

A Reevaluation of Cockburn's Cliveden Set

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Claud Cockburn, founder and editor of *The Week* (a pro-communist British weekly periodical), coined the term the “Cliveden Set” in late 1937, when he accused a group of politicians, bankers, ship builders, newspaper editors, and other wealthy aristocrats of conspiring to influence the policy of the British Government.¹ Cockburn, a communist himself, wanted Britain to rearm and issued several warnings in his paper for Britain to wake up to Hitler’s intentions while the “set” was busy appeasing Germany. His articles went unnoticed until he labeled a story “The Cliveden Set” on 22 December 1937; the story exploded.² Unfortunately, due to deficiencies in Cockburn’s argument, a majority of historians dismiss most of the charges he made against this group. In spite of this censure, it remains difficult to believe that everything he wrote was false. In fact, Cockburn was very accurate when he reported the “set’s” pro-German intentions. Not only were they pro-German but, as Cockburn hypothesized, they attempted to influence the British government towards an amicable relationship with Germany. It was this intent which separated the “set” from other appeasers, and the reason why Cockburn’s thesis should not be dismissed.

The members of this “alleged set” actually had their beginnings as a group in South Africa in the early 1900s, where they were part of a handpicked group of about 23 to 30 intelligent and highly regarded young men on Lord Alfred Milner’s administrative staff after the Boer War.³ (Their task was to reconstruct South Africa’s economy, and reconcile and unite its warring peoples under one government.)⁴ Lord Milner, High Commissioner of South Africa, fueled these men - Philip Kerr (later Lord Lothian), Geoffrey Dawson, Edward Wood (later Lord Halifax), Lord Bob Brand, Lord Hichens, and Lionel Curtis - with his ideals, training them with the “vision of [creating in South Africa a] self-governing people under the British flag.”⁵ This body of assistants (essentially the heart of Cockburn’s “set”) became known as “Milner’s Kindergarten.”

Lord Milner himself was part of the great British Imperialist Cecil Rhodes’ Secret Society founded in 1891. The purpose of this society “was to devote itself to the preservation and expansion of the British Empire.”⁶ Lord Milner was Rhodes’ chosen successor to lead this society to its ultimate goal of a federal union. Both Rhodes and Milner, “sought to unite the world, above all the English-speaking world, in a federal structure around Britain.”⁷ This would be done according to secret political and economic influence aided by the “control of journalistic, educational, and propaganda agencies.”⁸ When Rhodes died, Milner took over the society and continued towards its goals by recruiting bright young men who he believed could be easily influenced, and had enough power and ambition to be influential in spreading their ideals.

By 1910, “Milner’s Kindergarten” achieved the Union of South Africa, and most of them returned to England. Upon returning to England, Lothian, Dawson, Brand, Hichens, and Curtis rejoined Milner, secretly becoming the Milner Group. As a group, they continued to pursue the ideals of Milner and Rhodes by launching their famous *Round Table Review of Commonwealth Affairs* in November 1910. This quarterly, founded and edited by Lothian, was “designed to keep open lines of communication around the Empire, a function that might later be performed

by official representatives if federation became a reality.”⁹ As imperialists, they were alarmed for the future of the Empire, and used the *Round Table Review* as a propaganda tool.

Curtis and Brand played larger roles in the group as it expanded in size and outlook. Curtis was seen as the motivating force in the group for much of the 1910s,¹⁰ while Brand, Lothian’s immediate chief in South Africa, introduced the wealthy Waldorf Astor (his friend from New College who would later become a Lord) into the group in 1910. Astor, as well as Abe Bailey, became the chief financial supporters of the Milner Group.¹¹

Dawson and Lothian also played important roles at this time. By 1912, Dawson had become editor of *The Times*.¹² He later served as secretary of the Rhodes Trust (1921-22), and editor of the *Round Table Review* (1941-44).¹³ His influence on these publications and foundations was tremendous and was in line throughout with the Milner Group aims. Besides being the founder and editor of the *Round Table Review*, Lothian was secretary of the Milner Group (1910-16), served as secretary to Lloyd George (1916-22), and finally the Milner Group’s leader (1925-40). He was also Secretary of the Rhodes Trust (1925-39), and became a Lord (1930).¹⁴

Lord Astor’s financial contributions brought him into the group. His father, William Waldorf Astor, owned the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and in 1911, bought *The Observer* at Waldorf’s insistence. James Louis Garvin, editor of *The Observer*, was retained as editor for both of these publications and was brought into the group by Waldorf as another means of influencing the public to their aims. Waldorf’s wife, Nancy Astor (and later known as Lady Astor, the first woman in Parliament), had a big influence on Brand, Curtis, and Lothian. She attracted these men by being outspoken, yet willing to learn. By the 1930s, the Astors were not just financial contributors, but played a larger role by hosting meetings at Cliveden or one of their other homes.

Due to the long history of the Milner Group, and the power they wielded throughout England, Cockburn’s concept of a “set” should not have been dismissed so quickly. Contemporaries and historians have done this because of their disdain for Cockburn’s reporting methods and because he was a known communist. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that, as one historian argues, “they were all there [by 1920], the little nucleus, the hard core, the “Cliveden Set” in embryo.”¹⁵ Therefore, regardless of what the majority of historians and contemporaries believe about Cockburn, and though there are mistakes that need to be sifted through, Cockburn’s general thesis deserves closer scrutiny and reevaluation.

Not until Britain began appeasing Germany did Cockburn become suspicious of his country’s foreign policy. His investigations ultimately led him to the Milner Group, and in order to inform the British public of the existence of this group, he wrote several articles in *The Week* demonstrating the power the group wielded and the connections among its members. On 17 November 1937, he wrote:

Subscribers to *The Week* are familiar with pro-Nazi intrigues centering on Cliveden [the Astor home] and the Printing House Square [*The Times* office] on the eve of the outbreak of the Spanish War. The expulsion of *The Times* correspondent from Berlin [Norman Ebbutt on 21 August 1937] put a spoke ... in the wheel of certain Germanophile plans. The intrigue however continued with

Lord Lothian, the Astors, Mr. Barrington-Ward of *The Times* and its editor Mr. Geoffrey Dawson (né Robinson) at the heart of it.¹⁶

As Cockburn gathered further information, his accusations implicated British aristocrats' subversive acts to influence their government into a pro-German line. On 6 April 1938, he wrote:

The Cliveden Set, (now being unkindly referred to as "Hitler's fifth column"), following the famous 'charades' with the Prime Minister and Sir Thomas Inskip ten days ago at the *Schloss*, have been redoubling their private and public activity with the apparent determination of getting the present – and any future – Chamberlain Government committed to the general line of foreign and domestic policies outlined here last week before Messrs Churchill and Eden haggle or coax them into a deviation.¹⁷

Even as early as April 1936, Cockburn accused Major John Jacob Astor (owner of *The Times* and brother of Lord Astor), Dawson, and Mr. Ormsby Gore (later Lord Harlech) of playing "an almost decisive role in the shaping of the policy pursued by the British government in the Rhineland Crisis."¹⁸ These accusations also included many government members whose intrigue and appearances at Cliveden during important events brought them into the conspiracy, which prevented an anti-Nazi government policy.

Cockburn's articles in *The Week* continued unabated. He was indiscriminately attacking J.J. Astor, Geoffrey Dawson, Lord Halifax, Neville Chamberlain, Lord Lothian, Lord Astor, and Nancy Astor. From this group,

he formulated the conception of the Cliveden Set, plotting and intriguing for the advance of Germany against Russia, and in the middle of the set he envisaged Lady Astor, fortuitously in a position of power, wielding a wicked and disturbing influence.¹⁹

Soon both the media in Britain and America were accusing those at Cliveden of pro-Nazi intentions and conspiracy. However, *The Week*, already accused of being a mouthpiece for communist propaganda, was not the most reputable paper, so when the errors in Cockburn's reports were pointed out,²⁰ the accusations about the "Cliveden Set" were dismissed.²¹

But where did the Milner Group's pro-German and anti-communist sentiments that Cockburn referred to come from? Were they pro-German or were they merely imperialists with connections in the British Government? The disillusionment over the Versailles Treaty, and the fear of the spread of communism into central Europe shaped their views and provided the Milner Group with certain goals that motivated them up until World War II. Lothian, Brand, Curtis, Dawson, Garvin, and the Astors promptly began "a campaign to undermine the treaty, the League of Nations, and the whole peace settlement," for they all had believed Germany had been unfairly treated.²² Therefore, this group used the resources they had to appeal for a just peace for Germany.

In 1919, Lionel Curtis, with the financial support of Lord Astor, founded the Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA, otherwise known as Chatham House), where they “held public meetings, conducted independent studies, and issued regular bulletins in a more or less successful effort to enlighten the public mind.”²³ The Milner Group continuously influenced the RIIA, which by 1930 was chaired by Waldorf Astor himself. The group exercised its influence for a just deal for Germany through the RIIA, *The Times*, *The Round Table*, *The Observer*, and the College of All Souls (where many of the groups members were fellows).²⁴ This goal did not even change when the Nazi Party came to power in 1933. Geoffrey Dawson and Robert Barrington-Ward (who also became a part of the Milner Group in the late 20s), were instrumental as editor and sub-editor of *The Times* in spreading the Milner Group’s message, of German equality among nations. Even after Germany’s withdrawal from the League in October 1933, *The Times* “accepted the situation... and argued the case for treaty revision.”²⁵ From 1933-39, “the paper saw no reason why an action that was justified by ethics and politics before January 1933 should be held to be falsified by the events of the 30th of that month.”²⁶ In *The History of The Times* it was written that “their [referring to Dawson and Barrington-Ward] conviction that Germany was right and Versailles wrong made it impossible for them to refuse her justice if sought by negotiation and not by force.”²⁷

Lothian wrote, in a letter to a friend on 24 November 1933, that he “loathe[d] the Nazi regime,” but he knew that, “there would be no peace in Europe until Germany was given effective equality.”²⁸ Lady Astor, who was greatly influenced by Lothian, based most of her opinion towards Germany on Lothian’s bad conscience about Versailles, and her own prejudice towards France (this was due to her deep antipathy for Catholics).²⁹ She wrote in a letter to *Time and Tide* at the end of 1937: “I have desired to restore a sense of security in Europe by treating Germany as an equal. I have worked for the reversal of the policy of goading her people and rulers into restlessness by trying to keep them in a state of inferiority.”³⁰ Lady Astor was expressing a fear the Milner Group had of the breaking down of the “security in Europe.” This was a result of their greater fear of communism, which Lothian wrote about at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919: “If we are wise we shall offer to Germany a peace which... will be preferable for all sensible men to the alternative of Bolshevism...”³¹ Therefore, it was the group’s fear of Bolshevism that made them desire a strong Germany.

This fear of Communism remained a constant theme among the Milner Group throughout the 30s, especially for Lothian and the Astors. “It remained the solid base on which Philip and the Astors rested their political thinking between the wars.”³² As devout Christians they viewed communism as a threat to Christianity, and this fear “made them feel rather more sympathetic to Hitler’s regime.”³³ Thus, the group began to see Germany as a “bulwark against communism in Europe.”³⁴

Along the same lines, Lord Astor told Thomas Jones (the newest influence on the group), why America misunderstands the British attempt to reach a settlement with Germany. Jones wrote in his diary that Astor said:

This is largely due to the intensive and widespread anti-German propaganda being conducted by those Jews and Communists. Newspapers are influenced by those firms which advertise so largely in the press and are frequently under Jewish

control. One can detect Communist inspiration and promptings, of which most people are quite oblivious.³⁵

Clearly, Lord Astor was stirred by anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic rhetoric, which influenced him and the group to pursue relations with Germany.³⁶ Lord Astor continued: "This being the case, I went out of my way to try and clarify the situation and explain our attempts to settle outstanding questions with Germany. I *naturally* only dealt with arguments etc., which I and others had discussed *publicly* in England."³⁷ These "public" arguments could only mean the unjust treatment of Germany by Versailles, and the vision of Germany as a "bulwark against Bolshevism," that he "and others had discussed publicly." In saying this, was Lord Astor admitting more? Was he not saying that, "naturally" he had not divulged the arguments for trying to reach agreement with Germany discussed *privately* at Cliveden and elsewhere among his Milner Group peers? If so, what were these arguments and why could they not be shared in public? What were the secret aims of the Milner Group?

The Milner Group's ignorance of the newly created central European states and, later, of the intentions of Nazi Germany itself, made it possible for them to dismiss the legitimacy of these new states and work to improve the conditions for a country intent on doing evil. Thus, from 1920 until early in 1939, the group "preferred the policy of *rapprochement* with Germany advocated so ardently in the 1890s by Neville Chamberlain's father, the arch-imperialist Colonial Secretary and crusader for an imperial tariff."³⁸ By building up Germany again, England could use her to steady the balance of power in Europe, preventing the spread of communism into central Europe (where it would be a threat to the western democracies), and thwarting the militarism of France. This was the group's central goal for the role of Germany in Europe. Their other aims during this period were to:

increase Britain's weight in that balance by aligning with her the Dominions and the United States; to refuse any commitments (especially any commitments through the League of Nations, and above all any commitments to aid France) beyond those existing in 1919; to keep British freedom of action; [and] to drive Germany eastward against Russia if either or both of these two powers became a threat to the peace of Western Europe.³⁹

The group envisioned a strong Germany which would extend her influence over central and eastern Europe without force. In a letter to General Smuts, Lothian wrote that "the only practical policy at the moment...is to do everything we can to ensure that Germany's growing influence eastwards respects the political independence of the small nations of Eastern Europe and is extended without the actual resort to violence."⁴⁰ They also conceived of a four-power pact between Germany, England, Italy, and France, which would stabilize western Europe. Peace would be ensured since Europe would be surrounded by "Russia on one side, and an Oceanic bloc of the British Commonwealth and the United States on the other."⁴¹ Conceptually, the Milner Group wanted to split the world into "bloc's" of control, with the Anglo-American bloc envisioned by Cecil Rhodes dominating most of the world.⁴² But as several Milner Group members communicated throughout this period, this idea relied upon treating Germany as an equal. Germany would be allowed to dominate eastern Europe if it could be done without force,

and at a pace “no faster than British public opinion could accept.”⁴³ This was reiterated by Milner Group members in meetings with Hitler, discussions with Joachim von Ribbentrop, and in the press. But the Milner Group was “not willing to allow Germany to expand eastward as she wished.”⁴⁴ They made every effort to restrain Germany from using force while softening up her prospective victims in order to avoid war.

Although there were many groups in England willing to appease Germany, and to believe in Hitler’s peaceful intentions, none of them had the power or connections of the Milner Group. They demonstrated their power through propaganda which influenced public opinion, and used their connections to influence government policy. They thought that appeasing Germany was the best way for England to keep peace and preserve their empire.

Of all the institutions that the Milner Group controlled, *The Times* was the major mouthpiece due to its direct influence on the public. In line with the Milner Group aim for a rebuilt Germany to restore the balance of power in Europe, *The Times* made a conscious effort to produce pro-German articles. In May 1937, Dawson wrote a friend: “I do my utmost, night after night, to keep out of the paper anything that might hurt their susceptibilities.”⁴⁵ Dawson deleted anything that would be harmful towards Germany from any articles written by *The Times* reporters, proven in his relationship with *The Times* correspondent in Berlin, Norman Ebbutt. Ebbutt was anti-Nazi and fearful of Hitler’s intentions, which was reflected in his articles about warnings of German rearmament. He constantly reported these findings back to London, yet, Dawson would not print them. William Shirer, an American reporter in Germany, wrote: “Ebbutt has complained to me several times in private that *The Times* does not print all he sends, that it does not want to hear too much of the bad side of Nazi Germany and has been captured by pro-Nazis in London.”⁴⁶ Dawson also failed to include the views of Liddell Hart, military advisor for *The Times*, during crisis periods, eventually causing him to resign on 1 August 1938. Liddell Hart wrote in his memoirs that after the Rhineland occupation in March 1936, “Dawson and Barrington-Ward avoided asking me for my views on the military effects, let alone any comments on these for publication.”⁴⁷ This happened again prior to the Sudetenland crisis when Dawson and Barrington-Ward suggested without first consulting Liddell Hart, that the area be ceded to Germany. Instead of following the advice of their military advisor, and their correspondent in Germany, both of whom were warning of German rearmament and a tougher British policy to combat it, Dawson and Barrington-Ward pursued their own course.⁴⁸

Daily, the voice of *The Times* featured pro-German lead articles and editorials.⁴⁹ Several articles written by Lothian were published in the paper, including one published 1 February 1935, immediately following his late January meeting with Hitler. In it he stressed that Hitler did not want war for Germany, but wished for equal treatment in Europe. He wrote:

He [Hitler] goes farther to say that he will sign pacts on non-aggression with all Germany’s neighbours, to prove the sincerity of his desire for peace, and that in armaments he asks no more than ‘equality’ for Germany... I have not the slightest doubt that this attitude is perfectly sincere. Hitler’s Germany does not want war...[Germany needs to be treated] as a friend and as one of the European community, ...[not as a] dangerous animal.⁵⁰

Lothian and Dawson continued to push for equality, and tried to make this point to the public. Both knew however, that the British public would only support future changes in Europe if done peacefully. The atmosphere they created by 18 June 1938, was favorable to the Germans, and made it easier for the Anglo-German Naval Treaty to be accepted, allowing Hitler to triple the size of his navy, and thus bringing about the legal repudiation of Article V of the Versailles Treaty. On 14 June, Dawson wrote:

In its broad aspects, however, there is not the slightest doubt that the agreement if it comes will be generally welcomed in this country and it should be widely welcomed elsewhere as a contribution to pacification and stability. Although in practice it involves a tacit disregard of the Treaty of Versailles, yet, in as much as it will substitute a new agreement for a section of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty, it will constitute an important advance in the process of getting peace established upon the firm ground of agreements freely concluded.⁵¹

Moreover, this demonstrated the overwhelming desire of the Milner Group to prepare public sympathy for an Anglo-German rapprochement.

From 1936-38, the group upheld their conviction in a pro-German policy. They believed that "the principle of self-determination of nationalities was as morally valid in 1938 as in 1919."⁵² But when Germany used aggressive tactics in the East, they began to protest, not over the actual merging of Austria and the Sudetenland to Germany, but the method used. The basis of Dawson's protest in *The Times* lay in Germany's "applying the physical strength of the bully!"⁵³ In a letter to Liddell Hart in November 1936, Barrington-Ward reiterated that "the point of our policy must not be to forbid new groupings or agreements in the East but to ensure, as far as we can, that the attempt is not made to accomplish them by war."⁵⁴

The Times did not follow the policy of the Government, but attempted to influence the government with the Milner Group ideals. "At no time during the period 1928-1938, did Printing House Square [where *The Times* was published] seek to follow the inspirations of the Foreign Office. The policy of Dawson and Barrington-Ward was their own."⁵⁵ In fact, the policy was that of the Milner Group, and it was one that *The Times* tried to persuade the government to follow. Liddell Hart wrote that "the basic fault of both [Dawson and Barrington-Ward] in editorial policy was, it seemed to me, that they sought to make *The Times* the 'submerged half' of the Government, or the cabinet behind the Cabinet, instead of giving priority to its function as a newspaper."⁵⁶ Dawson attempted, through his personal friendships with Baldwin, Chamberlain and Halifax, and (as Liddell Hart wrote) "his friends in the Cabinet", to do just that.⁵⁷ He wished to influence his friends in the government and in many ways he was successful.

Jones, the former Secretary of Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin in the 1920s, and the newest member of the Milner Group, had remained good friends with Baldwin, and attempted to push him against certain anti-German British officials in the 30s. In a conversation between Jones and Baldwin on 28 April 1934, he spoke of Robert Vansittart's [of the British Foreign Office] antipathy for Germany: "Diplomats should have nothing to do with hatred of anybody. It is both silly and dangerous."⁵⁸ This reflected the Milner Group's feeling that Vansittart, due to his pro-French sentiments, would be a block to Anglo-German friendship. Jones continued:

I lunched yesterday with Astor. He showed me a letter from his second son, David... full of pungent pictorial criticism of Garvin's [who had begun to turn against appeasement] anti-German articles. Astor had prepared pages and pages of a considered reply on 19th and 20th Century history. The boy has his mothers gift of vituperation and an intense dislike of nationalism. I wish I felt our Foreign Office understood the Germans as they do the French.⁵⁹

Although Baldwin responded by questioning Germany's intentions, Jones continued to try and influence him. In a letter to a friend on 21 February 1936, he wrote:

I keep on and on preaching against the policy of ostracizing Germany, however incalculable Hitler and his crew may be, and the duty of resisting Vansittart's pro-French bias... We have abundant evidence of the desire of all sorts of Germans to be on friendly terms with us.⁶⁰

He attempted to push Baldwin to improve these relations, when in 1936, he told Baldwin that he should remove Sir Eric Phipps as British Ambassador to Germany.⁶¹

It was on occasion of the Rhineland incident when the group exerted a tremendous amount of pressure on the government. Jones again played a central role. That day, 7 March 1936, Lothian, Lord and Lady Astor, Sir Thomas Inskip, Jones and several others happened to be at Cliveden when they heard the news. During discussions Lothian said, with the group all in agreement, that he would not tolerate sanctions on Germany turning them out of "her own back garden."⁶² The group came up with several conclusions that Jones telephoned to Baldwin with this aim:

what I am trying to secure is that S.B. [Stanley Baldwin] should have his mind made up on the big major issue of accepting Hitler at his face value and trying him out fairly now that the last trace of humiliation has been removed [from the Versailles peace]. One wants S.B.'s mind firmly made up *before* he enters the Cabinet where he will encounter all sorts of contradictory advice...⁶³ [emphasis added]

This clearly established Jones' desire and that of the group to influence Baldwin so that he could either shift or shape the Cabinet's decision.

Jones was also a key player in arranging for a meeting between Hitler and Baldwin. He had previously served as a go-between, but promised that he would use his influence with Baldwin to pursue a meeting between the two in order to improve relations. Although he had told Hitler on 17 May 1936 in Berlin that he was "a private and unofficial person," he definitely had official connections and felt free to tell Hitler that Baldwin had told him once of his plan "to get alongside Germany."⁶⁴ Hitler urged the importance of this alliance and pushed for further negotiations. After sharing these "unofficial" discussions with Baldwin, Jones told Dawson and the Astors "that he wanted their help in setting up a meeting between Hitler and Baldwin."⁶⁵ Jones wrote that Dawson said he was "all for collaboration with Germany, but worried over

S.B.'s inertia, as we all are."⁶⁶ Ultimately, they were "worried" that Baldwin could not be convinced.

Throughout 1936, several members, including Dawson, Lord Astor, and Jones, traveled to Germany to meet with Hitler, Ribbentrop, Hermann Göring, and Werner von Blomberg. Ribbentrop, while in London on 2 June, lunched with Jones and further discussed arrangements for a Hitler – Baldwin meeting, concluding that Hitler could meet Baldwin (who was afraid of flying), two to three miles off the English coast. Jones then asked Ribbentrop to go with him that evening to the Astors for dinner, so that "he would meet a Cabinet Minister in the shape of Inskip, now Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, as well as Lothian and the Astors."⁶⁷ How convenient! It seems that the Milner Group believed that they could influence another member of the Cabinet, which was exactly what happened. According to Jones, Inskip was "impressed" with Ribbentrop. Ribbentrop had informed Inskip that Germany was receiving secret advances from some of the smaller powers in Europe, and stressed "the importance of a collaborating England and Germany forming a new centre of crystallization."⁶⁸ After Inskip had gone to bed, Lothian, Jones, and Ribbentrop talked further. Jones wrote that Lothian "impressed [the Milner Group aims] upon von Ribbentrop that in any agreement with us it must be made plain that it contemplated the peaceful revision of the treaties as they affected Austria, Memel, and the rest. We must not get into a position of a breach of faith should Austria fall to Germany."⁶⁹ Thus, Lothian and Jones were conspiring with the Nazis to revise the Treaty of Versailles, further indicating their sympathy with German desires as long as changes were made peacefully.

Then in September 1936, Dawson, Jones, and David Lloyd George met with Ribbentrop, Hitler, and Rudolf Hess in a series of meetings where they reiterated their desire for peace with Germany. While the Milner Group was busy giving Hitler the false impression that England was ready to make an alliance with Germany, they also were attempting to further influence their own government to this policy.

The Milner Group conspiracy thickens when you consider the role of several government officials who were either part of the group or loosely affiliated with it. This includes Halifax, Sir John Simon (through All Souls), Sir Samuel Hoare, Inskip, and Chamberlain who were all active among the group, and present for many meetings.⁷⁰ The Milner Group's constant interaction with these Cabinet members at Cliveden, and elsewhere, allowed them to be influential. Michael Astor, the youngest son of Waldorf, wrote that "the danger of Philip Lothian's position was that although he had no actual responsibility for government policy, he had the ear of men who wielded power."⁷¹ And this could be said for most of the group, particularly Dawson, Jones, and the Astors. "It goes without saying that the whole inner core of the group, and their chief publications, such as *The Times* and *The Round Table*, approved the policy of appeasement completely and prodded it along with calculated indiscretions when it was felt necessary to do so."⁷² Thus, it can be argued that, because of their influence, Hitler was assured that he could rearm and reoccupy the Rhineland without British resistance, while members of the British Cabinet made sure an alliance against Germany was impossible.⁷³ Even after the Rhineland incident, they were able to prevent action against Germany, by convincing even anti-appeasers that Hitler's intentions were peaceful. On 9 March 1936 the Cabinet concluded that no action was necessary. Anthony Eden's statement, which he later read in the House of Commons, was discussed and approved in the Cabinet. It read:

there is, I am thankful to say, no reason to suppose that the present German action implies a threat of hostilities; the German Government speak in their memorandum of their “unchangeable longing for a real pacification of Europe” and express their willingness to conclude a non-aggression pact with France and Belgium.⁷⁴

Thus, the conspiracy was complete.

When Chamberlain became Prime Minister, the Milner Group again used their connection as a means of influence. Several times in 1937-38, Chamberlain stayed at Cliveden (Jones wrote that it was five weekends), and many other times he dined there. These were not just visits between friends (for Chamberlain was on close terms with the Astors as well as Dawson), but were usually arenas for large political discussions. Lady Astor wrote to Lothian on 12 December 1937, that “Neville Chamberlain is lunching with me on Thursday, and I hope Edward Halifax, and Tom Inskip... Apparently the Communist rag [*The Week*] has been full of the Halifax-Lothian-Astor plot at Cliveden...”⁷⁵ Lothian replied on 17 December, “I saw in the papers that you and the Londonderry’s have been regarded as the heart of the pro-German movement. But I’m glad to think that it has got well entrenched in the Government long ago...”⁷⁶ The Milner Group was largely responsible for this because of their direct contact with high-ranking government officials. On 8 March 1938, Dawson wrote in his diary that he had lunched “with Nancy and Waldorf – the Prime Minister and Mrs. Chamberlain, Tom Inskip, Edward Halifax, Philip (Lothian), Bob (Brand) and Tom Jones – the ‘Cliveden Front’ in fact.”⁷⁷

Chamberlain’s aims for Germany were similar to those of the Milner Group. He wished to restore Germany as a power in Europe in order to return her to the League and keep the peace. He wrote that “Left-wing Britain was clear that Germany had been wronged over disarmament and still had wrongs to be righted in Danzig and the Corridor...”⁷⁸ On 27 April 1936, he wrote in his journal that the League needed to be maintained “as a moral force and focus,” while peace depended “on a system of regional pacts, to be registered and approved by the League.”⁷⁹ His idea of “regional pacts” was similar to that of the Milner Group. Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London, wrote that after meeting Chamberlain on 29 July 1937, he was convinced that Chamberlain’s “aspirations were centered on a Four-Power (Western) Pact, and that the road to it would be the appeasement of Hitler and Mussolini in every possible way.”⁸⁰ Although this was a common theme in British political circles, Maisky believed that the “Cliveden Set” influenced Chamberlain and government policy. He wrote:

power in this country [England] remained firmly in the hands of the most reactionary elements of the Conservative Party. Chamberlain was Prime Minister and Lord Halifax was Foreign Secretary, and it was the Cliveden Set that defined the main lines of the Government’s official policy.⁸¹

Although Maisky might have been influenced by *The Week*, his insight into the aims of the Milner Group was quite sharp. In any case, his personal contact with British officials certainly gave him a more accurate picture than Cockburn could ever concoct.

On 10 May 1938, Chamberlain attended a lunch hosted by the Astors in their London home at St. James Square. The conversation focused on the European situation. Chamberlain suggested a four-power pact, and the need for frontier revision in favor of Germany to settle the Sudetenland issue.⁸² Hitler had not even demanded this, yet Chamberlain, with the support of the Milner Group, was preparing the way for Munich. In a letter to his sister on 26 November 1937, he wrote:

but I don't see why we shouldn't say to Germany, 'give us satisfactory assurances that you won't use force to deal with the Austrians and Czechoslovakians, and we will give you similar assurances that we won't use force to prevent the changes you want, if you can get them by peaceful means.'⁸³

Chamberlain had been influenced to believe that Germany should be given a free hand in Europe.

By the end of 1937, Halifax became even more valuable to the Milner Group when he visited with Hitler in Germany, and when he was named Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Cockburn wrote that on the weekend of 23-24 October, the "Cliveden Set" had decided that it was time to offer Hitler a "free hand" in central and eastern Europe.⁸⁴ Jones wrote that Britain should accept Hitler's offers before "his price... mount[ed] and he will want the naval agreement revised in his favor."⁸⁵ But, Halifax was not present at these discussions, as Cockburn mistakenly wrote. Had the group communicated their conclusions to him before he left? The answer lies in the Halifax visit with Hitler on 19 November 1937, when he reiterated the desire for a four-power western pact with "possible alterations" being made for Germany over the questions of "Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia... through the course of peaceful evolution" without "far-reaching disturbances."⁸⁶ Since Halifax was speaking for the Cabinet, it can be assumed that they were now in line with the Milner Group. His report back to the Cabinet on 24 November was so positive that the Cabinet notes read, "Lord Halifax thought, therefore, that the basis of an understanding might not be too difficult as regards Central and Eastern Europe, and that the question of the League could be discussed."⁸⁷

Upon his return, Halifax lunched with Lady Astor. She wrote to Lothian on 27 November, "Edward Halifax came to luncheon the day after he returned from Germany. He liked everyone he met in Berlin... He said he felt that he was speaking a completely different mental language, but he realized that it was absolutely necessary for us to get on with them."⁸⁸ Naturally, the Milner Group was quite pleased to hear the meeting went well. Chamberlain too, was pleased. He wrote in his diary on 26 November:

the German visit was from my point of view a great success, because it achieved its object, that of creating an atmosphere in which it is possible to discuss with Germany the practical questions involved in a European settlement... Both Hitler and Goering said separately, and emphatically, that they had no desire or intention of making war, and I think we may take this as correct, at any rate for the present. Of course, they want to dominate Eastern Europe; they want as close a union with Austria as they can get without incorporating her in the Reich, and they want

much the same things for the Sudetendeutsche as we did for the Uitlanders in the Transvaal.⁸⁹

These words not only demonstrated his fundamental misunderstanding of Nazi Germany, but showed that he sympathized with German desires. Chamberlain immediately pursued offers “to satisfy German colonial demands by giving them the Belgian Congo and Angola in place of Tanganyika,” for her return to the League.⁹⁰ In December 1937, an article published in the *Round Table Review*, reflected these views. It read:

that Great Britain should contribute her share towards finding a colonial area – say, in central west Africa – which could be transferred to Germany under mandate... A majority would regard the abandonment of France’s eastern alliances as a price well worth paying for lasting peace and the return of Germany to the League.⁹¹

Then in 1938, Germany began to go against the warnings of the Milner Group by establishing her military prowess and threatening her neighbors. The British Government and the Milner Group, continued their attempts to convince the public that Hitler would settle down, but had to act more cautiously in order to retain public support. In March 1939, after the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, the group began to split.⁹²

At Cliveden in June 1939, Adam von Trott zu Solz, a former classmate of David Astor at Oxford and a Rhodes scholar, met with Inskip (then Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs), Halifax, Lothian, Chamberlain, Dawson, the Astors, and a “number of other Government politicians.” On an official mission from Berlin, von Trott’s job was to feel out the current mood of the British and report back to the German Foreign Office. Even at that late date, it was apparent that several, if not all, of these men wished to solve the crisis with Germany in order to pursue an alliance. He wrote that Lord Astor was “still as markedly Germanophile as ever,” that Lothian had probably “not yet gone over to the anti-German, Anglo-American camp,” and that both praised Hitler, but were deceived by Hitler’s “destruction” of independent Czechoslovakia.⁹³ Prior to that, Halifax, Astor, and Lothian, admitted they had been willing to let Germany dominate central and eastern Europe if it was done peacefully.⁹⁴ That would be the only way the British public would accept it. Von Trott wrote that Lord Astor told him, “if he or his friends were still to defend German policy publicly in Britain they would be regarded as traitors and hounded down.”⁹⁵ Therefore, if the British public would have not been so anti-war and aggression, the Milner Group would have continued to appease.

Claud Cockburn’s prescience in *The Week*, highlighted a group that had a tremendous amount of power and influence inside and outside the government. Although Cockburn may have been inaccurate about certain details, the entire argument can not be easily thrown out. Further study into the details show that the group he labeled the “Cliveden Set” were Germanophiles, but of equal importance, because of their origins and training, they were imperialists with a common vision for the British Empire. This vision consisted of specific goals, including supporting a strong but peaceful Germany as a bulwark to prevent the spread of communism into Europe. This explains the group’s interactions with high-ranking Nazis in the 1930s. The details also show that the group unlike other appeasers, through the power they

controlled, attempted with much success until March 1939, to influence both the public and the government to subscribe to their beliefs. Therefore, they were certainly more than a pressure group favorable to the Germans as many have suggested. Cockburn was correct when he wrote: "Call it a set, call it a gang, call it a trust, call it a co-operation, or charades, or Christian Science or cagoulardism; cut it how you like, it's still baloney."⁹⁶

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¹ Much credit for the scope of this study needs to be given to Professor D'Agostino and my peers in the HIS 740 seminar at San Francisco State. Their insights into further research, as well as their probing questions and constructive feedback, first drew me to this topic and then helped me to focus on its formation. I thank them immensely.

² Cockburn's articles caught and spread like wild fire in the British press. Newspapers including *The Daily Worker*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Reynolds News*, *News Chronicle*, and *Tribune*, began to talk of the conspiracy that 'Clivdenites' were spinning; political cartoonists drew pictures of Lady Astor leading this pro-Nazi brigade. See Claud Cockburn, *A Discord of Trumpets: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 240. In regards to the "set," he wrote: "I am prepared to believe that one or two of the people, whom I then supposed to be principal figures, were really cat's-paws. But then a cat's-paw is a cat's-paw and must be expect to be treated as at least part of the cat," 261f.

³ Christopher Sykes, *Nancy: The Life of Lady Astor* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972), 117.

⁴ Elizabeth Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 47.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Carroll Quigley, *The Anglo-American Establishment: From Rhodes to Cliveden* (New York: Books in Focus, 1981), ix.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Langhorne, 48. See also D.C. Watt, *Personalities and Policies: Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1965), 29.

¹⁰ See Quigley, 63. Curtis had been one of the chief architects of the idea of a British Commonwealth.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46. Bailey was the largest landowner in Rhodesia and a devoted imperialist – his financial contributions were eclipsed by Lord Astor around 1925. Brand besides being responsible for the Astor influence, was a banker and thus, was regarded as the economist of the Milner Group. He was director of Lloyd's Bank and *The Times* and after the war he was financial adviser to Lord Cecil at the Paris Peace Conference. See also *ibid.*, 60.

¹² *Ibid.*, 61. This was the first of two stints in this position which lasted until 1919. Dawson's second term was from 1922, when J.J. Astor bought the paper, until 1941.

¹³ The group also controlled the Rhodes Trust (started in 1902) and The Beit Trust (started in 1906). The Beit Trust was formed by Alfred Beit, the business genius who handled all of Rhodes' business affairs. It was to be used for transportation and other improvements in Africa, after his death in 1906. Beit also founded two Beit Chairs at Oxford University, which also came under the Milner Group's control. See *ibid.*, 88f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁵ Langhorne, 49.

¹⁶ Claud Cockburn, ed., *The Week* (17 December 1937). As quoted in Sykes, 366f. After presenting a tremendous amount of damning evidence of the "set's" efforts to appease Germany, Sykes concluded: "These friends were not traitors; they were not Nazis; they were not admirers of Fascism; they were not, except for Halifax, influential on

foreign policy, but until mid-March 1939, they were believers in, and ardent publicists for Chamberlain's Appeasement policy. That is the only faint shadow of reality in the myth, and the reality, pursued to its logical end, means that most of Great Britain belonged to the Cliveden Set," 409.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 258 (6 April 1938), 1.

¹⁸ *The Week* (April 1936). As quoted in Michael Astor, *Tribal Feeling*. (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1963), 136. Astor accurately portrays the actions of the group, with excellent quotes, but downplays the group's role in influencing government decisions. (Lord Harlech was also a part of the Milner Group, but was not a major player.)

¹⁹ Astor, 137. Although Lady Astor's role was not as large as Cockburn thought, she definitely was influential among the group's members.

²⁰ See D.C. Watt, "The Week that Was," *Encounter* (May 1972), 83. He wrote, "it's record of accuracy is extremely low in any of the areas on which the accuracy of its statements and judgements can now be checked." For example, one of Cockburn's major mistakes was made in the 17 November 1937 article referred to previously. He wrote that Halifax was at Cliveden on 23 and 24 October, prior to Lord Halifax's visit to Germany. *The Week* claimed perfect knowledge of Halifax's instructions, which it described as follows: "he was under orders to propose to the Führer (whom he was to meet on the 19th) that in exchange for an Anglo-German truce, Great Britain would in no way interfere with German expansion to the East. The Grand Design had no German origin, *The Week* insisted, but a strictly British one. Halifax would convey it to Hitler as if it came from the British Government, but in fact it was the invention of a hidden cabal which directed the Government in secret. The plan, *The Week* now revealed, had been concocted on the 23rd and 24th October, under the aegis of the Astor's." See Sykes, 366.

However, it was later proven that it was Anthony Eden (then Foreign Secretary, who wanted to take a tougher stand towards Germany), and not Halifax, at Cliveden that weekend. Obviously, an egregious error. However, Cockburn was not too far off about Halifax's visit with Hitler. There is no evidence in the British Cabinet papers that Halifax was to propose this to Hitler, although his report back to the Cabinet was very discrete and positive towards Hitler as if he was attempting to make him look good to the others in the Cabinet.

²¹ AJP Taylor wrote his wife on 6 May 1974: "People no longer believe in the Cliveden Set. It was invented by Claud Cockburn as a joke (like most of *The Week*). Genuine analysis of the visitors to Cliveden show that they were of all sorts. The main feature of the Cliveden weekends was not agreement on appeasement, but argument over everything." A.J.P. Taylor, *Letters to Eva: 1969-1983*, ed. Eva Haraszi Taylor (London: Century, 1991), 181. Thomas Jones wrote: "Such was the variety and individuality of the persons gathered that the notion of their forming a Cliveden Set was as grotesque as it would be to expect unity among the passengers of a Cunarder." Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters: 1931-1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), xxxvi. See also John Grigg, *Nancy Astor: Portrait of a Pioneer* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980), 146. Grigg wrote that the "myth" of a conspiracy "Cliveden Set" was concocted by the "gifted communist journalist Claud Cockburn."

²² Quigley, 23. Lothian, Brand, and J.C. Smuts (a former Milner Kindergartner in South Africa who stayed in that country and later became her Prime Minister) were all involved with the Paris Peace Conference. Lothian was PM Lloyd George's private Secretary while Brand was a financial adviser to Lord Cecil. Smuts helped Cecil create the detailed Charter of the League. Lothian wrote the preamble to the Fontainebleau Memorandum calling for fair treatment for Germany, but it was not adopted by the Peace Conference. See Quigley, 81.

²³ Langhorne, 82. See also Watt, *Personalities and Policies*, 48. He wrote: "Its role was to provide a forum in which an educated opinion on foreign relations could develop."

²⁴ Astor, 145. See also Quigley, 74. For the significance of All Souls and its influence on the Milner Group, see Quigley 20-26 and A.L. Rowse, *All Souls and Appeasement: A Contribution to Contemporary History* (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1961).

²⁵ *The History of The Times: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948*, Part II (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1952), 883.

²⁶ Rowse, 7. On this day, 30 January 1933, Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany.

²⁷ *The History of The Times*, 923.

²⁸ J.R.M. Butler, *Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr): 1882-1940* (London: MacMillan and co. Ltd., 1960), 197. See also 206, 214-16 for attitudes towards Germany.

²⁹ Grigg, 195.

³⁰ Anthony Masters, *Nancy Astor: A Biography* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 193. Masters view of the Cliveden Set: "With some reason the group felt they represented the views of the country. They had absolutely no conception of Hitler's real power and there is no doubt that they set up a highly influential politico-press pressure group," 187. But he also wrote they "had access to the 'back door' of power," 191. However, he concluded that the group was influential but not subversive. "Britain was not governed by the Cliveden group, but they did exert considerable influence," 201.

³¹ Langhorne, 81.

³² *Ibid.*, 82. Cockburn was very aware of this and accused the "set" of anti-communism several times. He wrote in his memoirs: "*The Week* ran a fairly long story about what it claimed were the forces in Britain which, because of their overriding fear of the Bolsheviki, formed the principle [sic] social and political obstacle to the successful pursuit by Britain of a clear-cut vigorous and uncompromising anti-Nazi policy." See Cockburn, *A Discord of Trumpets*, 260.

³³ Astor, 143. For more on the fear of communism, see Eva Haraszti, *Treaty Breakers or "Real Politiker": The Anglo-German Naval Agreement of June 1935*, trans. Sándor Simon (Budapest: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1974), 18-20.

³⁴ Garvin supported Germany for this very reason. See Neville Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers: Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), 34.

³⁵ Jones, 390.

³⁶ Lady Astor was also quite anti-Semitic. After a Foreign Affairs Committee meeting on 25 February 1938, Nancy retorted to Conservative M.P., Alan Graham, who had told her she had not behaved well during the session: "Only a Jew like you would dare to be rude to me." See Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters: 1930-1939*, ed. Nigel Nicolson. (London: William Collins Sons and Co., 1966), 327.

³⁷ Jones, 390. Italics added for emphasis.

³⁸ Watt, *Personalities and Policies*, 162. It has been suggested that Chamberlain's "affinity with his father's tariff imperialism made him peculiarly sensitive" to the advice of the 'Clivedenites', especially since it "usually coincided with his own judgement." See Keith Middlemas, *The Strategy of Appeasement: The British Government and Germany, 1937-39* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 99.

³⁹ Quigley, 240.

⁴⁰ Butler, 224.

⁴¹ Quigley, 279.

⁴² Lothian brought up "Cecil Rhodes's plan for a union of Germany and the whole Anglo-Saxon world," during his second meeting with Hitler in 1937. See Sykes, 386. But, Hitler just wanted an Anglo-German alliance so that he could turn east. Adam von Trott zu Solz wrote in June 1939 that Lothian still believed in an Anglo-German alliance, "if Germany led, but did not dominate Central and Eastern Europe, the Western European nations could then feel reassured about their political independence. England - America (which Lothian naturally likes to regard as one!) and Germany, as the only real Great Powers, could then jointly shape and guarantee the future of world politics," United States Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*. VI Ser. D (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 679f. (Hereto after referred to as *DGFP* VI Ser. D.)

⁴³ Quigley, 272.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴⁵ *The History of the Times*, Part II, 734. See also B.H. Liddell Hart, *The Liddell Hart Memoirs: The Later Years II* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 149; and Robert Rothschild, *Peace for Our Time* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988), 209. Dawson did this with the support of the Milner Group, "fortified by the constant support of the Astors, by Lothian... secure in his close personal friendship of [Stanley] Baldwin, Halifax and Chamberlain, he was deterred by nothing." Rowse, 10.

⁴⁶ William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (London 1941), 42. See also Frank McDonough, "The Times, Norman Ebbut [sic] and the Nazis, 1927-37," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992), 407-424.

⁴⁷ Liddell Hart, 126.

⁴⁸ Michael Astor wrote that *The Times* "supported the policies of Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain," 136.

⁴⁹ For pro-German letters to *The Times* see Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-9* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1980), 255ff.

⁵⁰ Lord Lothian, "Germany and France: The British Task, II. – Basis of Ten Years' Peace," *The Times* (1 February 1935), 15. In Ian Colvin, *Vansittart In Office: An Historical Survey of the Origins of the Second World War Based on the Papers of Sir Robert Vansittart* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965), he wrote that these articles by Lothian were extremely harmful. "These opinions could not have been more wrong, and they were circulated to a Cabinet which was already on the path of error," 41.

⁵¹ *The History of The Times*, 894.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 931.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 918.

⁵⁴ Liddell Hart, 132.

⁵⁵ *The History of The Times*, 918.

⁵⁶ Liddell Hart, 149.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁸ Jones, 129. See also Colvin, 34f.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁶¹ Colvin, 47. Phipps had been holding a tough line on Germany and complained that the English appeasers were interfering with his work. In a memo to Sir John Simon on 31 May 1935 he wrote: "Germany will, I learn, insist upon *all* her former Colonial possessions being returned to her... These are dragons' teeth sown by Lords Rothermere, Lothian and Allen despite all my efforts." See W. N. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin, and M.E. Lambert, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919 – 1939: Naval Policy and Defense Requirements, July 20 1934 – March 25, 1936* XIII second ser. (London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1973), 315.

⁶² Butler, 212. Dawson repeated this to Rowse at All Souls saying: "What has it got to do with us? It's none of our business is it? It's their own back garden they are walking into." Rowse, 40.

⁶³ Jones, 181. For a list of the group's "shadow conclusions" at Cliveden see Jones, 180f. Lothian four days later informed German Ambassador Hoesch that "for the time being the broad masses sympathize with the German action and do not wish to see Britain involved in measures against Germany." See United States Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, The Third Reich* V Ser. C (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1966), 102f.

⁶⁴ Jones, 200.

⁶⁵ Masters, 189.

⁶⁶ Jones, 202.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 215. This was not the first time that Jones lunched with Ribbentrop. In fact, Jones writes in his diary of several lunch meetings with Ribbentrop. On 15 April 1936, he wrote to Lady Grigg (her husband Patrick James Grigg was also a Milner Group member): "Last Wednesday I had lunch alone at the Carlton with von Ribbentrop and went over the usual topics between us and Germany. He talks English very well and I'm sure does not want war in the West.... Memel and Danzig were not worth going to war about; Austria would fall to Germany presently. Germany must have her colonies, and so forth, - nothing that you and P.J. do not know already," 186. A clear indication of the Milner Group's approval of revision in central and eastern Europe.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 216. This was not the only time Inskip was included in Milner Group discussions with Nazi Government leaders. On 11 March 1938, Lord Astor, Jones, and Inskip breakfasted with Ribbentrop and his right hand man Dr. Woermann at the German Embassy in London. See Jones, 395-397.

⁷⁰ These five men were part of "Cato's" "guilty men thesis," in which they were blamed for leading Britain down the wrong path. See "Cato," *Guilty Men* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1940). For insights on Simon and Hoare see Quigley, 28; 270-275.

⁷¹ Astor, 145.

⁷² Quigley, 271.

⁷³ Quigley wrote that "within the Cabinet Halifax, Simon, and Hoare resisted the effort to form any alignment against Germany." Quigley, 270.

⁷⁴ Great Britain Cabinet Office. [Cabinet: Registered Files, 1916-1939.] (London: Public Record Office, 1971), [Microfilm: cab 23 81] Cabinet 17 (36) 1, 262.

⁷⁵ Sykes, 387.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 388.

⁷⁷ John Evelyn Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and our Times* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1955), 366. The Chamberlain's spent that weekend with the Astors at Cliveden. See also R.J.Q. Adams, *British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement, 1935-39* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 89f. Adams wrote that Chamberlain's policy was not influenced by the Cliveden Set, "that coterie of enthusiastic appeasers gathered for country house weekends at the Buckinghamshire mansion of his friends, Lord and Lady Astor. Nor was he taking his lead... from Printing House Square, where the editor Geoffrey Dawson lent the powerful support of *The Times* to appeasement efforts," 76.

⁷⁸ Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1970), 263. It would be helpful to have Chamberlain's letters to his sisters in entirety to get an overall perspective of Chamberlain's visions and feelings. Although Feiling's book is very useful, it is also extremely selective.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 295. On 10 June Chamberlain asked the 1900 club: "Does it not suggest that it might be wise to explore the possibilities of localising the danger spots of the world by means of regional arrangements, which could be approved by the League?" 296.

⁸⁰ Ivan Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler?* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1964), 69.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 94f.

⁸² Quigley, 284. See also Grigg, 149 and Sykes, 391f. Cockburn wrote in *The Week* on 7 September 1938: "*The Times* is rightly looked upon as the mouth organ of those powerful Anglo-American circles in closest touch with the German Government, and the fact that such a suggestion – which everyone knows is no more acceptable or practicable than the cession of Scotland to Germany would be for the British – is regarded as a sinister indication of Germany's future plan." Again a very perceptive prediction.

⁸³ Feiling, 333. MP Sir Stafford Cripps truly believed that the Milner Group was behind Chamberlain's policy. At the end of March 1939, he said about the group: "They are the people who got Viscount Halifax to go to Germany behind Eden's back. They are the people who have been entertaining Ribbentrop and making friends with many other Nazis. They are the people who are running the policy behind Chamberlain...." Masters, 194.

⁸⁴ Patricia Cockburn, *The Years of the Week* (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1968), 240. Dawson, Lothian, Brand, Curtis, and Jones were all present as was appeaser Neville Henderson. Although many historians argue that this discussion was unlikely due to the presence of Eden, it was also possible that they discussed it in private after Eden had gone to bed or when he was not present.

⁸⁵ Jones, 370.

⁸⁶ J. Noakes and G. Pridham, eds., *Nazism, 1919-1945: Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination, A Documentary Reader 3* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 690. Meanwhile, Germany became convinced that Britain saw Germany as a bulwark against communism, and that Britain was prepared to allow Germany to liquidate Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland if this could be done without provoking a war. Quigley, 275. Maisky wrote that Hitler understood Halifax's statements as "London's blessing for the violent seizure of 'living space' in the (east)," 73.

⁸⁷ British Cabinet Papers [Cab 23 90:163] 45 (37) 5, 166.

⁸⁸ Sykes, 387.

⁸⁹ Feiling, 332f.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁹¹ Quigley, 278.

⁹² The Milner Group split after the German occupation of all of Czechoslovakia. For more on this see Quigley 292-302. On 12 March in the House of Commons, Lady Astor said: "Will the Prime Minister lose no time in letting the German Government know with what horror this country regards Germany's action?" Vyvyan Adams, a fellow Conservative, interjected: "You yourself caused it!" See Sykes, 403.

⁹³ *DGFP*, VI Ser. D, 674, 677.

⁹⁴ Halifax said that after Munich he "had seen the way open for a new consolidation of Powers, in which Germany would have the preponderance in Central and South East Europe, [while in return] a 'not too unfriendly Spain and Italy' would leave unthreatened British positions in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and with pacification in the Far East also becoming possible." *Ibid.*, 675. Sykes wrote that Halifax "is rarely associated with the Cliveden Set." Sykes, 404. While Butler explained that Lothian could not have made concessions or proposals to Hitler behind the back of his own government because Halifax was present when "the alleged proposals were made." He

called these suggestions "absurd," while assuming that Halifax played no role. Butler, 231. Both of these writers are very biased about their subjects and tend to paint them in a favorable light, being selective in the evidence they discuss and excusing their subject from almost any and all guilt. But from what I have found, Halifax definitely was a part of the group although probably not within the inner circle.

⁹⁵ *DGFP*, VI Ser. D, 676.

⁹⁶ *The Week*, No. 257 (30 March 1938), 2.