thoroughly-Nazified German Red Cross. He benefitted from lobbying by his sister, Princess Alice, and her husband the Earl of Athlone, that secured his release from imprisonment by the Americans in 1946. He spent the rest of his life in seclusion but did attend the local cinema the year before his death to watch the coronation of Elizabeth II, his cousin’s granddaughter.

⁶⁸ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, pp. 370, 347, 363.

⁶⁹ See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The last days of Hitler*, (1947), Lewis Namier, *In the Nazi Era* (1952) and ‘Erich and Theo Kordt: Resisters after the Event’, *History Today*, Vol, 1, Issue 6, (June 1951) and John Wheeler-Bennett, *The nemesis of power: the German Army in politics, 1918-1945*, (1953).

⁷⁰ Meehan, *Unnecessary War*, p. 403.

⁷¹ Tennant, *TA*, p. 243.

Several of the Fellowship's British champions had not survived the war. Mount Temple died in the summer of 1939 after a long battle with Parkinson's while Lothian, refusing medical treatment as a Christian Scientist, died from blood poisoning in the Washington embassy in December 1940. He was followed a year later by Frank D'Arcy Cooper, aged just fifty-nine, who had just been awarded a baronetcy having served as chairman of the executive committee of the Export Council of the Board of Trade. Of the survivors, Tennant had remarried in 1950 having separated from his first wife Eleonora at the end of the war. She had embraced far-right and anti-Semitic politics leading two extreme nationalist groups (the Never Again Association and the Face the Facts Association) and thereafter moved back to her native Australia. He used his comfortable retirement in his Hertfordshire country house to write his memoirs which were published in 1957. According to his grandson, having avoided the ignominy of appearing as Ribbentrop's character witness, he was alarmed by Eleonora's political activities and threats of embarrassing disclosures so felt it necessary to publish his *mea culpa* to distance his engagement with the Third Reich from her politics.⁷²

Despite his lobbying, Conwell-Evans had failed to secure formal government employment so concentrated on writing *None so Blind*, completed in 1941, and articles and reviews for *The Nineteenth Century and After* which included attacks on Halifax and Henderson for their failure to heed his and Christie's warnings. In 1945, he moved from Cornwell Gardens, the scene of his meetings with the German resistance, to Pembridge Crescent in Notting Hill where he became a recluse. Resigning his cherished membership of the Travellers Club and leaving no forwarding address, he eluded the Kordts who wanted him as a witness in the Wilhelmstrasse Trial. In the early sixties, Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott overcame similar challenges to track him down through Christie. Gilbert and his first wife befriended Conwell-Evans who assisted the young historian in researching several of his books.

Christie, who had suffered from ill-health since the Great War, also spent his post-war years as a recluse but we know from the Conwell-Evans/Gilbert correspondence that he and Conwell-Evans kept in close touch and shared their Christmases. Having decided (or perhaps agreed under official pressure) not to distribute *None so Blind* until after his death, Christie avoided discussion of his work in pre-war Germany. He only

⁷² Author's conversation with Mungo Tennant, 25 February 2015.

came back into the public eye aged ninety when, on 3 November 1971, he threw himself from the window of his flat in Cranmer Court, Chelsea (the building which over thirty years previously had housed the Fellowship) and was pronounced dead on arrival at St Stephen's Hospital.

Unlike Vansittart, Tennant, Christie and Conwell-Evans, Julian Piggott never gave up on the cause of Anglo-German friendship. Having been a member of the Weimar-era Anglo-German Association, having played a central role in the Fellowship's founding and served on the Council throughout its four-year existence, in 1951 following an appeal in *The Times*, he and others founded a new friendship society, confusingly also called the Anglo-German Association. It had an in-house publication titled *Anglo-German Review* and a new affiliated Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft founded in Dusseldorf in 1949 with branches around Germany. Serving as secretary and then chairman, he enlisted Field Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis as president and recruited the archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, Anthony Eden (now the Earl of Avon) and the German ambassador as patrons. It held dinners in smart London hotels attended by the British foreign secretary and leading German diplomats and politicians including Chancellor Adenauer. Two things are striking about the newly-minted association: it followed the protocols and formulae of the Fellowship almost to the letter and apparently made no mention of its predecessor in any context.⁷³ Unlike its predecessors, the Anglo-German Association has survived, changing its name to The British-German Association in 1995, with the Duke of Kent as patron and a continuing mission to 'promote understanding and to forge links between Britain and Germany'.⁷⁴

The Fellowship played a bigger role in the diplomatic crises of the late 1930s than the British have tended to remember, attracting broad support from each of the relevant Establishment elites. But, while elitist, it does not fit comfortably within the aristocratic

⁷³ The post-war DEG was similarly coy about its predecessor, see Ritter, 'Die erste DEG'.

⁷⁴ www.britishgermanassociation.org.

‘fellow travellers of the right’ tradition. The breath and quality of its support should be the focus for interested historians rather than the lazy typecasting prevalent in popular media ever since. Its founders and leaders, especially Mount Temple, Lothian, Tennant, Conwell-Evans, Christie, Piggott, Tiarks and D’Arcy Cooper, were neither stupid nor cowardly. On balance, these were better men doing better jobs for better reasons than often inferred. Though guilty of naivety and gullibility in the early days, they voiced their fears about Hitler’s intentions and determination well before Chamberlain and his government. Their intelligence and advice to the British government were based on mostly impeccable sources at the heart of the National Socialist administration and included both its ardent critics as well as supporters.

As Stedman has concluded, it was, at the time, ‘easy to criticise Neville Chamberlain from the sidelines’ but far harder ‘to suggest a constructive, coherent alternative that he could have pursued’. The Fellowship did propose alternatives to the British government throughout its short life – specifically, more energetic and professional diplomacy in the earlier years (1935 and 1936) underpinned by economic appeasement that would weave together the two economies. In parallel, they encouraged continuing rearmament and the taking of a ‘firmer stand’, including through alliances with France and Russia, against Hitler’s expansionist military forays, particularly from 1938. Their contacts within the German opposition to Hitler had given them insight to support the thesis that his regime was more fragile than others presumed. While certainly classifiable as appeasement, this was at odds with the strategies adopted by each of the three pre-war prime ministers and especially divergent from Chamberlain’s brand of appeasement once he launched Project Z. This, they had advised, was a step too far and would not be taken seriously by the German government. They had excellent access to, and audience with, but were ultimately ignored by, Chamberlain, Wilson and Henderson who each fatally misread the Führer. For Conwell-Evans and Christie in particular (who among subsequent historians of appeasement would have agreed with Parker especially), those three were indeed the ‘Guilty Men’ - late in understanding Hitler’s determined intentions and stubbornly resistant to any contradictory advice. Following the invasion of Poland, Conwell-Evans and Christie felt this very strongly, recognising that there was ‘no doubt that the Ambassador based his policy on

instructions constantly received from 10 Downing Street and not on the views of the Permanent Head of the Foreign Office'.⁷⁵

The Fellowship was a child of business and finance, and while the profit motive was rarely ignored, those supporters were capable of higher motives in arguing for peace. It had wide engagement with the British military, who like their counterparts across the North Sea and the founding businessmen, looked at the prospect of a second European war with dread. Whatever else, it was a poor place for the promotion of those poisonous ideologies around race and religion that defined the Third Reich and rightly still preoccupy modern commentators. In Britain, the Fellowship was, in its time, taken more seriously by government, parliament, the intelligence services, the press, business and the military than it has been ever since. Its fall from both grace and relevance in Britain was almost immediate once war was declared even when the prospect of a negotiated peace with either Hitler or his replacement seemed a real prospect.

Surprisingly, its reputation and relevance outside Britain fared better than at home. Although confused with the chimeric Cliveden Set, the Fellowship's legacy lingered longer among the Germans, the Russians and the Americans. For Rudolf Hess, encouraged by Albrecht Haushofer with whom he shared a dream of an Anglo-German alliance, it was the Fellowship that he hoped to find in Scotland. Meanwhile for Joseph Stalin, his paranoia about such an alliance fuelled by Kim Philby, it was what he most feared Hess might find in Scotland.

Understanding Anglo-German cooperation before 1945 is important, if only to put Anglo-German conflict in its proper context. Not least, given the cultural links between the British and Germans, a peaceful *modus vivendi* between the two most powerful economies in Europe remained a logical diplomatic strategy in the first half of the twentieth century - despite nine years of war. Britain and France were awkward allies throughout the period and the isolationist United States was a most reluctant one. Prestigious organisations such as the Fellowship had a role to play promoting Anglo-German friendship before, between, and after, both world wars.

⁷⁵ Conwell-Evans, *NSB*, p. 72.

Appendix I Dramatis personae

Aberdare, Lord (Clarence Napier Bruce), (1885–1957)

Athlete. Educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford. Fellowship member and attended at least four dinners. International Olympic Executive Committee, 1931-51. Chairman of National Advisory Council for Physical Training and Recreation, 1937-39. British and US amateur champion in both rackets and tennis.

Arnold, Lord (Sidney), (1878-1945)

Liberal then Labour politician. Educated in Manchester. Served on Council from 1937 and attended several Fellowship events. Paymaster-general, 1929–31. Joined the Labour Party in 1922 but resigned in 1938 on account of his disagreement with its foreign policy.

Baldwin, Stanley, (later Earl Baldwin), (1867–1947)

Conservative politician. Educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Introduced by Tennant (q.v.) to Ribbentrop (q.v.) in 1933. Prime minister, 1923-24, 1924-29 and 1935-37. Lord president of the Council, 1931-35. Member of the Travellers Club.

Ball, Major Charles, (1893-1973)

Soldier and businessman. Educated at Charterhouse and London University. Attended Fellowship's founding meeting, served on Council throughout and attended several events. Director of FA Hughes & Co., a pioneer of alloys and plastics for aircraft (with links to IG Farben and ICI) that was a corporate member and donor. Served in Royal Artillery, 1914-23, and on Military Inter-Allied Commission of Control (disarming Germany), 1919-23.

Beazley, Professor Sir Raymond, (1868-1955)

Historian. Educated at St Pauls, King's College, London and Balliol College, Oxford. Served on Fellowship's Council throughout. Professor of history, University of Birmingham, 1909–33 and previously Ilchester lecturer (Russian history), Oxford, 1913. Frequent lecturing visits to Germany 1930-7. Regular contributor to the *Anglo-German Review* and a council member of The Link.

Blomberg, Field Marshal Werner von, (1878-1946)

German soldier. Minister of war, 1935-38. Represented Hitler at George VI's coronation. Guest of honour at a reception held by the Fellowship in May 1937. Resigned following disclosure that his new wife had a criminal record for prostitution.

Brocket, Lord, (Ronald), (1904-1967)

Conservative politician and landowner. Educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford. Fellowship member and frequently attended events. Former member of parliament and barrister. Attended Hitler's fiftieth birthday celebrations.

Brunswick, Duke of, (Ernest Augustus), (1887-1953)

German aristocrat and soldier. Founder member of DEG. First cousin of King George V. Married Princess Victoria Luise of Prussia (1892-1980), the only daughter of the German Kaiser, William II, in May 1913. Their wedding was attended by most of Europe's royalty. Guest of honour (with his wife) and speaker at a banquet held by the Fellowship at the Dorchester in July 1936. Honorary member with wife of the Royal British Legion.

Butler, Richard Austen, ('RAB' later Lord Butler), (1902-1982)

Conservative politician. Educated at Marlborough and Pembroke College, Cambridge. Guest at Fellowship's May 1938 reception. Under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1938-41. Later minister of education, chancellor of the exchequer, home secretary, deputy prime minister, and foreign secretary.

Cadogan, Sir Alexander, (1884-1968)

Diplomat, civil servant and diarist. Educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Guest at Fellowship's May 1938 reception. Permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1938-1946. Previously deputy under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1936-37, and ambassador to Peking, 1933-36. Later chairman of the BBC.

Chamberlain, Neville, (1869-1940)

Conservative politician. Educated Rugby and Mason College, Birmingham. Prime minister, 1937-40. Chancellor of the exchequer, 1923-24 and 1931-37. Visited Germany three times in the autumn of 1938 to meet Hitler. Died from bowel cancer six months following his resignation as prime minister.

Christie, Group-Captain Malcolm Grahame, (1881-1971)

Aviator, diplomat and intelligence agent. Educated at Malvern College and the University of Aachen where he obtained the degree of *Doktor Ingenieur*, with first-class honours in chemistry. Fellowship member, donor and served on the Council from January 1938. Also a member of the inter-war Anglo-German Association. General manager of the Otto Cokeoven Company of Leeds and president of Otto Coking Corporation, New York. Member of the Travellers' Club and the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Met Göring and Hitler in 1932. Reported to Sir Robert Vansittart (q.v.) on the German political situation from 1934. Introduced Vansittart to Konrad Henlein (q.v.) and Karl Goerdeler, former mayor of Leipzig and civilian leader of the German resistance. His activities in the 1930s were chronicled by his close friend and collaborator, Conwell-Evans (q.v.) in *None so blind: a study of the crisis years, 1930-1939, based on the private papers of Group-Captain M G Christie*, published in 1947.

Previously a pioneering aviator having learned to fly in 1910. Served in the RAF, 1919-30, and the Royal Flying Corps, 1914-18. Awarded an MC in 1916, a DSO in 1917, and appointed CMG in 1919. Air attaché in Berlin, 1927-30 and Washington, DC, 1922-6. Retired due to ill-health in 1930 to live in Germany near the Dutch border. Following the Second World War, lived in London in apparent seclusion. Committed suicide in November 1971, aged ninety.

Clydesdale, Marquess of, (Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, from 1940, Duke of Hamilton), (1903-1973)

Boxer, aviator and Conservative politician. Educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Member of parliament, 1930-1940. The first man to fly over Everest, in 1933. From 1940, hereditary keeper of Holyroodhouse (the monarch's official residence in Scotland) and lord steward of the royal household. Served in the RAF during Second World War. Published *The Pilot's Book of Everest* in 1936.

Coburg (Saxe-Coburg-Gotha), Duke of, (Prince Charles Edward, Duke of Albany), (1884–1954)

Anglo-German royal prince. Born in England and educated at Eton and Bonn University. Posthumous son of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, Queen Victoria's youngest son. Founder member and president of the DEG. President of the German Red Cross from 1933 and an NSDAP party member from 1935. Arrested by the Americans at the end of the war but released in 1946.

Conwell-Evans, Dr Thomas Philip (TP), (1892-1968)

Historian, political secretary and sometime intelligence agent. Second son of Thomas Conwil-Evans [sic], a master tailor. Educated at Carmarthen Grammar School, privately in France and Germany, Jesus College, Oxford and the London School of Economics where he was awarded a PhD. At Fellowship's founding meeting and thereafter was joint honorary secretary until February 1937 when he became salaried secretary until October 1939. Visiting lecturer in English history at Königsberg University, East Prussia, 1932-34. Previously political secretary to Lord Noel Buxton, Labour minister of agriculture, and secretary to two parliamentary committees - the British Armenian Committee and the Balkan Committee. It was with Noel-Buxton and the MP Ben Riley that Conwell-Evans first met Hitler in the spring of 1933. A member of the Travellers Club and the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Friend, neighbour, walking companion and sometime speech writer to Ramsay Macdonald (q.v.). Following the war, he moved to Notting Hill, London and lived in relative seclusion until his death in 1968.

Translated *Civilisation 1914-1918*, by Georges Duhamel from French for publication in Britain in 1919. Co-authored with Noel Buxton *Oppressed Peoples and the League of Nations* in 1922. Published *The League Council in Action: a study in the methods employed by the council of the League of Nations to prevent war and to settle international disputes* in 1929; *Foreign Policy from a Back Bench 1904-1918, a study based on the papers of Lord Noel-Buxton* in 1932; and *None so blind: a study of the crisis years, 1930-1939, based on the private papers of Group-Captain M G Christie* in 1947. Regular contributor to *Nineteenth Century and After*.

D'Arcy Cooper, Sir Francis (Frank) Bt., (1882–1941)

Accountant and industrialist. Educated at Wellington. Chaired Fellowship's founding meeting in March 1935, was a personal donor and served on executive committee and Council throughout. Chairman of Lever Brothers (later Unilever) from 1925 following death of Lord Leverhulme. Unilever was the largest corporate donor to the Fellowship. From 1940, chairman of the executive committee of the Export Council of the Board of Trade. Partner in accountancy firm, Cooper Brothers & Co. Served and was wounded in the Great War.

Davidson, Viscount, John Colin Campbell (JCC), (1889–1970)

Conservative politician. Educated at Westminster and Pembroke College, Cambridge. Introduced Tennant (q.v.) and Ribbentrop (q.v.) to Baldwin (q.v.) in 1933. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1923-24 and 1931-37. Previously chairman of the Conservative Party and PPS to Bonar Law and Baldwin.

Dirksen, Herbert von, (1882-1955)

German diplomat. Succeeded Ribbentrop (q.v.) as German ambassador to the Court of St James's 1938-39. Previously ambassador to Japan and Soviet Russia. Guest of honour at a Fellowship dinner in October 1938.

Domvile, Admiral Sir Barry, (1878-1971)

Royal Navy officer and author. Fellowship member and served on Council from January 1938 to April 1939. Director of Naval Intelligence, 1927-30, commanded the Third Cruiser Squadron, 1931-32 and president of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1932-34. Published *The Case For Germany* in 1939. Interned during second world war under Defence Regulation 18B, 1940-1943.

Eden, (Robert) Anthony, (later Earl of Avon), (1897-1977)

Conservative politician. Educated Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Foreign secretary, 1935-1938 and 1940-45. Lord privy seal, 1934-1935. Later prime minister.

Eltisley, Lord, (George Douglas Cochrane), (1879-1942)

Conservative politician and company director. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Served on Fellowship's Council throughout. Former member of parliament. Chairman Central Chamber of Agriculture, 1934, Council of Agriculture for England, 1922-23, and Water Companies Association, 1923-31.

Evans, Jack, (1890-1937)

Served on the Council and the executive committee. Donor and representative of corporate member, CT Bowring & Co (Insurance), Ltd.

Gaertner, Friedl, (Born 1911)

Austrian model and intelligence agent. Codenamed Gelatine or M/G. Having married a Jew, she left Austria for Palestine in 1934. Arrived in London in 1938 and was introduced to the security services by Stewart Menzies (later chief of MI6) whose younger brother, Ian, had married her sister. On behalf of MI5 she infiltrated organisations in Britain with connections to Germany including the Fellowship which she joined in 1938 and subsequently attended several events. From 1941 she worked as a double agent with MI6's XX programme sending misinformation to contacts in Germany.

Gollancz, Victor, (later Sir), (1893-1967)

Left wing publisher and writer. Educated at St Paul's and New College Oxford. Founded Victor Gollancz Ltd in 1928 and the Left Book Club in 1936 with a particular focus on challenging the rise of National Socialism. Published *Tory MP* in 1939, *Guilty Men* in 1940 and *Your MP* in 1944. Authored and published *Shall our Children Live or Die? A reply to Lord Vansittart on the German Problem* in 1942.

Göring, Field Marshal Hermann, (1893-1946)

German pilot, politician and art collector. Commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe from 1933, president of the Reichstag, prime minister of Prussia and Hitler's designated successor. Reich Jägermeister (the game warden of the Reich). Found guilty of war crimes in 1946 and sentenced to death. Committed suicide hours before planned execution.

Guinness, Arthur Rundell, (1895-1951)

Banker. Educated at Winchester. Attended founding meeting, served on Council throughout and on executive committee. Partner, Guinness Mahon & Co. which donated £50. Later a member of the League of Nations Special Joint Committee on Private Foreign Investment, 1945 and president of the International Chamber of Commerce, 1947-49.

Halifax, Earl of, (Edward Frederick Lindley Wood), (1881-1959)

Politician and diplomat. Educated at Eton, Christ Church, and All Souls, Oxford. Foreign secretary, 1938-1940. Later British ambassador to the United States, 1941-46. Previously leader of the House of Lords, 1935-1938, lord privy seal, 1935-37 and viceroy of India, 1926-1931. Chancellor of the University of Oxford, 1933-1959. Master of the Middleton Foxhounds.

Hamilton, Duke of: see Clydesdale, Marquess of

Hamilton, General Sir Ian, (1853-1947)

Army officer and writer. Educated at Wellington and privately in Germany. Veteran of Afghan, Boer, Russo-Japanese and Great wars. Vice-president of the inter-war Anglo-German Association. Declined membership of the Fellowship. President of the Royal British Legion (Scotland). Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, 1932-35.

Harvey, Oliver, (later Lord), (1893-1968)

Diplomat and diarist. Educated at Malvern and Trinity College, Cambridge. Counsellor and principal private secretary to secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1936-39. Later ambassador to Paris.

Haushofer, Albrecht, (1903-45)

German professor, diplomat and member of the German resistance. Son of Karl Haushofer (q.v.). Educated at Munich University. Professor of political geography at the Berlin School of Politics. Secretary of the Geographical Society in Berlin, 1928-38. Befriended Clydesdale (q.v.) in 1936 at the Olympic Games. Adviser to Rudolf Hess and head of the Information Section in the Foreign Ministry from 1938. Visited the UK on several occasions in the late 1930s. Lectured at Chatham House in 1937. Shot by the SS in April 1945.

Haushofer, Karl, (1869-1946)

German general, editor and professor. Educated at the Munich Gymnasium, in the army and at Munich university. Founder member of DEG. Professor of geography, 1921-1939. Pioneer of the theory of 'Geopolitics' linking German imperialism with National Socialism. Editor of the periodical *Geopolitik*. Rudolf Hess (q.v.) was his student and sometime assistant. Father to Albrecht Haushofer (q.v.). Believed that peace with Britain should be central to German foreign policy. Arrested after the July 1944 plot against Hitler and committed suicide in 1946 in reaction to his son's murder.

Hawes, Captain MA, RN, (1887-1963)

Naval officer. Honorary secretary in 1936, served on executive committee and Council throughout and attended Fellowship events. Naval attaché in Berlin, 1929-1933. Member of Royal British Legion delegation to Germany in July 1935. His wife was a member of the Fellowship's ladies advisory committee.

Henderson, Sir Nevile, (1882-1942)

Diplomat. Educated at Eton and abroad. Frequent guest of the Fellowship and DEG. Honorary member of the DEG. Ambassador to Germany 1937-39, ambassador to Argentina 1935-37. Published *Failure of a Mission 1937-9* in 1940 and *Water under the Bridges* posthumously in 1945.

Henlein, Konrad, (1898-1945)

German-Czech gym instructor and politician. Founded the *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (SDP) in 1933 and campaigned for autonomy for the Sudeten minority in Czechoslovakia. Introduced by Christie (q.v.) to Churchill and other British politicians in May 1938. Committed suicide in an Allied prisoner of war camp in May 1945.

Hess, Rudolf, (1894-1987)

German politician. Educated at University of Munich. Deputy leader of the NSDAP from 1933. Guest of the DEG at opening ceremony in Berlin January 1936. Imprisoned in 1923 with Hitler whom he assisted in writing *Mein Kampf*. In May 1941, flew solo to Britain where he was held as a prisoner of war. Found guilty of war crimes in 1946 and imprisoned in Germany until his death in 1987.

Hewel, Walther, (1904-1945)

German diplomat. Educated at the Technical University of Munich. An early member of the NSDAP, he participated in the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch while still a schoolboy and maintained a close friendship with Hitler up till the dictator's death. He was an early employee of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop. Founder member and on Council of the DEG. Served as liaison between Ribbentrop (q.v.) and Hitler from 1938. Guest of honour at a Fellowship sherry party held at the Langham Hotel in December 1937. Met with Conwell-Evans (q.v.) at his last visit to Germany in February 1939 and with Tennant (q.v.), who considered him a friend, in his last visit in July of the same year. Committed suicide in May 1945.

Hoesch, Dr. Leopold von, (1881-1936)

German diplomat. Educated at universities of Geneva, Heidelberg, Munich and Leipzig. German ambassador to the Court of St James's 1932-36. Guest of honour at a Fellowship dinner in November 1935. Succeeded as ambassador by Ribbentrop (q.v.) in 1936 following his unexpected and unexplained death in office.

Hollenden, Lord (Geoffrey Hope Hope-Morley), (1885-1977)

Aristocrat and JP. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Served on Council throughout, frequent attendee at Fellowship events and donated £100. President of the Wholesale Textile Association and former High Sheriff of the County of London.

Hulbert, Norman J, MP, (later Wing-Commander Sir), (1903-1972)

Conservative politician. Educated at Tonbridge. Member of parliament 1935-64. Served on Council from 1938. Later served in the RAF, 1939-43, and as British liaison officer with Polish Forces, 1943-45. Later PPS to president of Board of Trade and minister of production, 1944-45.

Hunter, William

Served on Council from 1937. Representative of corporate member William Hunter & Co of Bradford.

Kerr, Philip Henry see Lothian, Marquess of

Kordt, Erich (1903-1969)

German diplomat and member of the resistance to Hitler. Rhodes scholar at Oxford University. Appointed by von Neurath (q.v.) as Ribbentrop's assistant in 1934. Thereafter chief de cabinet

to Ribbentrop as minister of foreign affairs, February 1938-December 1940. Previously first secretary at the German embassy in London. Founder member of the DEG. Attended Fellowship dinners in October and December 1937.

Kordt, Theodor ('Theo') (1893-1962)

German diplomat and member of the resistance to Hitler. Older brother to Erich Kordt (q.v.). Chargé d'affaires in the German embassy in London. Attended the March 1939 Fellowship dinner in honour of Gertrud Scholtz-Klink (q.v.). On 3 September 1939, received the British declaration of war on Germany in London. Previously chef de cabinet to the state secretary, von Bülow.

le Blount Kidd, G

Lawyer. Member and served as solicitor to the Fellowship throughout. Present at the founding meeting.

Lehnkering, Eugen

German aviator and businessmen. Twenty-first member of NSDAP. German business agent for C. Tennant & Sons who introduced Tennant (q.v.) to Ribbentrop (q.v.) in 1932. Founder member of the DEG.

Lloyd George, David, (later Earl Lloyd George), (1863-1945)

Liberal politician. Educated Llanystumdwy Church School and privately. Visited Germany in September 1936 and met Hitler as part of trip conceived, planned and managed by Tennant (q.v.) and Conwell-Evans (q.v.). Father of the House, 1929-1945, leader of the Liberal Party, 1926-1931, prime minister, 1916-22, chancellor of the exchequer, 1908-15.

Lloyd George, Gwylim, (later Viscount Tenby), (1884-1967)

Liberal and later Conservative politician. Son of David Lloyd George (q.v.). Educated at Eastbourne College and Jesus College, Cambridge. Fellowship member and accompanied his father to Germany in 1936. Parliamentary secretary to the Board of Trade, 1931 and 1939-41. Later minister of food, 1941-42, minister of fuel and power, 1942-45. Post-war home secretary and minister for Welsh affairs.

Londonderry, Marquess of, (1878-1949)

Conservative politician. Educated at Eton and Sandhurst. Fellowship member and attended several events. Previously a member of the inter-war Anglo-German Association. Guest of honour at DEG lunch in February 1936. Secretary of state for air, 1931-35, lord privy seal and leader of House of Lords, 1935.

Lothian, Marquess of, (Philip Henry Kerr), (1882-1940)

Writer, Liberal politician and diplomat. Educated at Oratory School, Edgbaston and New College, Oxford. Fellowship member, declined chairmanship. Introduced by Conwell-Evans (q.v.) to Ribbentrop (q.v.) in November 1934 whom he entertained at Blickling Hall, his Jacobean stately home in Norfolk in June 1935. Met Hitler and other leading German politicians with Conwell-Evans in January 1935 and May 1937. Previously a member of the inter-war Anglo-German Association. British ambassador to the United States, 1939-1940. Secretary of the Rhodes Trust, 1925-39. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1931. Parliamentary under-secretary, India Office, 1931-32. Governor of National Bank of Scotland.

Editor of *The Round Table*, 1910–16. Secretary to the prime minister, Lloyd George (q.v.), 1916–21. Member of the Travellers' Club.

MacDonald, (James) Ramsay, (1866-1937)

Labour politician. Educated at a Drainie parish school. Prime minister, 1924 and 1929-35. Lord president of the Council, 1935-37.

Maisky, Ivan, (1884-1975)

Russian diplomat, historian and diarist. Soviet ambassador to London, 1932-1943. His diaries were published as *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's, 1932-1943* in 2015.

Mason, David Marshall, (1865-1945)

Liberal politician, currency expert, peace campaigner and author. Educated at Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow University and Heidelberg University. Served on the Council from 1937 and, with his wife and family, was an enthusiastic attendee of Fellowship events. Founder and chairman of the executive committee of the Sound Currency Association. Member of parliament 1910–18 and 1931–35. Met Hitler in 1936 and invited Goebbels to visit London.

McGowan, Lord (Harry), (1874-1961)

Chemical industrialist. Educated at Allan Glen's School, Glasgow. Chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries 1930-50. Director of British Overseas Bank and Midland Bank. Fellowship member, attended events and ICI was the second most generous corporate donor.

Milne, James

Businessman. Represented Shaw Luthke & Co, a corporate member and donor. Attended founding meeting and served on Council until resignation in October 1937.

Mitford, Unity, (1914-1948)

Socialite and ardent admirer of Hitler. Fifth child of Lord and Lady Redesdale. Educated at St Margaret's School, Bushey. Fellowship member along with her parents. Following the outbreak of war and while still in Munich, she shot herself in the head and returned to Britain as an invalid.

Moore, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Thomas, (1886-1971)

Soldier, Conservative (Scottish Unionist) politician and animal protection campaigner. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Council member throughout and regular attendee at Fellowship events. Served in army, 1908-25. Member of parliament, 1925-1964. Chairman of the Home Guard Joint Parliamentary Committee. Also sometime vice-president of the RSPCA, trustee of the International League for the Protection of Horses, chairman of the Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals and chairman Anglo-Hungarian Fellowship.

Mount Temple, Lord, (formerly Colonel Wilfred William Ashley), (1867-1939),

Soldier and Conservative politician. Educated at Harrow and Magdalen College, Oxford. Chairman of the Fellowship from 1935 until his resignation in protest about Kristallnacht in November 1938. Previously a member of the inter-war Anglo-German Association. Also chairman of the Anti-Socialist Union, the Navy League and the Comrades of the Great War.

Formerly member of parliament, minister of transport and under-secretary of state for war. Commanded 20th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment in Great War.

Neurath, Konstantin von, (1873-1956)

German diplomat. Educated in Tübingen and Berlin. German foreign minister from 1932 until 1938 when he was dismissed from office and replaced by Ribbentrop (q.v.). From 1939 served as *Reichsprotektor* of occupied Bohemia and Moravia. Found guilty of war crimes in 1946 and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.

Oster, Colonel Hans, (1888-1945)

German soldier and resistance leader. Chief of staff to Admiral Canaris, chief of the *Abwehr* (military intelligence). A central organiser of the German resistance. Arrested in July 1944 after failed plot against Hitler and hanged.

Philby, HAR ('Kim'), (1912-1988)

Journalist, intelligence agent and traitor. Educated at Westminster and Trinity College, Cambridge. Member and employee of the Fellowship from 1936. Attended the Fellowship dinner in honour of the Brunswicks in July 1936. Previously assistant editor of the *Review of Reviews*, 1934-6. A Soviet agent from 1934. Subsequently a war correspondent for *The Times* in Spain, 1937-9. Employed by SIS (MI6), 1940-51. Defected to Soviet Russia in 1963. Appointed OBE in 1946 and awarded the Order of Lenin in 1965.

Phipps, Sir Eric, (1875-1945)

Diplomat. Educated at King's College, Cambridge. Guest at DEG Berlin opening ceremony in January 1937. British ambassador to Berlin, 1933-7, and to Paris, 1937-9.

Piggott, Julian, (1888-1965)

Businessman. Educated at Cheltenham College and Pembroke College, Cambridge. Attended Fellowship's founding meeting, served on the Council throughout and was a regular attendee at events. Previously a member of the inter-war Anglo-German Association. Manager of the British Steel Export Association, 1929-36. Previously commissioner at Cologne, Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, 1920-1925. Awarded an MC in 1917, appointed OBE in 1925 and CBE in 1933. Founder and chairman of the post-war Anglo-German Association in the 1950s and 1960s. Awarded the Grand Cross of Merit, Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1958.

Pitt-Rivers, George, (1890-1966)

Landowner, author, anthropologist and eugenicist. Educated at Eton and Worcester College, Oxford. Attended Fellowship events but was refused membership. Secretary-General of International Union for Scientific Investigation of Population Problems, 1928-37. Contested North Dorset constituency as independent agriculturist in 1935. Publications include *Variations in Sex Ratios as Indices of Racial Decline*, 1925; *The Clash of Culture and the Contact of Races*, 1927; *Weeds in the Garden of Marriage*, 1931; and *Problems of Population*, 1932.

Pomeroy, Elizabeth

Office secretary to the Fellowship.

Pownall, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Assheton p, (1877-1953)

Conservative politician. Educated at Rugby. Member of parliament, 1918–45. Fellowship member and served on Council throughout. London District Welfare Officer, 1939, chairman Public Accounts Committee, House of Commons, 1943–45.

Proctor, Charles

Industrialist. Attended founding meeting of the Fellowship and served on Council until he resigned in January 1938. Joint managing director of The Dunlop Rubber Company which donated £50.

Ribbentrop, Joachim von, (1893-1946)

Wine merchant, amateur diplomat and German politician. Educated at universities of Metz and Grenoble. German minister for foreign affairs, 1938-1945, German ambassador to the Court of St. James's, 1936–1938. Previously Reich minister ambassador-plenipotentiary at large and special commissioner for disarmament. Founded the Büro Ribbentrop (later renamed the Dienststelle Ribbentrop) as an alternative foreign ministry. Founder member of the DEG. Agent in Germany for Johnny Walker whisky. Found guilty of war crimes in 1946 and hanged.

Rosenberg, Rose, (1892-1966)

Political secretary. Educated at elementary school and commercial college in East London. Private secretary to Ramsay Macdonald (q.v.) as leader of the Labour party, leader of the opposition, prime minister and lord president of the council, 1923-1937. Joined the Labour Party in 1918. The first woman to be admitted to Strangers' Dining Room in the House of Commons.

Rykens, (also Rijkens), Paul, (1888-1965)

Dutch industrialist. Founding chairman of Unilever. Attended founding meeting of the Fellowship and served on Council throughout. Personally donated £20 as well as representing Unilever the largest corporate donor. Following the war was one of the founders of the Bilderberg Group, the elite Atlanticist discussion group established in 1954 by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

Scholtz-Klink, Gertrud, (1902-1999)

German women's leader. An early member of the NSDAP. As Reich's women's leader (*Reichsfrauenführerin*), she headed both the National Socialist Women's League (NSF - *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft*) and the German Women's Enterprise (DFW - *Deutsches Frauenwerk*). Also head of the Women's League of the Red Cross. Guest of honour at the March 1939 banquet jointly hosted by the Fellowship and the League of Health and Beauty at Claridge's. Also guest of honour at a reception at the Ritz organised by members of the Fellowship's Ladies Committee.

Sylvester, Albert James (AJ), (1889-1989)

Political and private secretary. Educated Guild Street School, Burton-on-Trent. Principal secretary to David Lloyd George (q.v.), 1923–45. Previously private secretary to successive prime ministers, 1921–23, to secretary of Committee of Imperial Defence, 1914–21 and to secretary of war cabinet and of cabinet, 1916–21. Published *The Real Lloyd George* in 1947 and *Life with Lloyd George* in 1975.

Tennant, Ernest William Dalrymple, (1887-1962)

Industrialist and businessman. Educated Eton. Joined C. Tennant and Sons, his family firm, in 1908 and became a director in 1912. Served in Intelligence Corps in Great War and was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1919. Married firstly Eleonora Fiaschi in April 1912 with whom he had four children before divorcing at the end of the war and, secondly, Irene Gage in February 1950. Published his memoirs as *True Account* in 1957.

Tiarks, Frank Cyril, (1874-1952)

Banker. Educated at HMS Britannia. Fellowship member, donor and Council member from 1937. Guest speaker at March 1939 opening ceremony for DEG Cologne branch. Partner in J. Henry Schröder & Co. from 1902. Director of Bank of England, 1912–45 and of The Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. Ltd, 1917-48.

Vansittart, Sir Robert, (Lord Vansittart from 1941), (1881-1957)

Diplomat, author and dramatist. Educated at Eton. Attended Fellowship events. Permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1930–38, chief diplomatic adviser to the government, 1938–41. Previously PPS to the prime minister, 1928-30. Extensive publications including *Black Record* and *The Mist Procession*.

Weigall, Julian, (1868-1945)

Barrister. Educated at Wellington and University College, Oxford. Attended founding meeting of the Fellowship and served on executive committee and Council throughout.

Wilson, Sir Horace, (1882-1972)

Civil servant. Educated at Kurnella School, Bournemouth and the London School of Economics. Chief industrial adviser to HM Government, 1930–39; seconded to the Treasury for service with the prime minister, 1935. Accompanied prime minister to Germany in September 1938. Permanent secretary of HM Treasury and official head of HM civil service, 1939–42. Previously permanent secretary, Ministry of Labour, 1921–30.

Wright, Elwin

Travel agent and anti-Semite. Salaried secretary of the Fellowship, 1935-7. Employed by Thomas Cook & Sons, travel agents. Later a member of the Nordic League. Interned during World War II under Defence Regulation 18B.

Wynn, Arthur, (1910-2001)

Civil servant, author, medical researcher, communist and Soviet agent. Educated at Oundle and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was in Germany in 1933 and married a German communist, Lieschen Ostrowski, to enable her to escape Hitler's regime. He married Margaret 'Peggy' Moxon in 1938. Both he and Peggy were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He was recruited by the Soviets in 1934 as an agent recruiter for the KGB and known as Agent SCOTT. His primary responsibility was to recruit for the 'Oxford Ring'. Authored (with his wife) *Tory MP* in 1939 under the pseudonym 'Simon Haxey'. He was exposed as a Soviet agent after his death having served as, *inter alia*, a member of the Advisory Council on Research and Development, Ministry of Power, 1955–65 and chairman of the Standing Joint Committee on Metrication, 1966-69.

Appendix II The Anglo-German Fellowship: 1937 membership list⁷⁶

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The Rt. Hon. Lord Hollenden.
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D. M. Mason, Esq.
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Julian I. Piggott, Esq., C.B.E., M.C.
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HON. AUDITORS :

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SOLICITOR :

G. Le Blount Kidd, Esq., Manfield House, Strand, London, W.C.2.

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THE ANGLO-GERMAN FELLOWSHIP :

223, Cranmer Court, Sloane Avenue, London, S.W.3

Telephone : Kensington 2484

⁷⁶ Reproduced from the *Annual Report of the Anglo-German Fellowship 1936-37*, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Germany

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Agnew, Lt.-Com. Peter, R.N., M.P.
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Bruce, Harold, Esq.
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Lothian, The Most Hon. the
Marquess of, C.H.
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Mount Temple, The Rt. Hon. Lady.
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Redesdaie, The Rt. Hon. Lady.
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Dr. Burchand-Motz, Bürgermeister von Hamburg

Robert Bosch, Stuttgart. (Magneto).

Geheimarat Bosch, I. G. Farben-Industrie, Frankfurt, A. M.

Regierungspräsident Budding, Marienwarde/Ospr.

Gerhard Deissman, Berlin

Dr. h.c. Draeger, Berlin, Berlin, Viktoriastr. 7

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Staatsrat Essberger. Hamburg (Shipping)

Staatssekretär Funk, Berlin, Reichskanzlei.

Direktor Habel. Berlin, Herausgeber de Zeitschrift; "Germany and You"

Generaldirektor Hagemeier, Adler-Werke, Frankfurt a.M

Univ. Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer, General, München

Geheimrat Harting, Generaldirector der Zeiss-Werke, Jena

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Staatsrat Leisler-Kiep. Hamburg

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⁷⁷ Transcribed from the original attached to the minutes of the founding meeting of the Anglo-German Fellowship, 11 March 1935, KV5/3 C440756, TNA

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Dr. Georg Lüttke, Reichsbeauftragter, Berlin.
Staatssekretär Milch, Luftfahrtministerium, Berlin
Dr. van Oswald, Neubabelsberg bei Berlin
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Generaldirektor Rasche, Westfalenbank, Bochum
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Nachtrag

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Staatsrat Helfferich. Aufsichtsratsvorsitzender der Hamburg-Amerika Linie,
Hamburg

Staatsrat Lindermann. Aufsichtsratsvorsitzender des Norddeutschen Lloyd, Bremen

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Davidson, J. C. C., MP, (later Viscount Davidson), UK Parliamentary Archives (DAV)
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The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey

BT Series, Records of the Board of Trade and of successor and related bodies
CAB Series, Records of the Cabinet Office
FCO Series, Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors
FO Series, Records of the Foreign Office
KV Series, Records of the Security Service
LASP Series, Lascelles Papers
PREM1 Series, Prime Minister's Office records

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The British Library Manuscript Collections, London (BL)
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The Unilever Archive, Unilever plc, Port Sunlight, Cheshire
The Weiner Library for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide, London

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