



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

**Pioneers of European Federalism: the New Europe Group and  
New Britain Movement (1931–1935)**

**By:**

David Graham Page

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Department of History

October 2016

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first in-depth study of the early 1930s Bloomsbury-based New Europe Group (NEG) and New Britain Movement (NBM), which constituted a politicised social movement led by Dimitrije Mitrinović. The Introduction situates the NEG/NBM as the British manifestation of the *nouvelles relèves*, the northwest European cluster of extra-parliamentary political groups that were neither plainly left-wing nor right-wing, but rather were infused with a spiritually based ideology influenced by the Personalist philosopher Emmanuel Mounier. Chapter 1 scrutinises the NEG/NBM as an antisystem challenger to the National Government, and analyses the movement's 'political perfectionist' antisystemness in the context of the syncretic turn in British extra-parliamentary politics. Chapter 2 discusses the dynamics of the NEG/NBM, including its 'prefigurative politics' and Mitrinović's use of 'strategic ambiguity.' Chapter 3 contextualises the European federalist thought of Mitrinović and other prominent figures in the NEG/NBM, and examines their understanding of the 'European civil war' and perception of the European and world 'crisis.' Chapter 4 begins with a comparative analysis of the proposals for European unity advanced by Richard Nikolaus von Coudenhove-Kalergi, Aristide Briand, and Mitrinović and the NEG/NBM. The chapter then details the lines of reasoning the NEG/NBM used to make a case for Eurofederalism, and explains the movement's proposals for European governance and federal institutions. The first complete list of the NEG/NBM's periodicals is provided in an Appendix. The main finding presented is that the NEG/NBM (rather than Federal Union) was the first genuine Eurofederalist group in Britain. Another finding is that during the early years of the National Government, the NEG/NBM turned many readers of its periodicals into a 'networked audience' in order to maximise the movement's delegitimising impact on the MacDonald–Baldwin axis. This thesis redresses the neglect of the NEG/NBM in the historiography on significant fringe movements in interwar Britain.

**Pioneers of European Federalism: the New Europe Group and New  
Britain Movement (1931–1935)**

**CONTENTS**

Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

Introduction

Chapter 1 – Countering the ‘Crisis’ with Political Perfectionism: Dimitrije Mitrinović,  
His Followers, and the New Europe Group

Chapter 2 – The Rise and Demise of the New Britain Movement

Chapter 3 – The NEG/NBM as Britain’s First Genuine European Federalist Group

Chapter 4 – To Create a ‘New Europe’: the NEG/NBM’s Reasoning and Vision, in  
Context

Conclusion

Appendix: a Complete List of Periodicals under Mitrinović’s Direction

Bibliography

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost I very gratefully acknowledge Dr Julie Gottlieb, my primary supervisor. Without Dr Gottlieb's invaluable guidance, great encouragement and tremendous patience I would not have been able to bring to fruition this thesis. Her insights helped shape this work from the outset, and prompted me to make countless substantive and stylistic improvements. I am also grateful to Prof. Mary Vincent, my secondary supervisor, for comments and advice from which this thesis benefited.

At the J. B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford, Emma Burgham – the Project Archivist for the New Atlantis Foundation Dimitrije Mitrinović Archive – was a great help. She enthusiastically shared her knowledge, and her meticulous work cataloguing the extremely rich archive is sure to be immensely appreciated by scholars working on any of the groups associated with Mitrinović. Alison Cullingford (Special Collections Librarian) and Martin Levy (Special Collections Assistant) provided a warm welcome and first-rate assistance.

In New York, I am grateful to Brigette C. Kamsler and Betty Bolden of the Burke Library at the Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University, for their help accessing the Harry F. Ward Papers. In Sils Maria, Peter Villwock at Nietzsche Haus allowed me to consult the Oscar Levy Papers prior to completion of the accession process. At the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, the University Archives staff provided a good deal of help with the Watson Thomson Fonds over the course of several visits. My debts to scholars will be fully apparent from the text and notes.

Last but not least, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my wife, Miwa Gardner-Page, for all the support she has provided throughout this project. My better half has shown forbearance in the face of my seemingly endless cogitations on 'Neg-nebbum,' as she calls the NEG/NBM. I simply could not have done this without her.



## List of Abbreviations

BUF	British Union of Fascists
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
<i>Eleventh Hour</i>	<i>The Eleventh Hour</i> New Series
EU	European Union
FO	Foreign Office
FU	Federal Union
ILP	Independent Labour Party
LNU	League of Nations Union
MIS	Military Intelligence, Section 5
NAFDMA	New Atlantis Foundation Dimitrije Mitrović Archive
NBM	New Britain Movement
NEG	New Europe Group
<i>New Albion</i>	<i>New Albion: For British Renaissance and Western Alliance</i>
<i>New Atlantis</i>	<i>New Atlantis: For Western Renaissance and World Socialism</i>
<i>New Britain</i> quarterly	<i>New Britain: Quarterly Organ of the XIth Hour Club</i> or <i>New Britain: Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance</i> (specified in notes)
<i>New Britain</i> quarterly New Series	<i>New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State</i>
<i>New Britain</i> weekly	<i>New Britain: A Weekly Organ of National Renaissance</i>
<i>New Europe</i>	<i>New Europe: A monthly Journal for Federation and Disarmament</i>
NF	New Force
Thomson Fonds	Watson Thomson Fonds
UEF	Union of European Federalists

## **Introduction**

### ***The Subject, Significance and Sources of this Thesis***

#### *The Subject*

The subject of this thesis is the concentric couple of Bloomsbury-based political groups called the New Europe Group (NEG) and the New Britain Movement (NBM), active in the first half of the 1930s. Sharing a set of organisers, the NEG (founded in 1931) and the outgrowth NBM (which had a public profile in 1933–4, and published its last surviving periodical until mid-1935) had no substantive ideological differences. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the NEG and the NBM together as ‘the NEG/NBM’ or ‘the movement.’ I will make an exception every time a distinction need be made between the NEG (which, for the most part, organised lectures and discussion groups, while conducting and publicising research) and the NBM, a politicised social movement that grew to operate in all four corners of the kingdom. The NEG/NBM was the brainchild of the London-based self-exile Dimitrije Mitrinović, a charismatic Herzegovinian Serb who was the movement’s undisputed leader.<sup>1</sup>

The NBM’s objective was to ‘create a New Britain organised in Social Unity and for the economic freedom of every individual’ through the use of methods including the ‘equitable distribution of wealth’; the ‘national control of the issue of money’; the ‘constitutional reorganisation of national politics upon a regional basis’; the ‘functional organisation of industry in the service of the community as a whole’; and the creation of a ‘European Federation ... as the basis of a new world order and a

---

<sup>1</sup> Mitrinović was born on 21 October 1887 in a village near the town of Stolac, and died on 28 August 1953 in Richmond-upon-Thames; see Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* (Boulder, 1984), p. 7 and p. 185.

means towards active peace.’<sup>2</sup> The NEG/NBM captured the imagination of thousands: *New Britain: A Weekly Organ of National Renaissance* (hereafter *New Britain* weekly), the movement’s main periodical, had a peak readership of half a million.<sup>3</sup> In its day, commentators recognised the NEG/NBM as a significant voice in the political sphere: for example, John Middleton Murry told readers of *The Adelphi* that the movement gave ‘definite focus’ to the ‘aspirations of [a middle-class] mass of opinion,’ “‘radically” inclined as no body of opinion in its class has been before,’ on the ‘defects’ of ‘national and international organisation.’<sup>4</sup>

### *The Significance*

Peter Clarke has identified the British Union of Fascists (BUF) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) as the main beneficiaries of the ‘bankruptcy of bourgeois politics’ that many Britons began to perceive in 1931, when a politico-economic crisis caused Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to effectively suspend party politics.<sup>5</sup> MacDonald was expelled from the Labour Party a week after forming the National Government (whose benches were dominated by MPs from the Conservative Party, led by Stanley Baldwin), which he headed until mid-1935. Many Britons disapproved of what Robert Boothby would later call the ‘get-together on the part of the Boys of the Old Brigade.’<sup>6</sup> Some Britons who cared just as little for the rump Labour

---

<sup>2</sup> University of Bradford Special Collections: New Atlantis Foundation Dimitrije Mitrinović Archive [hereafter NAFDMA], 6/1/1, ‘The New Britain Alliance’ [‘The Constitution of the New Britain Alliance’], 15 December 1933 (published January 1934), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> David Davies put *New Britain* weekly’s peak circulation at 70,000; see D. R. Davies, *In Search of Myself: The Autobiography of D. R. Davies* (London, 1961), p. 131. I calculated the peak readership using the ‘serious weeklies’ readership-to-circulation ratio given on p. 183 of Benny Morris, *The Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany during the 1930s* (London, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> John Middleton Murry, ‘A Word to Spiritual Aristocrats’, *The Adelphi*, November 1933, p. 89.

Mitrinović privately referred to Middleton Murry as ‘Muddleton Mirray’; the two men were not close. *Adelphi* contributor Jack Common also wrote for NBM periodicals. See NAFDMA, 1/9/13, R. G. Wrugh (Rex Campbell became R. G. Wrugh in 1936), ‘Notes on Mitrinovic’, MS, October 1961, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900–1990* (London, 1997), p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Boothby, *I Fight to Live* (London, 1947), p. 93.

Party joined the CPGB, whose members saw Soviet Russia as the exemplar of progress; others among the discontented joined the BUF, in quite a few cases because they wanted their country to mirror, with a British tint, the image projected by fascist Italy.<sup>7</sup> But for discontented Britons wishing to invest their hopes in a more indigenous and ‘respectable’ movement, the alternatives to the CPGB and BUF included one that suited their sensibilities: the NBM was the congenial ‘political home’ they sought. The NBM – active in communities as poor as Lemington and as rich as Royal Leamington Spa – was not a distant-third beneficiary of the perceived bankruptcy of bourgeois politics, for it outstripped the CPGB in size and importance in 1933–4.<sup>8</sup>

The NEG/NBM, though, is very rarely mentioned in surveys of Britain in the 1930s, and is little known even among specialists. Unlike the shirt movements of roughly equal size (each of which has a comparatively voluminous literature), the NEG/NBM did not stage spectacles that attracted national press coverage; this low profile augured low visibility in the historical record. To more fully account for scholars’ neglect of the NEG/NBM, we must consider several other factors that, taken together, go a long way to explaining the almost complete absence of the movement from the historiography.

One factor that partially accounts for the dearth of literature on the NEG/NBM is that some historians may have dismissed it out of hand as nothing but a failure – yet this impression turns out to be quite mistaken. Invoking E. P. Thompson’s phrase, Linda Merricks has complained that Mitrinović’s group has been included among those unfairly ‘dismissed by the “enormous condescension of posterity” as cranks and failures.’<sup>9</sup> Even historians are not immune to survivorship bias, so it is perhaps unsurprising that few have paid attention to a movement that neither prompted

---

<sup>7</sup> Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, p. 171.

<sup>8</sup> NAFDMA, 6/5/4, ‘Index of New Britain Groups’, no date.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Merricks, *The World Made New: Frederick Soddy, Science, Politics, and Environment* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 108–9.

government policy changes nor took a more enduring institutional form (such as by evolving into a political party).<sup>10</sup> Yet the NEG/NBM matters: and it matters most of all because it was the first British movement to advocate genuine European federalism (hereafter Eurofederalism) – and because it managed to continue publicising that cause until the mid-1930s, unlike most likeminded groups on the Continent. After the fascists had come to power in Italy, the leaders of political groups most likely to further develop Eurofederalist thought were murdered, exiled or driven underground.<sup>11</sup> The same fate befell likeminded Germans from 1933, when the National Socialists outlawed Europeanist associations as ‘pacifist.’<sup>12</sup> In France, the cause of European integration had been tarnished in 1930 by the failure of the proposal for a united Europe made by French statesman Aristide Briand. The Eurofederalist flame – stamped out by jackboots in Italy and Germany, and smothered in France – was kept burning in Britain by the NEG/NBM.

Another factor, a side effect of the ‘Bloomsbury boom,’ partially accounts for the scholarly neglect of the NEG/NBM: among intellectual historians, the voices of the Bloomsbury Group have tended to drown out those of its neighbours – witness how ‘Bloomsbury’ is taken as a metonym for the Bloomsbury Group, effectively homogenising the district’s fissiparous intellectual scene.<sup>13</sup> In deference to that dominance, Mitrinović’s group has been called ‘the other Bloomsbury Group.’<sup>14</sup> The groups were based only hundreds of yards apart; each met at the Valerie Cooper School of Rhythmic Movement and Dance in Fitzrovia, and Mitrinović was a client of the

---

<sup>10</sup> It must be borne in mind that the NEG/NBM sought influence rather than power (about which more later) – and it is usually harder to detect the exertion of influence than it is to see the exercise of power.

<sup>11</sup> John Pinder, ‘Federalism in Britain and Italy: Radicals and the English Liberal Tradition’, in Peter M. R. Stirk (ed.), *European Unity in Context: The Interwar Period* (London, 1989), pp. 201–3.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Lipgens, *A History of European Integration*, vol. 1, *The Formation of the European Unity Movement: 1945–1947*, trans. P. S. Falla and A. J. Ryder (Oxford, 1982), p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Regina Marler has documented the ‘Bloomsbury boom’ in *Bloomsbury Pie: The Making of the Bloomsbury Boom* (New York, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Philip Conford, ‘“Saturated with Biological Metaphors”: Professor John Macmurray (1891–1976) and the Politics of the Organic Movement’, *Contemporary British History* 22.3 (2008), p. 320.

Hogarth Press.<sup>15</sup> Merricks has contended that no contemporary could have foreseen that ‘the Bloomsbury circle around the Woolfs and Bells, not that around Mitrinović’ would be ‘regarded as successful by historians.’<sup>16</sup>

A practical issue, too, partially accounts for the lack of research on the NEG/NBM: Mitrinović’s acolytes restricted access to the movement’s archive until 2003–4, when 31 metres of material was deposited at the University of Bradford as the New Atlantis Foundation Dimitrije Mitrinović Archive (NAFDMA).<sup>17</sup> In the mid-1970s, the acolytes had granted archival access to Serbian scholar Predrag Palavestra, who was writing the first biography of Mitrinović.<sup>18</sup> A few years after the book was published, they read a private translation and were dismayed by the shoddy chapter on Mitrinović’s activities in London.<sup>19</sup> For decades after their experience with Palavestra, the acolytes – who felt ‘a responsibility to him [Mitrinović] not to cloud the picture of his personality and work but to carve it out more clearly’ – closely guarded their

---

<sup>15</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London, 1999), p. 129. Roger Fry, a Bloomsburian, was the brother-in-law of New Britain weekly contributor Janko Lavrin, who had introduced Mitrinović to certain London circles (Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 61). Another connection between the two groups was that Virginia Woolf and Mitrinović were among the patrons of the Guernica exhibition (NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, ‘Exhibition of Picasso’s Guernica’, 1938).

<sup>16</sup> Merricks, *World Made New*, pp. 108–9.

<sup>17</sup> Two decades prior to the accession, the acolytes granted access to Rigby, whose biography of Mitrinović (the aforementioned *Initiation and Initiative*) was published in 1984. In it Rigby acknowledged the assistance of David Shillan, Harry and Gracie Rutherford, Ellen Mayne and Violet MacDermot, ‘all of whom knew Mitrinović personally’ (*Initiation*, p. v). None of these acolytes were prominent figures in the NBM, whose public profile was fading by the time Harry Rutherford first contributed to *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin* on 10 October 1934 (from that issue on, he and some of Mitrinović’s other younger followers produced the periodical, restyling it *The Eleventh Hour New Series* [hereafter *Eleventh Hour*] on 21 November 1934).

<sup>18</sup> Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i Utopija Dimitrija Mitinovića: Počeci srpske književne avangarde* (Belgrade, 1977).

<sup>19</sup> The biography has all manner of shortcomings, and the chapter on the NEG/NBM is replete with factual errors; see NAFDMA, 1/9/2/ Volume, ‘Critique of the last chapter of Dr. Predrag Palavestra’s book *Dogma i Utopija Dimitrija Mitinovića* by the Trustees of the New Atlantis Foundation’, TS, 1980, pp. 71–2. For the private translation, see NAFDMA, 1/9/1, ‘The Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović’, TS, trans. D. Shillan and E. D. Goy, ca. 1980. At best, Palavestra’s impressionistic account of the NEG/NBM offers a rough sketch of a finely grained subject. Alert to the biography’s methodological problems, one reviewer stated that it could be ‘read like first-class novelistic writings’; see NAFDMA, 1/9/1, ‘Review by Predrag Protić in “Književne Novine” (Literary News) Belgrade 1.12.77. of Predrag Palavestra: “The Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović”, Slovo ljubve, Belgrade 1977’, TS, trans. D. Shillan, 1978, p. 1.

archive, lest another scholar misconstrue sources and put more misinterpretations on the historical record.<sup>20</sup>

Another reason for the neglect of the NEG/NBM is what might be referred to as the ‘incomprehensibility’ of a movement that was anomalous in interwar Britain. Many scholars who have touched on the NEG/NBM (usually while discussing affiliated figures or associated bodies) have mischaracterised it, and their superficial treatments obscure more than they illuminate. In order to make the past intelligible, we turn to taxonomy; but being so accustomed to labelling as a way to make things legible, it can be perplexing to encounter a movement that was determined to ‘throw off labels.’<sup>21</sup> Today, Britons take it for granted that a political party or movement vying for their support will stand for a reasonably coherent body of ideas, enabling them to broadly discern its ideological make-up. But British politics had a ‘misty climate’ in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when ‘talk of “Left” and “Right”’ had only very recently gained currency.<sup>22</sup> Dan Stone has argued that historians are so used to ‘pigeonholing thinkers into “schools,” “movements” and “trends” that we overlook those ... who do not easily fit’ – but it is important to avoid the temptation to ‘make the past more manageable, less complicated.’<sup>23</sup> This study of the NEG/NBM is an attempt to widen the sense of ‘the play of ideas,’ to borrow Stone’s phrase, ‘in a setting that is too easily slotted into a story of political continuity that was not felt with such confidence during the period itself.’<sup>24</sup> The NEG/NBM sought to sever that continuity, and its ‘political perfectionism’ made it an aberrant actor on the edge of the interwar stage, as will be explained in chapter one.

---

<sup>20</sup> NAFDMA, 3/17/1, Ellen Mayne to Watson Thomson, Richmond, 29 November 1960, TS.

<sup>21</sup> “‘New Britain’: Colonel Delahaye Explains the Movement’, *Golders Green Gazette*, 18 April 1934.

<sup>22</sup> David Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century, 1914–63* (Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 116–7.

<sup>23</sup> Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool, 2002), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Yet another reason why the NEG/NBM has been neglected is that it ‘fits the conventional remit of neither the political nor the cultural movement,’ as Mathew Thomson has noted.<sup>25</sup> The NEG/NBM operated in what Luisa Passerini has called ‘the no-man’s-land between culture and politics,’ and the movement’s political, cultural and social activities were tightly entwined.<sup>26</sup> In a time of sub-discipline specialisation among academic historians, it is not too hazardous to venture that for some practitioners of political history and cultural history alike, the NEG/NBM has appeared just too *awkward* a subject to be worth the bother. To that we can add that the movement’s ‘enigmatic’ leader, whose ‘many-sided interests and activities greatly transcend the scope’ of straightforward description, is a ‘difficult subject,’ as one scholar has described Mitrinović.<sup>27</sup>

The near absence of the NEG/NBM in the historiography on fringe movements in 1930s Britain means that the literature has not quite covered the full array of opposition to the National Government, and that our knowledge of British ‘politics’ (widely conceived) in the first half of the decade is less complete than is warranted. As Stone has argued, restoring obscure figures to their proper place in history is a task well worth the effort if it contributes to making ‘complexity and density the norm.’<sup>28</sup> Acknowledging the importance of the long-overlooked NEG/NBM is to recognise that the political landscape in 1930s Britain was more complex and even denser than we previously supposed. There being a clear need to redress scholars’ neglect, what follows is the first proper assessment of the movement.

---

<sup>25</sup> Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006), p. 92.

<sup>26</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 64.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Moravcevic [review], ‘Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i Utopija Dimitrija Mitinovića* (Belgrade, 1977)’, *World Literature Today* 52.3 (1978), p. 492. Watson Thomson, one of Mitrinović’s closest followers, wrote of the ‘life-long task of trying to see D.M. [Mitrinović] clearly and as nearly whole as possible’ (NAFDMA, 3/17/1, Thomson to Winifred Gordon Fraser, Vancouver, 20 October 1955, TS). In the view of acolyte Harry Rutherford, it was ‘very hard for any one person to do him [Mitrinović] justice,’ given how ‘rich in mind, character and powers of expression’ he was (NAFDMA, 3/17/1, Rutherford to Thomson, Richmond, November 1965, TS).

<sup>28</sup> Stone, *Breeding Superman*, p. 11.



## *The Sources*

This thesis is the first in-depth study of the NEG/NBM, drawing extensively on a wide range of primary sources accessed in Britain, Canada, the United States and Switzerland. These sources include extremely candid unpublished drafts of the memoir of Glasgow-born intellectual Watson Thomson (b. 1899), one of the prominent figures in the movement. His papers comprise the Watson Thomson Fonds (hereafter Thomson Fonds), archived at the University of British Columbia.

When working with the NAFDMA, I was cognisant of the ways in which the acolytes' concerns about personal privacy, and other matters, might have been reflected in the contents (or lack thereof) and organisation of the archive. There is no way of knowing what, or how much, material the acolytes never stored in the first place. But it seems that few documents handwritten by Mitrinović (except for private correspondence) went uncollected by his followers, as the acolytes' 'reverence' for 'even the smallest scraps' of his scribbles was akin to 'the treatment given to a saint's relics,' according to archivist Emma Burgham, who catalogued the NAFDMA in 2014–5.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The NEG/NBM in Its European (and Wider) Context: the Movement as the British Manifestation of the nouvelles relèves***

In the 1930s, the political landscape in several European states featured an extra-parliamentary group/movement whose spiritually infused ideology could not fairly be

---

<sup>29</sup> Emma Burgham, 'A Mind at Work: Notes and Notebooks' (11 June 2014), *The Eleventh Hour* blog, <https://eleventhhourarchive.wordpress.com/page/3> [accessed 12 June 2014]. Burgham has also stated that Mitrinović 'was a librarian's worst nightmare in terms of mangling publications' (*Ibid.*).

characterised as either left-wing or right-wing. Among the small community of historians who work on these phenomena, Olivier Dard's term '*nouvelles relèves*' has come to replace '*non-conformistes*' as the collective descriptor of these groups/movements, most of which were based in northwest European capitals.<sup>30</sup> These *nouvelles relèves* groups/movements had many affinities, each having been founded in opposition to what the Personalist philosopher Emmanuel Mounier referred to as 'le désordre établi' ('the established disorder'), at a time when their leading figures perceived Europe to be undergoing a crisis of civilisation.<sup>31</sup> Likeminded in their opposition to communism and collectivism, materialism and 'individualism' (as they understood it), and parliamentary democracy and capitalism in their existing forms, each group/movement sought to create the conditions for a communitarian 'New Order' to arise in their respective states and at the European level. They envisioned a spiritual 'revolution' that would inspire 'reconciliation,' through which social conflicts would be resolved and international anarchy replaced by pan-European governance.

Though usually *sui generis* in their respective national contexts, each *nouvelles relèves* group/movement was a star in a European constellation that relatively few interwar historians have charted. The Paris-centred l'Ordre nouveau – led by Alexandre Marc, Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu – was the polestar. The London-centred NEG/NBM and the Brussels-centred Esprit nouveau group (known by the name of its periodical) were among the kindred groups, each of which recognised that they

---

<sup>30</sup> In 2005, some of these historians took part in a conference on *nouvelles relèves*, the proceedings of which were published as: Olivier Dard and Etienne Deschamps (eds), *Les relèves en Europe d'un après-guerre à l'autre: racines, réseaux, projets et postérités* (Brussels, 2005). This volume remains the most comprehensive survey of *nouvelles relèves* groups/movements. The main reason why Dard's term *nouvelles relèves* has replaced '*non-conformistes*' is that the latter, on translation into English, could result in the referents being confused with a different set of 'Non-conformists' (i.e. Protestants who do not 'conform' to the governance of the established Church); see Christophe Le Dréau, 'L'Europe des non-conformistes des années trente: les idées européistes de New Britain et New Europe', in Dard and Deschamps (eds), *Les relèves en Europe*, p. 312. Although other scholars have proposed English translations of *nouvelles relèves*, none have gained currency – for this reason I use the French term.

<sup>31</sup> R. William Rauch, *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy, 1932–1950* (The Hague, 1972), p. 83. See also John Hellman's works *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left 1930–1950* (Toronto, 1981) and *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc's Ordre Nouveau, 1930–2000* (Montreal, 2002).

shared values with the others. Each group/movement had some left-wing and some right-wing characteristics, so their critiques were often predicated on a blend of left- and right-wing ideas. For example, leading figures in each of the groups/movements expressed anti-American sentiment based on the notions that Americans were in thrall to Mammon (materialism) and Moloch (mechanisation), and bent on cultural imperialism. In Fig. 1, these three attributes of the American imaginary are the set in the central intersection where the critique (‘negative’) of the Left overlaps with that of the Right.

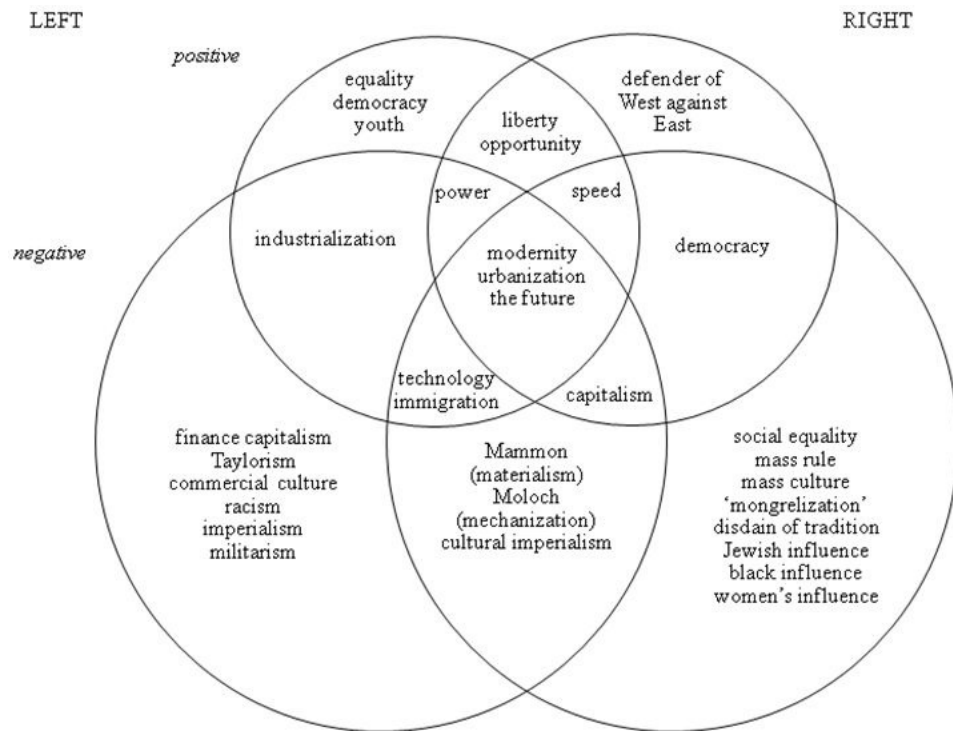


Fig. 1. ‘America as a concept’ in Max Paul Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 10.

Yet many of these leading figures also levelled criticisms that were conventionally the remit of either the Left or the Right – simultaneously, in some cases. One example from an NEG/NBM periodical was a short critique of finance capitalism

and Jewish influence that began: ‘When will Jews release their hold over the Money power ...’<sup>32</sup>

Given their unique combinations of left- and right-wing characteristics, *nouvelles relèves* groups/movements are awkward subjects of study; indeed, Mathew Thomson has argued that one of the reasons for the ‘surprising’ absence of the NEG/NBM from the historiography of fringe movements in interwar Britain ‘is that its ideas appear so odd set against the conventional political landscape of left and right.’<sup>33</sup> In a way, he echoes S. G. Hobson (b. 1870), the father of guild socialism and a major influence on the NEG/NBM, who in 1938 lamented that the movement’s unconventionality meant that – judged by ‘conventional political canons’ – ‘it would not as yet appear to be on the map; but how futile are the canons!’<sup>34</sup>

In 1992 David Cannadine noted that “‘Fog in Channel: Continent cut off’” was ‘the prevailing weather condition’ under which most academic historians had until recently been doing British history.<sup>35</sup> The fog has cleared by now, but British historians have not yet navigated the route between l’Ordre nouveau and the NEG/NBM as adroitly as their French counterparts. Researched in great depth, l’Ordre nouveau is far better and more widely understood in France than the NEG/NBM is in Britain, for reasons including comparatively wide practice of intellectual history in France, and the fact that l’Ordre nouveau had greater and more enduring influence in France than the NEG/NBM had in Britain.

L’Ordre nouveau’s key principle, ‘Ni droite, ni gauche’ (‘Neither right, nor left’), had an NEG/NBM equivalent: what Mitrinović called ‘Above and Between.’<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> ‘Where is Meaning? What is the Goal and Purpose?’, *Eleventh Hour*, 10 July 1935, p. 169. I have cited this source because it is the most succinct example of a critique that melded left- and right-wing elements published in any of the NEG/NBM periodicals (in each of them, anti-Semitic sentiment was either entirely absent or extremely rare, it is important to note).

<sup>33</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> S. G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left: Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (New York, 1938), p. 266.

<sup>35</sup> David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Le Dréau, ‘L’Europe’, p. 315.

By this he meant the reconciliation, on a higher plane, of ideologies that were typically understood to be irreconcilable. Reflecting on his time in the NEG/NBM, Watson Thomson wrote that Mitrinović ‘elaborate[d] passionately on the falseness of this [communism and fascism] dichotomy’ and said there was ‘an element of validity in both creeds, but that these valid elements had to be transposed and incorporated in a new social pattern, different from those proposed whether by the communists or the fascists, before their rightness could be fully realized.’ Thomson elaborated:

What was the valid element in communism? Basically, [the] economic proposal: public control of industry, and planning of the whole economy, in the interest of ... personal welfare... Where communism went wrong was in its monolithic and totalitarian outlook ...

And what did he [Mitrinović] find valid about fascism? Simply, its insistence on ... a hierarchic principle, though he would add at once that the fascist application of this principle was utterly and profoundly wrong. Inequality did not properly belong to the economic sphere, nor to the political, but rather to the cultural ... sphere, where one man is not as good as another and where the recognition of superior quality is a necessity for social health and human advancement.<sup>37</sup>

This approach to political philosophies led J. B. Boothroyd to remark that Mitrinović had a neurosis the size of Nelson’s Column, called ‘synthesis.’<sup>38</sup> Mitrinović deemed it important to radicalise and mobilise as broad a range of supporters as possible to build a New Britain – not least because by so doing, talented individuals and persons of means might escape the gravitational field of less salubrious political groups that could potentially have secured their backing.

Christophe Le Dréau has outlined some of the affinities between the NEG/NBM and l’Ordre nouveau, and has wondered how close the movements came to organising ‘une sorte d’Internationale non-conformiste’ (‘a sort of Nonconformist International’).<sup>39</sup> But Le Dréau’s contribution to the debate covers so much ground that his efforts to drill

---

<sup>37</sup> University of British Columbia University Archives: Watson Thomson Fonds [hereafter Thomson Fonds], Box 2, File 4, Thomson, TS of autobiographical writings, no date (but 1960s), pp. 112–13.

<sup>38</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> Le Dréau, ‘L’Europe’, p. 312 and pp. 322–3.

down on this rich seam make only boreholes. British historians, for their part, have almost completely ignored these links – but in the 1930s the links were well known to security services on the Continent as well as in Britain, where Scotland Yard investigated Mitrinović on at least one occasion.<sup>40</sup> It has recently come to light that other organisations were gathering intelligence on the NEG/NBM, in part because of its ties to l'Ordre nouveau. Richard B. Spence's archival research revealed that an informant codenamed 'M' – most likely MI5 Section B5(b) chief Maxwell Knight – passed on information about this 'very remarkable English group' to Rome-based Jesuit priest Father Joseph Ledit, who was probably part of the Vatican's clandestine service. Ledit shared this information with the Italian secret service.<sup>41</sup> 'M' stated that Mitrinović's group had 'startling European connections which might be of grave import politically.' 'M' had been conducting a 'special urgent investigation' with the support of John Baker White, who headed the Economic League's spy outfit.<sup>42</sup> In Nazi Germany, the authorities may not have developed an interest in the NEG/NBM as a movement, but they did ban the circulation of *New Britain* weekly from February 1934 onward.<sup>43</sup>

European scholars of the *nouvelles relèves* have not looked for similar phenomena outside Europe, except for in Quebec. The New Zealand Legion, though, can also be considered a kindred movement; its journal, *National Opinion*, reprinted

---

<sup>40</sup> Thomson Fonds, Box 2, File 5, Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, TS, 1953, p. 111.

<sup>41</sup> *New Britain* weekly published writings by the exiled anti-fascist priest Luigi Sturzo (one of the fathers of Christian democracy), including a piece on 'bloody repression, the rule of revolver, bludgeon, and castor oil, and the absorption of the person by the dominant group' ('Britain and Austria', *New Britain* weekly, 28 February 1934, p. 439). The fact that *New Britain* weekly had opened its pages to such an outspoken critic of Mussolini would likely have been sufficient reason for the Italian secret service to deem Mitrinović a person of interest.

<sup>42</sup> Richard B. Spence, *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult* (Port Townsend, 2008), pp. 227–9.

<sup>43</sup> 'The World We Live In', *New Britain* weekly, 21 February 1934, p. 404. Under the sub-heading 'Banned in Germany,' the editorial struck a defiant note: 'We have criticized the régime, and shall continue to do so, for its policy of violence and intolerance.'

several articles from *New Britain* weekly.<sup>44</sup> The New America Movement, too, was kindred; indeed, the two movements were ‘in many respects similar,’ as one NBM periodical told readers.<sup>45</sup>

### *Literature Review*

The literature on the NEG/NBM is modest: fewer than a hundred pages of scholarship have been published in English or French. In 1973 Alan Watts, a sometime follower of Mitrinović, rued that the NEG/NBM had not been ‘properly chronicled’; he was adamant, though, that the movement ‘should most certainly “go down in history.”’<sup>46</sup> Writing more than 30 years later, Le Dréau had cause to note that the movement ‘attend encore son historien’ (‘is still awaiting its historian’).<sup>47</sup>

At the invitation of Mitrinović’s acolytes in the early 1980s, Andrew Rigby wrote what remains the sole English-language biography of Mitrinović.<sup>48</sup> Reviewing the 1984 monograph, Thomas A. Emmert concluded that Mitrinović was a ‘fascinating’ thinker, and that Rigby’s work would encourage other scholars to explore the subject’s life and ideas.<sup>49</sup> The biography has served as the standard reference cited by nearly all scholars whose research has been connected with the NEG/NBM in any way.

---

<sup>44</sup> For the information on the republication of NBM articles by the New Zealand Legion, I am grateful to Dr. Matthew Cunningham, an authority on the Wellington-based movement.

<sup>45</sup> ‘New Britain Groups’ [‘Greetings to New America’], *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, 7 November 1934, p. 8. The NEG/NBM is not mentioned in the papers of New America Movement leader Harry F. Ward, which are held by Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University. The New America Movement has been discussed in two works: Eugene P. Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet: The Times and Life of Harry F. Ward* (Boulder, 1984), pp. 174–92; and David Nelson Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Tuscaloosa, 2003), pp. 162–70.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Watts, *In My Own Way: An Autobiography 1915–1965* (New York, 1973), p. 111. Watts went on to popularise Buddhism in the US, becoming the country’s foremost interpreter of Eastern philosophies.

<sup>47</sup> Le Dréau, ‘L’Europe’, p. 330.

<sup>48</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*; a second edition appeared as *Dimitrije Mitrinović: A Biography* (York, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Thomas A. Emmert [review], ‘Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović*’ (Boulder, 1984)’, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 19.2 (1985), p. 236. At the start of his review, George Feaver asked: ‘Dimitrije who?’ See George Feaver [review], ‘Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović*’ (Boulder, 1984)’, *American Historical Review* 91.1 (1986), p. 117. By 1990, though, Emmert was lamenting that it

Rigby's assessment of the movement remains the most detailed one published, but it would have been impossible for him to do the NEG/NBM full justice in the 30 pages over which his discussion ranges. The limitations of the analysis are completely understandable given Rigby's need to traverse a life as multifaceted as Mitrinović's in a single volume. As is only to be expected, the overview gives rise to far more questions than could be satisfactorily addressed in one chapter.<sup>50</sup>

In 2008, Rigby wrote the entry on Mitrinović in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. This volume, unlike its predecessor, did not exclude non-British subjects who influenced national life. Mitrinović did not naturalise in Britain, so could not have been included in the *Dictionary of National Biography* supplements.

Passerini has situated the NEG/NBM where it properly belongs: at the centre of the Europeanist discourse community in interwar Britain, whose contours she has mapped.<sup>51</sup> Her study of that discourse shows how emotion was intimate to the workings of groups including the NEG/NBM, thereby enriching our understanding of the role of emotion in calls for a united Europe made between the wars.

It might be supposed that the spike in interest in the Great Depression era during the years of the Great Recession would have increased awareness of the NEG/NBM among scholars. To a slight degree this did appear to be the case, in an age similarly marked by austerity, eddied by the currents of transnational capital, and witness to fragmented opposition to rule by a Conservative-dominated government. Yet too few intellectual historians of interwar Britain have come to see the NEG/NBM as a fertile patch of the field – one that is mostly untouched. This thesis is the first attempt to till it.

---

was now 'unlikely that we will ever experience a renaissance of interest' in Mitrinović; see Thomas A. Emmert [review], 'H. C. Rutherford, ed., *Certainly, Future: Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinović* (Boulder, 1987)', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 24.1 (1990), p. 67.

<sup>50</sup> Since Rigby's work was published, Zoran Milutinović has produced noteworthy research on Mitrinović. Milutinović is an almost surefooted guide through some of the thickets of Mitrinović's tangled philosophies, though he slips with his assertion that Mitrinović had 'anarchist inclinations'; see *Getting Over Europe: The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam, 2011), pp. 171–3.

<sup>51</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, pp. 105–48.



### *The Structure and Main Objective of this Thesis*

Chapter one begins with an overview of the ‘crisis’ in Britain between the wars, and the scholarly treatment of the phenomenon. Following that is a discussion of the ‘antisystem’ challenges to the National Government and the parliamentary regime, and an analysis of the NEG/NBM’s ‘political perfectionist’ antisystemness. Next, Mitrinović’s activities from 1914 to 1931 are outlined, prior to an account of how his body of followers became a ‘court system.’ The chapter ends with an examination of the formation of the NEG and its activities in 1931–2.

Chapter two starts with an account of the rise of the politicised social movement that was the NBM. An analysis of the NBM’s dynamics shows how some members experienced the movement, and how Mitrinović – its guiding light – used ‘strategic ambiguity’ to galvanise support. The chapter ends with an examination of the NBM’s demise and the factors that lay behind it.

In chapter three, attention turns to the NEG/NBM as the first genuine European federalist group in Britain. First, the NEG/NBM’s Eurofederalist thought is situated in the intellectual tradition. There follows an explanation of why sovereignty has been the key issue to address in plans for European unity, and an overview of the tradition of thought on European integration on which the movement’s prominent figures drew. The NEG/NBM’s understanding of the ‘European civil war’ and its perception of the European and world ‘crisis’ are then elucidated. The final question addressed in this chapter is why the movement considered the federalisation of Europe a priority.

Chapter four begins with a comparative analysis of the proposals for European unity put forward by Richard Nikolaus von Coudenhove-Kalergi, Briand, and Mitrinović and the NEG/NBM. The four lines of reasoning that informed the

NEG/NBM's case for Eurofederalism are then detailed. The chapter closes with a detailed discussion of the movement's proposals for European governance and federal institutions.

Following the conclusion is an appendix, consisting of the first complete list of the NEG/NBM's periodicals: some names were cause for confusion among readers in the 1930s, just as they are for scholars today. Especially given Mitrinović's continual rechristenings of what could be seen as just one large-format periodical, the list will serve as a useful reference.

The main objective of this thesis is to show that the NEG/NBM was the first genuine Eurofederalist group in Britain. What is more, the movement's Eurofederalism was not the whimper of 'first-wave' (i.e. interwar) thought on European integration, but was, rather, the apotheosis of first-wave reasoning. By the early 1930s, Mitrinović's desire for European integration had been reignited by the ideas on European unity spread around the Continent by periodicals, some of whose staffs were undivided in their support for the cause.<sup>52</sup> In the British capital, Mitrinović 'talked European Federation when many of the people clamouring for it to-day sneered at the idea and at him,' one follower recalled in 1961.<sup>53</sup> As we shall see in chapters three and four, the NEG/NBM did not merely keep the Eurofederalist flame burning after it had been extinguished in Italy and Germany, and had died to embers in France – it did no less than greatly enrich the supply of prescient ideas on European integration.

---

<sup>52</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 119. Mitrinović had favoured 'a federation of European nations' from at least as early as 1914 (NAFDMA, 1/4/2/5, Mitrinović to Peter Kropotkin, Brighton, 16 August 1914, TS, trans. R. Meuss).

## Chapter 1

### Countering the ‘Crisis’ with Political Perfectionism: Dimitrije Mitrinović, His Followers, and the New Europe Group

#### *The ‘Crisis’*

In line with Britain’s tradition of parliamentary governance, ‘politics’ was for a long time generally understood to mean the politics of parties and Parliament. Until recent years, political historians’ focus on the workings of representative democracy as the aggregate of British political life tended to blur out many extra-parliamentary movements.

One such movement was the NEG/NBM. By 1933 many Britons considered the National Government thoroughly discredited: unemployment neared 20 percent, and appalling social conditions were commonplace in Slump-stricken swathes of the country.<sup>54</sup> To some citizens it seemed that the attempt by the political class to ‘muddle through’ had left Britain stranded in the economic blizzard, and that the NEG/NBM had opened the only path out.<sup>55</sup> *New Britain* weekly had ‘a meteoric career’ (in the words of Malcolm Muggeridge), as did the movement that produced it.<sup>56</sup> To understand how and why the NEG/NBM burned so brightly, we must first revisit the debate on the ‘crisis,’ and then consider anew what opportunities antisystem formations (parties and movements) had to challenge political arrangements and economic orthodoxies.

---

<sup>54</sup> In 1933, British unemployment was 19.9 percent; see Juliet Gardiner, *The Thirties: An Intimate History* (London, 2011), p. 9. Durham and Tyneside, south Wales, west Cumberland, and a belt of central Scotland (the areas that would be aided by the 1934 Special Areas Act) were in economic distress, as was Lancashire (with 38 percent unemployment in late 1932); see Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties* (London, 1973), p. 108. The Cornish economy was ‘in paralysis’ (Gardiner, *Ibid.*, p. 53). The Highlands, too, was suffering from economic decline; see Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918–1939* (London, 1995 [1940]), pp. 310–11.

<sup>55</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 126.

<sup>56</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, *The Thirties, 1930–1940, in Great Britain* (London, 1940), p. 22.

Arnold Toynbee called 1931 the *annus terribilis* that saw ‘Western minds’ contemplating the ‘catastrophe’ of ‘a spontaneous disintegration from within.’<sup>57</sup> Peter M. R. Stirk has argued that for Europeans, the roots of the ‘sense of crisis’ lay in the carnage of the Great War; the problematic post-war settlement (particularly the unstable system of states); inflamed nationalism; ideological realignment; and the ‘hesitancy’ of the United States. Dashed hopes of international peace and of lands fit for heroes emboldened critics of the powers that be. Liberal democracy was assailed by adversaries who claimed its limitations had been transcended either by communism or by fascism. The onset of the Great Depression compounded Europeans’ fears and anxieties, and lent credence to the notion that the crisis was permanent.<sup>58</sup>

Europeans’ experience of the crisis was laced with confusion. As Jan Ifversen has observed, the titles of many books and articles published after the first volume of Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918) included the words ‘decline,’ ‘catastrophe,’ ‘sickness’ or ‘helpless,’ suggesting that the crisis ‘touched the very heart of European life.’<sup>59</sup> Richard Overy has noted that ‘the possibility of cure’ was implicit in the medicalised language of the crisis, but *ad nauseam* discussions of its many dimensions, the dizzying array of diagnoses and the vertiginous variety of proffered remedies left most serious readers in doubt as to the nature of the sickness, let alone the cure.<sup>60</sup>

In Britain, ‘the Slump’ was the shorthand term for the concurrent economic symptoms of the crisis, enumerated by the NBM thus: ‘falling price levels, industrial

---

<sup>57</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1931* (Oxford, 1932), p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Peter M. R. Stirk, ‘Introduction: Crisis and Continuity in Interwar Europe’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 10, p. 2, p. 8 and pp. 10–11.

<sup>59</sup> Jan Ifversen, ‘The Crisis of European Civilization After 1918’, in Menno Spiering and Michael Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe since 1914: The Legacy of the First World War* (Houndmills, 2002), p. 17 and p. 14. This vocabulary starkly contrasts that which appeared in pre-war public lecture titles, such as ‘A Perfect World – Could We Endure It?’ (1913). For many educated Europeans, the Great War represented ‘a clear fracture with pre-war expectations of relentless advance,’ as Richard Overy has explained; see *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919–1939* (London, 2010), p. 16 and p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 4.

paralysis, increased burden of debt, and widespread unemployment.’<sup>61</sup> For many in the economic black-spots – where structural unemployment blighted whole communities – even the prospect of work vanished, reducing life to a precarious existence with no hope of respite.<sup>62</sup> But the longstanding popular view of the 1930s as a period of ‘poverty, failure and reaction’ is mistaken, as Martin Pugh, for one, has explained.<sup>63</sup> Obviously, not ‘everyone lived in Jarrow or was on the road to Wigan pier,’ in the words of Andrew Thorpe.<sup>64</sup> As Overy has noted, profound discontinuities were absent in Britain, and there was no serious threat: the economy was healthier, overall, than most major ones; there was no prospect of revolution; and free expression was continuously enjoyed.<sup>65</sup> But ‘discourses of doom’ spread to Britain via refugees, visitors and British intellectuals who spent time on the Continent (all three of these vectors for the transmission of ideas were well represented among the contributors to the NEG/NBM’s publications).<sup>66</sup> In the first age of mass communication, the notion of civilisational crisis was turned into a ‘populist cliché’ through ‘repetitive endorsement’ by what Overy has called ‘networks of anxiety.’<sup>67</sup> For many Britons, though, the crisis was never anything but a secondhand experience.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> ‘New Order for Great Britain’, *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, 15 August 1934, p. 1. Shipbuilding and other heavy industries were paralysed in the early 1930s, but light industry fared much better (the national grid, completed in 1933, stimulated demand for domestic appliances); see Gardiner, *Thirties*, pp. 26–7. The grid and improving road networks meant industrialists could situate factories far from coalfields, closer to middle-class consumers (half of whom lived in southeast England); of Britain’s 1932–7 net increase of 644 factories, 532 were in Greater London, whose residents gained almost two-thirds of new manufacturing jobs (Branson and Heinemann, *Nineteen Thirties*, p. 56 and p. 81).

<sup>62</sup> L. C. B. Seaman, *Life in Britain between the Wars* (London, 1985 [1970]), p. 43. In 1931 Ferndale, 96 percent of those who had held jobs covered by insurance were out of work (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 26).

<sup>63</sup> Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009), p. vii.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Thorpe, ‘Introduction’, in Andrew Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* The crisis discourse was transmitted to the United States, too. Pankaj Mishra has noted that from 1933 ‘a crisis of man’ was ‘widely perceived’ in American intellectual life, and that ‘most’ of the crisis literature was written by European-born thinkers whose ‘formative intellectual experience was of the economic and political crisis of Europe.’ This ‘fundamentally derivative’ discourse ‘resonated’ in the US until the early 1970s; see Pankaj Mishra [review], ‘Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933–73* (Princeton, 2015)’, *London Review of Books* 37.16 (2015), pp. 13–4.

<sup>67</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 20, p. 7 and p. 3. Anxieties were heightened still further by the advertising of firms – such as peddlers of quack cures – that stood to profit. In 1933, four issues of *New Britain* weekly included an advert, ‘The Torture of “Nerves” Banished for Ever!’, aimed at those who ‘suffer from ...

Overy has suggested that the ‘mythic portrayal of crisis’ was ‘a special language’ that the war-survivor generation needed to describe ‘what seemed to them the unique nature of their suffering and their profound insecurity.’ Intellectuals, who wanted to be ‘at the front of the throng of onlookers if civilization crashed,’ set the fashion in ideas and competed to explain the crisis. When authors addressed such a weighty subject, it made their output seem more consequential. Publishers colluded with authors, and the book-buying public indulged them.<sup>69</sup> The idea that Britain was in crisis was also stoked by some persons of an authoritarian bent, who *had* to believe it: no other state of affairs would have justified their desire for a leader to emerge and prove his strength by tackling the crisis. Left-wing would-be revolutionaries also peddled the narrative of crisis, which may have helped convince some that the revolution was closer at hand.

As Overy has made clear, the revolution in mass media, a marked increase in literacy and educational achievement, and ‘spreading habits of self-improvement and voluntary lobbying’ allowed the concerns of politicians, academics, doctors and scientists to ‘become common property’ – but most Britons did not spend their free time contemplating the crisis.<sup>70</sup> Aside from the intelligentsia and Colonel Blimps, those who recognised the country’s relative decline tended to favour the kind of irreverent attitude distilled in *1066 and All That*, the publishing phenomenon of 1930.<sup>71</sup>

The oft-repeated characterisation of the period as a monolithically ‘low dishonest decade’ is erroneous, then – but there was nonetheless a pall. Susan Kingsley Kent has argued that when the friends and family of those who lost life or limb in the

---

Morbid Fears, Shyness, Blushing.’ The copywriters were evidently confident that an anxiety-ridden readership was primed to believe blushing was a ‘nerve-weakness’ requiring ‘drugless home treatment.’

<sup>68</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6. Kevin Jefferys has written of the ‘pronounced growth of new forms of social inquiry’ in the 1930s; see Jefferys, *Politics and the People: A History of British Democracy since 1918* (London, 2007), p. 35.

<sup>71</sup> Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 403.

Great War (or were killed by the 1918–20 flu pandemic) are deemed ‘seriously traumatized individuals,’ they collectively ‘begin to constitute a “society,” a “polity,” a “nation.”’<sup>72</sup> Nearly all men and women had to come to terms with the fact that they had consented to mass slaughter on their own continent.<sup>73</sup> In the late 1920s and early 1930s there was an outpouring of war memoirs, a literary abreaction to the brutalities of the trenches; these accounts enabled friends and family to get a sense of what servicemen had endured and to understand something of the horrors they had witnessed.<sup>74</sup> Many survivors – steeped in death, apprenticed only in killing, and suspected of having a callous attitude to life – had been discharged into labour markets that could not absorb them.<sup>75</sup> Jon Lawrence has explained how post-war Britain was ‘gripped by intense fears’ that the barbarism of war had unleashed dangerous forces that threatened to brutalise society, destroy constitutional government, and deface the edifice of ‘civilisation.’<sup>76</sup>

Added to the trauma was awareness among Britons that the 1914–18 slaughter was not ‘The Great War for Civilization’ styled on the Victory Medal, but rather a four-year record of inhumanity that had disgraced the continent and laid bare Britain’s reliance on the cooperation of non-Europeans. At the turn of the century British intellectuals, like their Continental counterparts, had taken for granted Europe’s civilisation and superiority, but the Great War caused many thinkers to question these twin assumptions in the debt- and doubt-laden aftermath.<sup>77</sup> Disavowing a Victorian article of faith, they could no longer regard European history as ‘an unbroken chain

---

<sup>72</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918–1931* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 15. The decimation of the officer class (which many believed deprived Britain of a cohort of leaders-to-be) left the highest in the land as grief-stricken as the humblest families (Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 4).

<sup>73</sup> Menno Spiering and Michael Wintle, ‘European Identity, Europeanness and the First World War: Reflections on the Twentieth Century – an Introduction’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Aleid Fokkema, ‘“And Down We Went”: Fragments of Interwar Europe Seen from the British Metropolis’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 157; and Seaman, *Life in Britain*, p. 18.

<sup>75</sup> Blind or maimed beggars were a common sight in the interwar years (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 13).

<sup>76</sup> Jon Lawrence, ‘The Transformation of British Public Politics After the First World War’, *Past and Present* 190 (2006), p. 190 and p. 211.

<sup>77</sup> Spiering and Wintle, ‘European Identity’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 4.

from primitive to modern,' as Overy has put it.<sup>78</sup> Sublimating their disorientation, some thinkers set their minds to the task of imagining possibilities for national and continental renewal. As Benjamin Ziemann has noted, historians of Weimar Germany have come to see the crisis as

not simply an objective condition, but rather a cultural form which could be used to imagine and reflect upon possible scenarios for a renewal of society. The semantics of 'crisis,' in other words, should not be mistaken as a simple expression for the dysfunctionality of a system in terminal disarray.<sup>79</sup>

Ziemann has referred to the 'openness' of the 'crisis.'<sup>80</sup> This was sensed by thinkers in Britain, too – among them prominent figures in the NEG/NBM. For Mitrinović and his followers, developing a highly sophisticated understanding of the crisis as an objective condition was not an end in itself, but rather a means of better informing their deliberations over what changes were needed to fully counter the crisis. Prominent figures in the NEG/NBM thus took the 'openness' of the 'crisis' as a licence to imagine how best the renewal of Britain and Europe could be effected; but the wider significance of the movement lies, in part, in the fact that these thinkers did not stop there. Rather, they managed to collectively mobilise as standard-bearers for radical politico-economic proposals, with the aim of inspiring action to realise their ideas (some of which would, decades later, be implemented). The very purpose of *New Britain* weekly, its editor stated, was 'to suggest to its readers that the crisis is an opportunity for action.'<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 28.

<sup>79</sup> Benjamin Ziemann, 'Weimar was Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the German Republic', *German History* 28.4 (2010), p. 553. I am grateful to Prof. Ziemann for this reference.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 553.

<sup>81</sup> 'Former "Everyman" Editor Starts "New Britain"', *World's Press News*, 11 May 1933.



## *Antisystem Challengers*

Giovanni Capoccia has put the number of democratic regimes in 1920 Europe at 24; by 1939 only eleven remained, among them Britain.<sup>82</sup> Following the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928, Britain more or less met the three criteria for ‘minimal-procedural’ democracy, namely: free and fair elections with full suffrage; elected governments with the capacity to govern; and effective guarantees of civil liberties.<sup>83</sup> The NEG/NBM’s prominent figures, though, argued that the second and third of these were not characteristics of the post-1931 parliamentary regime. Their reasoning will be explored below, but at this point we must situate the movement on the British political landscape at a time when, on the Continent, democracies were failing. This is far from straightforward, however, because the NEG/NBM was a *sui generis* phenomenon in Britain.

Capoccia has noted that among the European democracies in which struggle between ‘democratic incumbents and antisystem outsiders’ was *not* a primary characteristic of the political process, Britain was one of the six in which ‘democrats prevailed against weak opponents.’<sup>84</sup> Some of the reasons for the absence of a grave struggle in interwar Britain are well known. Early and gradual introduction of

---

<sup>82</sup> Giovanni Capoccia, *Defending Democracy: Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe* (Baltimore, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> For the criteria, see David Collier and Steven Levitsky, ‘Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research’, *World Politics* 49.4 (1997), pp. 433–4. Jefferys has called 1930s Britain an ‘infant democracy,’ given how much of the pre-democratic order remained (*Politics*, p. 21 and p. 49). John Ramsden has referred to interwar Britain as a ‘near democracy’; see *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902–1940* (London, 1978), p. 122. Full suffrage did not create a perfectly equal franchise: voters who owned property could cast multiple ballots, as could those affiliated with a university.

<sup>84</sup> Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, p. 7 and p. 13. Five of the six democracies were constitutional monarchies. As Pugh has noted, ‘the sheer popularity of the [British] monarchy acted as a safety valve for extreme nationalism,’ which was, as a consequence, never a source of pressure great enough to strain the parliamentary regime. Indeed, by serving as the focus of nationalist feeling, the monarchy in effect precluded the possibility of a charismatic would-be national ‘saviour’ sweeping to power on an upsurge of nationalist fervour (*We Danced*, p. 382).

democratic institutions meant Britain had a strong foundation for regime continuity.<sup>85</sup> Crucially, Britain's social structure was such that neither fascism nor communism could flourish.<sup>86</sup> British society had few politically salient cleavages, and was insulated from troubles on the Continent. Citizens had opportunities to express their views, and learnt of little political corruption.<sup>87</sup> Conditions were never conducive to a fascist parliamentary breakthrough: Britain was 'not suffering under the psychology of defeat,' and there was neither a 'ruined middle class' nor 'economic suffering extreme enough to drive men to desperate measures,' as the *New Statesman and Nation* put it.<sup>88</sup> The vast majority of those in stable employment enjoyed rising disposable income due to sticky wages and falling prices, which took the edge off much popular discontent.<sup>89</sup> The Labour Party's constitutionalism reinforced the liberal-democratic system, and the National Government channelled middle-class fears of socialism into tremendous electoral support.<sup>90</sup> Fascists could not credibly present themselves as a bulwark against revolution when the CPGB (with a cadre of only 2,350 in 1930) was 'neither more powerful, numerous nor rich' than the Geoplanarian (flat Earth) Society, as Graves noted.<sup>91</sup> Lawrence has stated that the 'dominant motif' of interwar political discourse turned out not to be brutality, but rather civility, peaceableness and moderation.<sup>92</sup> The

---

<sup>85</sup> Lauri Karvonen, *Fragmentation and Consensus: Political Organisation and the Interwar Crisis in Europe* (Boulder, 1993), p. 171.

<sup>86</sup> Branson and Heinemann have stated that fascism held little appeal to unemployed persons in distressed areas, as these localities had the strongest tradition of trade unionism (*Nineteen Thirties*, p. 313). Jobless persons inclined to protest had an outlet in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, which organised the Hunger Marches (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 446). Fascism's appeal to members of the petite bourgeoisie was blunted by the political confidence they developed through trade-association activities; see Tom Jeffrey, 'A Place in the Nation: The Lower Middle Class in England', in Rudy Koshar (ed.), *Splintered Classes: Politics and the Lower Middle Classes in Interwar Europe* (New York, 1990), p. 81.

<sup>87</sup> Thorpe, 'Introduction', in Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism*, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 434.

<sup>89</sup> Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 34.

<sup>90</sup> Martin Pugh, '*Hurrah for the Blackshirts*': *Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2006), p. 172; and Jefferys, *Politics*, p. 31.

<sup>91</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 267; and Graves, *Long Weekend*, p. 157.

<sup>92</sup> Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003), p. 561. The prison population of England and Wales in 1930 was 45 percent lower than in 1910. From 1920 to 1930, convictions for drunkenness fell by 44 percent, and rowdyism declined (Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 105 and p. 118). More reliable than crime statistics are records of football stadium crowd behaviour: terrace violence became so rare that some

extreme Left and the extreme Right never assumed proportions that threatened the parliamentary regime, and not once did an antisystem party achieve significant electoral displacement.<sup>93</sup>

Lauri Karvonen's empirical study found that 'the interwar crisis did not destabilize previously stable regimes to a decisive degree,' and that each state with low fragmentation in its party system was among the democratic 'survivors.'<sup>94</sup> On the face of it, fragmentation increased in Britain in the late 1920s and early 1930s, which saw splits in the Labour Party; the factionalisation of the Liberal Party; the emergence of the New Party; the confection of the pet projects-cum-parties the Empire Free Trade Crusade and the United Empire Party; and the birth of nationalist parties in Scotland. But whenever fragmentation was the decisive factor in an electoral contest, parties in Opposition or the wilderness were almost always the only ones that suffered – which meant that fragmentation had the effect of firming up the position of the National Government, rather than destabilising the regime.<sup>95</sup> In the 1931 general election, the partners in the National Government gained a record 554 of the 615 seats in the Commons, though they won the support of no more than 14.5 million of the 21.6 million voters.<sup>96</sup> The result was the outright dominance of the MacDonald–Baldwin axis, which ensured the stability of democratic rule.<sup>97</sup> Many Britons, though, considered the National Government's outsize majority to be unhealthy and a prop for complacency.

---

mothers felt comfortable bringing infants to matches. See Giovanni Carnibella et al., 'Football Violence in Europe', The Social Issues Research Centre, Oxford report to the Amsterdam Group (1996), p. 23.

<sup>93</sup> Gerald D. Anderson, *Fascists, Communists, and the National Government: Civil Liberties in Great Britain, 1931–1937* (Columbia, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Karvonen, *Fragmentation*, p. 169. Austria, a special case, was the sole exception to this rule.

<sup>95</sup> For example, the Labour vote was so fragmented in the 1933 Kilmarnock by-election that the National Labour candidate triumphed over his Labour Party and Independent Labour Party (ILP) opponents with just 34.8 percent of the vote (a still record-low vote share among Scottish by-election winners).

<sup>96</sup> Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926–1932* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 459; and Seaman, *Life in Britain*, p. 46. Electoral pacts among the partners in the National Government left the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party with a mere 52 seats; only one Labour frontbencher was re-elected (Gardiner, *Thirties*, pp. 116–7).

<sup>97</sup> In deeply rooted democracies, Karvonen has noted, regime survival rested less on low fragmentation than on 'high levels of cabinet stability,' which Britain experienced (*Fragmentation*, p. 174 and p. 169).

Although the National Government never had to struggle to defend the parliamentary regime, several antisystem formations were active in interwar Britain. In spite of their apparent failure, these antisystem formations are not to be dismissed as irrelevant. For example, the New Party (founded by Oswald Mosley in 1931) was, in the words of Matthew Worley, ‘an absolute political failure’ – yet despite the fact that the party had only ‘minuscule’ support and ‘never remotely threatened the basic pattern of British politics,’ Worley has argued that it deserves our attention because it encapsulated ‘the concerns and uncertainties’ of the early 1930s. The *Saturday Review*, for one, recognised that the New Party was ‘a “sign of the times” and a symptom of a wider dissatisfaction with the existing parliamentary system.’<sup>98</sup>

Worley buttressed his argument by citing Michael Biddiss’ assertion that ‘prevalent error’ may sometimes be ‘more accurately representative of an age than ultimately more profitable ideas.’<sup>99</sup> In the case of the NEG/NBM, ‘prevalent error’ was present – yet so were many ideas that would later prove profitable. True, the NBM did not see the implementation of the political changes it advocated; nor did it survive as a ‘carrier’ of a particular set of principles. Yet many of the ideas it helped to popularise would be realised in the decades that followed, making the NEG/NBM a ‘successful’ progenitor. NBM goals realised in the past 70 years include ‘national responsibility’ for ‘medical assistance’ and ‘full university opportunity for all able to benefit thereby,’ which became pillars of the welfare state.<sup>100</sup> What is more, the NEG/NBM’s core principles of devolution and subsidiarity are, today, taken for granted as part of Britain’s domestic political arrangements. Thus it is not only because the movement was peculiarly resonant of its time that it is worthy of attention.

---

<sup>98</sup> Matthew Worley, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 12–13.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Biddiss, *Age of the Masses: Ideas and Society in Europe since 1870* (London, 1977), p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Objects of the New Britain Alliance’, *The Birmingham Post*, 31 March 1934. The NBM was representative of what Stephen Kotkin has referred to as the ‘deepening turn toward social welfare as a worldview’ in the interwar years. See Kotkin, ‘Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjunction’, in Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin (eds), *The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789–1991* (Lanham, 2003), p. 188.

To examine the NEG/NBM is to engage in what Worley has referred to as ‘subterranean history,’ namely ‘delving beneath the surface of mainstream politics to seek relevance in the cross-currents of political allegiance and social interaction.’<sup>101</sup> The best place to start is the ideological ground that the NEG/NBM shared with the New Party: both formations were rooted in ‘antisystemness.’ This concept has been prone to what Giovanni Sartori has called ‘conceptual stretching.’<sup>102</sup> Defined broadly, an ‘antisystem’ formation is any movement or party whose constituency’s attitudes to the democratic system range from alienation to protest.<sup>103</sup> For a formation to meet the narrower definition of ‘antisystem,’ though, it must intend to change not only the government but the very system of government (including its fundamental values).<sup>104</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the New Party was antisystem in the narrow sense because, as Capoccia has stated, a formation’s ‘ideological anti-systemness’ can ‘only be assessed by way of speculation as to its future intentions.’<sup>105</sup> The New Party’s intentions can be gauged from its periodical, *Action*.<sup>106</sup> On the one hand, the New Party stood for ‘the definite revision of the Parliamentary system’ because ‘under the present system ... any comprehensive scheme of legislation [would be] blocked by cumbersome methods of Parliamentary procedure.’<sup>107</sup> Mosley favoured the introduction of ‘methods of occupational franchise,’ which would lead to the ‘representation of industrial interests, workers, employer and technician in Parliament.’<sup>108</sup> The New Party argued that for the duration of the crisis, there was a need for a five-minister ‘inner Cabinet’ to govern ‘by Order in Council,’ which

---

<sup>101</sup> Worley, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> Giovanni Sartori, ‘Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics’, *The American Political Science Review* 64.4 (1970), p. 1034.

<sup>103</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 132.

<sup>104</sup> Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p. 133.

<sup>105</sup> Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, p. 32.

<sup>106</sup> The short-lived *Action* had a total of 344 pages, compared with *New Britain* weekly’s 2,000. The NEG/NBM produced more than 3,500 pages across its periodicals and publications.

<sup>107</sup> Oswald Mosley, ‘Have We A Policy? – Yes!’, *Action*, 24 December 1931, p. 2; and ‘Is Parliament Worth It?’, *Action*, 22 October 1931, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Mosley, ‘Policy’, p. 2.

Parliament would have the right to reject ‘after a brief general debate.’<sup>109</sup> In Mosley’s view, these changes were needed to ‘Make Parliament into a workshop, instead of a talk-shop.’<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, the New Party had ‘no desire to rob Parliament of its function as guardian of the Nation’s Liberties: it must always be open to the House of Commons to dismiss any Government which does not command its support.’<sup>111</sup> The New Party professed its ambition to be ‘a virulent and compact group’ in the Commons that would ‘stir’ the ‘energies’ of the National Government, and ‘influence the next Parliament towards a policy of vigour and action.’<sup>112</sup> The balance of evidence suggests that Mosley’s formation sought to be a fully fledged ginger group in Parliament, as Worley has stated. The New Party wanted to modify, rather than transform, the system of government: thus it met the broad definition of antisystem formation, but not the narrow one (unlike Mosley’s next formation, the BUF).<sup>113</sup>

Capoccia has defined ‘relevant’ antisystem formations as those that manage to have, at a minimum, a ‘*delegitimizing impact* on the regime’ through ‘propaganda and actions.’<sup>114</sup> The NEG/NBM was most certainly a ‘relevant’ antisystem movement at its height in 1933–4.<sup>115</sup> Faced by such a movement, incumbents can ignore it, pay lip service to its concerns (which may or may not be shared more widely), or co-opt any of its ideas that they could feasibly accommodate.<sup>116</sup> Alternatively, they could engage

---

<sup>109</sup> ‘Parliament’, p. 3; and Mosley, ‘Policy’, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Views That the Enemy Would Not Print: A Mosley Manifesto’, *Action*, 15 October 1931, p. 26.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Parliament’, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; and ‘Views’, p. 26.

<sup>113</sup> Worley, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 10.

<sup>114</sup> Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, p. 29. Becoming ‘relevant’ is more difficult for an antisystem movement than it is for a post-parliamentary-breakthrough antisystem party, which is in a position to impair ‘the coordination game of the democratic parties’ or behave as ‘irresponsible opposition’ in other ways (see Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, p. 28; and Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, pp. 139–40).

<sup>115</sup> Capoccia has noted that a formation ‘need not oppose all of the characteristics of the system in question to qualify as being antisystem’ (*Defending Democracy*, p. 34). The NBM’s ostensible support for the monarchy, then, does not mean the movement was not truly antisystem.

<sup>116</sup> By acknowledging an antisystem movement, incumbents may boost their legitimacy (among supporters) if they create the impression that the movement’s existence is, first and foremost, evidence of the vitality of the pluralist system they are upholding.

with the antisystem movement, at the risk of enhancing its status. A government backbencher might even seek advantage by arguing a case in the movement's main periodical; for example, the Tory maverick Harold Macmillan contributed a full-page article to *New Britain* weekly.<sup>117</sup> The NBM afforded such opportunities to incumbents because 'reconciliation' was one of the movement's main objectives, as we shall see.

The NEG/NBM periodicals were met with 'stony silence' by 'such "cultural" organs as the *Spectator* and *New Statesman*,' the unaffiliated *New English Weekly* complained.<sup>118</sup> But this 'silence' mattered little so long as the movement could directly delegitimise the National Government and parliamentary regime through its own propaganda. *New Britain* weekly was read by approximately 500,000 persons at its peak.<sup>119</sup> The 'sixpenny weekly for twopence' was affordable to all but the very poorest Britons.<sup>120</sup> It cost less than a five-pack of budget cigarettes, enabling the unemployed to buy copies 'out of the few coppers they can spend each week.'<sup>121</sup>

To increase the delegitimising impact of the NBM, its prominent figures sought to turn the readership of the movement's periodicals into a 'networked audience.' With the explicit encouragement of *New Britain* weekly, many readers formed local groups, which by autumn 1933 dotted England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This network offered readers the opportunity to become participants in the NBM, rather than just passive receivers of its ideas. Meetings of local groups enabled their members to

---

<sup>117</sup> Harold Macmillan, 'My Reply to Eimar O'Duffy', *New Britain* weekly, 7 February 1934, p. 348.

<sup>118</sup> '*New Albion*', *The New English Weekly*, 12 April 1934. According to Worley, the *New Statesman and Nation* was 'bamboozled' by the New Party, and treated it as a 'sideshow' (*Oswald Mosley*, p. 12). That periodical ignored the NBM, unlike many local publications. One afforded Frederick Soddy three pages to explain the NBM ('The New Britain Movement', *The Oxford Magazine*, 7 June 1934, pp. 791–3).

<sup>119</sup> See note 3 for readership calculations.

<sup>120</sup> *New Britain* weekly, 22 November 1933, p. 11. The NEG/NBM's large-format periodicals were far more expensive, and it is likely that each issue had many more readers than buyers. One reader wrote to Mitrović to express 'appreciation' for *New Atlantis: For Western Renaissance and World Socialism* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933) [hereafter *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933)], and to reveal that a shop assistant at Smith's – on being asked 'why he did not display it more openly' – 'assured me that so many fingered it without buying it, that he had to remove it from the other magazines. Also that one man took a copy into the shop in the morning & was still reading it after lunch, & went away without having purchased it!' (NAFDMA, 1/7/8/195, J. G. Ogilvie to Mitrović, London, 29 October 1933, MS).

<sup>121</sup> T. Ernest Jackson, 'Good Companions!', *New Britain* weekly, 31 May 1933, p. 58.

develop a sense of themselves as part of a broad-based politicised social movement. Members of the Rugby group mimeographed a ‘hyperlocal’ magazine called *New England*, and persons associated with the group in Oxford produced *Conspiracy*.<sup>122</sup>

Many local group members attended meetings in halls, and took part in discussion groups in drawing-rooms.<sup>123</sup> The most eventful gatherings were the first and second national conferences, which were followed by summer schools; in contrast to the shirt movements’ marches, the NBM organised rambles.<sup>124</sup> Any sparring was exclusively of the verbal kind.<sup>125</sup> The movement’s prominent figures were not interested in capturing headlines through political theatre: there was nothing remotely like the Blackshirt rally at Olympia or the Greenshirt brick that broke a window at 11 Downing Street.<sup>126</sup> Whereas Greenshirt activities ‘literalised the notion of projection and penetration,’ the NBM never even produced a necktie for its supporters (its prominent figures spurned the suggestion that a ‘distinctive’ tie would be ‘good

---

<sup>122</sup> One issue of *Conspiracy* is extant in NAFDMA, 5/4/1 File. Three issues of *New England* are extant in NAFDMA, 6/5/2 – but at least five issues were mimeographed. The Rugby group comprised 37 members on 17 August 1933 (NAFDMA, 6/5/1 File, ‘List of Members of Rugby New Britain Group, August 17th. 1933’, TS, 17 August 1933).

<sup>123</sup> Some of these meetings had a police presence. At a public meeting in Croydon on 27 February 1934, ‘two policemen hovered round the entrance’ in case of ‘any untoward event,’ it was reported. Police intervention was ‘happily not required,’ though there was ‘a certain atmosphere of hostility on the part of a small section of the crowded audience’ (‘New Britain’, *Croydon Advertiser*, 3 March 1934).

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, ‘London Rambles’, *New Britain* weekly, 4 April 1934, p. 618.

<sup>125</sup> In 1967–8 Prime Minister Harold Wilson would be troubled by an erroneous rumour about housing minister Niall MacDermot (son of Mitrinović’s main benefactor), which was one of the two reasons why Wilson decided not to promote him to Solicitor General (the other reason was that his second wife was half Russian). Wilson ordered MI5 to launch an official investigation after ‘an Irishman alleged, bizarrely, that MacDermot and his student New Britain group had practiced ritual murder’ (David Leigh, ‘MI5 and the Minister’s Wife’, *The Observer*, 23 October 1988). The truth was that at a 1939 meeting of another group associated with Mitrinović, MacDermot had shoved a co-participant with a heart condition, who then died of cardiac failure. MacDermot was acquitted of manslaughter; see Nigel West, ed., *The Guy Liddell Diaries: MI5’s Director of Counter-Espionage in World War II*, vol. 2, 1942–1945 (London, 2006), p. 142. During the Second World War, MacDermot rose through MI5, where he headed the counterintelligence operation for the Normandy landings. Two decades later, MI5 officers opposed to Wilson acted on a grudge they bore MacDermot, possibly for revealing in Parliament that Soviet spy Kim Philby had served in an important intelligence position during the war; see Howard B. Tolley, *The International Commission of Jurists: Global Advocates for Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2010), p. 139.

<sup>126</sup> ‘They do not advocate that sort of thing’ wrote a reporter who, on hearing that an NBM group ‘might be opening up in Southport,’ was not expecting its ‘adherents’ to ‘strut around ... and challenge Sir Oswald Mosley’s followers to mortal combat’ (‘Have You Heard of the New Britain Alliance?’, *Southport Journal*, 8 June 1934). The earnest NBM did not advocate ‘tactical frivolity’ either, though *New Britain* weekly occasionally featured contributions of a humorous nature.



publicity’).<sup>127</sup> Watts summed up the NBM attitude as: ‘No shirts, badges, flags or labels are required – only a firm purpose and a desire for sanity.’<sup>128</sup> This total rejection of uniformity left the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* unsure of what to make of the NBM: it recognised that the movement had ‘political aims, though so far as we are aware its members do not wear any special colour of shirt, or even tie.’<sup>129</sup> *New Britain* weekly cartoons mocked the shirt movements (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3); a ‘New Britain’ could be realised only through regeneration and reconciliation, not regimentation. As a St. Albans group member put it: Britons were not ‘mere instruments at the disposal of every wind that blows a shirt in our face,’ for the ‘way to the age of plenty is not draped with shirts of any colour.’<sup>130</sup>



Fig. 2. Stanley Herbert, detail of ‘The British Association Meets Today’, *New Britain* weekly, 6 September 1933, p. 497.

<sup>127</sup> Tim Armstrong, ‘Social Credit Modernism’, *Critical Quarterly* 55.2 (2013), p. 53; and NAFDMA, 1/7/8/211, Bill Duff to Mitrinović, 29 October 1935, TS.

<sup>128</sup> ‘National Co-operation’, *Bromley District Times*, 20 July 1934.

<sup>129</sup> ‘New Britain’, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 1934.

<sup>130</sup> Norman C. Pallant, ‘To the Editor’, *Herts Advertiser*, 20 April 1934.



Fig. 3. Stanley Herbert, 'SALESMANSHIP', *New Britain* weekly, 23 August 1933, p. 433.

### **The Syncretic Turn in Extra-parliamentary Politics**

The understated nature of the NBM's activities is one reason why the movement has been overlooked; another is that it did not 'play the democratic game,' as Capoccia has

called an antisystem formation's attempt to enter 'the citadel of democratic political institutions.'<sup>131</sup> Yet another reason is that, as Daniel Ritschel has noted, little serious attention has been paid to the 'remarkably complex variety' of challenges to orthodox economics 'staked out within the radical camp' rather than in Westminster, the NEG/NBM's 'highly eclectic' and 'curious' planning philosophy among them.<sup>132</sup> Ritschel has pointed out that the 'fractured and fragmented nature of economic opinion in the 1930s' has been oversimplified.<sup>133</sup> That is also the case, albeit to a lesser degree, for political opinion. The political loyalties of intellectuals were in fact 'surprisingly fluid' until Hitler's seizure of power, as Stan Smith and Jennifer Birkett have explained. The European intelligentsia was in 'ferment' from 1929 to 1933, when 'political commitments could be inflected to Left or Right.' Many writers 'vacillated between extremes' in what Smith and Birkett have termed 'revolving commitment,' and much of the political writing of the early 1930s 'reveals this deep ambiguity.'<sup>134</sup>

In 1930 *The Observer* declared: 'No one remembers a time when discontents were so rife in all parties together and when movements were so kaleidoscopic.'<sup>135</sup> Worley has stated that New Party members 'were caught in an ideological flux, drawing from and responding to an array of influences and stimuli as they struggled to comprehend a shifting socio-political landscape wracked by economic depression.'<sup>136</sup> Indeed, one editorial in *Action* complained that members of the public asked New Party leaders to offer "'an easy category into which you can be made to fit.'" In other words, they want to tuck the New Party away into some dusty pigeon-hole of their minds.'<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>132</sup> Daniel Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997), p. 5 and p. 241.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>134</sup> Stan Smith and Jennifer Birkett, 'Introduction', in Jennifer Birkett and Stan Smith (eds), *Right/Left/Right: Revolving Commitments, France and Britain 1929–1950* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 1–2.

<sup>135</sup> 'Mr. Baldwin and After: The New Generation and Its Future Youth and Leadership', *The Observer*, 2 November 1930.

<sup>136</sup> Worley, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 11.

<sup>137</sup> 'Take Your Choice – Two Ways Out of the Mess', *Action*, 17 December 1931, p. 4.

In a similar vein, an editorial in *New Britain* weekly announced: ‘SINCE THE FIRST NUMBER OF THIS PAPER APPEARED WE HAVE BEEN CALLED FASCIST, Communist, Imperialist, Nationalist, Liberal, and, if I could remember them, half a dozen other names as well. I am not surprised by that. We expected to be just a little annoying and perhaps confusing.’<sup>138</sup> Public confusion over the ideological orientation of the NBM aided, rather than hindered, its growth.<sup>139</sup> Many puzzled but open-minded individuals were pulled into the NBM orbit simply because they were curious about what the movement stood for, exactly.

Tom Villis has explained that the syncretic turn in British extra-parliamentary politics – whose locus was the rejection of the liberal parliamentary system ‘from a direction that fused the ideas of right and left’ – had its origins in the pre-war years, when A. R. Orage’s *The New Age* was at the height of its influence.<sup>140</sup> Until its demise in 1922, the periodical served as a clearinghouse for novel ideas. Mitrinović contributed in 1920–1, and was the dominant figure in Orage’s world ‘for two or three years,’ according to Philip Mairet, a contributor at the time.<sup>141</sup> Villis has noted that the syncretic ‘political space’ opened by *The New Age* ‘has been ignored by those who have looked for similar ideas primarily in relation to existing parliamentary parties,’ despite it being the breeding ground for ‘criticisms of parliamentary democracy’ that would be expressed more clamorously between the wars.<sup>142</sup> This political space accommodated ‘elements of ideas that had motivated criticisms of both parliamentary democracy and capitalism in the 19th century,’ alongside ideas that had ‘much in common with a European tradition of radical right-wing anti-parliamentarianism.’ Villis has seen in the

---

<sup>138</sup> C. B. Purdom, ‘What We Stand For’, *New Britain* weekly, 28 June 1933, p. 176. At one public meeting, ‘A volley of questions was fired at Mr. Purdom’ by attendees who were eager for clarification of the NBM’s ‘objects’ (‘New Britain’, *Croydon Advertiser*, 3 March 1934).

<sup>139</sup> This confusion was heightened by Mitrinović’s deliberate use of ‘strategic ambiguity,’ as will be discussed in chapter two.

<sup>140</sup> Tom Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt against Liberal Democracy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 2006), p. 194.

<sup>141</sup> Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and Other Papers* (Manchester, 1981), p. 178.

<sup>142</sup> Villis, *Reaction*, pp. 194–5.

ideational complexion of *The New Age* the first blush of the ‘political revolt’ against parliamentary democracy in Britain. In its day, this ‘cultural rebellion’ did not ‘find the same circumstances for political manifestation’ present in Continental European states, so the ‘ideas remained isolated on the intellectual fringe’ in Britain. Yet these ideas, Villis has concluded, ‘provided an arsenal of arguments from which later disaffected intellectuals could draw.’<sup>143</sup> That arsenal would be fully deployed by prominent figures in the NBM.

### ***Political Perfectionism: the NEG/NBM as a ‘Positive’ Antisystem Movement***

The National Government faced antisystem formations strong enough, at least for a time, to call into question the legitimacy of the incumbents and the parliamentary regime, and to articulate plans (feasible or otherwise) for changes to the political system.<sup>144</sup>

The emergence of a significant politicised movement is a relatively rare occurrence in any state.<sup>145</sup> But rarer still is the coming to prominence of one that, like the NEG/NBM, belongs in the little-known ‘positive’ subset of antisystem formations that Michael Keren has termed ‘political perfectionist.’<sup>146</sup> Without doubt, the NEG/NBM was the only political perfectionist movement active in Britain between the wars.

The main objective of leaders of a political perfectionist movement or party is the realisation, in their polity, of ‘a standard of perfection’ derived from ‘commitment

---

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>144</sup> Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, p. 6.

<sup>145</sup> Martin Kolinsky and William E. Paterson, *Social and Political Movements in Western Europe* (New York, 1976), p. 345.

<sup>146</sup> Michael Keren, ‘Political Perfectionism and the “Anti-system” Party’, *Party Politics* 6.1 (2000), p. 108. In the twentieth century there were few prominent political perfectionist movements or parties. The literature on this ‘positive’ subset of antisystem formations is proportionally scant.



to an imaginary rather than real civil society,' for the benefit of the polity's people. This contrasts the agenda of leaders of a 'negative' antisystem formation, who seek to delegitimise the regime primarily for the benefit of their formation, to which their own personal fortunes are tied (they are unlikely, of course, to couch their antisystemness in such self-interested terms).<sup>147</sup> Political perfectionist formations seek to enlarge citizens' sense of theoretically possible outcomes of the political process; in contrast, negative antisystem parties make promises designed to maximise their support 'in the knowledge that they will never be called upon to make good on their pledges.'<sup>148</sup>

Keren has stated that leaders of political perfectionist movements imagine an 'impossible reality,' and share that vision in an attempt to wither away citizens' 'sense of the impossible.'<sup>149</sup> The NBM's prominent figures imagined a perfect 'New' Britain and worked toward its realisation, initially by popularising their vision. One journalist grasped that 'They of the New Britain movement ... would build up the ideal state they visualized.'<sup>150</sup> As Sartori has stated, political perfectionism differs from utopianism in

---

<sup>147</sup> Keren, 'Political Perfectionism', pp. 107–8. Keren has discussed New Force (NF), an Israeli political perfectionist movement-turned-party represented in the Knesset from 1965 to 1973. Like the NBM, NF had former soldiers among its prominent figures. The NF's leader's 'viewpoint' was that of 'the soldier forced to fight for a state whose leadership ... had corrupted it,' and the formation focused on the discrepancy between the pure wishes of young soldiers and the tainted realities of the state (*Ibid.*, pp. 111–14). NF, like the NBM, emerged only after it had become fully apparent that national leaders had over-promised in wartime and under-delivered after (in the British case, over-promising had quelled the militancy of returning Fighting Forces until they were safely demobilised). Twenty years to the day Britain declared war, the NBM began its second national conference (4–6 August 1934). Delahaye said that the date had been chosen because 'the ideals men died for' ('civilisation, liberty and democracy') 'had not been achieved; indeed, they were in greater peril than ever.' The NBM 'was out to fulfil them,' he stated ('Transformation of Society by National Will', *Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror*, 6 August 1934). If the Fallen 'could come back they would realise that they had died for nothing. That put the responsibility on the people of the present day to see that ... what these men died for should be given to mankind,' Delahaye said ('"New Britain" Movement', *Central Somerset Gazette*, 10 August 1934).

<sup>148</sup> Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, p. 31.

<sup>149</sup> Keren, 'Political Perfectionism', p. 112 and p. 114. Today, as Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink have explained, it is advocacy networks that 'use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies'; see *Activists Beyond Borders* (Ithaca, 1998), p. 16. Today, few citizens believe a government could bring about 'perfect' conditions in its polity; rather, the general expectation is that a government manage, as best it can, a wide range of highly complex issues. Specialist advocacy networks have thus proliferated in recent years, and no new political perfectionist formations have come to prominence. It may be the case that a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of a political perfectionist formation is the grouping of a critical mass of activists with faith in government's ability to broadly determine domestic conditions at will.

<sup>150</sup> 'New Britain', *Croydon Advertiser*, 3 March 1934.

that it moves beyond contemplation and becomes ‘perfectionistic activism.’<sup>151</sup> Watts stressed that the aims of the NBM were ‘positive – not merely the anti-this and anti-that of Left Wing politicians,’ and that the movement had ‘evolved a definite and detailed plan for national reorganisation.’<sup>152</sup> If the political perfectionist formation’s vision captures the imagination of followers, faith may follow: after all, it is not unreasonable to believe that a plan that seems unrealisable at one moment could be implemented at a later juncture.<sup>153</sup> Circumstances constantly change, often beyond anyone’s powers of anticipation – as was well understood by Mitrović, who, after devoting his youth to Yugoslavism, saw the political unification of the South Slav peoples go from lost cause to internationally recognised reality in the span of a few years.<sup>154</sup>

Negative antisystem parties distort the electoral market: they try to empty the political centre by outbidding incumbents. In contrast, ‘positive’ antisystem formations shine a spotlight on the deficiencies of the status quo in order to stir awareness among citizens, shame those responsible, and spur into action the persons or bodies tasked with rectifying the problems.<sup>155</sup> Clarke has noted that the Slump not only ‘discredited capitalism, it also discredited reformist attempts at tinkering with it.’<sup>156</sup> By casting the National Government’s tinkering in unflattering light, the NBM sought to shame the incumbents, and to spur them to legislate with a view to a ‘perfect’ polity.<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revised* (Chatham, 1987), p. 60.

<sup>152</sup> ‘National Co-operation’, *Bromley District Times*, 20 July 1934.

<sup>153</sup> Karl Mannheim argued that ‘man would lose his will to shape history’ if he lost faith in utopias; see Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London, 1936), p. 236.

<sup>154</sup> As will be discussed in chapters three and four, the NEG/NBM had a vision for European integration. This was one of the great lost causes of the 1930s, yet many of the European-level changes sought by the movement’s prominent figures would come to be realised within their lifetimes.

<sup>155</sup> Of course, political perfectionist movements are not the only antisystem formations that agitate against government complacency. The New Party, for example, aimed to ‘see to it that the seats of office are not over-comfortable’ (‘Parliament’, p. 3).

<sup>156</sup> Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, p. 172.

<sup>157</sup> A political perfectionist formation would struggle to function as such if new limits on free expression minimised its potential delegitimising impact. The NBM feared that the National Government would try to stifle criticism using the powers it sought with the Incitement to Disaffection Bill. The movement supported the Merseyside demonstration against the Bill (‘United Front at Liverpool’, *Daily Worker*, 26 June 1934). The NBM’s Alexandra Park group stated that the law would be ‘an unjust weapon in the hands of an unscrupulous Government’ (‘Profound Concern’, *Wood Green Sentinel*, 1 November 1934).

Mitrinović understood that to exert influence on a government, an antisystem formation need not contest elections: it need only grow strong enough to get incumbents to act on ideas in line with those of the movement. The Cabinet was in an unprecedentedly strong position to resist attempts to shape the legislative agenda from beyond government ranks. But some dynamic National Government MPs – whose minds were not clogged by old nostrums – put forward activist government proposals, which prominent figures in the NBM hoped their ideas would inform.<sup>158</sup> Among the younger generation of MPs, those exploring innovative economic ideas perceived the 1860s-born Baldwin and MacDonald to be hidebound and complacent in the face of high unemployment; in 1929, for example, Mosley had attacked Baldwin on the grounds that he had been ‘content’ as prime minister ‘just to squat in front of problems of the day like a hypnotised rabbit in front of a snake.’<sup>159</sup> MacDonald was equally deserving of criticism: when prime minister, his efforts to address unemployment extended little beyond setting up committees and launching inquiries.<sup>160</sup> In December 1932, he resorted to urging the public to give unemployed persons something to do, such as by ‘teaching men ... to make mats out of bits of old rope.’<sup>161</sup> The NBM was well aware that ‘some of the strongest criticism of the Government comes actually from the young Conservatives,’ and that Macmillan was ‘impatient to get at the roots of the

---

<sup>158</sup> The National Government won 90 percent of seats in the 1931 election. Years of rule by a government with an impregnable majority galvanised the NBM, as it later would a German antisystem movement that arose in similar circumstances, namely the *Außerparlamentarische* (extra-parliamentary) Opposition that opposed the 1966–9 grand coalition (which had 95 percent of seats in the Bundestag).

<sup>159</sup> ‘Preston By-election’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 July 1929. Within a year, Mosley became even more disillusioned with the ‘old gang’ politicians, having been obliged to work under Jimmy Thomas, a corrupt minister who was co-responsible with Chancellor Philip Snowden for tackling unemployment (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 433 and p. 389). Panic-prone Thomas, who preferred drinking to thinking, could not even grasp the scope of the problem. Snowden was beholden to notions of thrift and sobriety, and believed the main effect of spending on public works would be the crowding out of private investment. See Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (New York, 2000), pp. 179–80.

<sup>160</sup> Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. 178. In 1930, MacDonald confided in his diary that unemployment was ‘baffling’ him, and that his ‘head would not work’; see David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977), p. 543. Diary entries such as ‘The simple fact is that our population is too great for our trade’ betray MacDonald’s ignorance of economics (*Ibid.*, p. 537). By 1935, his mental acuity had deteriorated so badly that the interpreter at the Stresa Conference had to make up a speech from his ramblings; see Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. 414.

<sup>161</sup> Branson and Heinemann, *Nineteen Thirties*, pp. 39–40.



trouble.<sup>162</sup> The National Government's outsize majority resulted in what one prominent figure in the NBM called the 'drift away from a rigid party politics.'<sup>163</sup> Looser party ties allowed Macmillan to argue – via the Next Five Years Group, established in February 1933 – in favour of subsidies for distressed areas, state control over industry, and the abolition of the Means Test (a system used to assess the amount of dole payable to an unemployed person).<sup>164</sup> Other conscience-stricken Conservative MPs (some of whom represented blighted industrial areas in the North) were disquieted by their less idealistic colleagues' indifference to the suffering of the unemployed, and rejected the notion that 'sound' finance would see the country through – like Macmillan, they were 'semi-detached' from their party.<sup>165</sup> The NEG/NBM hoped that MPs sympathetic to the movement could be induced to advance its causes in the knowledge that NBM members 'from all parties or none' would rally support for such efforts in league with *New Britain* weekly.<sup>166</sup> The NBM would thus influence the course of government by ensuring that 'the best brains of all political parties were sinking petty differences,' as a member of a local group in Devon put it.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> 'Another Week Goes By', *Eleventh Hour*, 5 December 1934, p. 34. Between the wars, no more than three Tory MPs could have been described as 'working men' (Jefferys, *Politics*, p. 24). Among the rest, Macmillan was unusual in that he had seen poverty and hunger up close in his constituency, Stockton-on-Tees (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 71). J. B. Priestley likened the 'finished' town to 'a theatre kept open merely for the sale of drinks in the bars'; see Priestley, *English Journey* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, 1977 [1934]), p. 321.

<sup>163</sup> 'Towards a New Britain: Islington Address by Mr. Lohan', *Islington Gazette*, 13 July 1934.

<sup>164</sup> D. R. Thorpe, *Supermac: The Life of Harold Macmillan* (London, 2010), pp. 110–11. Mitrinović conversed with Allan Young, Macmillan's secretary, in an attempt to win his support, but Young decided he could not 'play any part' in Mitrinović's plans, being 'fully committed to Macmillan & the Five year group' (see NAFDMA, 1/7/8/216, Allan Young to Mitrinović, London, 10 December 1935, MS).

<sup>165</sup> David Howell, *Mosley and British Politics 1918–32: Oswald's Odyssey* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 204. The Conservative rank and file knew they could count on 'haves' in the prosperous south of England outnumbering northern 'have-nots' at the ballot box (Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, p. 179).

<sup>166</sup> Basil Hall, 'New Britain', *News Chronicle*, 20 February 1934.

<sup>167</sup> Mr. S. C. Dyer of Barnstaple, quoted in 'Landkey Workers' Educational Association', *North Devon Journal*, 28 March 1934.

### *Stir, Shame and Spur*

Political perfectionist movements can single-mindedly ‘stir, shame and spur’ in a ‘pure’ way – unlike pressure groups, on which the grubbiness of procedural politics rubs off; protest parties, which angle for a share of power; ginger groups of MPs, which are subject to parliamentary socialisation; and loyal Opposition parties, which jockey for power (and, if they ruled recently, may be reluctant to draw too much attention to certain deficiencies, lest their own record in government be scrutinised anew). In contrast to pressure groups, which make demands (typically on a single issue) that could be accommodated in the system, political perfectionist formations advocate broad and deep changes that are barely conceivable in the circumstances – but the evident unfeasibility *is* an integral part of the damning indictment of incumbents. When examining a correctible (albeit difficult) problem, a political perfectionist formation highlights the expanse between a far from perfect reality (e.g. the continued existence of slum housing) and an optimal solution (e.g. all citizens securely housed in decent conditions) so that the shortcomings of office-holders and the system in which they operate appear in the sharpest possible relief.<sup>168</sup> Political perfectionist formations posit that if ‘perfect’ solutions to longstanding problems are still not within reach, it is only because incumbents have made so little progress toward them (prior incumbents may come in for a share of criticism, too).<sup>169</sup>

To give an example, *New Britain* weekly castigated the National Government for the slow pace of the clearance of slums, ‘the most disgraceful social stain of the

---

<sup>168</sup> There is, however, a scenario in which a political perfectionist movement would have a net *stabilising* effect on the system: if citizens disenchanted with mainstream parties came to see the movement as a suitable outlet for the expression of their discontent, negative antisystem parties would lose much of their appeal – and with it, much of their ability to threaten the system.

<sup>169</sup> The *News Chronicle*, the sole surviving liberal national daily, acknowledged that the NBM’s ‘criticisms’ were ‘useful’ (‘Liberty’, *News Chronicle*, 22 February 1934).

20th century.’<sup>170</sup> It also decried ‘the awful results of widespread speculative building,’ ‘meaningless ribbon development,’ and the ‘spread of brick monstrosities ... marshalled monotonously in depressing rows.’<sup>171</sup> A few months before the completion of Becontree, the world’s largest public housing estate, Jack Common drew attention to what he called ‘the planned slum and the cemetery-suburb,’ which lacked amenities for communal life.<sup>172</sup> *New Britain* weekly shamed the health minister for declaring slum clearance progress to be ‘very good’ when ‘by the lowest possible standard the number of houses to be cleared cannot be far short of a million and by any decent standard of living not far short of two million.’<sup>173</sup> Housing policy was ‘a shocking mockery,’ and the National Government’s ‘refusal to accept responsibility’ was a ‘national disgrace’ that ‘should cover every member of it with ignominy.’<sup>174</sup> *New Britain* weekly sought to spur the health minister to ‘much more drastic’ action.<sup>175</sup>

Some citizens might be so dazzled by the spotlight that political perfectionist formations shine on problems that they avert their eyes, rather than allow themselves to be stirred to greater awareness. The periodical *Patriot*, for example, dismissed as ‘subversive propaganda’ the ‘chief line’ of the ‘Noxious’ NBM, calling it a ‘Fruit Tart’ with an ‘attractive crust’ that covered ‘Moscow’s unconscious agents.’<sup>176</sup> Many other citizens, though, appreciated the efforts of ‘*New Atlantis*, *New Albion* and *New Britain*’ to ‘clarify the murkiness,’ as Ronald Blythe has put it.<sup>177</sup> Seeing problems illuminated in a harsh, unforgiving light could have been just what it took to stir them out of

---

<sup>170</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 14 June 1933, p. 99. Niall MacDermot, the son of the NBM’s main benefactor, would later serve as housing minister in Wilson’s first government.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>172</sup> Jack Common, ‘Report on Housing’, *Eleventh Hour*, 9 January 1935, p. 141. Becontree’s 110,000 residents could socialise in five pubs and six public buildings (nearby, residents of the similarly populous town of Shrewsbury could gather in 159 pubs and 15 church halls); see Gardiner, *Thirties*, pp. 283–4. The NBM envisioned a ‘New Britain’ free of the social atomisation that ‘cemetery-suburbs’ augured.

<sup>173</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 11 October 1933, p. 642.

<sup>174</sup> ‘The Reader’s Guide’ [review], ‘E. D. Simon, *The Anti-Slum Campaign* (London, 1933)’, *New Britain* weekly, 8 November 1933, p. 787.

<sup>175</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 30 August 1933, p. 452.

<sup>176</sup> ‘On Whose Side?—LXXII’, *Patriot*, 2 August 1934, pp. 95–6.

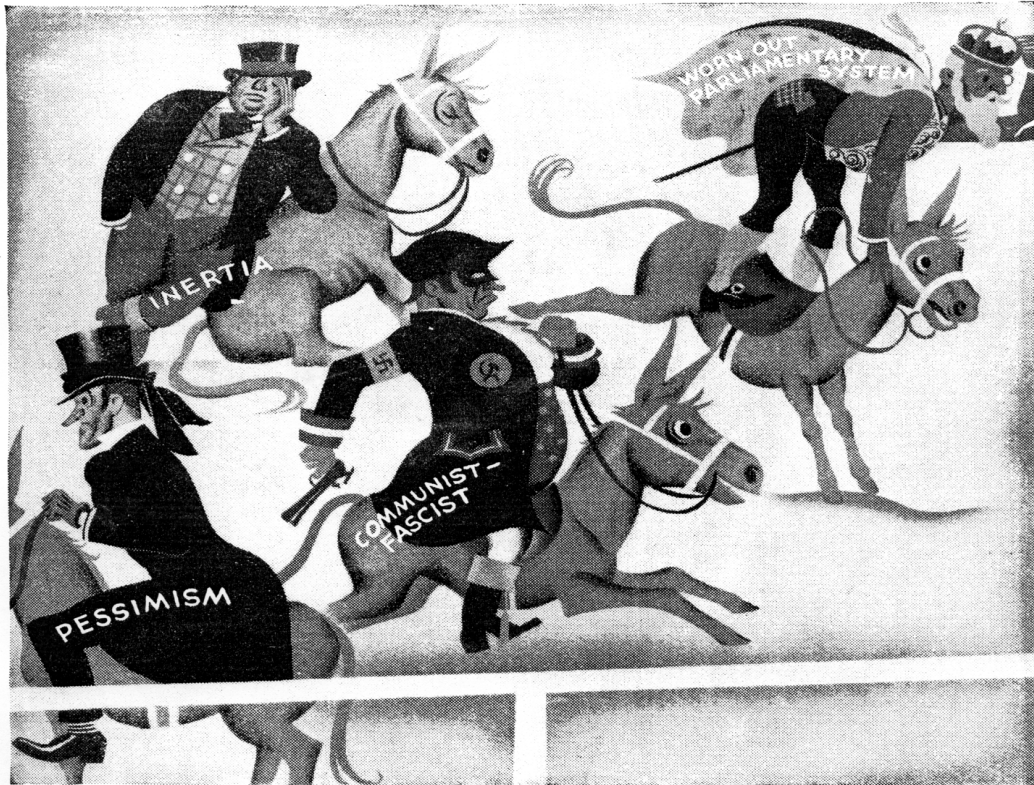
<sup>177</sup> Ronald Blythe, *The Age of Illusion: Glimpses of Britain between the Wars 1919–1940* (Oxford, 1983 [1963]), p. 111.

complacency, apathy or fatalism – all habits of mind to which the NBM objected (Fig. 4).<sup>178</sup> If a ‘perfect’ solution seemed beyond grasp, even the remotest prospect that it could come within reach might have been enough to stave off pessimism, a disposition that the NBM’s prominent figures scorned as much as they did inertia (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Stanley Herbert, ‘SHADES OF THE GREAT MARVELLING AT THEIR PROGENY’, *New Britain* weekly, 7 June 1933, p. 81.

<sup>178</sup> After 1931, ‘general apathy’ was the ‘most remarkable aspect of electoral behaviour,’ according to John Stevenson and Chris Cook. Local election turnout was ‘regularly low’ and sometimes fell to about a third of eligible voters; see *The Slump: Britain in the Great Depression* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Harlow, 2010), p. 140. Most middle class voters trusted the National Government to mind the shop, freeing them to pursue their lives unencumbered by a duty to be overtly political.



Stanley Herbert

**Derby Day: All the Losers !**

Fig. 5. Stanley Herbert, 'Derby Day: All the Losers!', *New Britain* weekly, 31 May 1933, p. 49.

When weighing criticisms of incumbents made by various formations, some citizens would likely judge a political perfectionist movement's motives to be purer than those of a party contesting power.<sup>179</sup> Expressing no interest in elected office, prominent figures in positive antisystem movements embody disinterestedness, and present themselves as starkly different from favour-currying, self-serving operators eyeing the spoils of office. One prominent figure in the NBM did just that at a public meeting in Hampstead, as the *Golders Green Gazette* reported:

<sup>179</sup> One commentator disdained the 'purity' of the NBM's approach, stating that *Conspiracy* (the magazine produced by persons associated with the NBM's group in Oxford) expressed 'sympathy and feeling for our present industrial and political discontents without contaminating its [the movement's] adherent with anything so worldly or useless as day to day party politics' ('Spectator', 'Glass Case Politicians', *Isis*, 5 December 1934).

Every country was having its change ... and the New Britain movement wanted to bring about a change here. It was a peculiar movement in that sense.

If there was a new Britain, if they were instrumental in bringing about a change, they were not so much concerned, like most other organisations, whether they had publicity, they were wholeheartedly not for themselves, but for Britain. If they could be instrumental in any way they would not mind whether or not their name was ever mentioned.<sup>180</sup>

Other journalists developed an understanding of the NBM's peculiarity in this respect:

*The Birmingham Post* noted that the movement set itself 'the task of *creating an atmosphere* [emphasis added] in which great reforms could be carried through without force and without the reactions of dictatorship, &c.'<sup>181</sup>

### ***'Aspidistra Antisystemness' – and Its Limits***

The NBM's task of 'creating an atmosphere' for 'great reforms' held most appeal for members of the middle classes.<sup>182</sup> Murry wrote in *The Adelphi* that a 'considerable' and 'growing' middle-class 'mass of opinion' had 'acquired a distinctive organ of expression – the *New Britain* weekly.' 'Through the agency' of the weekly, he continued, 'a nebulous mass of dissatisfaction and aspiration has advanced a perceptible

---

<sup>180</sup> "'New Britain'", *Golders Green Gazette*, 18 April 1934. The speaker addressed 'a large crowd of interested people' ('Towards a New Britain', *Hendon Times and Borough Guardian*, 13 April 1934).

<sup>181</sup> 'Objects of the New Britain Alliance', *The Birmingham Post*, 31 March 1934.

<sup>182</sup> The advertising in *New Britain* weekly suggests that the bourgeoisie was well represented among its readership; each of the first five issues, for example, had full-page adverts aimed at lawn tennis players who could (if they had a spacious back garden) use the 'Kum-Bak Auto-Coach' for a 'practice knock-up.' Unlike *Action*, *New Britain* weekly never had adverts that spoke to fears of re proletarianisation or more perilous social relegation ('your family can be made safe from the peril of poverty', *Action*, 8 October 1931, p. 15), or that addressed concerns about reduced circumstances ('start a spare-time business that quickly brings a full-time income', *Action*, 5 November 1931, p. 21). Corot advertised 4–7-guinea frocks in *Action*, and ones costing 5½–8 in *New Britain* weekly. To counter concerns that only the working class made routine use of payment plans (known as paying on the never-never), Corot adverts in *Action* reassured lower-middle-class potential customers that its clientele included 'members of the aristocracy, society, the stage, the turf, leading authors and journalists and leaders of the advertizing and selling world, all of whom pay by instalments' ('corot models by instalments', *Action*, 8 October 1931, p. 23). Appealing to more socially secure *New Britain* weekly readers, Corot did not mention persons in the 'selling world' – rather, its adverts focused on 'designs for town or country wear, for cruising, and for holiday wear,' and made reference to instalment plans only in code (customers could pay 'in the modern way') ('get your frocks from corot', *New Britain* weekly, 24 May 1933, p. ii).



degree towards becoming a real body of opinion. To that extent, the *New Britain* has performed a creative function, seldom fulfilled by a new journalistic organ to-day.<sup>183</sup> Through the NBM, members of the middle classes were able to participate in what we might call ‘*aspidistra antisystemness*,’ namely the genteel expression of discontent with the system in a manner that maintained social respectability.<sup>184</sup> An unwritten code of behaviour restrained active involvement in politics among suburbanites, for whom respectability was all-important.<sup>185</sup> But members of the middle classes were able to attend NBM local group gatherings in homes, or even public meetings at small-scale venues, without setting off the twitching of net curtains in their neighbourhoods. Compared with ‘Safety First’ conservatism (which was as dull as the road safety campaign whose name the Tories borrowed for their 1929 election slogan), the NBM seemed inspirational to many in the middle classes.<sup>186</sup> They could identify with a movement that was inspired by social idealism, to which it gave eloquent voice, rather than fuelled by unsavoury grievances.<sup>187</sup> One prominent figure in the NBM would later write that the fact that the movement ‘grew to the dimensions it did’ was ‘a testimony to the spiritual vitality of its vision.’<sup>188</sup>

Political perfectionist movements highlight what they regard as the incumbents’ poverty of political imagination and failure to make laws that would minimise imperfections in a polity. The imperfections perceived by the NBM’s prominent figures included the wretched housing conditions endured by millions of their

---

<sup>183</sup> Murry, ‘Spiritual Aristocrats’, p. 89.

<sup>184</sup> The *aspidistra* is a houseplant that symbolised the respectability of members of the middle classes who, in the words of one of Orwell’s characters, had come ‘to settle down, to Make Good’ – there would be ‘no revolution in England while there are *aspidistras* in the windows.’ See George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (New York, 1956 [1936]), p. 48 and p. 44.

<sup>185</sup> Jefferys, *Politics*, p. 40. Some younger suburbanites, though, felt less restrained than their elders. For example, Miss Janet Mickle – resident of a newly built semi-detached villa in Cheam – declared the need to ‘combat’ ‘Poverty amidst our present day plenty,’ and favoured Major Douglas’ ideas over those of the NBM (‘Social Welfare’, *Croydon Advertiser*, 3 March 1934).

<sup>186</sup> William D. Rubinstein, *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Political History* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 166.

<sup>187</sup> In their very first article, the NEG’s prominent figures declared themselves ‘utterly optimistic’; see ‘Ourselves Announced’, *New Britain: Quarterly Organ of the XIth Hour Club* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1932) [hereafter *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1932)], p. 2.

<sup>188</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 133.

compatriots, poor public health, mass unemployment, sub-optimal money supply, and other clusters of problems that had been inadequately addressed by those with the power to rectify them. L. C. B. Seaman has written that most Britons came to accept the existence of long-term unemployment in the older industrial areas ‘in the way they accepted the phenomena of overpopulation in India or of recurrent flood and famine in China’ – that is, as something ‘natural,’ about which nothing could be done.<sup>189</sup> Most citizens were resigned to malign socioeconomic conditions in parts of the country, meaning incumbents more readily fell into the timidity trap, enacting only half-measures at best.<sup>190</sup> But many other citizens despaired over ‘white flag’ attitudes – and it was from among this subset of the citizenry that the NBM drew much of its support.

Mitrinović had no patience for what he called ‘Business as usual’ politics.<sup>191</sup> Equally impatient were the NBM’s prominent figures who had served in the Great War: they had developed disgust for ‘muddle-through’ politicians, and – unwilling to ‘soldier on’ in silence – felt free to criticise those who spoke in the name of Britain. The National Government presented itself as ‘the true expression of national consensus,’ as Tom Jeffrey has noted.<sup>192</sup> But the government was “‘National” in name only’ according to one NBM periodical, which stated that the label was ‘obviously an absurdity’ given the preponderance of Conservative MPs.<sup>193</sup>

The NBM’s ‘lofty aim’ was commented on by at least one newspaper.<sup>194</sup> Tens of thousands perusing the movement’s periodicals likely found some of the NBM’s ideas hard to metabolise, but even the most casual reader could not have missed the

---

<sup>189</sup> Seaman, *Life in Britain*, p. 47.

<sup>190</sup> Historians of the Conservative Party who looked for the achievements of the National Government regime it dominated found only mining royalty reform and improved road safety, farm production and milk consumption; see Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931–40* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 4–5.

<sup>191</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 17.

<sup>192</sup> Jeffrey, ‘Place’, in Koshar (ed.), *Splintered Classes*, p. 79.

<sup>193</sup> ‘Another Week Goes By’, *Eleventh Hour*, 5 December 1934, pp. 34–5. When Baldwin replaced MacDonald as premier in June 1935, *Eleventh Hour* wrote ‘the Conservative Government is dropping its last pretence to being National’ (‘Another Week Goes By’, *Eleventh Hour*, 12 June 1935, p. 77).

<sup>194</sup> ‘A New Britain!’, *Midland Chronicle & Free Press*, 16 March 1934.



repeated exhortations to expand his or her sense of what was possible, politically. Neville Chamberlain's claim that 1932 was 'a year wonderful in endeavour' suggests just how little scope for endeavour the National Government was capable of imagining.<sup>195</sup> By ensuring that tens of thousands of Britons were exposed to a radical yet respectable alternative programme, the NEG/NBM showed up the timidity and complacency of the National Government. As a positive antisystem formation, the NBM sought to *abash*, rather than *bash*, the incumbents and the system. The Fourth Estate, for its part, did little to hold the government to account: the national dailies were glutted with human-interest stories and 'borderland' ones straddling science and mysticism (the great topic of 1933 was the Loch Ness Monster).<sup>196</sup> Indeed, the popular press discouraged the study of political and economic issues.<sup>197</sup> In 1931 the National Government had gone to the country with the request that voters 'register a simple act of faith' in its capacity to restore the nation to health, as Seaman has noted.<sup>198</sup> That faith had been betrayed and the people's trust abused, in the view of prominent figures in the NBM. After all, what good was a Doctor's Mandate if the dithering doctor declined to use his instruments when the body politic was so obviously in need of corrective surgeries?

The NBM's political perfectionism put the movement at odds with Britain's tradition of gradualism. Walter Bagehot wrote that 'the most essential mental quality for a free people, whose liberty is to be progressive, permanent and on a large scale' was 'much stupidity' – in *English Constitution* (1867) he clarified what he meant by 'stupidity,' positing it as the virtue of 'the dull traditional habit' that 'guides most men's

---

<sup>195</sup> Graves, *Long Weekend*, p. 261.

<sup>196</sup> One reason for the 1934 establishment of the National Council for Civil Liberties was the dearth of watchdogs; the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Herald* were the only national dailies generally critical of government policy (Branson and Heinemann, *Nineteen Thirties*, p. 311 and p. 273).

<sup>197</sup> Graves, *Long Weekend*, pp. 288–9 and p. 260.

<sup>198</sup> Seaman, *Life in Britain*, p. 45.

actions.<sup>199</sup> The ‘stupidity’ of much of the potential audience for the NBM’s ideas capped the support for the movement; many Britons would have been wary of the political novelty it represented. One of the NBM’s prominent figures recognised the salience of ‘stupidity’ when he spoke of the ‘peculiarly British way of great hesitation to move,’ even when the country was heading ‘in the direction of tyranny and the denial of individual rights.’<sup>200</sup>

In mid-1933, *New Britain* weekly declared ‘We need a special microscope to study the economic improvements of 1933.’<sup>201</sup> But by 1934, signs of recovery were hard to ignore: economic conditions seemed to be improving in most parts of Britain. Indeed, the country looked to be on the mend: the loss of confidence in the British state was being stemmed (in England, at least), with Parliament re-establishing its credibility through initiatives such as the Special Areas Act 1934. Chamberlain told the Commons: ‘We have now finished the story of *Bleak House* and are sitting down this afternoon to enjoy the first chapter of *Great Expectations*.’<sup>202</sup> There remained much bitterness in economically desolate areas, but elsewhere in Britain life tasted sweeter – quite literally so, for when Chamberlain reported on economic recovery the following year, he was able to cite a massive increase in sugar consumption.<sup>203</sup>

But it was developments beyond Britain’s shores, rather than the country’s improving fortunes, that gave one of the NBM’s prominent figures cause to re-evaluate his attitude to political perfectionism. David Davies (b. 1889), an ex-collier and Congregational minister from Wales, recalled the change in his thinking:

The idealist urge to build a new world had been swamped in my growing sense of the danger besetting our civilization... The fine frenzy arising out of an exuberant, *positive* will to fashion a new order evaporated in the realization that the secure, established heritage of previous struggle

---

<sup>199</sup> Bagehot, quoted in Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (New York, 1968), p. 384.

<sup>200</sup> “‘New Britain’”, *Golders Green Gazette*, 18 April 1934.

<sup>201</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 12 July 1933, p. 228.

<sup>202</sup> David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain* (London, 2001), p. 17.

<sup>203</sup> Iain Macleod, *Neville Chamberlain* (New York, 1962), p. 168.

was in danger of being lost.<sup>204</sup> My concern now was not a new Socialist order, but the preservation of democracy; ordinary, bourgeois capitalist democracy. It is going to take us all our time, I thought, to keep what we've got. I was acutely alive to the menace of Fascism, still more to the menace of Hitlerism. The world is retreating, I felt... Hitherto I had been crying for the moon. Now I began to cry for the street-lamp, which barbarian hands were seeking to destroy.<sup>205</sup>

In short, was it right for the NBM to continue to undermine a purportedly decayed domestic order once it became apparent that Britain's 'bourgeois capitalist democracy' was on course for an existential struggle against a brutal order twisted by 'barbarian hands'? By the mid-1930s Davies, for one, came to realise that it would take all the efforts that a society could muster to preserve its 'established heritage' from the harm that could be inflicted by German military might: 'How can we get a new world, if we cannot summon the will and the energy to safeguard the few good things in the old world? Significant living narrowed down to desperate defence of the *status quo*.'<sup>206</sup> At this juncture, Davies came to see political perfectionism as irresponsible, even indecent – what Sartori has termed 'bad idealism.'<sup>207</sup> As Keren has noted, 'uncontrollable attendance to the maximization of ideals' can have a role in 'jeopardizing the political principles' underlying a parliamentary regime – and the British one, as Davies acknowledged, looked rosier when compared with the systems of government on the Continent.<sup>208</sup> Anyone who persisted with the 'fine frenzy' would seem as out of touch as a tenant complaining about the foundations of his home while neighbours fretted about the tremors of an earthquake that imperilled everything.

---

<sup>204</sup> Davies came to this realization by making what Adam Smith called 'the highest effort of political wisdom' to determine 'when a real patriot ought to support and endeavour to re-establish the authority of the old system, and when he ought to give way to the more daring, but often dangerous spirit of innovation.' Smith was writing about a non-specific time of 'public discontent' when 'even a wise man may be disposed to think some alteration necessary in [the] form of government'; see Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Amherst, 2000 [1759]), p. 340.

<sup>205</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 148.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148–9.

<sup>207</sup> Sartori, *Theory of Democracy*, p. 58.

<sup>208</sup> Keren, 'Political Perfectionism', p. 109.

The ending of the NBM experiment in political perfectionism also had to do with the personal circumstances of Mitrinović. He never became a subject of the Crown, which meant he was not in a position to openly lead a politicised social movement in Britain (as will be explained in chapter two). At this point, we must turn our attention to Mitrinović: the man who created the NBM; inveigled its funding; synthesised its ideology; inspired its other prominent figures; controlled its periodicals; guided its development – and assented to its demise.

### ***Dimitrije Mitrinović's Activities, 1914–31***

Mitrinović is ‘not exactly a household name’ even among historians of the Balkans, one scholar has noted.<sup>209</sup> Yet the Herzegovinian Serb accomplished a remarkable feat: born in a remote, hardscrabble village on the periphery of one empire, he made himself a success in the centre of another by building a movement that ‘mobilized ... public support, and became of political importance for a brief, critical moment,’ as Mairret put it.<sup>210</sup>

Born in 1887 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a territory that had fallen under Austro-Hungarian control nine years earlier, Mitrinović was brought up in the Serbian Orthodox tradition. His schoolteacher parents raised their firstborn at home (which had a library of several hundred books in at least four languages) until 1899, when the gifted boy was sent to board at the high school in Mostar.<sup>211</sup> All aspects of life in Herzegovina’s largest town – with its ‘babel of languages’ and thousands-strong garrison – reminded its inhabitants that they were ‘under a military occupation,’ a

---

<sup>209</sup> Emmert, ‘Andrew Rigby’, p. 235.

<sup>210</sup> Mairret, *Autobiographical*, p. 134.

<sup>211</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 7–9. Around this time, Bosnia and Hercegovina had a literacy rate of about 1 percent; see Arthur J. May, *The Hapsburg Monarchy 1867–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), p. 188.

British traveller recorded.<sup>212</sup> Mitrinović and his schoolfellows were bitterly opposed to the exploitation of their homeland, and formed a secret society.<sup>213</sup> In order to circumvent censorship and avoid punishment, Mitrinović had to operate in a conspiratorial mode; decades later, facing far fewer restrictions in London, Mitrinović would intrigue his followers by toying with pseudo-conspiratorial practices, as if to experience some semblance of the excitement he had felt during his formative years.<sup>214</sup>

As a young man Mitrinović distinguished himself as the ‘undisputed ideological and aesthetic leader’ of his generation: he was the arbiter of cultural taste among the territory’s politically conscious youth, many of whom were involved in the *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia) movement, as it later became known.<sup>215</sup> He ‘moved in mysterious ways, and often met an open door where others could not even knock,’ his first biographer stated.<sup>216</sup> Crisscrossing the South Slav lands, Mitrinović promoted discreet discussion on spiritual and moral regeneration (‘Fighting against attitudes of servility, sneaking and contemptibility’), and cultural revival in the face of the ‘spiritual and material forces’ of Germanisation, Magyarisation and Italianisation.<sup>217</sup> His activities made him subject to official harassment, including arrest and searches of his lodgings, when on Austro-Hungarian soil.<sup>218</sup> Committed to gradualism, Mitrinović argued that awakening ‘dormant national energies’ was a prerequisite for a successful union of the South Slav peoples in an independent federal state.<sup>219</sup> Having put his faith in federal governance as the best hope of peacefully resolving differences among

---

<sup>212</sup> Omer Hadžiselimović, ed., *At the Gates of the East: British Travel Writers on Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Boulder, 2001), p. 272 and p. 447.

<sup>213</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>214</sup> In London, these practices involved what R. Lawrence Moore has called (in a US context) ‘fictions of cultural apartness’; see *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Oxford, 1986), p. 32. Mitrinović invented code phrases and systems of symbols for the use of his closest followers, Watts recalled when explaining how Mitrinović initiated him into a pseudo-conspiracy (*Own Way*, pp. 123–4).

<sup>215</sup> Dejan Đuričković, ‘The Poets of Young Bosnia’, *Survey Sarajevo 2* (1975), p. 78.

<sup>216</sup> NAFDMA, 1/9/1, Predrag Palavestra, ‘Conspirator, Prophet or Preacher’, in *The Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović*, TS, trans. D. Shillan and E. D. Goy, ca. 1980, pp. 10–12.

<sup>217</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 16.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

peoples, Mitrinović would soon enlarge the focus of his concern from the South Slav lands to Europe – but not until the early 1930s would he prove able, in London, to lead a movement furthering the cause of European federalism.

By the early 1910s, Mitrinović was outgrowing what he increasingly saw as petty squabbles among South Slav intellectuals; he gave the impression of being a ‘world-traveller who had stumbled by chance into sad and gloomy provincial surroundings,’ a fellow Young Bosnian recalled.<sup>220</sup> Unwilling to stagnate in a Bosnian backwater, Mitrinović moved to Munich – a wellspring of art – to immerse himself in the currents of European intellectual life. While studying in the Bavarian capital in 1913, he met Wassily Kandinsky. In February 1914, Kandinsky wrote to Franz Marc that Mitrinović would be ‘very useful to the Blaue Reiter’ group of artists because ‘he goes to the heart of things like lightning.’<sup>221</sup> At some point in the spring of that year, Marc’s editorship of a planned follow-up to *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach* was usurped by Mitrinović, who wanted the volume to propose the creation of ‘a federation of European nations.’<sup>222</sup>

In Germany, Mitrinović was beyond the reach of the Austro-Hungarian authorities – until teenage Young Bosnians assassinated Archduke Ferdinand. Mitrinović had always advocated strictly non-violent means of struggle, but his influence had waned in his absence. His teachings had come to be rejected by a band of youths who instead embraced the strategy of political violence favoured by Unification or Death (also known as the Black Hand), a secret military society in Serbia. As war fever spread, Mitrinović’s position became increasingly awkward: he was an almost penniless Austro-Hungarian subject in a neighbouring Central Power preparing to

---

<sup>220</sup> NAFDMA, 1/9/6, Borivoje Jevtic, ‘Dimitrije Mitrinovic: An Aquatic Flower, On the occasion of Dimitrije Mitrinovic’s death’, TS, no date, p. 19. Originally published in 1953 in *Zivot*, vol. 2, no. 13 (pp. 260–3), no. 14 (pp. 357–60) and no. 15 (pp. 433–40).

<sup>221</sup> Shulamith Behr, ‘Wassily Kandinsky and Dimitrije Mitrinovic; Pan-Christian Universalism and the Yearbook “Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe”’, *Oxford Art Journal* 15 (1992), p. 81.

<sup>222</sup> Mitrinović to Kropotkin, 16 August 1914.

mobilise against his kin-state, Serbia, whose passport he held illegally. Cut off from Belgrade sympathisers, Mitrinović faced either arrest or conscription if he returned to the Dual Monarchy.<sup>223</sup> After ruling out Russia as a refuge, Mitrinović decided to flee to Britain.<sup>224</sup> He crossed the Channel in the first week of August 1914 and proceeded to London, which would be his home for the last four decades of his life.<sup>225</sup>

Taking a position at the Legation of the Kingdom of Serbia (with the personal backing of the Serbian prime minister), Mitrinović worked as a propagandist.<sup>226</sup> A year or so after the Armistice – by which time his heart was no longer in the work – he resigned from the service of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.<sup>227</sup> Distancing himself from émigré groups, Mitrinović began to move in more influential circles. As a contributor to *The New Age* in 1920–1, he asserted that any peaceful global order would have to be built on metaphysical foundations, not mere inter-governmental agreements.<sup>228</sup> But his light-hearted side was in evidence, too: at that time Edwin and Willa Muir were among those who saw Mitrinović as a ‘source of joy’ who, when ‘Feeling gay,’ would ‘imitate Serbian bagpipes with zest.’<sup>229</sup>

Mitrinović concentrated on widening his network and deepening his relationships in and around Bloomsbury in the years up to 1926, when he cofounded the Chandos Group.<sup>230</sup> This society of intellectuals met regularly to discuss ideas including

---

<sup>223</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 37.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39–41. Michael Hughes has stated that in 1929 Mitrinović travelled to Belgrade ‘at the behest of King Alexander,’ who was considering him for the editorship of a new Yugoslavist periodical. Mitrinović ‘made an unfavourable impression on the King’s advisors,’ and he swiftly returned to London. See Hughes, *Beyond Holy Russia: The Life and Times of Stephen Graham* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 240.

<sup>226</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 41–2.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57 and p. 197.

<sup>228</sup> Hughes, *Holy Russia*, p. 163.

<sup>229</sup> Willa Muir, *Belonging: A Memoir* (London, 1968), pp. 40–1. The Orcadian poet Edwin Muir was married to fellow translator Willa Muir, who came from Montrose. In the 1920s, the town’s artistic community included Hugh MacDiarmid, who, in 1934, would contribute to *New Britain* weekly.

<sup>230</sup> In a letter to Mitrinović dating from that period, Edith Sitwell signed off ‘Your grateful pupil’ (NAFDMA, 5/2/3/16, Sitwell to Mitrinović, London, no date, MS).

guild socialism and social credit economics, the theory that C. H. Douglas (known as Major Douglas) had propagated in *The New Age*.<sup>231</sup>

At this time, Mitrinović felt the need to ‘delve deeply into the psychological aims which underlie human motives in general and politics in particular,’ as it was later explained to Hobson.<sup>232</sup> By November 1926, Mitrinović had established the British branch of the International Society for Individual Psychology, also known as the Adler Society; its purpose was to advance the study of the school of individual psychology founded by Alfred Adler.<sup>233</sup> Mitrinović was attracted to Adler’s theories because they centred on an individual’s ability not only to better his or her life using the conscious mind, but also to cooperate with peers to improve the welfare of society. Adlerian theories were consistent with Mitrinović’s conviction that individuals had to overcome passivity and take responsibility for remaking the world. In Adler, Mitrinović saw another thinker who believed that individuals needed to work together for the sake of humankind, not struggle among themselves for personal or national aggrandisement.<sup>234</sup> Mitrinović’s ‘eloquence, personal magnetism and tremendous intellectual brilliance,’ Mairet recalled, ‘turned Alfred Adler into a sort of “movement” in London,’ where lectures were held most evenings on premises on Gower Street. The Adler Society ‘was a brilliant show, with an enormous number of brilliant people,’ wrote Mairet. There came to be as ‘much “head-knowledge” of Individual Psychology about the quarter of Bloomsbury as in half Vienna,’ he added.<sup>235</sup>

In late 1928, an influx of members of the Chandos Group began to steer the Adler Society programme away from psychology; in mid-1930, members with a medical background saw fit to sever their connections. Mitrinović and the remaining members then concentrated on sociological inquiry and possibilities for political

---

<sup>231</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 95.

<sup>232</sup> Hobson, *Pilgrim*, p. 264.

<sup>233</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 91.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89 and p. 90.

<sup>235</sup> Mairet, quoted in Phyllis Bottome, *Alfred Adler: A Portrait from Life* (New York, 1957), pp. 231–2.



change, basing their discussions on *Politics: A Discussion of Realities*, which the Chandos Group had published the previous year.<sup>236</sup> Contributors including Lieutenant-Colonel J. V. Delahaye DSO (b. 1890), who would become a prominent figure in the NEG/NBM, had taken as their starting point the notion that society was badly organised, given that unfilled needs and unemployment existed simultaneously.<sup>237</sup> Mitrinović, Delahaye and other Adler Society members came to focus on ideas including the decentralisation of power through devolution of decision-making; workers' control of their respective industries, along with coordination of the activities of producers' organisations; European federalism; and world federation.<sup>238</sup>

Over the next few years, Adler distanced himself from the activities on Gower Street, determined as he was to keep his school of psychology free of practical politics.<sup>239</sup> Eventually Adler would completely disassociate himself from the British branch of the Society, but by October 1931 Mitrinović had turned his attention to a new initiative, the NEG.<sup>240</sup> Unlike the Adler Society, the NEG was not the branch of a larger organisation based on the Continent; rather, it was the creation of Mitrinović, which meant he no longer had any need to keep a 'parent' figure favourably disposed to his endeavours. Mitrinović formed the NEG, Britain's first genuine Eurofederalist group, to publicise his own Eurofederalist views, and those of others who thought along similar lines. As we shall see, the efforts of Mitrinović's 'devoted disciples and adoring women,' as Watts called them, helped the NEG flourish by the summer of 1932.<sup>241</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 94 and p. 97.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104. Colonel Delahaye was one of a number of men whose background destined them to become pillars of the Establishment – until they were politicised by the Great War and its aftermath, which turned them into what Pugh has called 'critics and rebels' (Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 15).

<sup>238</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 105–6.

<sup>239</sup> Bottome, *Alfred Adler*, p. 232. Hughes has suggested that Adler was lukewarm on the British branch because many members were interested 'above all' in forms of Eastern and esoteric thought 'clothed in a language designed to make them seem scientific and objective' (Hughes, *Holy Russia*, p. 228). Adler likely grew warier when Mitrinović 'attracted large audiences, fascinated by the personality of the man though ascribing his extraordinary ideas about the unification of mankind to Alfred Adler,' Stephen Graham recalled; see Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene: An Autobiography* (London, 1964), p. 251.

<sup>240</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 98–9.

<sup>241</sup> Watts, *Own Way*, p. 109.

Around September of that year, Willa Muir and her husband paid a visit to Mitrinović and found him ‘established in Gower Street as the centre of a cult’:

We were received by an incisive secretary who said the ‘The Master’ would appear in a little while; she looked shocked when asked if he could still imitate the Serbian bagpipes. The room was fluttering with devotees ... One young man told us happily that he had sold his only pair of gold cuff-links for The Master, and two little old ladies had sold a country cottage, they said, for The Master. When Mitrinović came in, the whole roomful thrilled and moved reverently toward him... We non-joined his bogus cult.<sup>242</sup>

Prior to scrutinising the NEG, it is important to understand how Mitrinović was able to galvanise such dedicated followers – for without them, the activities of the NEG would necessarily have been on a far smaller scale, and the NBM could never have been launched. Was Mitrinović’s group a cult, a circle, or something else?

### **‘The Master’ and His Court System**

Arthur Peacock, the secretary of the National Trade Union Club, recalled that the followers of Mitrinović ‘held him in deep regard and were a faithful bodyguard. He was their “master.”’<sup>243</sup> Willa Muir’s characterisation of Mitrinović’s group as a ‘cult’ was echoed by John Gould Fletcher, an Arkansan who would later win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. In his 1937 memoir, Fletcher reflected on his time in the NEG, which had ‘the atmosphere of a mad cult,’ being a ‘collection of neurotic women, sentimental vegetarians, charlatans, and self-deceivers.’ They ‘were freakish, to say the least, but they seemed to be exercising a queer hold on me,’ he recalled. Fletcher claimed that England ‘was utterly bankrupt of new ideas and energy,’ implying that the NEG was not so much as a speck of light in the dark firmament – but one obvious problem with

---

<sup>242</sup> Muir, *Belonging*, p. 168.

<sup>243</sup> Arthur Peacock, *Yours Fraternally* (London, 1945), p. 87.

his account is that he had thought highly enough of the ‘windy talk’ to become deeply involved.<sup>244</sup> In any case, he left the NEG before its members developed very sophisticated ideas, so his appraisal was akin to judging a parliamentary career solely on the quality of the maiden speech. Fletcher’s faculties were impaired in 1932: having ‘overextended’ himself in the NEG, he suffered a ‘psychic melt-down,’ his biographer has explained. After a failed suicide attempt in July 1932, Fletcher returned to Little Rock.<sup>245</sup>

The ‘cult’ construal of Muir and Fletcher is corroborated by few sources. Granted, Mitrinović’s group had some cult-like features, which became more pronounced from 1935; but before then, hardly any of the hallmarks of cults were in evidence. With one or two exceptions, Mitrinović did not exert himself to keep in his orbit individuals who were drifting away. Mitrinović did not shun, or tell loyal followers to shun, those who parted ways with him. Rather than fostering intolerance of those outside the group, he did the opposite. Mitrinović did not demand adherence to a dogma, nor did he forbid criticism of the ideological direction of the group – in fact, he sometimes became frustrated when his authority was *not* challenged.<sup>246</sup>

In the first half of the 1930s the group cannot fairly be characterised as a cult, then, but given Mitrinović’s dominance it was clearly not a ‘circle’ of individuals of roughly equal standing.<sup>247</sup> Thomson recalled that he ‘lived within the splendid orbit’ of Mitrinović, who ‘in range and stature ... just wasn’t of our kind at all.’<sup>248</sup> Furthermore,

---

<sup>244</sup> John Gould Fletcher, *Life is My Song* (New York, 1937), pp. 366–7.

<sup>245</sup> Ben F. Johnson III, *Fierce Solitude: A Life of John Gould Fletcher* (Fayetteville, 1994), p. 192 and p. 195.

<sup>246</sup> Two acolytes recalled that Mitrinović – who believed the age of hierarchical leadership had passed – strongly criticised those who acted deferentially toward him (Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 140).

<sup>247</sup> One of Mitrinović’s most devoted followers wrote of ‘the adulating, placating, and servility which was meted out to him, in the desire to get his favour at all costs,’ but added that ‘there was very little true affection’ (NAFDMA, 3/17/1, Fraser to Thomson, Bordon, 19 October 1941, TS).

<sup>248</sup> Thomson to Fraser, 20 October 1955; and Thomson, TS of autobiographical writings, p. 111. In Mitrinović’s presence, Mairet felt almost as if he ‘were listening to some messenger from a higher realm of knowledge about the predicament of mankind’ (*Autobiographical*, p. 85).

the most dedicated followers were too intensely involved in the group for ‘circle’ to be an appropriate descriptor.

What Mitrinović was operating on Gower Street is best described as a ‘court system,’ a term Maurizio Viroli has used to denote any arrangement of power in which ‘one man is placed above and at the center of a relatively large number of individuals’ who ‘depend on him to gain and preserve wealth, status, and reputation.’<sup>249</sup>

Mitrinović’s followers believed he had vast reserves of spiritual and cultural capital, portions of which he could choose to share with them or withhold at any given moment. His followers could gain wealth of the financial kind, too. Thomson, for one, had no source of income outside the group.<sup>250</sup> Davies was paid handsomely for work to further the group’s objectives. He lived in a ‘whirl’ of public and private meetings

from luncheon till early dawn. I felt how wonderful it was! I was given plenty of money, though I had little occasion to spend it for I was lavishly entertained. The Age of Plenty had dawned. It did not last, of course. As long as it continued I became familiar with expensive restaurants and no longer trembled before a head waiter... Mitrinovic was a man of amazing generosity... For property and money (its symbol) he had utter contempt. I once saw him throw a bundle of pound notes into the air before an astonished company of people. He looked on with sardonic amusement at the scramble.<sup>251</sup>

Davies recalled how Mitrinović could raise or lower the status of his followers at will, including by playing them off against each other. Davies and Thomson ‘were Mitrinovic’s “See-saw, Marjorie Daw,” as he said himself. When I was in favour, Thompson [sic] was out of it, and vice-versa.’<sup>252</sup> Another attendee of meetings at Gower Street wrote of how Mitrinović ‘would get hold of a person, make him feel he had a great message or a great mission, get him publicity and opportunities of expression, and then pull him down, or perhaps it is fairer to say, subject him to tests

---

<sup>249</sup> Maurizio Viroli, *The Liberty of Servants: Berlusconi’s Italy*, trans. Antony Shugaar (Princeton, 2012), p. xii.

<sup>250</sup> Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 120.

<sup>251</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 118.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

that made him feel diminished and superseded.<sup>253</sup> Mitrinović's control over the movement's periodicals meant he could determine which of his followers would gain reputations beyond Bloomsbury: it was he who decided whose articles would be published alongside contributions by high-profile individuals. To promote a certain follower, Mitrinović would on occasion affix the favoured one's byline atop a piece written by someone else.<sup>254</sup>

Mitrinović's most devoted followers (some of whom are among those pictured in Fig. 6) included three unmarried women of 'unusual gifts,' who formed a 'unique trinity of talents,' according to Hobson.<sup>255</sup> The trio comprised Winifred Gordon Fraser (b. 1893), a graduate who was Mitrinović's right-hand woman; Lilian Slade (b. 1881), who was of independent means; and Valerie Cooper (b. 1884), who owned a school of dance. Delahaye was among the most dedicated, as were Leslie 'Sammy' Lohan (b. 1910) and Davies (for a time).<sup>256</sup> So too was Thomson, a shell-shocked veteran of the Western Front who had refused a battlefield promotion.<sup>257</sup> In the 1920s he had graduated from the University of Glasgow, tutored in Jamaica, and served as a superintendent of education in Nigeria, where malaria almost killed him.<sup>258</sup> Rex

---

<sup>253</sup> Helen Moyes [née Fraser], *A Woman in a Man's World* (Sydney, 1971), p. 80. The first part of Moyes' account suggests that Mitrinović made routine use of 'love bombing,' a technique named by Margaret Thaler Singer. 'As soon as any interest is shown by the recruits, they may be *love bombed* by the recruiter,' Singer has explained, in a coordinated effort that involves long-term members 'flooding recruits and newer members with flattery, verbal seduction, affectionate but usually nonsexual touching, and lots of attention to their every remark'; see Singer, *Cults in Our Midst* (San Francisco, 1995), p. 114. Mitrinović was 'the complete master' of 'oil and honey' flattery, Davies stated. He 'was a marvellous talker, but a still more marvellous listener. That is how he first approached a prospective disciple: he encouraged him to talk, and listened with intense concentration. Suddenly he would break forth excitedly and turning to the company present would say: "Did you hear that? You should have been taking notes. Absolutely wonderful!" It is likely that the man had been talking utter platitudes. I shall not forget the effect upon myself. I swelled visibly. I was completely taken in.' See Davies, *In Search*, p. 122.

<sup>254</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 111.

<sup>255</sup> Hobson, *Pilgrim*, p. 263.

<sup>256</sup> Lohan would go on to serve in the Army during the Second World War. Later he became Secretary to the Services, Press and Broadcasting Committee, in which capacity he was smeared by Prime Minister Wilson in the 1967 'D-notice affair.' Wilson cited Lohan's 'character defects' in the Commons, and took an 'almost obsessive interest' in him, Alan Travis has written. The official inquiry cleared Lohan, but by then he had resigned (Travis, 'How Wilson Hounded the Colonel', *The Guardian*, 13 April 1999).

<sup>257</sup> Thomson Fonds, Box 10, File 9, Thomson, 'Confessions of a Convert', TS, no date (but 1960s), p. 1.

<sup>258</sup> Thomson Fonds, Box 2, File 1, Thomson, 'Curriculum Vitae', TS, no date; and Thomson Fonds, Box 2, File 1, Thomson, untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, TS, no date (but 1960s), p. 6.

Campbell (b. 1900), a businessman who had ‘Tory associations’ and Junior Carlton Club membership in the late 1920s, was another devoted follower.<sup>259</sup> To collectively refer to Mitrinović and this inner core of the NEG/NBM I will use the term ‘prominent figures’ rather than ‘leaders’ or ‘the leadership’ – for in a court system there can be only one leader.



Fig. 6. *Centre*, Dimitrije Mitrinović; *above left*, Valerie Cooper; *above right* (out of frame), Ivo Gabela, an NEG member who was not involved in the NBM; *far left*, Catherine (Kitty) Sulman (née Fraser), older sister of Winifred Gordon Fraser; *left*, Watson Thomson; *right*, J. V. Delahaye; *far right*, Lilian Slade; *below right*, Gladys MacDermot, the NBM’s most generous benefactor.<sup>260</sup>

What did Mitrinović gain from association with his followers? First of all, he gained the following he needed to actualise as a leader in his adopted land. He drew on the energy of his followers, who served as ‘workers’ to pursue the agenda he led them

<sup>259</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 5.

<sup>260</sup> NAFDMA, 11/2/16, detail of a photo taken at High Acre, West Mersea, Essex, no date (but most likely 1936).

to share.<sup>261</sup> Mitrinović benefited financially, too. He oversaw the distribution of largess disbursed by wealthy followers; although there is scant information on the particulars of his income, he maintained a relatively high standard of living and amassed a large library.<sup>262</sup> His means could be deemed ‘spiritual entrepreneurship’ – and, later, political entrepreneurship, of sorts. Mitrinović monetised his spiritual, intellectual and cultural capital so effectively that he was ‘always’ able to pay his bills ‘with crisp white five-pound notes.’<sup>263</sup>

What did Mitrinović’s followers gain from their association with him? Most of them were initially attracted by the compelling way Mitrinović introduced individuals to new realms of thought, enriching their understanding of other cultures (non-Western ones especially) and their intellectual lives in general. Widely read in several languages and profoundly curious, Mitrinović provided an alternative education to his followers, some of whom had not attended university. Edwin Muir recalled that Mitrinović ‘flung out the wildest and deepest thoughts pell-mell,’ and sent ‘dynasties and civilizations flying.’<sup>264</sup> A limerick attests to Mitrinović’s sharing of ‘superb’ thoughts:

A modern mystic from Serbia  
Enlightened the minds of Suburbia  
Under each camisole  
Sighed a synthetic soul  
With thoughts too superb and superbia<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> Sono Matsumoto wrote of his suspicions that Mitrinović enjoyed ‘the power’ he had ‘over people more than anything else’ (University of the Creative Arts, Crafts Study Centre Archives: Additional Papers of Bernard Leach, MS 11987, Matsumoto to Bernard Leach, London, 24 November 1932).

<sup>262</sup> According to Stephen Graham, Mitrinović got the ‘practical idea’ that there ‘was money to be made from straightening out people’s lives’ from the esotericist P. D. Ouspensky (Graham, *Wonderful*, p. 251). When Graham’s estranged wife died in 1956, he married his longtime companion, Vera Mitrinović (*Ibid.*, p. 269). Hughes has stated that Mitrinović seemed to disapprove, initially at least, of his sister’s relationship with a married man almost 20 years her senior; this ‘probably contributed to a later falling-out between the two men,’ who had been ‘drifting apart’ since 1916 (*Holy Russia*, p. 241 and p. 244).

<sup>263</sup> Watts, *Own Way*, p. 109.

<sup>264</sup> Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography* (London, 1954), p. 174.

<sup>265</sup> NAFDMA, 3/21/18 File, ‘M – VITCH’, a limerick about Mitrinović (most likely written by Barbara Johnson), MS, no date (but most likely 1979).

Mitrinović was able to hold audiences spellbound. ‘Certainly the atmosphere of Mitrinovic fascinated me – his humor, the power of his eyes and voice, his secretive and night owl habits,’ Watts remembered.<sup>266</sup> Paul Selver, too, recalled the effect of the ‘hypnotic eyes’: ‘Hardly had I shaken hands with Mitrinović than I found myself so affected by his mere presence that I nearly lost consciousness.’<sup>267</sup>

Mosley was widely considered to be distinct from the ‘dun ranks’ of English political figures.<sup>268</sup> Mitrinović certainly was, too, but the leader with whom ‘The Master’ had most in common was neither Greyshirt (and later Blackshirt) leader Mosley, nor the Greenshirt leader John Hargrave (two others who operated court systems in the antisystem formations they led). Mitrinović bore more similarities with the leader who would get the lion’s share of NEG/NBM criticism: MacDonald. The prime minister and his critic were tall and handsome, brooding and aloof – but they had far more in common than physique and temperament. Both were idealists rather than ideologues – but the similarities went still further.<sup>269</sup> In the 1920s, many had regarded MacDonald as ‘a second Messiah’; later, Selver called Mitrinović a ‘would-be messiah,’ and Lavrin stated that he had a ‘messiah complex.’<sup>270</sup> Each of the two leaders had been viciously abused as a traitor to his nation – MacDonald during the Great War he opposed, and Mitrinović immediately before it, when some Serbian ultranationalists ‘hated’ him so ‘terribly’ that he had asked one contact to warn him if there was ‘anything at all that materially affects life and wants to destroy me.’<sup>271</sup> MacDonald’s long suffering had, in the eyes of many, sanctified him, while Mitrinović could seem

---

<sup>266</sup> Watts, *Own Way*, p. 110.

<sup>267</sup> Paul Selver, *Orange and the ‘New Age’ Circle: Reminiscences and Reflections* (London, 1959), pp. 56-7.

<sup>268</sup> James Drennan, *B.U.F.: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (London, 1934), p. 14.

<sup>269</sup> Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. 176. MacDonald’s idealism faded over time: for example, in 1929 he allowed black workers to be forced off the job of building the new British Embassy in Washington; see Francis L. Broderick, *W. E. B. DuBois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* (Stanford, 1959), pp. 147-8.

<sup>270</sup> Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 281; Selver, *Orange*, p. 58; and Peter H. Butter, *Edwin Muir: Man and Poet* (London, 1966), p. 74.

<sup>271</sup> Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. 177; and Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 25.



‘radiant with the supersensible light which the ancient Christian artists used to symbolize by putting aureoles round the heads of saints and apostles.’<sup>272</sup> Both men were interested in spiritualism, and each cultivated a mystique tied to their origins on the fringes of Europe: MacDonald added to his ‘charismatic presence and melodious eloquence’ a ‘visionary gleam, a distillation of Celtic twilight’; Mitrinović’s saintly gleam was that of a visionary from the Balkan twilight who ‘moved among the stars.’<sup>273</sup> MacDonald was said to be of ‘unfathomable depth,’ as was Mitrinović.<sup>274</sup> When MacDonald’s was in his prime, his ‘nervous electric energy’ was palpable; the same was true of Mitrinović, who was nicknamed ‘Mita Dinamika’ (‘Dynamic Mita’) in his youth.<sup>275</sup>

When Davies recalled his first experience in ‘a packed drawing-room’ at Gower Street, he focused on Mitrinović’s mesmeric oratory and its revitalising effect:

It proved to be the most extraordinary meeting I had ever attended in my life. It shattered ‘the even tenour of my ways’. It flung me into a maelstrom compared to which my past conflicts were as a gentle shower to a tornado.

... What [Mitrinović] said gripped me. I felt something fall away from me. I cannot recall now the theme of his speech, but I had never heard English like it. Its grammar was English, but that was all.

... It sounded marvellous to me.

I was so tremendously moved and excited, painfully so, that I got on my feet and let myself go... Some deep, suppressed hunger and awareness welled up in my heart and tore through my words: now I was alive again.<sup>276</sup>

---

<sup>272</sup> Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. 177; and Mairet, *Autobiographical*, p. 108. MacDonald tarnished his reputation by securing a baronetcy for McVitie and Price’s chairman, who had supplemented the prime minister’s income. Wits quipped ‘Every man has his price, but not every man has his McVitie and Price!’ (Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 357).

<sup>273</sup> Brendan, *Dark Valley*, p. 177; and Davies, *In Search*, p. 124. Spiritualism, broadly understood as the practices of persons ‘prepared to go beyond conventional materialism or theology,’ was one of the ‘unmodern’ impulses triggered by ‘the most “modern” of wars,’ Jay Winter has explained; see *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 54. In 1932 Britain there were 500 spiritualist societies and 100,000 séance circles (Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 11).

<sup>274</sup> Iconoclast [Mary Agnes Hamilton], *J. Ramsay MacDonald: The Man of To-morrow* (New York, 1924), p. 268.

<sup>275</sup> Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 69. Ivo Andrić, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961, bestowed the nickname on Mitrinović, who was instrumental in the publication of Andrić’s first literary work (Jevtic, ‘Dimitrije Mitrinovic’, p. 19).

<sup>276</sup> Davies, *In Search*, pp. 114–5.

Soon after, ‘the apathy and depression of the recent past’ receded, and Davies once again ‘walked with [his] head high.’<sup>277</sup> Many other demoralised individuals were rejuvenated by Mitrinović’s ‘magic medicine,’ as Thomson called it.<sup>278</sup> One reminisced that he ‘felt a fitter man’ ever since coming into contact with Mitrinović’s ‘radiating holiness.’<sup>279</sup> Hobson wrote that in the years preceding his association with Mitrinović’s group, he was ‘the victim of spiritual and mental fatigue and utterly tired of life’ – but then the ‘pervading friendliness’ of Fraser, Slade and Cooper, ‘coupled with a complete absence of dogma,’ made him ‘almost wish [he] were young again.’<sup>280</sup>

Generally, Mitrinović’s followers considered traditional sources of authority, such as the Church (reduced to an instrument of the state in 1914–18), to be discredited.<sup>281</sup> As Pugh has noted, post-war disillusionment manifested itself in the reluctance of citizens to follow self-appointed leaders of their communities.<sup>282</sup> To his followers, Mitrinović embodied what we might call ‘alternative authority’ – he (or his mystique) appeared unsullied, and it seemed to them that such a figure above the fray could help make sense of their lives. Mitrinović gave the impression that he was a conduit for ‘secret’ knowledge; those who felt part of the select group privy to these truths experienced the thrill of exclusivity.<sup>283</sup>

Affiliation with Mitrinović made his followers feel distinguished: to be ‘thought capable or worthy of cooperation with Mitrinović in his sublime enterprise was a deep

---

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>278</sup> Thomson Fonds, Box 1, File 7, Thomson to R. G. Wrugh [Rex Campbell], Bowen Island, 23 February 1946, TS.

<sup>279</sup> NAFDMA, 1/8/7/125, Rodocanachi to Fraser, Athens, 3 September 1953, MS.

<sup>280</sup> Hobson, *Pilgrim*, pp. 263–4 and p. 267.

<sup>281</sup> In the 1930s the Church’s influence declined and attendance fell, except among Roman Catholics (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 487 and p. 490). The claims to authority of other bodies linked to the state weakened, too. Many individuals became sceptical when it was revealed that much official information about the Great War – which they had accepted as gospel – was deceitful (Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. xvii).

<sup>282</sup> Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 8.

<sup>283</sup> Mitrinović ‘belongs to another plane,’ Mairet wrote. He ‘had angelic knowledge, and could communicate it to many’ (NAFDMA, 1/8/7/123, Mairet, Lewes, 3 September 1953, MS).

gratification,' Mairet recalled.<sup>284</sup> 'The Master' was adroit at making individuals feel special, sometimes through acts of generosity; on at least one occasion he arranged for a follower to be chauffeured home in a limousine.<sup>285</sup>

Next we must consider how Mitrinović's followers benefited from their involvement in the NEG/NBM. The prospect of empowerment and the opportunity for personal transformation were major draws. Mitrinović was adept at spotting talents that were going to waste. Fraser worked in a bookshop before Mitrinović made her his secretary and factotum.<sup>286</sup> Similarly underemployed, Thomson toiled as a remedial teacher of unemployed youths before committing to the NEG, and Lohan worked at a Dockland Settlement (where Thomson had worked alongside him for a short while).<sup>287</sup>

Mitrinović was a consummate 'network specialist' or 'knowledge broker,' to use today's terms of art for those skilled at facilitating fruitful interpersonal relationships.<sup>288</sup> He 'never missed an opportunity' to meet public figures who 'might be of help to him in one of the "three scopes," the British, the European and world affairs,' recalled Campbell.<sup>289</sup> The chance to benefit from these connections was another draw for Mitrinović's followers, most of whom would not have had occasion to rub shoulders with such personages outside the NEG/NBM. At Gower Street, former Private Thomson could converse with General J. F. C. Fuller, the father of modern armoured warfare. Though deference and notions of 'natural' hierarchy had eroded in Britain in the aftermath of the Great War, social apartheid still prevailed in some

---

<sup>284</sup> Mairet, *Autobiographical*, p. 106.

<sup>285</sup> Watts, *Own Way*, pp. 110–11.

<sup>286</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 108.

<sup>287</sup> Thomson, untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 7; and Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 111.

<sup>288</sup> If the intellectual preoccupations of the denizens of 1930s Bloomsbury were to be Venn diagrammed, Mitrinović would be one of the few figures in the central intersection where all the sets overlap.

<sup>289</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], 'Notes', p. 20. Mitrinović was never able to exert a level of influence over a powerful political decision-maker equal to that of Nicholas Roerich over US vice president Henry A. Wallace; see John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York, 2000), pp. 130–46.

quarters.<sup>290</sup> But the NBM warmly welcomed individuals of all classes, and a person's social background mattered little in respect to his or her status in the movement.

For the followers closest to Mitrinović, comradeship and fellow-feeling were major attractors. These followers were 'among the very few people I have met who are conscious of the glorious thing true friendship can be,' Peacock wrote.<sup>291</sup> He continued: 'An irrevocable bond of friendship exists between them all. Seldom in life have I come across a body of people so sincere and earnest.'<sup>292</sup> Thomson had 'never known that human fellowship' could be 'so rich and warm as to seem palpable in the very air.'<sup>293</sup> Each of the closest followers revelled in the camaraderie at Gower Street, and cherished the sense of belonging in an accepting community of kindred spirits.

Involvement in the NEG/NBM gave these conscientious individuals a deep sense of social purpose, filling their lives with meaning. They aspired to do important things, and 'The Master' made them think they were: 'Blue prints would be drawn up and he hurried forward their completion as if the end of the world was at hand, and these blue prints alone would save it,' Peacock wrote.<sup>294</sup> Investing their hopes in the movement, the followers felt in the thick of things, and at the centre of a rarefied world.

Davies recalled:

There were meetings inspired by him at Gower Street and elsewhere all day and night, and every day and night, I was getting acquainted with all sorts of people, famous and obscure... My anonymity vanished. I had the grand feeling that I had my hands on the levers of history. Was I not helping to initiate a new order of civilization for Britain and Europe?<sup>295</sup>

Feeling ennobled by activism, they took pride in championing the causes of the movement, to which we shall now turn our attention.

---

<sup>290</sup> Lawrence, 'Transformation', p. 209; and Brendon, *Dark Valley*, p. 57.

<sup>291</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, p. 90.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>293</sup> Thomson, untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 11.

<sup>294</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, p. 88.

<sup>295</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 119.

### *The Birth of the New Europe Group*

Mitrinović founded the NEG in 1931. Launching a political initiative in Britain under no one's auspices but his own, Mitrinović came up against a problem: he was not a British subject. So after appointing Fraser secretary of the NEG in October 1931 (at the latest), Mitrinović tasked her with recruiting an eminent Briton to serve as a figurehead.<sup>296</sup> Fraser persuaded Patrick Geddes, a pioneering urban planner who would be knighted the following year, to accept nomination as president of the NEG.<sup>297</sup> At a stroke, Mitrinović became the *éminence grise* of a group whose credibility was enhanced by the British luminary who lent his name to the letterhead.

On 7 December Mitrinović delivered the inaugural lecture ('A United Europe in a World Order'), in which he warned of 'a tremendous historical descent to the nadir of civilisation.'<sup>298</sup> By this time the NEG had prepared a pamphlet, *The New Europe Group: Disarmament – Federation – Communal Credit*, of which only one copy is extant in the NAFDMA.<sup>299</sup> The text announced the existence of a group 'conscious of the imperative need for a European Renaissance.'<sup>300</sup> I believe that this copy was one of a tiny batch of proofs, and that the NEG never published it.<sup>301</sup> The tenor of the text was

---

<sup>296</sup> In the early 1930s it was not uncommon for the principal(s) of a new business venture to recruit a grandee as an 'ornamental' director: the notable's 'name' and reputation were supposed to lend respectability to an unproven undertaking, reassuring its backers (Cannadine, *Decline*, p. 419). In a similar vein, Mitrinović understood the value of gracing the NEG with an 'ornamental' president.

<sup>297</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 108.

<sup>298</sup> Violet MacDermot, ed., *Dimitrije Mitrinović: Lectures 1926–1950* (Bradford, 1995), pp. 279–80.

<sup>299</sup> NAFDMA, 5/5/1, *The New Europe Group: Disarmament – Federation – Communal Credit* [hereafter *Disarmament*], no date (but almost certainly no later than mid-November 1931). The work is unsigned, but Fletcher drafted the text, as can be deduced by cross-referencing the content with articles that subsequently appeared in NEG/NBM periodicals under his name. Fletcher's biographer has pointed out that he 'redoubled his activity' on behalf of the NEG in late 1931 (Johnson, *Fierce Solitude*, p. 191).

<sup>300</sup> *Disarmament*, p. 1. Unpriced, the pamphlet was likely intended as a handout to newcomers at events.

<sup>301</sup> The pamphlet is not explicitly referenced in any source, but it was almost certainly the 'small projected pamphlet' that Fraser mentioned in a letter to Sir Charles Trevelyan (NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, Fraser to Trevelyan, London, 16 November 1931, TS). Only this explanation fits the pattern of evidence.

elitist: if its purpose was to win hearts and minds, it set the wrong tone.<sup>302</sup> The NEG prepared a substitute inaugural text, but the ‘false start’ reveals a good deal about the NEG’s early thinking.

The events of the previous few years, the proof pamphlet began, had demonstrated ‘the community of the people of Europe’: ‘One people cannot suffer without dragging down the others; one nation cannot ultimately profit at another’s expense.’<sup>303</sup> A ‘New Europe’ could arise only if the ‘precarious balance’ that resulted from the ‘mutual accommodation of egoistic claims’ was replaced by ‘an organic unity’ in which every part was ‘properly subordinated to the whole.’<sup>304</sup> In each European country, an ‘intelligent and responsible minority’ had to be prepared to put the idea of a ‘federated Europe before the narrow objectives of nation, state or race.’<sup>305</sup> A vast amount of ‘research, co-operation and experiment’ was needed, and for that reason the NEG had drawn up ‘detailed and comprehensive plans for study, for political action, and, in particular, for vital co-operation with corresponding groups in other European countries.’<sup>306</sup> The NEG followed through on plans to cooperate with likeminded Continental ones, and developed a close relationship with l’Ordre Nouveau.<sup>307</sup>

The substitute text, which the NEG definitely published, was titled *Integration of Europe: The Way to Reconstitute the States of Europe as an Organic Society in a New World Order*.<sup>308</sup> It was informed by ideas generated through intense intellectual collaboration among NEG members, though the text was composed by Mairé – he

---

<sup>302</sup> Most elitist was the ‘New Aristocracy’ section, in which the ‘majority’ of individuals were said to be ‘apathetic or ignorant’ and ‘too insecure to challenge the life in which they are involved’ (*Disarmament*, p. 4).

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6 and p. 2.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>307</sup> In the first five months of *New Britain* weekly, it featured 18 half-page articles on the ideas of l’Ordre nouveau. Personal ties between the NEG/NBM and l’Ordre nouveau were established in early 1933, after Mitrinović dispatched Suzanne Jean to Paris for that purpose (Hellman, *Communitarian*, p. 67). In November 1934, some of the NBM’s prominent figures travelled to Paris for discussions with l’Ordre nouveau (Watson Thomson, ‘L’Ordre Nouveau Conference’, *Eleventh Hour*, 28 November 1934, p. 6).

<sup>308</sup> NAFDMA, 5/4/1 File, *Integration of Europe: The Way to Reconstitute the States of Europe as an Organic Society in a New World Order*, no date (but most likely December 1931).

recalled writing ‘the manifesto we printed to start the group, the first in London, I believe, dedicated to the cause of European community.’<sup>309</sup> The NEG made a ‘radical’ proposal, which ‘no one in England has yet ventured publicly to propose,’ namely that Europe needed to federalise and thus ‘become one integrated whole.’ As the peace settlement had been reached ‘in the same spirit in which the struggle had begun,’ the ‘jealous re-division’ of frontiers had ‘healed no wound, pacified no enemies.’ Not a single European state had any ‘forward policy’; each had ‘only defensive designs for saving itself against its neighbours and from disasters that threaten all alike because of their division.’ The role of NEG members was to work, in ‘advance of their age,’ for the creation of a federal Europe ‘by a series of stages and of partial reforms,’ and by fostering ‘a general psychic change.’ In so doing, they had to avoid being ‘schematic Utopians, aspiring to unify by obliterating all differences in the frame of a ready-made constitution.’<sup>310</sup>

NEG members addressed these issues at lectures and discussions on Gower Street; in February 1932, for example, they met every Monday and Thursday evening.<sup>311</sup> In a pamphlet printed that month, the NEG set out its position on the World Disarmament Conference. Europe was setting a bad example: states in ‘the Far East’ would ‘prove apt pupils’ of ‘the villainy Europe teaches,’ and Europe would ‘find herself outwitted in her aims by her own methods.’<sup>312</sup> Britain’s ‘newspapers and politicians,’ who ‘present facts so as to appeal to our lowest passions of fear and hatred,’ had ‘poisoned’ public attitudes. The NEG’s expressions of distaste for newspapers that ‘exploit men’s worse feelings for their own profit’ suggest that the

---

<sup>309</sup> NAFDMA, 1/9/14, ‘Notes by Philip Mairet from a talk which he gave to friends [in Oct. 1971] at Norfolk Lodge during the years 1970 and 1971’, TS, no date, p. 8.

<sup>310</sup> *Integration of Europe*, pp. 1–4.

<sup>311</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *February 1932*, February 1932. Membership cost one guinea per annum.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3. By July 1934, Mitrinović had come to believe that a ‘Japan-America war’ was ‘inevitable’ (NAFDMA, 2/2/4, Harry Rutherford, ‘Notes taken by Harry Rutherford’, 29 July 1934, TS, p. 33).

group had begun, that winter, to see the need to publish its own periodical (the NEG publishing programme remained limited to pamphlets until autumn 1932, though).<sup>313</sup>

In 1931, the group had declared: ‘the PRESENT SITUATION can only be saved from BECOMING DISASTROUS by the active co-operation of individuals. Politics have failed; experts are isolated; the public is apathetic. We are drifting towards violence for want of vision.’<sup>314</sup> These issues were explored in greater depth in Frank McEachran’s *The Unity of Europe*, which the NEG published in mid-1932.<sup>315</sup> McEachran explained how the breakdown of the international financial system had destroyed confidence and led to a ‘disastrous’ fall in prices.<sup>316</sup> He was astute in his analysis. By 1929, 60 percent of the world’s gold stock lay in the United States and France, whose central banks had since 1926 sterilised a high proportion of bullion inflows rather than use them to expand money supply. With so much hoarded gold out of circulation, Britain and other war debtors had been forced to deflate (until, one by one, they abandoned the gold standard), which had increased the real cost of credit.<sup>317</sup> In recognising the true danger to be ongoing deflation, McEachran was clearer eyed than the Bank of England, which had substantially *raised* the interest rate after Britain’s abandonment of the gold standard in September 1931 – this major mistake (rectified in the first half of 1932) is puzzled over by economic historians to this day, with one attributing it to ‘anxiety’ or ‘panic’ over the prospect of imported inflation.<sup>318</sup> McEachran made clear that the economic disaster was unfolding at the same time as underlying productivity (production technology, in particular) was improving at an

---

<sup>313</sup> *February 1932*, p. 2.

<sup>314</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *The New Europe Group*, no date (but 1931).

<sup>315</sup> NAFDMA, 5/4/1 File, F. McEachran, *The Unity of Europe*, no date (but mid-1932 is indicated by correspondence: see NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, F. McEachran to Fraser, Holt, Norfolk, 29 May 1932, MS).

<sup>316</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 25.

<sup>317</sup> Nicolas Crafts and Peter Fearon, ‘Lessons from the 1930s Great Depression’, Centre for Economic Policy Research discussion paper no. 8057 (2010), pp. 6–7.

<sup>318</sup> Roger Middleton, ‘British Monetary and Fiscal Policy in the 1930s’, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 26.3 (2010), p. 425.



unprecedented rate – indeed, poverty ought not to exist in the ‘age of plenty,’ an idea that would become a fixation of the NBM.

McEachran argued that European prosperity would rise ‘to an extent hardly dreamed of’ if customs barriers were to be abolished.<sup>319</sup> Autarky never had any place in the economic thinking of the NEG/NBM; in contrast, the New Party’s leaders declared: ‘We stand for Free Trade in times of prosperity and employment. We stand for Protection in depression and times of unemployment.’<sup>320</sup> Mosley had failed to see that shielding industries would give their stakeholders less cause to boost productivity, and that the resulting complacency would *deepen* the depression (not least because many of the workers clustered around uncompetitive facilities could have been more productively employed in efficient new industries) – even before factoring in the repercussions of the retaliation the protectionism was sure to provoke.

McEachran had finalised *The Unity of Europe* mere weeks after the entry into force of the protectionist Import Duties Act 1932 – legislation that passed only after Cabinet collective responsibility was suspended by a novel ‘agreement to differ.’<sup>321</sup> McEachran and prominent figures in the NEG knew it would prove detrimental to the general welfare.<sup>322</sup> Early in the summer of 1932, the NEG lamented: ‘the fate of England is in the hands of weak, ignorant and incompetent men.’<sup>323</sup> By then, the NEG had gained enough momentum to expand its activities beyond Bloomsbury.

---

<sup>319</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 24.

<sup>320</sup> ‘A Question No Man in Europe Can Answer’, *Action*, 10 December 1931, p. 2.

<sup>321</sup> Williamson, *National Crisis*, pp. 511–12.

<sup>322</sup> Adam Smith had made an argument that McEachran and the NEG obviously understood better than several Cabinet members: the imposition of duties ‘may be good policy’ *only* if it is likely that ‘they will procure the repeal of [others’] high duties or prohibitions complained of’; see Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London, 2007 [1776]), p. 301. In 1932, desperate, panicking governments were making irrational decisions, so instead of a cycle of repeal, there was a tailspin of retaliation.

<sup>323</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *New Europe Group* [pamphlet announcing the Popular Myths Exploded lecture series], May or early June 1932.

### ***‘Popular Myths Exploded,’ Unorthodox Views Expounded***

In the summer of 1932, the NEG organised ‘Popular Myths Exploded,’ a series of eleven lectures held at Caxton Hall in Westminster.<sup>324</sup> In the pamphlet announcing the series, the NEG stated that it hoped to arouse the public – which was ‘inactive in face of the perils’ – ‘to believe that it can and it must think and decide for itself.’ The NEG had therefore arranged lectures that would ‘deal directly with certain myths’ that had become ‘entrenched in the minds of most people as gospel truths.’ Civilisation was ‘cracking’ and

ignorance, superstition, fear and prejudice are BRINGING ENGLAND AND EUROPE TO A STANDSTILL.

... The time is come for the public to awake to the fact that A STRUGGLE FOR MATERIAL PROSPERITY IS NOT NECESSARY – THAT THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF ANYTHING BUT MONEY – that we are not the victims of mysterious economic laws, but of unscrupulous, self-interested individuals ...<sup>325</sup>

Each lecture attracted an audience of between 200 and 500 members of the public.<sup>326</sup>

In the inaugural lecture on 9 June, money supply was among the subjects discussed by Arthur Kitson, who had become president of the NEG following the death of Geddes in April.<sup>327</sup> Kitson ‘exploded’ two ‘myths’: ‘That the Bank of England is Essential to Industrial Prosperity,’ and ‘That the gold standard is essential to financial stability.’ Money supply had been ‘arbitrarily reduced,’ causing ‘social misery and depression.’ ‘Currency Deflation has always produced the same evil disasters,’ Kitson argued, though the lesson had apparently ‘had no effect on the minds of our Bankers or

---

<sup>324</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *New Europe Group Lectures at Caxton Hall*, May or early June 1932, poster.

<sup>325</sup> *New Europe Group* [pamphlet announcing Popular Myths Exploded].

<sup>326</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 10.

<sup>327</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 201.

politicians’ (the chair was Oliver Baldwin, estranged son of the Tory leader).<sup>328</sup> Kitson condemned the befuddled ‘leaders of all our political parties’ for being ‘densely ignorant of monetary science.’<sup>329</sup> It must be remembered that Kitson was speaking at a time when economics was ‘a festering mass of assumptions,’ as H. G. Wells put it – this being several years before John Maynard Keynes firmly established the field of macroeconomics with *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*.<sup>330</sup> Though Keynes considered Kitson to be one third of the ‘great Trinity of crankdom,’ he acknowledged in *The General Theory* that such ‘heretics’ (including Douglas) were a ‘brave army’ that had been of service in their assault on orthodox economics.<sup>331</sup>

The second lecture was given by Frederick Soddy, who exploded the myth ‘That poverty is of God.’ Soddy’s research on radioactivity had won him the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1921, after which he authored books on economics while continuing his scientific career. In Caxton Hall, he proposed ‘making money plentiful without altering its power of purchase,’ which would ‘give people enough money to buy all there was to be bought at a fair price.’<sup>332</sup> Today this sounds like garden-variety monetarism, but in 1932 this proposal was radical. Soddy had distilled his thought to policy prescriptions that included abolition (not just suspension) of the gold standard; floating exchange rates; use of surpluses and deficit spending (if necessary) to smooth business cycles; and the establishment of a consumer price index, produced by a bureau of economic statistics. Each of these prescriptions was generally regarded with suspicion in his day, but all of them eventually came to be widely accepted by those responsible for

---

<sup>328</sup> Mitrinović (with Campbell in tow) visited Oliver Baldwin and tried to talk him into supporting the movement. The attempt ended when the host ‘held his hands to his ears, in desperation.’ Campbell believed Oliver Baldwin ‘was not politically conscious enough,’ and ‘could not rise to the necessary novelty’ (being ‘too much the son of his father’); see Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 20.

<sup>329</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *Synopsis of Lecture* [by Kitson], pp. 1–2. The lecture text is not extant.

<sup>330</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 58.

<sup>331</sup> Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes: The Economist as Savior, 1920-1937* (New York, 1995), p. 416; and John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London, 1936), *passim* chapter 23.

<sup>332</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *Synopsis of Lecture* [by Soddy], p. 3.

macroeconomic management.<sup>333</sup> The Popular Myths Exploded lecture was not the only platform the NEG offered Soddy; Mitrinović would open the pages of NEG/NBM periodicals to the Nobel Laureate, whose prescience extended to imagining a single currency that would be ‘an inestimable boon to everyone.’<sup>334</sup>

The third lecture in the series, on the ‘myth’ ‘That Science Will see us through,’ was delivered by John Macmurray, Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College London. The chair was Leonard Woolf, another link between the Bloomsbury Group and Mitrinović’s group.<sup>335</sup> The fourth lecture, chaired by Harold Nicolson, was given by C. E. M. Joad, a well-known philosopher who had resigned from the New Party eleven months earlier.<sup>336</sup> Joad discoursed on a point to which the NEG would return over and over again: ‘Our physical and chemical sciences have so outstripped our social science that we are unable to distribute the bounty we produce; thus the system breaks down through excess of plenty and men starve because of their inability to purchase the goods,’ while producers are ‘ruined because of their inability to sell.’<sup>337</sup> A synopsis of the ninth lecture (by Gerald Heard) is extant, but those for lectures five (chaired by Vernon Bartlett), six, seven (chaired by John Strachey), eight, ten and eleven are not.<sup>338</sup>

These synopses were the last pamphlets the NEG issued before it embarked on a far more ambitious venture: the preparation of a large-format periodical for national distribution. As we shall see in chapter two, the publication of *New Britain* quarterly gave the NEG a public profile beyond Bloomsbury – only for the group to be sidelined

---

<sup>333</sup> Eric Zencey, ‘Mr. Soddy’s Ecological Economy’, *The New York Times*, 11 April 2009.

<sup>334</sup> Frederick Soddy, ‘Is an International Money Possible?’, *Eleventh Hour*, 19 December 1934, pp. 75–6.

<sup>335</sup> *New Europe Group Lectures at Caxton Hall*.

<sup>336</sup> Nigel Jones, *Mosley* (London, 2005), p. 61; and *New Europe Group Lectures at Caxton Hall*.

<sup>337</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *Synopsis of Lecture* [by Joad], p. 2. *Nature* commended *New Britain* quarterly for ‘courageous and independent thought’ in general, and for striving ‘to assess the place of science in the new order’ in particular (‘New Britain’, *Nature*, 11 March 1933, p. 358).

<sup>338</sup> *New Europe Group Lectures at Caxton Hall*.

by the explosive growth of the NBM, which enfolded the NEG as a Europe-focused London subset of what swiftly became a nationwide movement.

## Chapter 2

### The Rise and Demise of the New Britain Movement

#### *The Rise and ‘Inevitable’ Demise of a Politicised Social Movement*

The NBM had the potential to grow at a rapid rate because it licenced the public articulation of pent-up discontent that individuals had expressed – if at all – only in the company of family members, friends or workmates. Martin Kolinsky and William E. Paterson have explained that social movements show ‘potential participants’ that ‘what is being talked about and proposed concerns them personally,’ and then try to convince them ‘that what they might experience as a private grievance or deprivation is part of a general problem affecting the interests of the collectivity.’ Social movements have to make it seem not only ‘reasonable, desirable and possible’ for individuals to ‘do something’ about the general problem, but *necessary*, too.<sup>339</sup> To mobilise individuals, a social movement has to present the solution as something that cannot be left to politicians – hence the NEG/NBM’s focus on ‘rousing people to a sense of their individual responsibility.’<sup>340</sup> Yet, as Gary B. Rush and R. Serge Denisoff have explained, once a social movement has emerged, it is subject to ‘inevitable’ demise either through failure or through success – if it proves successful it becomes part of the status quo, which ends the ‘the viability of the movement as an antithesis.’<sup>341</sup>

It was the publication of the first issue of *New Britain* quarterly that began to turn Mitrinović and his followers from the organisers of a vibrant research and lecture society into the principals of a politicised social movement – one that ‘the Master’ would not allow to become part of the status quo, as we shall see.

---

<sup>339</sup> Kolinsky and Paterson, *Western Europe*, p. 18.

<sup>340</sup> ‘Former “Everyman” Editor Starts “New Britain”’, *World’s Press News*, 11 May 1933.

<sup>341</sup> Gary B. Rush and R. Serge Denisoff, *Social and Political Movements* (New York, 1971), p. 367.

***‘Bring It Right Home’: New Britain Quarterly***

Thomson recalled that around August 1932, ‘it seemed to him [Mitrinović] time to “bring it right home.”’<sup>342</sup> The idea was ‘to start talking not only New Europe, but New Britain.’<sup>343</sup> Though it ‘was imperative for Britain to take leadership’ in the world, this would only ‘be possible through a regenerated Britain.’<sup>344</sup> ‘So New Britain was projected,’ Thomson recalled, ‘first as a Quarterly, then as a weekly paper and then as a “national movement.”’<sup>345</sup>

Mitrinović appointed Davies editor of *New Britain* quarterly. Davies met with a printer to discuss details, and had a dummy copy made up – only for Mitrinović to discard it ‘after one withering, contemptuous look. “You are not going to stab the Unconscious of the Englishman with *that* kind of thing,” he said.’ Mitrinović then sketched his own design; when Davies presented that three-column 16- by 14-inch design to the printer, the response was ‘ribald laughter.’ But ‘that was to be its format,’ and Davies ‘began to learn that to be editor meant being Mitrinović’s office-boy.’<sup>346</sup> Mitrinović controlled the quarterly: he suggested prospective contributors, decided what material from Continental writers would be translated, chose the illustrations, and selected which books would be reviewed.<sup>347</sup> His insistence on an out-of-the-ordinary format was vindicated: the first issue of the quarterly sold an impressive 2,000

---

<sup>342</sup> Thomson Fonds, Box 5, File 12, Thomson, draft of sub-section of *Turning into Tomorrow* called ‘The Man Mitrinović’, TS, no date (but 1960s), p. 4.

<sup>343</sup> Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 82.

<sup>344</sup> NAFDMA, 5/4/5 Volume, *New Europe Group and Atlantic Initiative*, TS, no date (but no earlier than the 1950s), p. 32.

<sup>345</sup> Thomson, draft of sub-section of *Turning into Tomorrow* called ‘The Man Mitrinović’, p. 4.

<sup>346</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 125. Mitrinović soon made Thomson co-editor with Davies (*Ibid.*).

<sup>347</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 111.

copies.<sup>348</sup> One historian has declared the NEG/NBM's large-format periodicals 'the most handsomely designed journals of the thirties.'<sup>349</sup>

In the first issue of *New Britain* quarterly, Delahaye discussed the crisis and explained the need for a 'revolution of order':

Leaders continue to tinker with symptoms, whereas it is the disease which has to be attacked... Not planning only is required but planning for a new purpose. That purpose, briefly stated, is to achieve a maximum of individuation, i.e. the maximum devolution of power and significance and responsibility in the spheres of politics, economics and culture, upon the maximum number of individuals.

Each individual then must see to the change in his own outlook, rather than urge others to take the first step.<sup>350</sup>

Delahaye defined what he saw as the two types of reformers common in Britain:

'world-savers' and 'soul-savers.' The former, an 'extroverted planner and organiser,' believed the world had become 'an interdependent whole and must be organised accordingly.' In contrast, the introverted soul-saver had a 'priestly and psychological' attitude; reformers of this type deemed it futile to speak of national cooperation until 'individuals themselves have been reformed by a change of heart.' Delahaye found each approach 'inadequate,' and deemed 'exclusive emphasis' on either a mistake. World-savers had pinned their faith to the League of Nations, yet nationalism was as intense in 1932 as it had been before the Great War. Soul-savers had 'proved equally ineffective' with their exhortations to the individual to become less self-centred and to 'extend his loyalties until he embraces all mankind in his interest.'<sup>351</sup>

---

<sup>348</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 128.

<sup>349</sup> Neil Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (New York, 1959), p. 57. The use of infographics was perhaps *New Britain* weekly's most novel design feature. As for the movement's large-format periodicals, the unaffiliated publication *The New English Weekly* singled out *New Albion: For British Renaissance and Western Alliance*, April 1934 [hereafter *New Albion*, April 1934 – because only this one issue was published] as a 'remarkable' one that featured 'new treasures with the splendour of typography usually reserved for advertising,' as well as 'magnificent' reproductions of paintings 'worthy, at the very least, of the Parisian "Cahiers D'Art"' (*New Albion*, *The New English Weekly*, 12 April 1934).

<sup>350</sup> J. V. Delahaye, 'New Europe – New Britain', *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1932), p. 23.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.



The NEG's prominent figures differentiated themselves from world-savers and soul-savers through their earnest efforts to marry the two approaches. Delahaye saw that 'theoretical exhortation *in vacuo*' would not result in hearts being 'permanently converted and on a wide scale.' Reformers would only be successful if appeals to individuals were accompanied by 'action upon the outer world,' through which 'changes in consciousness occur.' Thus the failure of the reformers could be explained by the fact that few of those who prayed for the

emergence of a new individual are at the same time working to establish the external conditions which are necessary for his development. Few of those who desire the League of Nations to become a real league are making direct efforts to eradicate the spirit of competitive economic nationalism within their own nation.<sup>352</sup> Those who deny the possibility of world peace until there has been a majority change of individual heart ... do nothing but increase the feeling of despair.<sup>353</sup>

Deriding as 'sheer defeatism' the suggestion that no practical changes could be made until everyone had become a better person, Delahaye advocated the NEG view that 'a minority' needed to act with 'conscious determination to establish a new national and international order' (the majority could be converted to 'fully conscious participation' after new conditions arose). Otherwise, nothing could be expected but 'eternal procrastination' by governments postponing reform efforts on the grounds that the whole world had to move together.<sup>354</sup> The establishment of a new order in Britain had to begin with the changing of the consciousness of every individual – through 'action upon the outer world' – over whom the NEG/NBM had influence. Mitrinović called this process 'Self change for world change.'<sup>355</sup>

---

<sup>352</sup> The NBM's ideas on this issue were considered by members of Southport's League of Nations Union (LNU) Youth Group at a meeting on 29 April 1934 ('L.N.U. Youth Group Discusses New Political Group', *Southport Guardian*, 2 May 1934). There is, however, little evidence of collaboration between the NEG/NBM and LNU.

<sup>353</sup> Delahaye, 'New Europe', pp. 22–3.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>355</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 3.

### ***‘Self Change for World Change’: Prefigurative Politics in Mitrinović’s Court***

Mitrinović offered his followers the opportunity for personal transformation through prefigurative politics. Wini Breines has defined the central task of prefigurative politics thus: ‘to create and sustain within the live practice of the movement, relationships and political forms that ‘prefigured’ and embodied the desired society.’<sup>356</sup> Soon after joining Mitrinović’s court, it became ‘clear’ to Thomson that he and his fellows ‘were embarked on a double-sided project – the exoteric affairs of starting a paper and running lecture-series on the one hand, and on the other, the esoteric business.’<sup>357</sup> The latter involved what Rigby has called training for cosmopolitan citizenship.<sup>358</sup> Under the guidance of Mitrinović, his followers underwent a ‘transformative process’ through which they learned to ‘live their lives in association with others, in full consciousness of their commitments as fellow members of a common humanity.’ This entailed their pledging themselves to one another ‘in open and equal alliance.’<sup>359</sup> It meant accepting ‘People’s fears & faults, hopes and ambitions ... as if they were one’s own,’ as Campbell put it. It was ‘necessary “to digest” other human beings, including all their weaknesses, vanities, and stupidities,’ he added. Only thus were ‘the barriers of race, class, sex and age broken down.’<sup>360</sup>

Thomson discussed an example of Mitrinović’s teaching, which followed occasions when Lohan

let us down politically or personally in some way or another. With each succeeding offence our hearts grew harder against him. Many times we were ready to reject him utterly till D.M. reminded us that it was just at

---

<sup>356</sup> Wini Breines, ‘Community and Organization: The New Left and Michels’ “Iron Law”’, *Social Problems* 27.4 (1980), p. 421.

<sup>357</sup> Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 82.

<sup>358</sup> Andrew Rigby, ‘Training for Cosmopolitan Citizenship in the 1930s: The Project of Dimitrije Mitrinovic’, *Peace and Change* 24 (1999), p. 387.

<sup>359</sup> Rigby, ‘Training’, p. 384.

<sup>360</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 8.

such junctures that we were tested as to the reality and depth of our contract with each other – and with Sammy [Lohan].

‘His badness is the world’s badness. Each of us carries with us so much of the wrongness of things from time immemorial. We have all been offended against by our fathers and our fathers’ fathers from the beginning. That darkness we have to turn into the light. And how? Why, by swallowing it! By eating up that bit of evil which is in Sammy.’

Thomson added that the group was ‘impressed by the significance and power that lies potential in that old-fashioned concept of forgiveness, taken to its logical and most earnest extreme.’<sup>361</sup>

Rigby has asserted that the ‘various public projects set in motion by Mitrinović and his followers’ need to be ‘understood as instruments or vehicles for the personal development of the participants.’ Rigby has argued that their ‘real purpose’ was ‘the furtherance of the initiation process through which Mitrinović was guiding his intimate associates.’<sup>362</sup> Mairet was of the view that

every one of the public projects launched by [Mitrinović] came to an end, usually chaotic, after a brief life of intense activity and sacrificial expenditure. But this is the way with most, if not all authentic esoteric schools; any enterprise or organization they undertake in the outer world must be of some public value or interest, but that is not the primary purpose. It is a communal exercise, which the teacher ordains for the development of the pupils as individuals: they must not be allowed to identify themselves with it, still less must the school or the teacher himself become committed to that one exoteric work. It must achieve some success; but then it must be dissolved or abandoned.<sup>363</sup>

According to Mairet, ‘turning the attention of pupils to some public work is an absolute necessity if the group is not to sink into self-regarding *inactivities*.’<sup>364</sup> Mitrinović once wrote: ‘what is necessary is not that this weekly paper should survive... Neither is it

---

<sup>361</sup> Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, pp. 112–3. Here there are marked similarities with the Gülen Movement, which contends that humanity requires a new ‘golden generation’ of individuals who exercise *hoşgörü* (‘nice seeing,’ or compassion) in all their encounters; see Joshua D. Hendrick, *Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World* (New York, 2013), p. 79.

<sup>362</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 101.

<sup>363</sup> Philip Mairet, *A. R. Orage: A Memoir* (New York, 1966), p. xxvi.

<sup>364</sup> Mairet, *Autobiographical*, p. 133.

necessary that [the NBM] should maintain itself” – they were ‘incidental.’<sup>365</sup> What mattered most to him was the movement’s set of ideas (which could be carried forward by other groups) and ideals, which would be embodied by the individuals transformed through prefigurative politics.

### ***New Britain Weekly and the Launch of the NBM***

On 9 February 1933, Fraser replied to Ivy Brand’s request that the NEG send a representative to speak at a meeting of the British Order of Woodcraft Chivalry:

[S]ince our activities are now divided between the New Europe Group and the New Britain Group, it would be more appropriate if the speaker should talk on the meaning of the New Britain Group.

... The New Europe Group represents what should, we believe, be the foreign policy of a New Britain. It is not possible, however, to make people who are satisfied with the present system realise how unworthy of England and how much against the human interest England’s attitude of isolation is. We must work first for a New Britain where individuals will realise that it is impossible for the individual or nation to further his own interests at the expense of other individuals or nations...<sup>366</sup>

From Fraser’s comment that the group’s ‘activities are now divided,’ it seems ‘the New Britain Group’ (which soon grew to the proportions of a movement) began to identify itself as such in January 1933; at this stage its membership was drawn exclusively from Mitrinović’s followers and high-profile associates. Almost all the prominent figures in the NEG came to be involved in the NBM, which meant the public profiles of the two groups were hardly distinguishable. Even Mitrinović’s closest followers were uncertain

---

<sup>365</sup> ‘Is New Britain’s Impulse and Proposal of consequence for the British Nation?’, *New Britain weekly*, 1 August 1934, p. 305.

<sup>366</sup> NAFDMA, 5/2/1, Fraser to Ivy Brand, London, 9 February 1933, TS.

about some of the names and interrelationships of the Gower Street-based initiatives he started, confused as they were by his occasional rechristenings.<sup>367</sup>

At some point in the spring of 1933, an independently wealthy follower of Mitrinović named Gladys MacDermot donated £100,000 to the movement.<sup>368</sup> This sum was more than six times the amount the Liberal Party would receive in 1935, and was greater than the foreign subsidies the BUF would receive in 1933 and 1934 combined.<sup>369</sup> The donation enabled the launch of *New Britain* weekly in May 1933.<sup>370</sup> Approximately half a million English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish readers would prove willing to consider the message of the movement.<sup>371</sup>

When planning the weekly, Mitrinović and his followers – who knew little about the technical and commercial aspects of running a tuppenny periodical – recruited

---

<sup>367</sup> Not only did Mitrinović rechristen initiatives, he renamed the NEG/NBM's large-format periodicals, too. *The New English Weekly* informed its readers that “‘New Albion’ [is] the present re-incarnation of the ‘New Atlantis,’ which was the resurrection of the ‘New Britain’ Quarterly, which died with the birth of the ‘New Britain’ weekly” (‘*New Albion*’, *The New English Weekly*, 12 April 1934). To make matters even more complicated, there turned out to be only one issue of *New Albion* before it too was re-incarnated in autumn 1934 as another *New Britain* quarterly, this one subtitled *For British Revolution and the Social State* (this also lasted only one issue). Completing the list of the movement's large-format periodicals was *New Europe: a monthly Journal for Federation and Disarmament*, which appeared once in September 1934. When the editorship of *The New English Weekly* fell vacant with the death of Orage in November 1934, T. S. Eliot stepped in to ‘help stave off a takeover bid’ by Mitrinović and his followers; see Jason Harding, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-war Britain* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 191–2. Eliot had contributed to *New Britain* weekly a few months prior; see ‘In Sincerity and Earnestness: New Britain As I See It’, *New Britain* weekly, 25 July 1934, p. 274.

<sup>368</sup> Thomson Fonds, Box 2, File 5, Thomson, *Turning into Tomorrow* Version II (TS of autobiographical writings), no date (but 1960s), p. 93. The 2015 purchasing power of this sum (calculated using the percentage increase in the retail price index) would have been £6.4 million.

<sup>369</sup> David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 137; and Pugh, ‘Hurrah’, p. 153.

<sup>370</sup> According to Thomson, Gladys MacDermot donated the sum because ‘she had felt such personal benefit, in mental health, from her association with Mitrinovic’; see Thomson, *Turning into Tomorrow* Version II (TS of autobiographical writings), p. 93. Hendrick has stated that ‘charismatic authority figures ... are legitimized by performing superhuman acts that are viewed by their followers as proof of their proximity with the transcendent, however defined’ (*Gülen*, pp. 77–8). Much earlier, Max Weber theorised that such a figure had to ‘prove’ his ‘divine mission’ by ‘*bringing well being* to his faithful followers’ and that ‘if they do not fare well, he obviously is not the god-sent master’; see *Economy and Society, Vols. 1 and 2*, eds Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, 1978 [1922]), p. 1114. Here it should be noted that the word ‘charisma’ derives from the Greek word for ‘divine gift.’

<sup>371</sup> *New Britain* weekly was also distributed in Australia and South Africa, and some of its content appeared in foreign periodicals. As mentioned above, some *New Britain* weekly articles were republished in the periodicals of kindred movements such as the New Zealand Legion. For a general readership, parts of a 24 January 1934 piece on Singapore appeared in a Straits Settlements newspaper (‘The Importance of Singapore’, *Penang Gazette*, 13 February 1934). *The China Weekly Review* also took note of *New Britain* weekly; see ‘Quo Tai-chi Writes in London Magazine’, 19 May 1934.

former *Everyman* editor Charles Purdom to be managing editor.<sup>372</sup> Though the initial confusion surrounding the venture reminded Purdom of ‘a comic opera,’ the ideas to be expressed in *New Britain* weekly ‘were not different’ from his own.<sup>373</sup> Advertised by an eye-catching poster (Fig. 7), the first issue appeared on 24 May, Empire Day, as Mitrinović believed that any appeal to the British public had to be couched in patriotic terms.<sup>374</sup>



Fig. 7. Stanley Herbert, ‘Read New Britain’ poster advertising the launch issue of *New Britain* weekly, NAFDMA, 6/4/3, no date (but almost certainly May 1933).

<sup>372</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 116.

<sup>373</sup> C. B. Purdom, *Life Over Again: An Essay in Autobiography* (London, 1951), p. 134.

<sup>374</sup> Mitrinović was known to remark: ‘You can do nothing in England unless you unite the Bible and the Union Jack’ (Davies, *In Search*, p. 131).

Vendors ‘arrayed with two posters each, suspended from cords about [their] necks,’ were ‘sent out in the highways and byeways.’<sup>375</sup> At the bookstalls, the weekly’s ‘noticeable design in green’ ensured that it ‘stands out among the periodicals,’ one Londoner wrote.<sup>376</sup>

*New Britain* weekly featured articles on wide-ranging subject matter, which differentiated it from the many ‘separate sphere’ periodicals that appealed to either male or female readerships. It included radio, theatre and book reviews; illustrated guides to physical exercise (authored by Cooper); and writings on cinema by John Grierson (the father of modern British documentary filmmaking). Peacock recalled that many editors were ‘envious’ of the stable of contributors, and stated that *New Britain* was ‘the best twopenny political review produced by the journalism of the period.’<sup>377</sup>

The first issue announced that ‘the event of this week is in all truth the appearance of this paper,’ whose ‘endeavour’ would be ‘to live and work for the renaissance and self-fulfilment of the British nation.’ The moment had come for British men and women ‘to take charge of their national destiny.’<sup>378</sup> Appearing at a time when pessimism was, in the words of Overy, ‘highly contagious’ and ‘increasingly institutionalized,’ *New Britain* weekly moved one unemployed youth to write to the editor to say that he ‘felt better’ after reading it.<sup>379</sup>

Davies was convinced that the NBM had grown ‘at a fabulous pace’ because it enabled young people ‘to feel they were capable of mastering the forces of dark, mechanical necessity that were engulfing society.’<sup>380</sup> Peacock attributed the pace of

---

<sup>375</sup> J. Snelgrove, ‘From a Street Seller’, *New Britain* weekly, 14 June 1933, p. 121.

<sup>376</sup> P. H. Stevenson, ‘New Britain’, *Golders Green Gazette*, 23 February 1934.

<sup>377</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, p. 84.

<sup>378</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 24 May 1933, p. 1.

<sup>379</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 3 and p. 19; and H. Harrison, ‘Hope!’, *New Britain* weekly, 6 September 1933, p. 505.

<sup>380</sup> Davies, *In Search*, pp. 134–5. Overy has stated that the ‘sense of crisis’ was perhaps ‘more pronounced’ among the young (*Morbid Age*, p. 15).

growth to widespread disillusionment with ‘the growing spirit of materialism’ in left-wing organisations when ‘Labour was sick at heart.’<sup>381</sup> *New Britain* weekly drew ‘a splendid company of men and women’ who deemed ‘economics and ethics’ two sides ‘of the same coin.’<sup>382</sup> One young reader, Francis Clarke of Norwood, wrote to the editor:

NEW BRITAIN is more than a paper, it is a ‘movement.’ I have been waiting for it for more than ten years. I’ve read every number from cover to cover. Every idea I have read in it finds a response in me.

There are no doubt thousands waiting for Action and a Lead, but to overcome the inertia in the *hundreds* of thousands is the great problem before you. That will not be possible by mere rationalization. They must be drawn within the sphere of the movement by *directly* enlisting the enthusiasms and directing the energies of those who are with you from the beginning.<sup>383</sup>

The mention of the decade-long wait suggests that *New Britain* tapped into pent-up demand among Clarke’s generation for a programme of radical reform of the British state.

Beyond Bloomsbury, most of the NBM’s supporters were introduced to the movement through its periodicals. One recalled why and how he was mobilised:

[B]y the time I got to Oxford I had it quite clearly in my mind that the two world problems to be dealt with were war and poverty...

My problem was that my sympathies were basically with the ‘left,’ but I could not go the whole way with them. I did not ... see the struggle or the solution as a class one... The world seemed to me to be more divided between those who saw and wanted to do something about the social problem and those who did not, than between proletariat and bourgeoisie... I saw no reason to believe that a mass movement of the working class would produce a world much better than the existing one.

---

<sup>381</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, pp. 84–5. Peacock overstated the weakness of the Labour Party in 1933. No doubt, 1931 had been disastrous, on account of anti-Labour electoral pacts and splits in the ‘Labour vote’ (in Ilkeston, five recounts were needed to declare a National Labour candidate victorious with 17,587 votes to the 17,585 of his Labour Party opponent). Years later, Branson and Heinemann recalled, ‘Labour supporters were still saying, “I remember the time when Ramsay MacDonald went over,” as though nothing that had ever happened since had made an equal impression’ (*Nineteen Thirties*, p. 19). The party gained two seats in 1932 by-elections, but its parlous finances meant it could not contest five others. But 1932 municipal election results indicated grassroots vitality, and by 1933 the party’s plucky, if patchy, recovery was more evident (Stevenson and Cook, *Slump*, pp. 130–1, p. 127, p. 133 and p. 135).

<sup>382</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, pp. 84–5.

<sup>383</sup> Francis Clarke, ‘We Agree’, *New Britain* weekly, 21 June 1933, p. 153.



Consequently I was in a difficult situation. I felt very strongly the need to be active doing something about the social problem, but I found no body of people with whom I could unconditionally ally myself, because they all seemed to be grinding a partial and divisive axe. [O]ne afternoon I picked up the first number of the *New Britain* [quarterly] in the Junior Common Room. I was really thrilled by ... a journal which really stood for social justice and had a serious and radical programme, and at the same time maintained the best values of human culture...

I did not at that time ... get in touch with anyone in London. I bought the next two numbers of the *Quarterly* and when the *New Britain Weekly* came out in May 1933 I bought it first thing every Wednesday morning and did nothing else until I had read it almost from cover to cover... [W]hen I saw [an Oxford group] was started I got in touch.<sup>384</sup>

This supporter, then, waited for others to take the initiative and start a local group before he began to actualise his political commitment to the movement.

The most animating idea in the NBM's ideology – and the one that gave the greatest cause for hope – was that the world was entering an 'age of plenty.' For Mitrinović the crisis was, among other things, a challenge to individuals to ally with each other (rather than cluster in the large collectivities of nation, race or class) to complete the transition to the age of plenty.<sup>385</sup> Millions of Britons felt beleaguered by 'scarcity,' yet scientific and technological advancements had made possible material abundance from which all could benefit. The Bromley New Britain Group's organiser stated that 'dissatisfaction with the National Government' arose from its apparent belief that 'we have got no further than the age-old problem of keeping mouths fed and bodies warm – when there is enough food and clothing to keep everyone well supplied.'<sup>386</sup> An NBM member representing the West Bromwich groups asked 'Why is it that, while boot and textile factories are standing idle, numberless people are ill-shod and ill-clothed; while brickyards and builders are short of work, men and women are less well

---

<sup>384</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 122–3.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>386</sup> Alan W. Watts for the Bromley New Britain Group, 'National Co-operation', *Bromley District Times*, 7 September 1934, 20 July 1934.

housed than beasts?’<sup>387</sup> The reason, one NBM supporter ventured, was that none of the political parties are ‘plenty conscious’: party politics remained ‘an ignoble struggle between opposing groups which reflects all the motives of fear, hate, revenge and class struggle appropriate to an age of scarcity and coercion.’ Until Britons came to be

conscious of and to accept all that a new age of abundance must imply, so long will all this talk of plenty remain a bitter jest to our millions of half-starving unemployed, so long will our cabinet ministers make bad jokes in worse taste at the expense of those defenceless millions.

The supporter pointed out that although it seemed ‘ridiculous at first glance that anyone should resist plenty,’ society had been ‘dominated’ by scarcity: ‘our traditions, our social customs, our institutions, our morals, our religious precepts, have all been moulded by this factor.’<sup>388</sup>

Among the National Government’s key figures, no one was more moulded by scarcity than the NBM’s *bête noire*: Prime Minister MacDonald. The prime representative of what the NBM deemed ‘Old Britain’ had, in his early days in London, survived on only water and oatmeal; during his first occupancy of 10 Downing Street he ate in its heated banqueting rooms, being too poor to heat his private apartment.<sup>389</sup> To Mitrinović’s mind, Britons had to grow conscious of plenty before a New Britain of material abundance could replace an Old Britain corrupted by an (unnecessary) sense of scarcity, and presided over by old men who did not know any different.

---

<sup>387</sup> J. Walmsley for West Bromwich New Britain Groups, ‘Capitalism Out-of-date?’, *Midland Chronicle & Free Press*, 7 September 1934.

<sup>388</sup> ‘The New Britain Approach’, *Golders Green Gazette*, 1 March 1935.

<sup>389</sup> Brendon, *Dark Valley*, pp. 176–7.

## *Strategic Ambiguity and Its Uses*

Mitrinović's contributions to *New Britain* weekly ranged over wide terrain. From May to July 1933, he published a series of articles titled 'World Affairs.'<sup>390</sup> Purdom received letters of complaint, such as one from J. B. Thorburn of Essex, who argued that the individual responsible for the 'atrocious' English 'should be kept away from pens and paper.'<sup>391</sup> Mitrinović knew what changes he wanted to see in Britain and Europe, so why were his writings and some of the movement's terminology so perplexing? The answer is that Mitrinović favoured the use of 'strategic ambiguity,' which Eric M. Eisenberg has defined as a communication strategy whereby 'individuals use ambiguity purposefully to accomplish their goals.'<sup>392</sup> Eisenberg has posited several reasons why leaders may find it preferable to 'allow for multiple interpretations' by receivers of ideas.<sup>393</sup> The two reasons why Mitrinović made use of strategic ambiguity were that it preserves leaders' 'privileged positions,' and promotes 'unified diversity.'<sup>394</sup>

Leaders seeking to preserve their 'formal or informal standing' can use strategic ambiguity to take out 'character insurance,' as Eisenberg has explained. For leaders who are highly credible, 'clarity is always risky' because it provides the receiver with new information that can result 'in a potentially negative reevaluation of character.' A source 'deemed credible who speaks ambiguously may be called a prophet, but a low-credible source speaking identically may be dubbed a fool,' Eisenberg has stated.<sup>395</sup> Many called Mitrinović a prophet, but few records point to his having been treated as a

---

<sup>390</sup> Mitrinović's writings appeared under the byline 'M. M. Cosmoi,' which was used exclusively by him.

<sup>391</sup> J. B. Thorburn, "'World Affairs'", *New Britain* weekly, 21 June 1933, p. 153.

<sup>392</sup> Eric M. Eisenberg, 'Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication', *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984), p. 230.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

fool.<sup>396</sup> Peacock once tried to draw out Mitrinović on the question of why he seldom expressed himself on paper with the clarity that he was able to demonstrate in person. Believing that ‘most people’ passed over ‘baffling’ articles, Peacock was frustrated that Mitrinović made ‘no attempt to make himself clear in [written] English.’ Peacock advised Mitrinović that he ‘had better give as much time to the study of Cobbett and Selden as he had done to Blake,’ so that his audiences ‘might grasp the more speedily the ideas he was ventilating.’ Mitrinović’s only recorded response was a smile.<sup>397</sup>

Faced with Mitrinović’s magniloquent writings, some readers’ eyes glazed over – but his style made other readers, such as F. G. A. Hartley of Hendon, sit up and take notice. Hartley ‘spent an hour or so’ figuring out that Mitrinović had ‘something fine and significant to say,’ yet felt the need to ask: ‘Why this tortuous and involved, not to say obscure, literary style? Why all these strange new words?’<sup>398</sup> Purdom responded that the style of ‘World Affairs,’ ‘as it is in poetry,’ was the means by which ‘the capacity of sharing experience is awakened in others.’<sup>399</sup> Eisenberg has stated that leaders need to use ‘abstract, evangelical, and even poetic’ language in order to ‘make meaning for followers’ because values have to be expressed ‘at a level of abstraction at which agreement *can* occur.’ Effective leaders thus use ambiguity strategically to ‘encourage creativity and guard against the acceptance of one standard way of viewing organizational reality.’<sup>400</sup> This ‘unified diversity’ was precisely what Mitrinović was determined to forge.

---

<sup>396</sup> Davies claimed that the ‘only one’ Mitrinović ‘failed to impress’ was John Lewis, head of the Left Book Club’s national network of discussion groups (*In Search*, p. 134). Yet one *New Britain* weekly reader poked fun at Mitrinović, beginning a letter to him ‘Dear Mr Mickey Mouse of the Cosmos’ (NAFDMA, 1/7/8/201, Richard Hope to Cosmoi [Mitrinović], London, 23 June 1933, MS).

<sup>397</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, p. 87.

<sup>398</sup> F. G. A. Hartley, “‘World Affairs’”, *New Britain* weekly, 21 June 1933, p. 153.

<sup>399</sup> ‘The Editor [C. B. Purdom] in Person’, ‘How to Read’, *New Britain* weekly, 21 June 1933, p. 144.

Hughes has argued that Mitrinović had as a young man been ‘inclined’ to use poetic language as ‘the most appropriate way’ of articulating his worldview, out of the belief that ‘formal rational language could not alone convey his meaning satisfactorily’ (*Holy Russia*, p. 112).

<sup>400</sup> Eisenberg, ‘Ambiguity’, p. 231.

Worley has shown that the New Party gathered in ‘restless souls’ who had drifted from one political organisation to another in search of ‘a congenial home to express their ill-fitting views.’<sup>401</sup> Similarly, the NBM united some ‘who found themselves at odds with the causes they had earlier supported, or who had seen those causes come crashing down around them,’ as James Webb has put it.<sup>402</sup> Prominent figures in the NBM never saw the movement’s main role as being that of an ‘Adoption Society’ for all ‘Political Orphans’ who ‘nosed around.’<sup>403</sup> But Mitrinović’s strategic ambiguity meant that the NBM, in the early days, was like a Rorschach test in that prospective supporters could see in it what they wanted to see. Many young persons, including some not previously politicised, looked up to the NBM as a city on the hill; others saw it as a big tent offering shelter when they wandered in lost on a murky political landscape. There were also handfuls of malcontents who flocked to the latest flag waved, rather like the protesters in *Modern Times* who follow the Chaplin character after he picks up a hazard warning flag that fell off a passing truck. Whatever their affiliations, they were welcomed under the New Britain banner. Peacock recalled that ‘Extreme Marxists and Christian Socialists, Guild Socialists, and Liberals, die-hard Tories and enthusiastic Money Reformers all participated’ in NBM activities; Mitrinović was ‘striving always to find some point of contact.’<sup>404</sup>

Campbell wrote that the ‘tremendous crowd’ ‘thronging’ a typical NEG/NBM event in Bloomsbury was ‘the strangest collection of people you ever could imagine’:

Doctors, teachers, students, budding Freudian, Jungian & other psychologists, pseudo-philosophers ...; Communists, Marxists & fascists ... food reformers at any time, dress reformers, neurotics, hoboes, titled people from Mayfair, artists & would-be artists from Chelsea,

---

<sup>401</sup> Worley, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 101. Two restless souls who left the New Party and became involved in the NBM were W. J. Brown and G. E. G. Catlin; see Matthew Worley, ‘What Was the New Party? Sir Oswald Mosley and Associated Responses to the “Crisis”, 1931–1932’, *History* 92 (2007), p. 57. Both figures wrote articles for NBM periodicals.

<sup>402</sup> James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle, 1976), pp. 192–3.

<sup>403</sup> ‘Another Week Goes By’, *Eleventh Hour*, 10 July 1935, p. 172.

<sup>404</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, p. 88.

‘intellectuals’ all the time, bright young ‘upper class’ girls out for adventure, theosophists & anthroposophists & ‘seekers for truth.’ Everybody expectant, everybody confused & most of them very much dug into the grave of their own partial viewpoint.<sup>405</sup>

Hobson explained that Mitrinović’s aim was ‘not to induce people who agree to co-operate, but to prove that the reconciliation of opposites in persons of deeply rooted and differing convictions was possible’ – at that Mitrinović was a ‘master, combining knowledge, spiritual power, persuasiveness and humour.’<sup>406</sup>

By building bridges across ideological divides, Mitrinović and the NBM helped to defuse anger and diffuse tension among competing groups. Campbell recalled that at Friends House, after a ‘packed’ meeting at which General Francis Younghusband ‘gave his blessing & support’ to the NBM, Mitrinović

sent a message asking us to invite anyone back to our headquarters in Gower Street.

Communists came; Fascists came – some dozen to twenty. Before discussion had begun they were quarrelling. Soon it was a sustained hostility. Mitrinovic spoke. ‘Everyone here,’ he said is against the old order. Everyone here is for the necessary economic changes, abolition of unemployment and the coming of the age of plenty... So that you all agree with the New Britain programme. Everyone did. Mosley’s fascist movement was destroyed in minutes!<sup>407</sup>

Campbell’s conclusion was, of course, mistaken: those induced to murmur agreement in public likely scratched their heads later in private, only to resume their hostility to

---

<sup>405</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 13. The NEG/NBM and the Occupy movement might seem to have little in common beyond their emergence during era-defining economic crises. Yet the social constituencies that thronged Gower Street were remarkably similar to those that occupied Zuccotti Park. Take Manhattan’s Chelsea for its London namesake, and a remarkable 15 categories overlap. After excluding the anachronisms of ‘titled people,’ ‘theosophists,’ and ‘anthroposophists,’ the only remaining difference is that anarchists rather than ‘fascists’ were present in Zuccotti Park. Both politicised social movements used political perfectionist strategies to critique the powers that be. Like the NBM, Occupy reframed debate (among certain audiences) for a short while. Prefigurative politics was a key feature of the Occupy phenomenon, as it was the NEG/NBM one. Occupy, like the NBM before it, ceased to have a public profile when it splintered into issue-specific groups – but not before many young persons had been politicised, mobilised and socialised in informal politics. Movements whose main purposes include helping participants to define and actualise their political commitments are often dismissed as meaningful only to those involved, but in Spain the development of Podemos (literally: We can) out of Movimiento 15-M (the Indignants Movement) has shown how informal politics can spill into institutional/instrumental politics and shake up the system.

<sup>406</sup> Hobson, *Pilgrim*, pp. 264–5.

<sup>407</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 18.

opponents with whom they had been crammed in a drawing-room. This case of reconciling (however temporarily) groups that could hardly have been any more adversarial is an extreme case of Mitrinović's 'Above and Between' principle put into practice, and evidence of the NBM's dampening effect on passions that often overheated. Mitrinović typically attempted to forge points of contact among socialists, liberals and conservatives, whose 'unified diversity' would have held more promise than that of a communist-fascist one. Mitrinović's approach was eventually rejected by some associates who came to believe it resulted in nothing more than endless arguments among a mishmash of persons of clashing political hues. Fuller, for example, had been drawn to the NBM prior to fully committing to the BUF, and Mitrinović convinced him to write articles for the NEG/NBM's periodicals. But Fuller concluded that the NBM was disorganised, and gave up on it in frustration.<sup>408</sup>

### ***Growing Pains***

The average weekly net sales figure for the first five issues of *New Britain* weekly was 32,119, according to the chartered accountants Mitrinović tasked with certifying its circulation.<sup>409</sup> This was twice the circulation of the *New Statesman and Nation* and more than five times that of the *Week-End Review*.<sup>410</sup> *New Britain* weekly's articles on guild socialism attracted support from socialists and trade unionists, and its emphasis on devolution drew into the movement Geddes' followers, along with others who believed London was over-mighty in British governance.<sup>411</sup> Young people joined 'in great

---

<sup>408</sup> Fuller broke with the NBM around February 1934; see Anthony John Trythall, *'Boney' Fuller: Soldier, Strategist, and Writer, 1878-1966* (New Brunswick, 1977), p. 181 and p. 289. Fuller's frank admiration for the figure of the strongman predisposed him to fascism (Pugh, *'Hurrah'*, p. 166).

<sup>409</sup> Free and 'voucher copies' were distributed, too, in unstated quantities ('Certified Net Sale 32,119', *New Britain* weekly, 19 July 1933, p. 287).

<sup>410</sup> See note 3 for readership calculations.

<sup>411</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 121.

numbers,' Davies recalled.<sup>412</sup> One disillusioned youth wrote that *New Britain* 'fires me with enthusiasm,' and that there had to be

thousands of young men like me, who, bewildered by the state of affairs in which they find themselves, search their minds for solutions of the various problems facing the world today, and come to the conclusion that a new social order is required. Most of us conclude also that none of the established political parties can bring it into being. So far we have been powerless individuals; NEW BRITAIN gives the leadership required.<sup>413</sup>

Such enthusiasm was felt all over Britain. Local groups were started in towns and villages as small as Diss, Norfolk; Wroxall, the Isle of Wight; Prestatyn, Denbighshire; Elland, West Yorkshire; Heswall, Cheshire; Milngavie, Dunbartonshire; and Ongar and Thorpe Bay, both in Essex.<sup>414</sup> Across London, NBM groups 'sprang up like mushrooms.'<sup>415</sup> Even the Tory bastion of Royal Tunbridge Wells had a group.<sup>416</sup>

A group was formed in Rugby after Gladys MacDermot (whose son Niall, the future government minister, was at Rugby School) and other followers of Mitrinović held a public meeting in the town.<sup>417</sup> Some locals visited the NBM headquarters at 55 Gower Street, the base of the NBM's 'Central Group' of prominent figures (including Fraser, Slade, Cooper, Thomson, Davies, Delahaye, Campbell and Lohan). One of the visitors from Rugby recalled that Mitrinović 'had such a presence that you only had to look at him to know that you were in the presence of someone great... I really couldn't take my eyes off him.'<sup>418</sup> Back in Rugby, they drew their associates into the local

---

<sup>412</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 134.

<sup>413</sup> Fredk. T. Mansell, 'From a Student', *New Britain* weekly, 5 July 1933, p. 218.

<sup>414</sup> 'New Britain Groups', *New Britain* weekly, 8 November 1933, p. 800; and 'Index of New Britain Groups.'

<sup>415</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 132.

<sup>416</sup> 'Index of New Britain Groups.' Left Book Club groups, according to Branson and Heinemann, tended to be strongest and most active in areas with few opportunities for involvement in leftwing party politics, such as outer London suburbs, Tory-dominated cities, smaller county towns, and villages (*Nineteen Thirties*, p. 302). Many such localities previously had NBM groups, which may have been the only local outlets for expression of opposition to the National Government. Peak membership of the Left Book Club was around 50,000 (p. 301). This number approximated *New Britain* weekly's circulation in 1933.

<sup>417</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 123.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123–4.



group, which met several evenings a week. ‘The astonishing thing,’ one recalled, ‘was that there was such a release of psychic energy that you could do with a very few hours of sleep. We would read and talk until sometimes 4.00 in the morning, and then the men would go to work at 9.00.’<sup>419</sup> By the following year, the NBM presence in Rugby was prominent – so much so that the town’s branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) got the ILP conference to rule NBM membership incompatible with ILP membership, and to instruct the National Council to enforce prohibition of dual membership.<sup>420</sup>

Mitrinović and the Central Group were as surprised as anyone by the overwhelming response to their calls to action – and as is common in nascent social movements, enthusiasm and spontaneity quickly outstripped the founders’ ability to coordinate and channel them.<sup>421</sup> By August 1933, Purdom fully comprehended that *New Britain* weekly ‘had struck a rich vein of political dissent and yearning for change,’ as Rigby has put it. Seeking to capitalise on the momentum, Purdom began to push for the establishment of a national political organisation that would weld all the NBM local groups into a unified whole that could exert pressure on decision-makers around the land.<sup>422</sup> By September, 55 Gower Street was beset by requests for literature, while Thomson and Davies travelled to address meetings and burgeoning local groups (among the most active were those in Birmingham, Merseyside and Oxford).<sup>423</sup> The London groups responded enthusiastically to Purdom’s initiative: in October, more than 50 delegates from the London groups met at Chiswick to draft a constitution and plan for the organisation of all the groups in the capital and environs.<sup>424</sup>

---

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>420</sup> This resolution was widely reported, including in ‘To Capture the Trade Unions’, *News Chronicle*, 4 April 1934. The rise of the NBM was a threat to the ILP, some of whose members in Rugby (including engineers at the BTH factory) were abandoning it for the NBM, as Rigby has noted (*Initiation*, p. 123).

<sup>421</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 133.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

By 8 November, there were 47 groups in the provinces and at least 30 in the London area.<sup>425</sup> The next *New Britain* weekly noted that ‘the sudden increase in the number of people wishing to start groups’ meant that there was no longer enough space on the back page for the list of group leaders.<sup>426</sup> In that issue Purdom acknowledged that the politico-economic proposals in the weekly had been vague, but argued that without a national organisation, the movement’s vision could not be translated into a specific plan of action. The ‘crystallization’ of the ideas expressed in *New Britain* weekly, he stated, would ‘require the backing of an organised body’ rather than just ‘co-ordinated groups with a central committee in London.’<sup>427</sup> Purdom was responding not only to external critics, but to a piece by Mitrinović that Rigby has compared with a papal nuncio.<sup>428</sup> Mitrinović had declared that the NBM was ‘not a party. A party, political or otherwise, the New Britain Alliance can never become. It shall not be a party. All parts and parties of our nation shall be contained in our New Spirit, in our New Way.’<sup>429</sup> Mitrinović knew that the natural tendency of a political party is to turn its membership into a tribe; he realised that if the movement were to become a party, its work to reconcile competing groups would have been undone. Becoming just another grid reference on the party political map would have negated the NBM’s efforts to connect the citizenry to politics by a route other than a party.

Purdom suspected that Mitrinović and the Central Group did not want to cede control over the direction of the movement they had birthed. To Purdom, it seemed that the NBM had reached the phase of growing up that necessitated leaving home; the members of the Central Group, though, were acting like overly protective parents on

---

<sup>425</sup> ‘New Britain Groups’, *New Britain* weekly, 8 November 1933, p. 800; and ‘New Britain Groups’, *New Britain* weekly, 1 November 1933, p. 768.

<sup>426</sup> ‘New Britain Groups’, *New Britain* weekly, 15 November 1933, p. 832.

<sup>427</sup> C. B. Purdom, ‘Getting Down to Brass Tacks’, *New Britain* weekly, 15 November 1933, p. 816.

<sup>428</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 126.

<sup>429</sup> ‘Ourselves Announced’, *New Britain* weekly, 1 November 1933, p. 737.

discovering that their progeny wanted to follow a different course to the one they had in mind.<sup>430</sup>

The conflict centred on the movement's 'nature and form,' as Rigby has stated. The founding members around Mitrinović (the Central Group based at Gower Street) wished for the NBM to remain a predominantly 'spiritual movement,' concerned with propagating ideas for the individuals who would build a New Britain. But certain activists in the London, Leeds and Sheffield groups wanted the NBM to become an organisation directly engaged in efforts to implement its proposals through conventional political processes.<sup>431</sup> The two sides met in Rugby on 19 November, but failed to agree a formal statement on the NBM's aims and organisational form. On a return visit four weeks later, they again failed to reach agreement. At a meeting in Birmingham in January 1934, the two sides failed once more to resolve their differences, and then yet again when they met in London on 25 February. The Central Group refused to countenance voting to decide issues in the NBM, fearing that it would result in the loss of the founders' 'guardian' role.<sup>432</sup> Following the London meeting, representatives from some of the provincial groups lambasted the 'dictatorial' founders for their unwillingness to 'allow an elected Committee to decide the principles of Aims and Policy,' nor even to 'permit any authority to pass to a National Council elected by the Groups.' The Central Group was further criticised for 'consistently' failing to explain 'in specific terms' its position on, or its claim to, 'authority' in the movement.<sup>433</sup> In March, representatives of the London groups met to devise a new strategy to reduce the power of the Central Group. They agreed a draft constitution for a federated movement, whose coordinating body would be a National Council made up of four representatives from each provincial region, 12 from the London area groups, and just

---

<sup>430</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 126.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

two from the Central Group (when unanimity proved elusive, a 75-percent supermajority would be able to decide an issue in its favour). It was clear to all involved that adoption of this proposed constitution would have emasculated the Central Group.<sup>434</sup>

### ***The First National Conference (Leamington Spa) and the Struggle for Control of the NBM***

The struggle for control of the NBM came to a head at its first national conference, held at Eastertide 1934. More than 300 representatives from around the country travelled to Leamington Spa to take part. Purdom chaired most of the sessions, which began on Friday, 30 March; Mitrinović kept a low profile. Purdom believed he saw ‘every sign of the initiation of a strong movement,’ but difficulties arose on Friday evening, when labour organiser J. T. Murphy made his first appearance on an NBM platform.<sup>435</sup>

Davies claimed that Mitrinović enlisted Murphy with a view to ‘injecting an upsetting element and bringing the conference to nought.’ The movement was ‘becoming too vigorous for Mitrinović and his inner circle to control,’ Davies explained, and members of the Central Group ‘were always desperately anxious not to allow anything to get out of their hands.’<sup>436</sup> Murphy thundered on about the need to forge a classless society by abolishing private property and the profit motive, which antagonised Purdom and members of the London area groups, who had strived to broaden the NBM’s appeal and bring businessmen into the movement.<sup>437</sup>

---

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130–1.

<sup>436</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 135.

<sup>437</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 130–1.

On Saturday morning the representatives were addressed by a London group leader who was among the strongest advocates of an organisational overhaul. When he declared that the NBM could attract 10,000 new members if it toned down its attacks on the capitalist class, Murphy retorted: 'If you went a little further and turned it into a capitalist party, I could bring you in 50,000 new members!'<sup>438</sup>

Saturday evening was devoted to Soddy's address on monetary reform. A discussion of the proposed NBM constitution was scheduled for the following morning, but late on Saturday evening Slade stood up and proposed that the conference solve, on the spot, 'the problems of leadership which must arise in the early stages of a movement' by appointing seven co-leaders: Soddy, Delahaye, Fraser, Davies, Murphy, Reverend A. D. Belden and the well-known criminologist H. F. T. Rhodes. Slade was 'inspired,' 'almost on fire,' according to one attendee, and her proposal was carried by acclamation. Rigby has concluded that although the cheers were 'undoubtedly genuine,' the representatives had witnessed an orchestrated 'coup' by the Central Group. On Friday night members of the Central Group had met with Mitrinović to plan a pre-emptive move against the constitution proposed by the London area groups. The Central Group dismissed formal voting procedures as belonging to Old Britain, but its members 'could rival the most devious of the old-world politicians when the occasion and their own interests demanded it,' as Rigby has commented.<sup>439</sup>

On Sunday morning, in the cold light of day, representatives argued about the legitimacy of the previous night's appointment of co-leaders by acclamation. In the afternoon Purdom expressed his dissatisfaction with proceedings. This sentiment was shared by a number of representatives, some of whom walked out in disgust. They were dismayed by the machinations of the Central Group, which preached devolution

---

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132–3.

yet did not practise it, and whose members seemed to ape the behaviour of the roughshod-riding National Government they all decried.

Put to the vote, the appointment of the co-leaders was upheld with 125 in favour, two opposed.<sup>440</sup> Fewer than half the members who had travelled to Leamington gave their blessing to the coup, but it was enough (given the walk-outs) to crush the attempt to turn the NBM into a federated political organisation.

To Davies' mind, this was one of the 'missed opportunities,' in 'long procession,' that doomed the movement.<sup>441</sup> Peacock, too, lamented that 'a glorious opportunity was missed by those at the helm' of the NBM, which 'possessed much initiative and enterprise' and had 'an abundance of talent in its ranks.'<sup>442</sup> Before examining why exactly the Central Group was so determined to prevent the movement becoming a national political organisation, it must be noted that Mitrinović occasionally doubted the wisdom of this resistance. Davies wrote that 'to the best of my belief, Mitrinović did not intend the movement to be organized, most certainly not as a popular party,' yet as late as August 1934

he did not seem to have made up his mind whether New Britain was to be a political movement or a spiritual fraternity. After a year and a half of chaotic, frustrated attempts at political organization, I was flabbergasted at Mitrinović's uncertainty, which he communicated to me during a taxi-ride to a meeting. It was this confusion that was the source of the chaos and conflict behind the movement.<sup>443</sup>

Lacking British subject status, Mitrinović knew full well that he was in no position to lead a national political organisation in Britain, even if he had been so inclined.

Thomson wrote of 'the difficult fact that the centre of [the] central group consisted of a single dominant person who, for a variety of reasons (of which the most easily sayable

---

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129–33.

<sup>441</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 131.

<sup>442</sup> Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, p. 84.

<sup>443</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 133.

was that he was not British) could not function openly.<sup>444</sup> As mentioned above, Scotland Yard kept an eye on Mitrinović, who did not want to be singled out as a troublemaker, or even a nuisance.<sup>445</sup> In 1921, Mitrinović noted that Oscar Levy, a colleague at *The New Age*, was deported in the wake of the passing of the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919.<sup>446</sup> Section 3 of the Act made ‘any alien’ who ‘attempts or does any act calculated or likely to cause sedition or disaffection’ liable on conviction ‘to penal servitude for a term not exceeding ten years.’ Given the NEG/NBM’s political perfectionism, the publication of most of its periodicals could have been seen as ‘calculated’ to cause ‘disaffection.’<sup>447</sup> It is no wonder, then, that Mitrinović sought to avoid official scrutiny, while cultivating influential associates who could have been relied on to vouch for him in a time of need.<sup>448</sup>

If the NBM had been transformed into a national political organisation, Mitrinović would have been obliged to retire to the attic of the house of ideas for which he had laid the foundations. Mitrinović would have controlled the NBM only for as long as he could sway (using the force of his personality and oratory) those who were running it. If persons outside his orbit were to have been permitted to become prominent figures in the movement, Mitrinović would no longer have been able to reign over it from Gower Street.

---

<sup>444</sup> Thomson, TS of autobiographical writings, p. 94.

<sup>445</sup> Mitrinović did voice fears related to his vulnerability; Thomson recalled that he would suddenly ‘look hard at one of us and demand, “Is it you who will betray me?”’ See Thomson, early untitled draft of autobiographical section of *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 111

<sup>446</sup> Stone, *Breeding Superman*, p. 24. Levy did not mention Mitrinović in his recollections of *The New Age* (Nietzsche Haus, Bibliothek: Oscar Levy Papers, MS of autobiographical writings, no date).

<sup>447</sup> In theory, as the *éminence grise* of a politicised social movement with growing influence, Mitrinović could have found his position in Britain becoming more imperilled than it would likely have become if he had been the doyen of a fringe political party – for governors and governed alike become nervous when a semi-transparent movement starts asserting itself politically. After all, a social movement cannot be ‘voted out of influence,’ whereas a fringe party always faces an uphill battle to be voted into power.

<sup>448</sup> During the Second World War, Mitrinović would take actions that put him in the good graces of the authorities. He offered to write an ‘extremely confidential’ memorandum on events in Yugoslavia for Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office (FO); see NAFDMA, 1/7/16/7, Mitrinović to Eden, London, April 1941, TS. Eden’s private secretary replied that ‘his Department would be glad’ to consider it (NAFDMA, 1/7/9/20, H. Lawford to Mitrinović, London, 21 April 1941, TS). Mitrinović lent paintings to a British Council ‘exhibition of the work of Allied artists’ (NAFDMA, 1/3/10, Alfred A. Longden [Director of Fine Art] to Mitrinović, London, 5 May 1942, TS).

For their part, Mitrinović's followers in the Central Group did not think such a beatified soul could descend to the grubby confines of the corridors of power. They believed their proximity to Mitrinović imbued them with the values of New Britain, which NBM supporters beyond Bloomsbury could not embody to the same extent (in their view). Members of the Central Group worried that the NBM would be hijacked if they did not safeguard the ideological and spiritual purity of the movement. They fretted that entryism would undermine or vitiate a federalised organisation more easily than it would a centralised movement that they steered. Unwilling to 'deabsolutise' their power over the NBM, its founders squandered the opportunity to attract resources from others who were committed to furthering the movement's aims.

The members of the Central Group were unwilling to allow 'their' politicised social movement to turn into a national political organisation; such a transformation would have put the NBM one step away from becoming a political party. The founders had 'a suspicion of, indeed a repugnance to, machine politics,' Hobson noted.<sup>449</sup> Political parties need financial backers, who seek favours in return for their largess; the Central Group certainly did not want to be beholden to the vested interests of Old Britain. As soon as a social movement institutionalises itself, it comes into competition with longer-established organisations and parties: the NBM would have had to compete with other formations for supporters, in a zero-sum game that it was not equipped to play. The Central Group had witnessed the New Party's mauling at the polls – if the NBM were to have fielded candidates for Parliament, retaining deposits would have been hard, and breaking the mould of party politics would have proved impossible. The *Week-End Review* and the *New Statesman and Nation* had suggested that the New Party's programme was too much of a mismatch to offer a viable alternative to that of

---

<sup>449</sup> Hobson, *Pilgrim*, p. 267.



the National Government.<sup>450</sup> It is very likely that the NBM would not have been spared a similar verdict.

A social movement could just about get by without professionals in key posts, but a national political organisation could not be helmed by amateurs such as the members of the Central Group. Bill Duff complained to Mitrinović that the movement was ‘full of fine people dithering about.’<sup>451</sup> Patrick Maitland (later 17th Earl of Lauderdale) described the NBM as ‘a show already congested with muddlers.’<sup>452</sup> Kolinsky and Paterson have stated that a social movement’s ‘political significance’ depends on the way it manages ‘colder’ aspects such as ‘discipline,’ the ‘transformation of ideology into politically relevant policies,’ and ‘the management of relations with established groups and authorities.’<sup>453</sup> Managing these ‘colder’ tasks would have been too onerous for the founders, who were working extremely hard just to keep things running. In any case, in their view reducing the movement to a political instrument – merely one among many in 1930s Britain – would have entailed a (self-defeating) lessening of the human warmth of the NBM.

### ***Practical Problems and the Rift over Rearmament***

Purdom had warned that ‘the new leadership was nonsense,’ and so it proved: ‘the leaders never once met or functioned in any way whatever,’ Davies recalled. While

---

<sup>450</sup> Worley, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 13.

<sup>451</sup> Duff to Mitrinović, 29 October 1935.

<sup>452</sup> Maitland was involved in the NBM in 1933–4, but revealed that ‘deeply as I approve the aims of New Britain,’ he felt he ‘could not trust Mitrinovic’ (‘overwork, and gross underpay’ were ‘secondary considerations’ in his decision to leave the movement); see NAFDMA, 6/1/4/20, Maitland to Odon Por, Stafford, 5 September 1934, TS. Maitland would later sit in Parliament as a Unionist; after Niall MacDermot took his seat on the Labour benches, Maitland told Fraser: ‘there is one of the Old School Tie on each side of the house, now!’ See NAFDMA, 3/17/1, Fraser to Thomson, no date (but March or April 1957), TS.

<sup>453</sup> Kolinsky and Paterson, *Western Europe*, pp. 17–18. The NBM’s efforts at such ‘transformation’ fell far short. Davies recalled: ‘New Britain was a bottomless abyss into which documents, plans and programmes disappeared for ever and ever’ (*In Search*, p. 133).

Mitrinović had got away with a ‘brilliant stroke’ at the national conference, he had, in the eyes of Purdom, ‘robbed the paper of serious purpose.’<sup>454</sup> Within a fortnight Purdom resigned the editorship of *New Britain* weekly.<sup>455</sup> According to Davies, Purdom’s departure spelled ‘virtually the end of the growth of the movement on a national basis.’ Mitrinović appointed a new editor: Davies. ‘I sat in the editorial chair,’ Davies recalled, but ‘To sit was all I did. I was editor only in name. The real editor was Mitrinović.’<sup>456</sup>

In the weeks following the conference Davies, Thomson, Lohan and others toured the country addressing NBM groups and other audiences, trying to raise morale and the funds needed to continue publishing *New Britain* weekly. By June 1934 it looked like the movement had survived the divisions exposed during the national conference. To rally support, the Central Group scheduled a second national conference for the August bank holiday weekend.<sup>457</sup> Then, in the 4 July issue of *New Britain* weekly, Mitrinović called for Britain to rearm, on the grounds that even ‘a possible victory’ of Germany over the rest of Europe would ‘disfigure the human universe.’<sup>458</sup> Mitrinović realised that Britain would face ‘the paradoxical prospect’ (in Overy’s words) of having to use war as a means of restoring a peaceable international order.<sup>459</sup> Mitrinović’s call upset absolute pacifists – who renounced violence of any kind, in any circumstances, out of the conviction that it was morally wrong – in local groups around the land. Later that month the Southend group severed connections with Gower Street; other groups followed suit. The secretary of the Coventry group pleaded

---

<sup>454</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 135.

<sup>455</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 14 April 1934. Shortly after, *New Britain* weekly’s advertising manager resigned (*World’s Press News*, 26 April 1934).

<sup>456</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 135.

<sup>457</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 133.

<sup>458</sup> ‘New: New Disaster: Disease and Pestilence of National and Planetary Dimensions’, *New Britain* weekly, 4 July 1934, p. 177.

<sup>459</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. xix.

with the Central Group to ‘avoid mentioning rearmament or any other term likely to antagonise the left wing and pacifist elements in the movement.’<sup>460</sup>

Meanwhile, the circulation of *New Britain* weekly fell ‘catastrophically,’ Davies recalled. The periodical had used up its initial funds, creating ‘increasingly enormous difficulty in keeping [it] alive’:

We literally did not know from week to week whether the next number would appear or not. I was not initiated into the mystery of the paper’s finance; but on occasions I was asked to accompany a few people to interview some wealthy or influential person... There would be weeks when salaries were delayed. Towards the end, the money for printing had to be found for each issue before the printer would put it on the machine. Many a time I was informed at luncheon hour on the Monday when we went to press that there was no money to print.

‘Miraculously it turned up’ – until the miracles ceased.<sup>461</sup> The 8 August 1934 issue, which appeared during the second national conference, was the final one.

### ***The Second National Conference (Glastonbury) and the Demise of the NBM***

The coffers were low but spirits were high as the second national conference got underway at Glastonbury on 4 August. Nearly 200 representatives were prepared for in-depth discussions on a constitution and statement of aims, which had been promised at the first national conference. The Central Group presented a document that reiterated the NBM programme: the twin principles of devolution and federalisation were features, as was the call for the socialisation of industry via the guild system. The document also argued for a ‘universal citizen’s allowance’ (what is, today, referred to variously as an unconditional basic income, a universal demogrant, or a citizen’s income) to end poverty, as was fitting in the age of plenty. Following discussion on the

---

<sup>460</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 133–4.

<sup>461</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 136.

organisation of the movement, 160 representatives voted in favour of control remaining with the Central Group, which the founders had stipulated was open to all who accepted that New Britain was not merely a political programme, but ‘a way of life.’ The representatives acknowledged that the basic unit of organisation was the local group, which would be ‘autonomous and self-moving’ within the guidelines established by the Central Group. Only four representatives dissented. The formal conference ended on 6 August, and was followed by a week-long summer school. The communal experience consisted of lectures, cricket, and physical exercise demonstrations and classes.<sup>462</sup> In this way, the conference turned into what Davies called ‘a domestic conclave.’<sup>463</sup> It became clear to all that the NBM – with neither a weekly nor means of replenishing funds – would retreat from public view, and in short order cease to be a movement with a national profile.

By winter, Thomson summed up the feeling of the Central Group: ‘the next phase should be one of interior concentration, personal equipment and research rather than of enlarged publicity.’<sup>464</sup> In effect, the Central Group was scaling back its political activities to the 1931 level (e.g. research, lectures and discussion groups), the better to focus on prefigurative politics. The NEG would remain in existence.<sup>465</sup> But at the NBM’s third national conference on 15–17 December, the decision was made to devolve the NBM into four separate but related bodies.<sup>466</sup> Some of Mitrinović’s younger followers, including Harry Rutherford and Watts, kept *The Eleventh Hour* New Series (hereafter *Eleventh Hour*) going until July 1935 – so the NBM had a six-month

---

<sup>462</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, pp. 135–7.

<sup>463</sup> Davies, *In Search*, p. 137.

<sup>464</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 137.

<sup>465</sup> Records indicate that the NEG’s last meeting was on 21 September 1957; see NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, *In Commemoration of Professor Frederick Soddy*, no date (but 1957). By 1938, Mitrinović ‘described the group as an academic rather than a political body,’ and *The Manchester Guardian* lamented that ‘most people know perhaps too little about its purposes’ (‘The New Europe Group’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 July 1938). In 1950, *Cavalcade* reported on an NEG event at which the ‘impressive’ Soddy, Mitrinović and Fuller ‘leaven[ed] the minds of a large assembly with a few unpopular notions.’ Mitrinović was ‘a striking figure in his neo-Regency attire.’ The report concluded: ‘Fashion clearly escapes Mitrinović. But he has a stimulating philosophy’ (‘Septuagenarians’, *Cavalcade*, 4 March 1950).

<sup>466</sup> ‘Another Week Goes By’, *Eleventh Hour*, 19 December 1934, p. 66.

afterlife in the sense that several of the issues addressed by the movement continued to be discussed on a weekly basis by a single periodical.<sup>467</sup> But the four successor bodies each focused on only one issue – thus the NBM ended not with a bang, but with four whimpers: the House of Industry League, the League for the National Dividend, the League for the Threefold State, and the British League for European Federation.<sup>468</sup> The fourth of these mainly reiterated (alongside the NEG) the Eurofederalist ideas developed in the NEG/NBM, and it is to those – the movement’s greatest intellectual legacy – that we now turn.

---

<sup>467</sup> In October, Duff’s ‘buzzing ideas’ about reviving the NBM fell on deaf ears: the fundraising ‘rackets’ he proposed were totally at odds with the values of the movement (Duff to Mitrović, 29 October 1935).

<sup>468</sup> Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 137. The House of Industry League was the only one of these four bodies that developed a public profile (*Ibid.*). For details, see Mike Tyldesley, ‘The House of Industry League: Guild Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s’, *Labour History Review* 61 (1996), pp. 309–21. In 1936 Fraser tried to win the support of public figures for a prospective British Committee for European Co-operation; see NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, ‘British Committee for European Co-operation’, no date (but April 1936).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The NEG/NBM as Britain's First Genuine European Federalist Group**

##### ***Situating the Eurofederalist Thought of the NEG/NBM***

The aim of chapters three and four, which focus on the NEG/NBM as a pioneering Eurofederalist group, is to position the movement in its rightful place in the historiography of Europeanism in Britain. Having identified, in the introduction, many of the reasons why the literature on the NEG/NBM is so small, it is worth mentioning that scholars' neglect of the movement's Eurofederalist proposals has additional causes. While it is true that the pre-1939 British discourse on European unity has 'faded' in the British consciousness (as Mark Garnett has observed), European academia has for 25 years been heavily invested in a bull market for studies on the 'pre-history' of integration – so here I need to explain the three reasons why the NEG/NBM's stock has hardly risen among intellectual historians of the European project.<sup>469</sup>

The first reason why the NEG/NBM's Eurofederalism has received so little attention is that the authors of seminal studies on the origins of European integration published before 2003–4 did not have access to the movement's archive. For example, Walter Lipgens states in *A History of European Integration* that the archive 'was not available to me as the group is planning to publish its own history.'<sup>470</sup> Consequently, Lipgens afforded the NEG/NBM a mere six sentences – rather than the fuller assessment it warranted – in an otherwise detailed history that is still widely cited.

---

<sup>469</sup> Mark Garnett [review], 'Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London, 1999)', *Political Quarterly* 70.3 (1999), pp. 359–60.

<sup>470</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 162. Lipgens' work was published in German in 1977. Seven years later, Rigby published *Initiation and Initiative*, having 'drawn heavily upon the support and criticism' of Mitrinović's acolytes (p. v).

The second reason is that although the NEG/NBM was the first British group to advocate genuine Eurofederalism, the NBM was relatively short-lived; in contrast, Federal Union (FU), the second British Eurofederalist group, has been continuously active since 1938.<sup>471</sup> FU's longevity is one of the reasons why it has almost monopolised the attention of the few historians who have researched pre-1945 Europeanist groups in Britain; their scholarship has created the impression that FU was the first British group to champion Eurofederalism. As early as 1950, Purdom sensed it was necessary to explain to journalists that the NEG was established 'to put forward the ideas of European federation and devolution long before Federal Union or before any of the existing proposals for European federation were in the least considered.'<sup>472</sup> The official history of FU, *Federal Union: The Pioneers*, incorrectly dates the NEG and steals its thunder; the work begrudges Mitrinović's movement a single sentence, even though one of the first FU vice presidents was NEG member Niall MacDermot, whose mother had been by far the largest donor to the NBM.<sup>473</sup> A source in the NAFDMA states that an NEG luncheon in 1938 'was devoted to helping to launch Federal Union, a more conventional movement which came to be more widely known.'<sup>474</sup> The NEG/NBM was the *real* pioneer of Eurofederalism in Britain – FU followed in its footsteps.

The third reason why the NEG/NBM has been a lacuna in surveys of the intellectual history of Europeanism stems from the NEG's post-1945 relationship to the wider Eurofederalist movement in western Europe. In 1946, Alexandre Marc – who

---

<sup>471</sup> FU was founded at 44 Gordon Square; see Richard Mayne and John Pinder, *Federal Union: The Pioneers: A History of Federal Union* (London, 1990), p. 6. A few years earlier, the NEG/NBM had held weekly meetings at 3 Gordon Square; see NAFDMA, 6/2/2, 'New Britain Conference', TS, no date (but almost certainly 3 February 1935).

<sup>472</sup> NAFDMA, 5/1/6 File, C. B. Purdom, quoted in 'The New Europe Group Luncheon Meeting Held at Simpsons-in-the-Strand, London, W.C.1. on Friday, 17th February, 1950', no date, TS, p. 2.

<sup>473</sup> Mayne and Pinder, *Federal*, p. 9; and Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 271. The FU European Committee included MacDermot and Mitrinović follower David Shillan (NAFDMA, 5/2/2/37, Niall MacDermot, 'Rome Congress of the European Union of Federalists' [the Union of European Federalists], 1948, p. 3).

<sup>474</sup> *Memorandum on the New Europe Group*, pp. 1–2. An NEG luncheon on 26 May 1939 featured an address on 'Federalism in the Western World' by FU executive committee member Patrick Ransome; see NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, 'Fork Luncheons' [invitation card], no date (but spring or early summer 1939).

had been the leading figure in l'Ordre nouveau and a contributor to the NEG/NBM's periodicals – founded the Union of European Federalists (UEF) to coordinate the activities of 'second-wave' groups (e.g. those founded or refounded during or after the Second World War). In November 1948, the NEG sent delegates – including Soddy, Purdom, Niall MacDermot and David Shillan – to Rome for the UEF's Second Annual Congress (FU also sent representatives).<sup>475</sup> There, Shillan was elected to the Central Committee of the UEF, after MacDermot stood down.<sup>476</sup> But Shillan thought the congress, which 'suffered badly from excess of mechanism over meaning and of letter over spirit,' seemed to 'lead further into the jungle of "organization" and intrigue.'<sup>477</sup> By 1949, Shillan wrote to Marc that the NEG was 'wrestling with great difficulties of material resources and organisation, complicated just now by much illness.'<sup>478</sup> By 1950 the NEG no longer wanted

to be drawn into the present confusion of political Federalist movements and organisations. These preach the principles of Federation while ignoring the equally important principle of Devolution, whereas we would not only devolve within geographical regions, but would devolve social life altogether into its true functions, economic, civic, and cultural.<sup>479</sup>

When the NEG declined further opportunities to collaborate with Continental groups that, in its view, were not wholly federalist, it lost influence in the lead-up to the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1957). In these years, second-wave groups gained strength (in

---

<sup>475</sup> In August 1947, MacDermot and Shillan had attended the UEF's first congress in Montreux as representative of the NEG (Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 162). MacDermot reported that Marc was 'very anxious' that the NEG 'should send a strong delegation to Rome,' in part because it would 'understand and support the general ideas of "integral Federalism" which Marc is trying to inject into [the UEF's] ideas and resolutions' ('Rome Congress', pp. 2–3).

<sup>476</sup> NAFDMA, 5/2/2/41, David Shillan, 'from D. S.: Rome – Paris', 18 November 1948, TS.

<sup>477</sup> Shillan worried, too, that the UEF could 'degenerate into pure mechanism and, even if unconsciously, drive Europe further towards disintegration'; see NAFDMA, 5/2/2/37, David Shillan, 'Rome and European Federation', no date (but almost certainly November 1948), TS, pp. 3–4.

<sup>478</sup> NAFDMA, 5/2/2/36, Shillan to Alexandre Marc, 1 February 1949, TS. The Second World War had taken a toll on the NEG's younger generation: John Harker and Orion Playfair were killed in service (Rigby, *Initiation*, p. 171). In 1939 Playfair had been secretary of the NEG, and was in contact with FU; see NAFDMA, 5/2/2/69, C. D. Kimber (on behalf of FU) to Playfair, London, 28 March 1939, TS.

<sup>479</sup> NAFDMA, 5/2/2/46, unsigned copy of a letter written on behalf of the NEG to professor Fleure, London, 12 November 1950, TS.



the wake of total war and genocide) at a rate that had never been possible for any first-wave group.<sup>480</sup> Thus scholars tracing the intellectual history of Europeanism were liable to dismiss the NEG as an unimportant second-wave group that faded from the scene, rather than to appreciate that the NEG was (with the NBM) a very important first-wave group – and one that maintained sufficient strength (under relatively benign wartime conditions in Britain) to be active at the start of the second wave. Lacking access to the NEG/NBM’s archive, scholars knew little or nothing about the NEG’s role in the first wave. That the NEG continued to publicise Eurofederalism into the mid-1930s – and thereby served as something approximating a missing link to second-wave thought – was not appreciated until late in the twentieth century.

What follows in this chapter is scrutiny of the meaning(s) of ‘federalism’ and an explanation of why the issue of sovereignty has been the crucial one in any plan for European integration. Next, I provide an overview of the tradition of thought on European integration from German unification through to the 1930s. The chapter ends with an explanation of how the NEG/NBM’s prominent figures understood the Great War as a ‘European civil war,’ and an examination of what they perceived to be the characteristics of the interwar ‘crisis.’

### ***The Meaning(s) of ‘Federalism’ and the Issue of Sovereignty***

Since the mid-seventeenth century, when the first stage of the process of state-formation in Europe was complete, political thinkers have considered how states might

---

<sup>480</sup> Three years after the Second World War, MacDermot pointed out that ‘the movement for European Unity had reached the Government level’ (‘Rome Congress’, p. 2). In contrast, it was not until 11 years after the First World War that governments deigned to even consider the prospect of European integration (this occurred only when Briand advanced a proposal, as shall be discussed in chapter 4).

be organised in a system.<sup>481</sup> Although the development of nationalisms and the forging of nation-states led to particularisms that left little room for the mass expression of support for European political unity, intellectuals did, over the centuries, draw up plans ‘in almost forgotten profusion.’<sup>482</sup> In order to differentiate among them, a few terms need to be examined. Stirk has argued that the ‘elasticity’ of ‘the idea of Europe’ has allowed it to be ‘appropriated by individuals of diverse ideological inclinations.’<sup>483</sup> The idea of a *united* Europe has almost the same degree of elasticity, so any scholar discussing a specific invocation of the idea needs to carefully examine its particular ideological freight. The ‘United States of Europe’ label, for example, has been applied to plans for a loose association of states, a fully fledged federation, and every type of entity in between. Mitrinović was worried that some individuals pondering the movement’s proposal for the federalisation of Europe might have difficulties distinguishing it from other proposals it superficially resembled. In *Integration of Europe* the NEG insisted that its scheme

should not be confused with any other appearing under a similar name. It is conceived, not in the interest of any single State, but in the interest of Europe as the most ripe and responsible estate of mankind. It is of a radical nature, requiring conscious changes in social habits and organisation throughout the Continent.<sup>484</sup>

Mitrinović’s concern, well founded in the first half of the 1930s, has been further justified by posterity: in the historiography on interwar Europeanism, discussion of the many schemes that appeared ‘under a similar name’ has almost crowded out analysis of the NEG/NBM’s proposal.

---

<sup>481</sup> Wim Roobol, ‘Aristide Briand’s Plan: The Seed of European Unification’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 32. The genealogy of the ‘European idea’ begins before the first stage of state-formation, but the ‘pre-history’ of European integration did not start before there were states to integrate.

<sup>482</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 35. Rolf Hellmut Foerster has identified 182 proposals made between 1306 and 1945; see Foerster, *Europa: Geschichte einer politischen Idee* (Munich, 1967).

<sup>483</sup> Stirk, ‘Introduction’, in Stirk (ed.), *European Unity*, p. 11.

<sup>484</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 1.

Even when scholars narrow their focus to the idea of a *federal* Europe, the need for cautious use of terminology is no less acute. This is due to the word ‘federalism’ and its cognates’ multiplicity of meanings across nations and time; indeed, there has been a tendency to use words such as ‘federation’ without defining their meanings.<sup>485</sup> This nomenclature was in flux between the wars, when it was not unusual for the label ‘federal’ to be applied to a proposal for a mere loose association of European states.<sup>486</sup> The meanings of ‘federal’ and ‘confederal’ were nebulous, and the terms were often used interchangeably; it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that their respective meanings narrowed, mainly due to the influence of epistemic communities (networks of professionals with recognised expertise in the field).<sup>487</sup> Most scholars analysing interwar schemes for a united Europe take pains to avoid implying that a plan labelled ‘federal’ at the time it was publicised would necessarily be recognised as such from a more recent vantage point. The most insightful among them have paid greater attention to the proposed substantive changes to inter-state relations than to the rhetoric in which the plans were couched.

A feature of the European Studies boom and the rise of the ‘history of the idea of Europe’ scholarly industry since the 1990s has been the ‘hunt’ for the provenance of the European Union (EU).<sup>488</sup> Given the semantic shifts over time, a pitfall on this hunt has been the elision of differences among first-wave proposals put forward by interwar visionaries, some of whom deliberately used ambiguous language (often for tactical reasons). Briand, for example, referred to his proposed entity as ‘the European Union,’

---

<sup>485</sup> N. J. Crowson, *Britain and Europe: A Political History since 1918* (London, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>486</sup> Crowson has pointed out that when Churchill used the word ‘federalism’ in the 1940s, it invoked merely ‘conceptions of trust and equality between partners’ (*Britain*, p. 4).

<sup>487</sup> The refinement of this vocabulary was driven by the disciplinisation of political science, and by the development of international relations and European Studies as intelligible fields of study.

<sup>488</sup> This trend is not unconnected to the disbursal of humanities research funds by the EU and other bodies anxious about the EU’s legitimacy deficit.

the ‘European association’ and ‘the Federal Union.’<sup>489</sup> Confusion was compounded at the time by interpreters and haste-prone commentators (including journalists facing tight deadlines), and has been deepened over the decades by translators insufficiently alert to how definitions have been refined in the academy (by political scientists, in particular). Another pitfall on the ‘hunt’ has been the teleological one: first-wave schemes are sometimes lumped together in the course of attempts to make post-1945 European integration ‘appear as an inevitable historical evolution,’ to borrow Michael Heffernan’s phrase.<sup>490</sup> In fact, nearly all the interwar proposals labelled ‘federal’ were just schemes to formalise intergovernmental cooperation. For its part, the NEG believed that ‘setting together the State Machineries ... and [founding] a Central Office which may be entrusted to work out the common interest of the twenty-six’ would be of ‘no use for the Nations.’<sup>491</sup> Rather, the political integration that the NEG/NBM envisioned was nothing short of federalism as understood today.

Political integration, as defined by Ernst B. Haas, is ‘the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings’ shift their ‘loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states.’ The result is ‘a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.’<sup>492</sup> When categorising any historical plan for European unity, it is important to note that envisaged political integration is necessary but not sufficient for a proposal to be deemed ‘federal’ (after

---

<sup>489</sup> Briand explained that he had avoided a single, inflexible formula for fear of dividing opinion and frightening certain governments; see Derek Heater, *The Idea of European Unity* (New York, 1992), p. 143. One British diplomat complained to FO colleagues that the French Government’s Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal Union (1930) was ‘so overloaded with verbiage that it is clear that the author has been at great pains either to conceal his meaning or to screen his complete lack of ideas’ (Crowson, *Britain*, p. 30).

<sup>490</sup> Michael Heffernan, *The Meaning of Europe: Geography and Geopolitics* (London, 1998), p. 3. André Gerolymatos has defined a ‘semi-official’ history (or parahistory) as one that ‘work backwards’ in an attempt to ‘justify’ the present circumstances of a particular polity by ‘subtly redrawing the past to suit the present’; see Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars: Myth, Reality, and the Eternal Conflict* (Toronto, 2001), p. x. Many such parahistories of European integration have been published in recent decades.

<sup>491</sup> NAFDMA, 5/4/2 File, Victor M. Bauer, *Europe: A Living Organism* [part 3], 1933, p. 53.

<sup>492</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe* (Stanford, 1958), p. 16.

all, political integration can be proposed with a view to the creation of a confederation or supranational organisation, too).

Any jurisdictional shift away from a state means that its national sovereignty is no longer absolute, so a state that refuses to relinquish ‘final and absolute authority’ (F. H. Hinsley’s definition of sovereignty) cannot be said, today, to be integrating with other states, let alone federalising.<sup>493</sup> Thus any scheme to unite Europe that did not envisage the creation of a new European polity invested with a measure of pooled sovereignty cannot be considered federal by today’s standards. Focusing on this criterion enables a clear distinction to be drawn between two types of proposal: those that would have left intact national sovereignty (i.e. the ability of states to act autonomously, with any proposed European institutions powerless to interfere), and those that would have necessitated some degree of ‘de-sovereignization.’<sup>494</sup> In the historiography, the clutter of proposals of the first type has obscured the smaller number of proposals of the second type, including the one made by the NEG/NBM.

The NEG/NBM was in fact one of the very few groups in interwar Europe to formulate a proposal for European political integration congruent with today’s understanding of federalism. In the very first issue of *New Britain* quarterly, one contributor rued that Britons wanted to be able ‘to snap our fingers at foreigners and their interference with us,’ and were prone ‘to think in terms of national glory, national success, national ambition and national sovereignty.’ But that pattern of thought was ‘incompatible’ with the solution to inter-state strife. Britons could ‘hardly say that we really want to solve our international problem’ if the retention of absolute sovereignty

---

<sup>493</sup> For the full definition, see F. H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Cambridge, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>494</sup> For a discussion of ‘de-sovereignization,’ see Francesco M. Bongiovanni, *The Decline and Fall of Europe* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 30.

continued to be favoured over the creation of a ‘sovereign government for Europe as a whole,’ which would ‘reduce’ the states to a ‘subordinate’ position ‘in a federation.’<sup>495</sup>

Repeatedly and consistently, the NEG/NBM argued for the creation of a European polity invested with a measure of pooled sovereignty; a body of rules under which states would be obliged to operate (entailing the institutionalisation of the process of resolving differences among them); and a set of mechanisms to ensure compliance with the rules in the case of any recalcitrance.<sup>496</sup> Before proceeding to examine these arguments, though, the NEG/NBM’s ideas need to be contextualised in the pre-1939 tradition of thought on European integration.

### ***An Overview of the Pre-1939 Tradition of Thought on European Integration***

By insisting on the necessity of pooling sovereignty, the NEG/NBM renewed a 60-year-old British tradition of thought on European integration, albeit one that before 1931 was exclusively comprised of proposals published on behalf of private citizens. The NEG – ‘the first group in [Britain] to be essentially concerned with the unification of Europe,’ as it put it – did generate ideas similar to some that had been set out by Victorian

---

<sup>495</sup> Professor J. MacMurray, ‘Can Science See Us Through?’, *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1932), p. 10.

<sup>496</sup> Harold Laski was one of the few figures outside the NEG/NBM to argue to the effect that ‘sovereign states cannot, by reason of their sovereignty, successfully organise their relationships upon any basis which can reasonably assume that peace is permanent’; see Laski, ‘The Economic Foundations of Peace’, in Leonard Woolf (ed.), *The Intelligent Man’s Way to Prevent War* (London, 1933), pp. 532–3. Another was Sir Arthur Salter, who wrote that a United States of Europe would need a ‘common political authority’ able to ‘reduce’ national governments to ‘the status of municipal authorities’; see *The United States of Europe and Other Papers* (London, 1933), pp. 91–2. Salter stated that the United States of Europe would need to be a ‘political reality’ to ‘be an economic one,’ though that was not ‘conceivable’ (p. 92). The *New Britain* weekly book reviewer regretted that the ‘practicability of such political unity’ seemed ‘beyond’ Salter’s imagination; see ‘The Reader’s Guide’ [review], ‘Sir Arthur Salter, *The United States of Europe* (London, 1933)’, *New Britain* weekly, 12 July 1933, p. 243.

thinkers, though Mitrović and the other prominent figures drew on many and varied sources, as well as their own imaginations.<sup>497</sup>

The first Briton to propose a federal Europe was Cambridge professor John Seeley, who wrote on the subject in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. In an 1871 lecture to the Peace Society, Seeley proposed a European legislature and executive, an armed force, and a form of direct link between the individual and the federal institutions. He stated that ‘We must cease to be mere Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and must begin to take as much pride in calling ourselves Europeans.’<sup>498</sup> *Macmillan’s Magazine* published Seeley’s ideas, but no group advocated them.

In 1899, W. T. Stead proposed that ‘an impartial Court’ be constituted as ‘a permanent part of the apparatus provided by the nations for adjusting [their] differences.’<sup>499</sup> As states were, presumably, to defer to the court’s rulings and be subject to decisions made by personnel in other parts of the apparatus, it is clear that Stead envisaged the impairment of national sovereignty. But Stead’s ideas, like Seeley’s a generation earlier, were not espoused by any group.

The Quakers began to support the idea of a United States of Europe in 1910, and the British National Peace League followed suit in 1911.<sup>500</sup> But it was not until Max Waechter founded the European Unity League in 1913 that a British organisation came into being specifically to advocate European unity (though not federalism).<sup>501</sup> Twenty-thousand joined – likely because of, rather than despite, the vagueness of its ideas – but the outbreak of war put a stop to its work.<sup>502</sup>

---

<sup>497</sup> NAFDMA, 5/2/2/138, *Memorandum on the New Europe Group*, no date (but no earlier than the mid-1950s), p. 1.

<sup>498</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 52.

<sup>499</sup> W. T. Stead, *The United States of Europe on the Eve of the Parliament of Peace* (London, 1899), p. 202.

<sup>500</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 123.

<sup>501</sup> Le Dréau, ‘L’Europe’, p. 325.

<sup>502</sup> Max Waechter, ‘The United States of Europe’, *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 86 (1924), p. 608. In the first half of 1914, the *Review of Reviews* and the *Daily Citizen* put forward the idea of a United States of Europe as the only way to guarantee peace and stability (Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 53).

During the war, certain sections of the Continental intelligentsia called for European political unity.<sup>503</sup> The Berlin-based association *Neus Vaterland* was founded in November 1914 to promote ‘supranational unification.’ Shortly after, the Dutch committee *De Europeesche Staatenbond* called for Europe to become ‘a closely united league of states or a federal state’; a Spanish committee echoed that call. In France, J. Barthélemy and A. Thierry developed sophisticated arguments in favour of integrating Europe. In 1918 Walther Rathenau called on German youth to ‘replace international anarchy by a voluntarily accepted higher authority.’<sup>504</sup>

It was Italy, though, that was the breeding ground for the purest federal proposals of the war years. In 1918 the economist Luigi Einaudi argued that national sovereignty was the root cause of war, and that the solution to Europe’s political and economic problems was a federal European state with its own army and administration. Einaudi proposed that the federation collect taxes and exercise its powers in direct relation with its citizens, as in the United States.<sup>505</sup>

At the same time, Einaudi’s associate Attilo Cabiati was writing the book *European Federation or League of Nations?* with Giovanni Agnelli, the founder of Fiat. Cabiati and Agnelli proposed European institutions including a federal congress, executive, and court to ensure the rule of law. Foreign policy, defence, finance and trade would be federal competencies; national sovereignty would be retained in all other areas.<sup>506</sup> On comparing the Articles of Confederation with its replacement, the Constitution for the United States of America, Cabiati and Agnelli realised the former had failed because it affirmed ‘the sovereign independence of the individual states,’ whereas the latter ‘created a Republic’ that ‘all admire.’ This showed that ‘one community, for its very survival,’ had ‘to change from a league of sovereign and

---

<sup>503</sup> Lippens, *European Integration*, p. 38.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

<sup>505</sup> Pinder, ‘Federalism’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 201.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*



independent states to a more complex form of a union of states ruled by a central power.’ For Cabiati and Agnelli, this meant that a ‘milder’ prospect than ‘a federation of European states’ was ‘but a delusion.’<sup>507</sup>

After Mussolini came to power in 1922, the proposals of Einaudi, Cabiati and Agnelli ‘disappeared from view’ in Italy.<sup>508</sup> Their ideas influenced a generation of Continental politicians, but had an ‘unclear’ impact in Britain, according to N. J. Crowson.<sup>509</sup> Wells’ analysis of the Articles of Confederation certainly echoed that of Cabiati and Agnelli. Wells stated that the Articles had ‘made a Union so lax and feeble that it could neither keep order at home nor maintain respect abroad.’ Europeans, then, needed to ‘do a parallel thing’ to what the Americans accomplished in the 1780s, namely ‘repeat, on a much greater scale and against profounder prejudices, the feat of understanding and readjustment’ that resulted in a federation. Wells argued that war would ‘destroy the social fabric of Europe’ unless boundaries were ‘got rid of’ and Europeans stopped ‘thinking in terms of the people of France, the people of England ... and so forth.’<sup>510</sup>

Wells’ appeal had no effect on British Government policy. Britain’s approach to Continental affairs throughout the early 1920s has been characterised as one of ‘limited liability.’ In the interwar years, successive British governments weighed potential commitments against domestic and imperial politico-economic considerations; usually, a prospective commitment that had little relation to British interests would be

---

<sup>507</sup> Giovanni Agnelli and Attilo Cabiati, ‘*European Federation or League of Nations?*, 1918’ in Peter M. R. Stirk and David Weigall (eds), *The Origins and Development of European Integration: A Reader and Commentary* (London, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>508</sup> Pinder, ‘Federalism’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 201–3.

<sup>509</sup> Crowson, *Britain*, p. 19. John Pinder has pointed out that the work of Cabiati and Agnelli ‘foreshadowed’ many of the ideas that would be developed in Britain’s Eurofederalist literature. This is unsurprising, given that their work was inspired by British political culture and was steeped in ideas from the English liberal tradition; see Pinder, ‘Federalism’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 201–3.

<sup>510</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Salvaging of Civilization: The Probable Future of Mankind* (New York, 1922), pp. 64–5.

deemed not worth the risk of embroilment.<sup>511</sup> The NEG/NBM disdained this hesitancy and drift, and rejected the naive hope-for-the-best attitude.

Britons who had any faith in the prospect of normalising conciliatory behaviour among states tended to invest their hopes in the League of Nations.<sup>512</sup> Many thought Britain's position as the foremost imperial power ruled out its direct participation in schemes for European integration, though figures debated whether Britain should at least sponsor such schemes.<sup>513</sup> Proposals for customs unions were taken seriously by political and bureaucratic elites on the Continent, and the Ouchy Convention (1932) came close to ratification.<sup>514</sup> In Britain, though, the separation of economics from foreign policy made it hard for elites to see the potential of economic cooperation; it was not until 1931 that the Foreign Office (FO) created an economic intelligence unit, and even then it was staffed by only a single desk officer.<sup>515</sup>

Passerini has argued that beyond Westminster and Whitehall, British attitudes toward 'the idea of Europe' through the 1920s and into the 1930s were much more varied than previously assumed, though 'Europeanism seems to have been mainly an urban, even metropolitan, affair.'<sup>516</sup> In 1929, Gaston Riou wrote that

the Conservative English press, for one reason or another, hardly breathe a word on this question of the United States of Europe. But from private information I can say that it is passionately discussed in London, even more so than in Paris, even if the papers do not dare to write of it.<sup>517</sup>

---

<sup>511</sup> Crowson, *Britain*, pp. 26–7.

<sup>512</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 119.

<sup>513</sup> Crowson, *Britain*, p. 116.

<sup>514</sup> Stirk, 'Introduction', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 15.

<sup>515</sup> Crowson, *Britain*, p. 22.

<sup>516</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 54. In 1927 for example, the Trades Union Congress passed a resolution calling for the creation of a United States of Europe; see Andrew Boyd and Frances Boyd, *Western Union: A Study of the Trend Toward European Unity* (Washington, 1949), p. 35.

<sup>517</sup> Riou, quoted in 'New Europe Speaks to New Britain', *New Britain: Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance* vol. 1, no. 3 (April–June 1933) [hereafter *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 3 (April–June 1933)], p. 86. Riou would later call the NEG 'the most cultured milieu in London' (Shillan, 'from D. S.: Rome – Paris').

The papers did not dare to – but a few years later Mitrinović changed that situation when he launched *New Britain* weekly. A periodical that stood ‘for The Federated States of Europe’ was ‘an event,’ Campbell recalled, ‘for at that time not a single journal or newspaper in Britain stood for European Federation; no responsible editor would dare to.’<sup>518</sup> The national press almost completely ignored the Eurofederalist part of the NEG/NBM’s platform.<sup>519</sup> Campbell remembered *Daily Express* editor Arthur Christiansen ‘looking around Mitrinović’s basement room in Gower Street, browsing over his books & doubtless, after his talk with him, he would report the conversation fully to Lord Beaverbrook ... whose pro-Empire policy was hostile to Europe & Mitrinović’s impulse & proposal.’<sup>520</sup> There is no record of Mitrinović’s view on the Beaverbrook boycott, but he referred to British newspapers in general as the ‘daily dirge.’<sup>521</sup>

Reflecting on the NEG/NBM’s efforts to ‘pioneer the way to European Federation,’ Campbell recalled that to publicly advocate it in Britain ‘was to invite ridicule or hostility, as this writer received on many occasions.’<sup>522</sup> Another contributor noted that to speak of European federation ‘may well appear laughable.’<sup>523</sup> Indeed, the NEG/NBM’s calls for the federalisation of Europe would have seemed quixotic to many readers. Yet the movement’s prominent figures believed that advocating

---

<sup>518</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 18.

<sup>519</sup> At no stage did coverage of the NEG/NBM by the *News Chronicle* make the movement too newsworthy for other dailies to ignore. The *News Chronicle* covered NEG events as late as 1938; see, for example, ‘China’s Great Fight’, *News Chronicle*, 14 May 1938.

<sup>520</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 8. Lord Morley described the *Daily Express* as a ‘huge engine for keeping discussion at a low level’ (Graves, *Long Weekend*, p. 161). Seaman’s verdict was that the newspaper ‘took nothing seriously (unless it was unimportant)’; see *Life in Britain*, p. 126.

<sup>521</sup> Wrugh [Campbell], ‘Notes’, p. 8. Mitrinović was ‘prodigious’ in his ‘reading of daily newspapers & of the periodicals, both British & Continental, [so] he knew what was happening of importance, in every part of the world, and scarcely a day passed when he did not refer to what so and so had said’ (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, he had ‘friends and correspondents in most countries of Europe who kept him informed on the main tendencies and political changes’ (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>523</sup> W. Horsfall Carter, ‘Exploring the Approaches to a Federated Europe’, *New Europe* vol. 1, no. 1 (September 1934) [hereafter *New Europe*, September 1934 – because only this one issue was published], p. 22.

Eurofederalism was not tilting at windmills; what led them to this belief was their perception that the annihilation of Europe was increasingly likely.

### *The 'European Civil War'*

For the NEG/NBM's prominent figures, the roots of the European 'crisis' lay in the blood-soaked trenches of the Great War – which they viewed as a terrible 'European Civil War,' in Mitrinović's words.<sup>524</sup> Fuller called it 'the great European Civil War of 1914–18,' a conflict among nations 'belonging to a common civilization and culture.'<sup>525</sup> Another contributor deemed it 'a civil war of Europe, of mass madness, when each belligerent nation blasphemed the Almighty in their prayers for victory.'<sup>526</sup> Tom Lawson has dated the emergence of the 'conceptual device' of the 'European Civil War' to the 1930s, and has suggested that its use was part of the effort to 'define the crisis.'<sup>527</sup> But the term had been used as early as November 1914 by Mitrinović's former associate Franz Marc, who wrote from the Western Front that the conflict was 'a *European civil war*, a war against the inner invisible enemy of the European spirit.'<sup>528</sup>

Donald Cameron Watt has written that those who 'spoke of a European civil war' in the 1930s felt the existence of 'a common European political society, a *civitas Europae*,' and 'identified those elements in it which were in conflict with each other.'<sup>529</sup> Such sentiment was rarely expressed in Britain, where the notion of Anglo-

---

<sup>524</sup> Dimitrije Mitrinović, 'Urgent Appeal to His Excellency the Chancellor of the Reich', *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), Supplement.

<sup>525</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, 'Suicide while of Unsound Mind', *New Britain* weekly, 11 July 1934, p. 217.

<sup>526</sup> 'S. I.', 'An Open Letter to the Younger Generation – Armistice, 1934', *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, 7 November 1934, p. 5.

<sup>527</sup> Tom Lawson, 'The Myth of the European Civil War', in Richard Littlejohns and Sara Soncini (eds), *Myths of Europe* (Amsterdam, 2007), p. 135.

<sup>528</sup> Marc, quoted in Erich Kahler, *The Germans* (Princeton, 1974), p. 272. Marc's statement appeared in 'Das geheime Europa,' an article published in the magazine *Das Forum* in March 1915; see Otto Karl Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career, 1914–1920* (Chicago, 1989), p. 13 and p. 261.

<sup>529</sup> Donald Cameron Watt, *Too Serious a Business: European Armed Forces and the Approach to the Second World War* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 14.

Saxon fraternity was more venerable.<sup>530</sup> Prominent figures in the NEG/NBM were not shy in asserting their belief in a *civitas Europae*, though. They boldly argued that ‘So united has Europe always been in history, culture, and political origins – and so much more now, by constant interchange of life – that its wars are in the nature of civil war.’<sup>531</sup> Strictly speaking, a civil war cannot, by definition, be fought by two or more states. Yet a writer with a continental (or larger still) perspective could put forward the concept of an international civil war in the confidence that open-minded readers would not dismiss it as oxymoronic. After all, awareness of the shredding of the common fabric of European civilisation in 1914–18 had created ‘a sensation akin to civil war’ among some individuals.<sup>532</sup> In 1915, Jules Romains had referred to a ‘civil disorder’ at ‘the heart of a homogenous civilization.’ The authors of some books published during the war years even treated the ‘European civil war’ as ‘the war of European unification,’ because they believed the conflict would force Europeans to learn their lesson.<sup>533</sup> This was the provenance of the NEG’s notion that if Europe federalised, the ‘crime’ of the war would be ‘expiated’ because history would then ‘bestow upon that War the new meaning of having been the pangs of the re-birth of Europe.’<sup>534</sup>

To some Europeans the Great War seemed like a civil war in another respect: the closer the conflict came to being a total war, ‘the more it resembled a civil war,’ as Dan Diner has noted. In civil wars, each of the sides *has* to aim for the total defeat of the other because only one of them can end up with ultimate political authority and a monopoly on violence. In most cases of pre-1914 interstate violence in Europe, the sides had not strived for the destruction of the enemy power but were, instead, ‘satisfied

---

<sup>530</sup> Two examples from 1896 will suffice: Arthur Balfour ventured that ‘the idea of war with the United States carries with it some of the unnatural horror of a civil war,’ while Joseph Chamberlain agreed that such a conflict would constitute ‘fratricidal strife.’ See Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton, 2010), p. 96.

<sup>531</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 4.

<sup>532</sup> Stanley G. Payne, *Civil War in Europe, 1905–1949* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 20–1.

<sup>533</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 37 and p. 36.

<sup>534</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 5.

with a complaisance' that preserved its existence. In contrast, compromise was impossible in a civil war because victory implied the destruction or total submission of the vanquished. For this reason, 'civil wars are the most brutal wars possible,' Diner has explained.<sup>535</sup>

The Great War had brought the standards of colonial warfare home, where Europeans butchered others so like themselves.<sup>536</sup> The fear that the 'European civil war' to come would be even more brutal underpinned the conviction – held by Mitrinović and other prominent figures in the NEG/NBM – that European culture itself would be 'in danger of perishing.'<sup>537</sup> In 1935, the poet Herbert Palmer wrote in *Eleventh Hour* that the conflict would have 'all the appearance of Civil War,' and would be 'self-murder, suicide, a horrible activity of negations.'<sup>538</sup>

### ***The Movement's Perception of the European and World 'Crisis'***

In a September 1933 issue of *New Britain* weekly, Lavrin wrote of a grave 'world-crisis' that could no longer be ignored by those who tried to bury their heads 'ostrich-like' in the sand, which had become 'much too thinned and scattered by the continuous storms sweeping over the present day world.'<sup>539</sup> The NEG saw the European 'crisis' as a 'painful time' of 'deepening debts and of social disintegration,' in which 'crime, suicide and insanity' were on the rise among a 'more insecure' people.<sup>540</sup> McEachran

---

<sup>535</sup> Dan Diner, *Cataclysms: A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe's Edge* (Madison, 2008), pp. 12–13 and pp. 24–6.

<sup>536</sup> Payne, *Civil War*, p. 22.

<sup>537</sup> 'New Albion' [Special Supplement], *Eleventh Hour*, 6 February 1935, Supplement (p. 4).

<sup>538</sup> Herbert Palmer, 'British Initiative for European Union', *Eleventh Hour*, 27 February 1935, p. 254. Fraser, too, expressed the fear that Europe would 'virtually commit suicide' (Winifred G. Fraser, 'New Europe', *Eleventh Hour*, 21 November 1934, p. 10).

<sup>539</sup> Janko Lavrin, 'Nationalism', *New Britain* weekly, 13 September 1933, p. 530.

<sup>540</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 1 and p. 4. In Britain, the Means Test was a force for social disintegration. Community cohesion was weakened when neighbours informed the authorities about one another's material circumstances (Blythe, *Age of Illusion*, p. 161). But 'all over England,' Orwell wrote, the 'most cruel and evil effect of the Means Test is the way in which it breaks up families'; see Orwell, *The Road to*

summarised the economic dimension of the global crisis thus: ‘the world grows more impoverished, unemployment increases in numbers, and in the midst of plenty we starve.’ Austerity measures and beggar-thy-neighbour policies presented the ‘absurd spectacle of each nation cutting its own throat and that of its neighbours, in a desperate attempt to economise and balance its budget.’<sup>541</sup> One *New Britain* weekly contributor stated that Europe’s economic crisis was the fault of the makers of the ‘arbitrary’ treaties of Versailles and Trianon, whose redrawing of borders had resulted in ‘dislocated, disjointed, and hopeless’ economies, with ‘tragic sociological consequences.’<sup>542</sup> In August 1933, Purdom proclaimed that Europe was a ‘mad and dangerous’ armed camp, in which nations were ‘preoccupied with preparations for war’ and ‘actively fighting with economic weapons.’<sup>543</sup>

In the *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, Lester Hutchinson wrote that armed competition for colonial monopolies and foreign markets could result in ‘the complete destruction of civilisation.’ War would be ‘brought to every civilian’s doorstep,’ making the Great War ‘almost seem like a skirmish.’ Hutchinson argued that the peoples of Europe had to ‘swiftly join together to introduce a new order into a mad and weary world’ if they were to prevent their being ‘blown to bits from the air, gassed in the streets, or artificially infected with terrible diseases.’<sup>544</sup>

Such presentiments of disaster were not uncommon in what Allen Hutt called an ‘eve-of-war age.’<sup>545</sup> The NEG/NBM’s prominent figures did not think of war and

---

*Wigan Pier* (London, 1998 [1937]), pp. 70–1. Inspectors assessed total household income: it was thus common for youths to be driven from their childhood homes, and for employed persons to come to resent out-of-work kinsfolk they had to support (reducing the fruits of their labour to subsistence level). The inquisitorial ‘test’ was a humiliating violation of domestic privacy, too (Gardiner, *Thirties*, pp. 47–51).

<sup>541</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 25. McEachran was not the only commentator to equate trade policy with violence. In 1926, Elémer Hantos had noted the ‘comprehensive armaments’ of post-war trade policy; the ‘new weapons’ included barriers that ‘exceed the highest customs dues in their effectiveness.’ See Elémer Hantos, ‘The European Customs Union’, in Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins*, p. 15.

<sup>542</sup> ‘Sentinel’, ‘The Shape of a New Europe’, *New Britain* weekly, 29 November 1933, p. 41.

<sup>543</sup> C. B. Purdom, ‘Britain’s Destiny’, *New Britain* weekly, 16 August 1933, p. 400.

<sup>544</sup> Lester Hutchinson, ‘Europe on the Brink of War’, *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, 29 August 1934, p. 6.

<sup>545</sup> Allen Hutt, *This Final Crisis* (London, 1935), p. 161.

peace in binary terms, so did not equate the absence of war with peace. Instead, they saw points on a continuum, which included what Delahaye called ‘Permanent Peace’ (also referred to as ‘active peace’); ‘so-called peace’; and war. In August 1934, so-called peace reigned: it was no more than ‘the suspension of imminent military hostilities during a period of continuous financial and economic struggle.’<sup>546</sup>

Palmer wrote that if war broke out, the result would be ‘horror and tyranny.’<sup>547</sup>

The NEG/NBM’s prominent figures thought that a war in Europe would be ‘impossible to localise’; if no war on the Continent could be contained, it followed that any war would necessarily become a Great one. *New Europe: A monthly Journal for Federation and Disarmament* (hereafter *New Europe*) stated that armed conflict was ‘possible between many states on the Continent at any time,’ which was consistent with the prominent figures’ view of Europe as closer to a state of war than it was to active peace.<sup>548</sup> Civilisation was a hairsbreadth from barbarism and the ‘negation of all that humanity has risen to,’ *New Britain* weekly wrote.<sup>549</sup>

Prominent figures in the NEG/NBM recognised that a second Great War would be more horrific by an order of magnitude than the first, in which the use of armaments had for the most part been limited to relatively narrow strips of Europe. They were, of course, far from alone in thinking this way and in sensing the danger so acutely. As Susan R. Grayzel has noted, civilian memoirists and commentators during this period were ‘consistent’ in asserting that air raids had ‘changed the nature of warfare.’<sup>550</sup> Stanley Baldwin’s 1932 prophecy that ‘the bomber will always get through’ became common currency.<sup>551</sup> Britain was thought to be especially vulnerable to aerial attack

---

<sup>546</sup> *New Britain Constitution and Statement of Aims* (London, August 1934), p. 7.

<sup>547</sup> Palmer, ‘British Initiative’, p. 254.

<sup>548</sup> *New Europe*, September 1934, inside back cover.

<sup>549</sup> ‘The Eleventh Hour for Europe’, *New Britain* weekly, 2 August 1933, p. 325.

<sup>550</sup> Susan R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 103.

<sup>551</sup> Overy, *Morbid Age*, p. 176. The Air Ministry stoked fears of a ‘knock-out blow’ by enemy bombers in order to scare the Treasury into funding expansion of the Royal Air Force (Crowson, *Britain*, p. 38).



because its population and industry were concentrated in relatively small areas.<sup>552</sup> As G. E. G. Catlin noted, aircraft had ‘reduced the Channel, militarily speaking, to a ditch.’<sup>553</sup> Washing ‘our hands of all these blankety-blank foreigners’ and letting them ‘go to the devil in their own way’ was no longer an option, Wickham Steed wrote in *New Britain* quarterly.<sup>554</sup>

Fears were fuelled by works of popular fiction. For example, the rumour of a raid by thousands of planes ‘all carrying bombs filled with suffocating gas, or explosive that would blow entire streets into atoms with one bang’ was the turning point in the plot of Cicely Hamilton’s 1933 novel *Little Arthur’s History of the Twentieth Century* (reviewed in the 22 November issue of *New Britain* weekly), which had been serialised in the mass-circulation *Time and Tide*.<sup>555</sup> That same year, Wells’ *The Shape of Things to Come* featured the ‘bombing, gas-diffusing aeroplane,’ which made ‘the entire surface of a belligerent country a war area.’<sup>556</sup> For the NEG/NBM’s prominent figures, Europe risked ending ‘her glorious history in indignity and mutual slaughter, a spectacle for the world’ – but they believed the continent could still ‘pull up and show the world that Western civilisation has not yet exhausted its meaning and purpose.’<sup>557</sup> As we shall see, what distinguished them from others who thought similarly was that the movement formulated far-reaching, detailed plans that promised to reverse the

---

<sup>552</sup> Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 323.

<sup>553</sup> G. E. G. Catlin, ‘Is It Peace?’, *New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State* New Series (Autumn 1934) [hereafter *New Britain* quarterly New Series (Autumn 1934) – because only this one issue was published], p. 26.

<sup>554</sup> Wickham Steed, ‘Alarm in Europe – Where Do We Stand’, *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 3 (April–June 1933), p. 79.

<sup>555</sup> Dennis Kennedy, ‘Cicely Hamilton’s Twentieth Century’ (paper delivered to the Belfast Literary Society, 3 April 2000), p. 5; and Lis Whitelaw, *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton: Actor, Writer, Suffragist* (Columbus, 1991), p. 234. These rumours of a raid begin a chain of events that leads to the creation of a ‘Federated Europe’ when states become provinces with ‘no fighting machines and men for outside wars,’ only police forces ‘to keep order at home’ (Kennedy, *Ibid.*, p. 7, p. 12 and p. 2).

<sup>556</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* (London, 1933), p. 40.

<sup>557</sup> ‘Another Week Goes By’, *Eleventh Hour*, 2 January 1935, p. 114.

generalisation of insecurity (or ‘socialized danger,’ to use the term employed by the political scientist Harold Lasswell in 1941).<sup>558</sup>

In response to a *Daily Mirror* article that urged the government to develop ‘the retaliatory power of air attack,’ the *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin* lamented that civilisation would become ‘a competitive slaughter of infants.’<sup>559</sup> Prominent figures in the NEG/NBM saw that there would be no distinction between combatants and civilians in a war extending far beyond battlefields. With fear of retaliation the only thing that might hold back an enemy, pity would be taken for weakness: civilians en masse would be ‘legitimate’ targets – and defenceless victims (Fig. 8). The prominent figures feared that adversaries in the next war would aim not for the mere capitulation of states, but for the annihilation of nations.<sup>560</sup> Geoffrey West likened the prospect of war to ‘men quarrelling together in a small room and threatening each other with sticks of dynamite.’ The conflict would be ‘war without victory, war to the death – the death of European civilisation.’<sup>561</sup>



Fig. 8. Arthur Wragg, ‘1940?’, *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, 29 August 1934, p. 3.

<sup>558</sup> Harold D. Lasswell, ‘The Garrison State’, *American Journal of Sociology* 46.4 (1941), p. 455.

<sup>559</sup> ‘Crisis? Issues? Emergency?’, *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, Mid-April 1934, p. 1.

<sup>560</sup> ‘New Albion’ [Special Supplement], Supplement (p. 4).

<sup>561</sup> Geoffrey West, ‘War the Spectre’, *New Albion*, April 1934, p. 33.

Mitrinović's vision of civilisation-engulfing catastrophe was 'the hell of bacterial and gas suicide of Christendom.' Britain would be desolated by 'the bacteriological east wind,' he prophesied.<sup>562</sup> Mitrinović expressed disdain for the 'ugly and ignorant spirits, ignoble and animal minds' who had brought Europe to this pass. He questioned whether these so-called statesmen really cared if civilisation met 'its shipwreck and cosmic earthquake in the European self-extirpating war.' They were guilty of 'power-delusion,' but 'Press-lords, great and world-ruling powers that be, infinite merchants and galactic financiers' too were to blame for the calamity to come (Fig. 9). Mitrinović noted their combined ability to 'destroy, dwarf, humiliate the kingdom of Culture and Civilisation,' Christendom and Europe, 'Western Man and the God in him.' The everlasting 'chronicle of the Truth of Things' would judge them all 'misleaders of the people,' and would remember them and their own children as having been 'killed off like the rest of us that are to be killed in our rat and mice millions.'<sup>563</sup>

---

<sup>562</sup> 'New: New Disaster', p. 177. A week later he moderated his prognosis: Britain would merely 'not survive as a world power' if another war broke out ('United States of Europe instead of the Atlantic Catastrophe? Albion and Columbia to lead Europe into World Federation. Stop on the Brink of the Abyss and Turn Back, Upwards, Towards Survival!', *New Britain* weekly, 11 July 1934, p. 209).

<sup>563</sup> 'Sermon to the Deaf, and to the Criminal Idiots, and to those who shall kill and shall be killed, unless they wake up to hear', *Eleventh Hour*, 8 May 1935, pp. 461–2. Mitrinović, here, also called them 'infernal souls and maleducated upstarts and highwaymen,' 'bloody and killing souls,' and 'blind and insensate leaders.' Examples of demonisation were extremely rare in the NEG/NBM's periodicals.



Stanley Herbert

**The International Lunatic Asylum**

One keeper to the other: "And they all think they're God's chosen people!"

Fig. 9. Stanley Herbert, 'The International Lunatic Asylum', *New Britain* weekly, 12 July 1933, p. 241.

NEG/NBM periodicals told their readers what they could do – as part of the movement or in sympathy with it – to end their ‘waking nightmare,’ in which ‘strain, fear ... and utter helplessness are [the] chief emotions.’<sup>564</sup> Prominent figures in the movement saw the way to resolve the crisis, but it would take nothing less than ‘radical measures of reform.’<sup>565</sup> One of these measures would be the creation of a European federation, such as had never been proposed by any group in Britain. The NEG/NBM’s proposal was genuinely Eurofederalist, as shall be made clear in chapter four through analysis of both the movement’s reasoning and its vision for the creation of European institutions.

---

<sup>564</sup> ‘The Eleventh Hour for Europe’, p. 325.

<sup>565</sup> *Disarmament*, p. 2.

## Chapter 4

### To Create a ‘New Europe’: the NEG/NBM’s Reasoning and Vision, in Context

#### *Three Visions of a United Europe: a Comparative Analysis of the Proposals of Coudenhove-Kalergi, Briand and Mitrinović*

From 1923 into the early 1930s, at least two dozen books on European unity were published every year.<sup>566</sup> By far the most important of these books was *Pan-Europe* (1923) by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, an aristocratic geopolitician who was the second most prominent advocate of European integration (after Briand) between the wars.<sup>567</sup> *Pan-Europe* was the manifesto of the Paneuropean Union, the organisation Coudenhove-Kalergi established to propagate the idea of European integration, to convert individuals to its cause, and to exert influence on governments via its 23 national branches.<sup>568</sup> In 1925 Coudenhove-Kalergi visited London, where he convinced some personages to endorse his vision of Pan-Europe.<sup>569</sup> The British official attitude, though, was chilly.<sup>570</sup>

Coudenhove-Kalergi argued that Europe’s states had to be ‘supplemented or completed’ by a union because the post-war proliferation of ‘a dozen Alsace-Lorraines’ had multiplied the risk of war.<sup>571</sup> Like Mitrinović, then, Coudenhove-Kalergi thought political union was the only means by which Europe’s troubles could be overcome. But

---

<sup>566</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 21.

<sup>567</sup> Roobol, ‘Briand’s Plan’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 37. Seven years later, Churchill publicly recognised that Coudenhove-Kalergi ‘revived the ideal of European unity’ (‘The United States of Europe’, *The Saturday Evening Post*, 15 February 1930).

<sup>568</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>569</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 55. After the Nazis seized power, Coudenhove-Kalergi repeatedly went to Britain to set up a Paneuropean Union branch, which Salter and Nicolson joined; see Luisa Passerini, *Love and the Idea of Europe*, trans. Juliet Haydock with Allan Cameron (New York, 2009), p. 74.

<sup>570</sup> In 1926, a mandarin at the FO called Coudenhove-Kalergi an ‘impractical theorist.’ Prior to 1930, the FO library did not include any books on Pan-Europe. See Ralph White, ‘The Europeanism of Coudenhove-Kalergi’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 39; and Crowson, *Britain*, p. 32.

<sup>571</sup> R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe* (New York, 1926), p. 11 and p. 55; and R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, ‘War Danger in Europe’, *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 88 (1926), p. 549.

unlike the NEG/NBM, Coudenhove-Kalergi deemed the Soviet threat a major reason for the states to ‘overcome all national hostilities and consolidate’; if they failed to commit to mutual defence in Pan-Europe, they would eventually ‘succumb to a Russian conquest.’<sup>572</sup> Like the NEG/NBM, the Paneuropean Union argued that intra-European disputes needed to be resolved through obligatory arbitration, but Coudenhove-Kalergi focused on arbitration as a way to prevent meddling by the Soviet Union, the adversary that posed the greatest threat to Europe, as he saw it.<sup>573</sup> Whereas Coudenhove-Kalergi feared a newly industrialised Russia extending its borders to the Rhine, Mitrinović never fixated on the possibility of Soviet aggression – rather, he feared ‘a new Great War’ in which ‘Europe as a whole would suffer the cataclysm of her history and her being.’<sup>574</sup> The NEG wanted European states to avoid antagonising the Soviet Union: while federalising, they ought to ‘have no desire to interfere with Russia, and must create our own conditions, so that Russia shall not desire to interfere with us.’<sup>575</sup>

While acknowledging the injustices of the post-war settlement, Coudenhove-Kalergi thought borders needed to be respected, not redrawn.<sup>576</sup> In contrast, Mitrinović expressed openness to borders being ‘revised’ as part of a ‘Covenant of the Federation.’<sup>577</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi was in favour of a ‘Magna Carta of Tolerance’ to protect minorities, though in his view the need for special protection would fade away as political and economic integration made borders ever less important.<sup>578</sup> In contrast to

---

<sup>572</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, p. 55.

<sup>573</sup> White, ‘Coudenhove-Kalergi’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 33. Arnold J. Zurcher, an associate of Coudenhove-Kalergi, later explained that the main reason for the focus on ‘the ideals of free Europe’ was to give Communism ‘more effective competition’ in the ‘struggle for men’s minds’; the ‘military and diplomatic aspects’ were ‘secondary,’ he added. See Arnold J. Zurcher, *The Struggle to Unite Europe, 1940–1958* (New York, 1958), p. 172. Coudenhove-Kalergi wanted to prevent meddling by all non-European powers: he sought a European ‘Monroe Doctrine’ and reform of the League so that it dealt only with intercontinental issues. See White, ‘Coudenhove-Kalergi’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 34.

<sup>574</sup> Peter Bugge, ‘The Nation Supreme: The Idea of Europe, 1914–1945’, in Kevin Wilson and Jan van der Dussen (eds), *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London, 1995), p. 98; and *New Europe*, September 1934, inside back cover.

<sup>575</sup> *Disarmament*, p. 3.

<sup>576</sup> Bugge, ‘Nation Supreme’, in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, p. 99.

<sup>577</sup> *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 11.

<sup>578</sup> Bugge, ‘Nation Supreme’, in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, p. 99.

the enshrining of mere tolerance, the NEG was open to the idea of ‘*European citizenship* and the right of any member of such Minority to *unprejudiced European jurisdiction*,’ as proposed by Victor M. Bauer, a Viennese thinker who gave a series of lectures to the NEG in 1933.<sup>579</sup>

The Paneuropean Union’s view on the place of Britain differed from that of the NEG/NBM. Coudenhove-Kalergi wrote that Pan-Europe had to ‘constitute itself *without* England, but not *against* England.’<sup>580</sup> He excluded Britain because he believed it had grown out of Europe to form, with its empire, a political continent in its own right.<sup>581</sup> The NEG/NBM, in contrast, called for a ‘straight and powerful British initiative for the Federation of the Continent.’<sup>582</sup> To Mitrinović, the launch of such an initiative by Britain would have mattered more than ‘whether Britain herself wants to join that Federation or whether she does not join it.’<sup>583</sup> Indeed, Britain’s ‘prime duty’ was to help ‘the European nations to draw together,’ one issue of *New Britain* weekly declared on its front cover (Fig. 10).<sup>584</sup> Mitrinović’s preference was for Britain ‘joining [the] European Federation as an integral member.’<sup>585</sup>

---

<sup>579</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 56.

<sup>580</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, p. 41.

<sup>581</sup> Bugge, ‘Nation Supreme’, in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, p. 97. Coudenhove-Kalergi added, though, that as soon as Britain felt ‘drawn to Europe’ more strongly than to its possessions, the way to Pan-Europe had to ‘lie open’ (*Pan-Europe*, p. 42). Yet the more pertinent question was how strongly the dominions felt drawn to Britain – this matter would be settled in 1931, when the Statute of Westminster made the dominions fully self-governing. Their people’s aspirations for looser ties with Britain ended any hopes for imperial federation that had lingered after the Edwardian era (Pugh, *We Danced*, pp. 406–7). NEG/NBM periodicals rarely featured in-depth discussions of the idea of imperial federation; Mitrinović saw the prospect of the federalisation of Europe as more realistic and important.

<sup>582</sup> ‘New Britain’, ‘An Open Letter to the Rt. Hon. David Lloyd George, M.P.’, *New Britain* weekly, 18 October 1933, p. 677.

<sup>583</sup> ‘Versailles Peace, Versailles Armament, Versailles Disarmament – everything except New Order for Great Britain, first and immediately, and Federation for Europe first and immediately for the sake of New Adam and the World Federation!’, *New Britain* weekly, 8 August 1934, p. 339.

<sup>584</sup> *New Britain* weekly, 18 April 1934, front cover. The weekly’s striking front cover depicted the British Isles as a solid black landmass, an umbra befitting what the NBM’s prominent figures saw as dark days – but the shadowlands brighten as ‘New Britain’ (including an apparently united Ireland) moves closer to the Continent. When the movement’s financial position became perilous, the weekly’s production values declined; the front cover of the last eleven issues was printed in green ink only.

<sup>585</sup> ‘Editorial’, *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), p. 2.





Fig. 10. Front cover of *New Britain* weekly, 18 April 1934; artwork by 'CWB' [C. W. Bacon].

Delahaye, for his part, believed Britain and the other large states would either enter the European federation 'direct as units' or after joining 'small scale federations';

he suggested that Britain could join ‘on her own or with Scandinavia.’<sup>586</sup> Another contributor to the NEG/NBM’s periodicals took the view that

Britain can neither accept plans for a United States of Europe, from which she is excluded, nor can she shut herself up within the wide borders of the Empire. Britain is as necessary to Europe as Europe is to her. Her destiny and that of Europe as a whole are one.<sup>587</sup>

In the same vein, Mairet argued that ‘The culture of Britain is European, and the natural and true orientation of British politics is therefore towards European unity, to be expressed ultimately in a federation of all the European States.’<sup>588</sup>

In marked contrast to the NEG/NBM, Coudenhove-Kalergi paid little attention to *how* Europe would be united. He offered outlines rather than detailed plans; for example, his proposal for a Pan-Europe constitution was vague.<sup>589</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi ignored or skirted some issues in his writings, in which questionable assertions commingle with prescient insights.<sup>590</sup> Many took the Paneuropean Union’s proposals to be ‘naïve’ and ‘overly optimistic,’ as Ralph White has surmised – yet while Coudenhove-Kalergi’s ‘Europeanism *was* idealistic and, in some respects, impractical,’ as ‘a radical critique of existing European order, it had to be.’<sup>591</sup> The same goes for the proposals of the NBM, whose weekly declared that ‘The impossible is the only possible course of action today’: ‘the federation of nations, the creation of institutions for a European society, political, economic, and cultural.’<sup>592</sup>

There is evidence only of indirect contact between the NEG and Coudenhove-Kalergi: Vandeleur Robinson wrote to the NEG, in advance of his attendance at a 1938 meeting, to say that he had ‘recently’ had ‘a long talk’ with the leader of the

---

<sup>586</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. V. Delahaye, ‘The Next Step toward New Europe’, *New Britain: Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance* vol. 1, no. 2 (January–March 1933), p. 47.

<sup>587</sup> ‘Anglo-Saxon’, ‘European Emigrations and the British Mission’, *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 29.

<sup>588</sup> Philip Mairet, ‘Necessarium Ad Britanniae Salutem’, *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1932), p. 12.

<sup>589</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 127.

<sup>590</sup> White, ‘Coudenhove-Kalergi’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 31.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>592</sup> ‘Europe’s St. Vitus’s Dance’, *New Britain* weekly, 1 August 1934, p. 310.

Pan-European Union.<sup>593</sup> The NEG/NBM's publications mentioned Coudenhove-Kalergi or the Pan-European Union only twice (in passing) in three years. Mitrinović evidently deemed Coudenhove-Kalergi's proposals undeserving of serious consideration, but given that there were some similarities between the blueprints of the NEG/NBM and Pan-European Union, it is worth considering why this was so. Mitrinović did not believe in half measures (unless they were way stations): unlike the Pan-European Union, prominent figures in the NEG/NBM were clear-eyed on the issue of national sovereignty and uncompromising in their belief that it had to be drastically curtailed. In stark contrast, Coudenhove-Kalergi's ideas on sovereignty were equivocal. Favouring 'an ad hoc politico-economic federation,' he was sure that all the Continental states would relinquish some of their sovereign powers after the pioneers among them showcased the advantages of doing so.<sup>594</sup> Initially, Coudenhove-Kalergi seemed to think that small concessions of sovereignty would be sufficient to ensure lasting peace and prosperity.<sup>595</sup> But he had changed his mind by February 1930, when he argued that unity could be achieved without impairing national sovereignty.<sup>596</sup> It seems, then, that Coudenhove-Kalergi came to believe that his proposed permanent bureau, House of Peoples and House of States needed only negligible powers. In contrast, Mitrinović comprehended that European institutions could not possibly prove effective unless they pooled a large measure of sovereignty.

Ignoring a mass of evidence to the contrary, Coudenhove-Kalergi believed that a wide constituency for his ideas was waiting to be inspired.<sup>597</sup> Like Mitrinović, he overestimated the extent to which the Great War had blunted the emotional appeal of nationalism. Both visionaries also overestimated the extent to which the non-

---

<sup>593</sup> NAFDMA, 5/2/2/125, Vandeleur Robinson to Mayne, London, 13 July 1938, TS. Robinson was a member of the Minorities Committee at the headquarters of the LNU (*Ibid.*).

<sup>594</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, p. xv; and White, 'Coudenhove-Kalergi', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 35 and p. 37.

<sup>595</sup> Bugge, 'Nation Supreme', in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, p. 101.

<sup>596</sup> Boyd and Boyd, *Western Union*, p. 40.

<sup>597</sup> White, 'Coudenhove-Kalergi', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 39.

intelligentsia would be swayed by invocations of a common European heritage – in each case, this owed something to a class-specific misrecognition of the relation of politics to values, as enshrined in high culture, in the new age of mass suffrage.

The Paneuropean Union never gained broad-based support.<sup>598</sup> Although its first congress attracted over 2,000 delegates from across Europe, Arnold J. Zurcher admitted that its branches were rarely more than ‘study and discussion groups,’ and conceded that there was little effort to forge a mass organisation strong enough to pressure governments.<sup>599</sup> Instead, Coudenhove-Kalergi concentrated on winning over political leaders and officials in the hope that they might

use their influence and power to establish appropriate public organs of European cooperation and mold favourable opinion. It was a strategy that ... could not go far to popularize the movement for integration. Hence, during the interbellum period, although European union became an ideal to be reckoned with among intellectual circles and in the salons where social and political leaders foregathered, it made little headway in capturing the imagination of the common man.

Zurcher considered Coudenhove-Kalergi’s greatest interwar achievement to be the Briand initiative, on the grounds that the Paneuropean Union made the French statesman sufficiently enthusiastic about ‘the European cause’ to ‘try to make it the policy of the major European power’ for the first time.<sup>600</sup> Scholars have debated how much influence Coudenhove-Kalergi had on Briand, but it is known that the two met in 1926, and that Briand accepted the honorary presidency of the Central Council of the Paneuropean Union in 1927.<sup>601</sup>

---

<sup>598</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 442.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40; and Zurcher, *The Struggle*, p. 5 and p. 7.

<sup>600</sup> Zurcher, *The Struggle*, p. 5 and p. 7.

<sup>601</sup> Roobol has noted that the idea of uniting Europe ‘hung in the air’ at that time, so it is hard ‘to reconstruct the process’ whereby the notion ‘matured’ in the mind of Briand, given his paucity of writings; see ‘Briand’s Plan’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 36–7. As many as 50 books that argued in favour of uniting Europe were published in mid-1929 (Lipgens, *European Integration*, p. 41).

At that time Briand's personal standing was extremely high: he had shared the 1926 Nobel Peace Prize for the Locarno Treaties, which reintegrated Germany into the comity of European states.<sup>602</sup> Following Locarno he failed to get the United States to guarantee French security; all that could be salvaged from the negotiations was the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, which lacked credibility.<sup>603</sup> Briand then sought to weave a European web to enmesh Germany, whose underlying economic strength was greater than that of France.<sup>604</sup> The following winter Briand privately stated:

A European confederation would be the true way of assuring peace. The League of Nations is too vast and feeble. The Locarno treaties are too restricted and directly linked to the bad peace treaties of 1919. But Europe! The 27 European States united in the economic, customs and military spheres, that is where there would be safety.

In a September 1929 address to the League of Nations Assembly, Briand proposed 'une sorte de lien fédéral' (a kind of federal link) among the states – but one that would somehow avoid infringing their sovereignty. Having identified economics as the 'most pressing' issue, Briand argued that the prospective organisation should 'act chiefly' in that sphere: economic union needed to take precedence over political union.<sup>605</sup> The following May the French Government circulated the Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal Union. The proposals were modest: the *régime* would have had hardly any competencies. The Memorandum set out a plan for the principle of a European 'moral union' being affirmed in a treaty that would oblige the states to meet regularly as a European Conference.<sup>606</sup> A permanent Political

---

<sup>602</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 129 and p. 144; and Peter Bugge, "'Shatter Zones": The Creation and Re-creation of Europe's East', in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 57.

<sup>603</sup> Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins*, p. 4. Martin Kitchen has called the Pact's wording 'singularly vacuous': signatories renounced war as a policy instrument except in case of self-defence, but retained the right to decide what constituted that. See Martin Kitchen, *Europe between the Wars* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Harlow, 2006), p. 132; and Raymond J. Sontag, *A Broken World, 1919–1939* (New York, 1971), p. 134.

<sup>604</sup> Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins*, p. 2.

<sup>605</sup> Peter M. R. Stirk, *A History of European Integration since 1914* (London, 1996), p. 35.

<sup>606</sup> Bugge, 'Nation Supreme', in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, p. 104; and Stirk, *History of European Integration*, p. 36.

Committee and its secretariat would provide continuity and act as an executive body.<sup>607</sup>

The Conference and the Committee would shape further cooperation.<sup>608</sup>

Reversing Briand's stance, the Memorandum stipulated that political union had to *precede* the establishment of a common market because the 'useless' contrary order would scare the smaller nations, which feared that larger states would leverage their economic might for political domination.<sup>609</sup> The change in priority between September 1929 and May 1930 was encapsulated by the phrase 'the necessary subordination of the economic to the political.'<sup>610</sup> The phrase bred suspicions that Briand's proposals had been twisted to further the ends of French security policy, and that the purported concern for the smaller nations was a mask for self-interest.<sup>611</sup>

In the Memorandum, Briand envisaged the creation of a political union

built not upon the idea of unity but of union; that is to say, sufficiently flexible to respect the independence and national sovereignty of each of the States, while assuring them all the benefits of collective solidarity for the settlement of political questions involving the fate of the European community or that of one of its Members.<sup>612</sup>

This was a vision of an intergovernmental Europe; given that national sovereignty would be respected, it is hard to gauge what degree of unity could possibly have been forged. It is also unclear what Briand had in mind when he stated that 'benefits' would be assured for each state.<sup>613</sup> These were just two of the vagaries in the Memorandum.<sup>614</sup> Derek Heater has noted how Briand 'piled' up adverbial phrases to emphasise the integrity of national sovereignty, an example being: '*in no case and in no*

---

<sup>607</sup> Stirk, *History of European Integration*, p. 36.

<sup>608</sup> Roobol, 'Briand's Plan', in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 43.

<sup>609</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 137.

<sup>610</sup> Roobol has concluded that precisely who or what inspired this 'fatal' reversal will never be known; see 'Briand's Plan', in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 43.

<sup>611</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 142.

<sup>612</sup> Aristide Briand, "'Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal Union'", 17 May 1930', in Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins*, p. 19.

<sup>613</sup> *The Observer* stated that all would depend on 'simple common sense and good will' (18 May 1930).

<sup>614</sup> Stirk and Weigall have noted that although the Memorandum was 'ambiguous,' so were post-1945 proposals that did lead to the creation of European institutions (*Origins*, p. 5).

*degree* may the formation of the Federal Union desired by the European Governments affect *in any way* any of the sovereign rights of the States which are members of such an association' (emphasis added by Heater). The Dutch Government's reply recognised that 'the co-ordination of the economic and moral forces of Europe' would fail unless states were 'ready to limit the exercise of their sovereign rights to some extent.'<sup>615</sup> But as Heater has noted, 'Briand did not square this circle; he danced around it... [By] giving so many assurances about the rights of states, Briand was contriving to give the impression that he was proposing to make a federal omelette without breaking sovereign eggs.'<sup>616</sup> The Memorandum, phrased in such a way as 'to be all things to all men,' 'ended up being nothing to anyone,' Heater has concluded.<sup>617</sup> There was opposition to the Briand initiative from (and within) states including Britain and Italy (Fig. 11). Ultimately the states decided on a 'first-class burial' for the initiative (which the German Cabinet had sought): it was interred in a League of Nations commission, which did little more than gather economic statistics.<sup>618</sup> After Briand's death in March 1932, the commission met one last time to dissolve itself.<sup>619</sup>

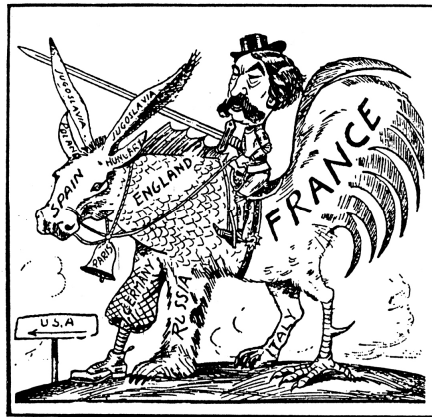


Fig. 11. Briand, holding the reins, spurs on a mongrel 'united Europe' to meet the American challenge. This Italian cartoon was reproduced by the *Review of Reviews* in October 1929 (Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 60).

<sup>615</sup> Boyd and Boyd, *Western Union*, p. 40.

<sup>616</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 143.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>618</sup> Zurcher, *The Struggle*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>619</sup> Heikki Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity* (London, 1998), p. 105.

Whatever its flaws, the Memorandum was the first plan for European unity to be more than a paper project. The Briand initiative set a precedent; a generation later, officialdom would prove well disposed to similar proposals.<sup>620</sup>

One scholar's suggestion that Briand's 'eloquent Pan-European call' was 'not even remembered two or three years after its utterance' does not hold true for prominent figures in the NEG/NBM.<sup>621</sup> The NEG's recommended reading list included *L'Union Européenne*, a book by B. Mirkine-Guetzevitch and Georges Scelle containing the complete documentation of the Briand Memorandum and the debate on it.<sup>622</sup>

Some critics had dismissed Briand's vision as castles in the air (see Fig. 12).<sup>623</sup> Yet 'building castles in the air,' Watts argued in *Eleventh Hour*, was decidedly different from exercising 'imagination,' the latter being 'the forerunner of creation, the possession of vision for the future.' Any fair assessment of the NEG/NBM has to acknowledge that the movement's Eurofederalist advocacy was characterised by the 'immediacy of thought and action' that Watts deemed essential to the expression of political imagination.<sup>624</sup>

---

<sup>620</sup> Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, pp. 144–5.

<sup>621</sup> A. G. Lehmann, 'Reflections on *Europa* (1935)', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, p. 108.

<sup>622</sup> Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 137.

<sup>623</sup> One *Le Figaro* journalist wrote that Briand had 'dreamt all the year of his United States of Europe, hoping against hope that a dream must hatch by virtue of being a dream, as an egg is hatched by virtue of being sat upon' (Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 138).

<sup>624</sup> Alan Watts, 'Three Blind Eyes', *Eleventh Hour*, 23 January 1935, p. 173.





Fig. 12. Briand dreams of a United States of Europe, depicted as castles in the air. This Dutch cartoon was reproduced by the *Review of Reviews* in August 1929 (Passerini, *Europe in Love*, p. 59).

Three weeks prior to Watts' article, *Eleventh Hour* had lamented that a European federation had long been regarded as 'a utopian dream.'<sup>625</sup> To *New Britain* weekly, though, it was the editors of *The Economist* who 'breathe and move in dreamland,' given their 'faith' in the League Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

<sup>625</sup> 'Another Week Goes By', *Eleventh Hour*, 2 January 1935, p. 114.

Prominent figures in the NEG/NBM continued: 'We rubbed our eyes' on reading the assertion by a 'respected contemporary' that the United States of Europe would be 'no substitute for the world-wide collective system of security.'<sup>626</sup> Addressing those who dismissed the 'Utopia' of a 'New Europe' as 'an idle dream,' 'Sentinel' wrote that the NEG/NBM would 'create a policy which will be the instrument to achieve our purpose.'<sup>627</sup> A week earlier, 'Sentinel' had called for Briand's 'great and real' vision to be 'translated into practical politics.'<sup>628</sup> Given that 'more heterogeneous' peoples 'could live together' in other parts of the world, 'the federation of Europe ought to be child's play.'<sup>629</sup>

Unlike Briand and Coudenhove-Kalergi, who avowed that little or no ceding of sovereignty would be necessary for a successful union, the NEG/NBM was unequivocal in its position that there could be

no reconciliation of differences, political or economic, while the nations stand firmly on their sovereign rights. Unless those rights are surrendered in part and the nations come together to make a common European polity, conflicts, threats of war, and insecurity will disturb them, and the reconstruction of Europe will be out of the question.<sup>630</sup>

Prominent figures in the movement took the uncompromising position from which Briand and Coudenhove-Kalergi had shied away. The states had rejected the Briand initiative because it went too far, but for the NEG/NBM it had not gone far enough. The NEG argued that war would be inevitable if states continued to act as laws unto themselves, 'clinging' to their 'powers of separate sovereignty.'<sup>631</sup> Neither armed

---

<sup>626</sup> 'The World We Live In', *New Britain* weekly, 19 July 1933, p. 260; and 'The United States of Europe', *The Economist*, 15 July 1933, p. 114.

<sup>627</sup> 'Sentinel', 'The Shape', p. 41.

<sup>628</sup> 'Sentinel', 'Foreign Policies of a New Britain', *New Britain* weekly, 22 November 1933, p. 10. The NEG/NBM deemed Briand's efforts 'potentially promising' ('New Britain', 'To Lloyd George', p. 677).

<sup>629</sup> 'Sentinel', 'Foreign Policies', p. 10.

<sup>630</sup> 'The World We Live In', *New Britain* weekly, 7 March 1934, p. 466.

<sup>631</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 4.

neutrality nor, in the aviation age, island status guaranteed protection, so no state could unilaterally exempt itself from conflict.

The ‘war to end war’ had resulted in what Archibald Wavell called the ‘Peace to end Peace.’<sup>632</sup> In the view of the NEG/NBM, another continent-wide conflict could be prevented only if states pooled at least as much sovereignty as had allowed them to wage war in the past. Ultimately, a federal body with a monopoly on the use of force (except that needed by each constituent state to uphold domestic order) would ensure peace among the states over which it held jurisdiction. The NEG stipulated that the pooling of sovereignty ‘would not involve the renunciation by any nation of its legitimate autonomy, much less its territory, culture, language or customs’; each of the states only needed to renounce sovereignty over the competencies that allowed them to act with ‘aggression, both military and economic.’<sup>633</sup>

In *New Britain* weekly, ‘X. Y. Z.’ took issue with G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole’s criticism of Briand’s vision. They argued, in *The Intelligent Man’s Review of Europe Today*, that Briand had ‘attempted to bring about a political union of the European States without giving it any firm basis of economic service.’ ‘X. Y. Z.’ understood that to mean the Coles thought economic union had to precede political unity, as many states had argued in their replies to the Memorandum. But ‘X. Y. Z.’ believed attempts at economic integration needed to be postponed until Europe had overcome its political problems, which were the greatest danger facing the continent.<sup>634</sup>

Mitrinović’s personal view was that it needed to be ‘recognised in fairness and historic decency’ that Briand, and France, had made a ‘fine and innocent attempt’ to bring about a united Europe. The Briand initiative had ‘failed’ not because

---

<sup>632</sup> John Howard Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History* (Oxford, 2004), p. 286.

<sup>633</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 4.

<sup>634</sup> ‘X. Y. Z.’ [review], ‘G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole, *The Intelligent Man’s Review of Europe Today* (London, 1933)’, *New Britain* weekly, 13 September 1933, p. 531.

it was only a mere diplomatic and superficial attempt of officials; for economically it was enlightened enough, and politically it was not based on a secret motive of French dominance. Historically, that attempt shattered on the unconscious and profound British resistance; but it metaphysically shattered because it did not come out of Spirit.

Mitrinović did not elaborate on the metaphysical shattering, but he may have been alluding to the failure of politicians and civil servants to rise above a pattern of power politics ingrained over centuries. Nor did Mitrinović explain his concluding judgement that the Briand initiative ‘was sociologically and psychologically a seedless fruit,’ though here he may have been referring to the absence, among the relevant parties, of what is now called European consciousness.<sup>635</sup>

‘British resistance’ to the Briand initiative had indeed been ‘profound,’ not least because the FO had feared it could ‘endanger the cohesion’ of the Empire.<sup>636</sup> But Germany, as well as Britain, had worried about antagonising the United States and lowering the chances of reviving global economic cooperation.<sup>637</sup> Even France came to reject the initiative after the fervent nationalist André Tardieu succeeded Briand as prime minister.<sup>638</sup> Other reasons for the failure included opposition from the League of Nations bureaucracy, which resisted the development of a potential rival; the death of German foreign minister Gustav Stresemann; the abrupt change in the economic climate after the Wall Street Crash; the National Socialist electoral breakthrough in 1930; and Briand’s fading from the international scene.<sup>639</sup> Mitrinović was thus mistaken when he singled out Britain’s attitude as the cause of failure. Coudenhove-Kalergi came to take a similar view a decade later, though: he stated that Britain’s reply

---

<sup>635</sup> Mitrinović, ‘Urgent Appeal’, Supplement.

<sup>636</sup> Stirk, *History of European Integration*, pp. 37–8.

<sup>637</sup> The FO highlighted the first point in its reply to the Memorandum: ‘an exclusive and independent European Union of the kind proposed’ might ‘create tendencies to inter-continental rivalries’ that ‘it is important in the general interest to diminish.’ Closer ‘European co-operation,’ the reply went on, ‘should not cause anxiety or resentment in any other continent.’ See Boyd and Boyd, *Western Union*, p. 39.

<sup>638</sup> Roobol, ‘Briand’s Plan’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 42.

<sup>639</sup> Bugge, ‘Nation Supreme’, in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, pp. 105–6; and Roobol, ‘Briand’s Plan’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 42.

to the Memorandum was ‘the most disastrous’ and ‘spelt the complete ruin of Briand’s initiative.’<sup>640</sup>

Across the NEG/NBM’s periodicals, the contributor who most closely scrutinised the implications of national sovereignty was W. Horsfall Carter, editor of the journal of the New Commonwealth Society for the Promotion of International Law and Order. For Carter, the enemy of peace was not ‘evil hearts’ but rather ‘inter-State anarchy.’ He believed that there had to be

a recognised law which can be enforced in inter-State relations just as there is a law that can be enforced in civic relationships.

The remedy is not to be found in anti-nationalism or internationalism but Federation, each country making its contribution to the community of nations without imposing its own interests at the expense of the others.<sup>641</sup>

Carter focused on the issue in ‘A New Foreign Policy for Britain,’ first published in *New Britain* weekly.<sup>642</sup> Arguing that European states needed to ‘sacrifice a measure of “sovereignty” to a Federal authority,’ Carter thought that disarmament would be possible only if such an authority assumed responsibility for defence. He explained that there had never been a community in

which the members enjoyed security where the principle of each defending himself obtained. Even in a primitive savage tribe the defence of the individual being is not an individual function but a function of the community. Yet in our inter-State relationships this idea of self-protection, bolstered by alliances, is maintained.<sup>643</sup>

Carter saw ‘all the difference in the world’ between ‘*competing* and *policing* armaments’; he argued that Europe should not seek to ‘abolish armed force,’ but rather

---

<sup>640</sup> R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Crusade for Pan-Europe: Autobiography of a Man and a Movement* (New York, 1943), p. 135.

<sup>641</sup> W. Horsfall Carter, ‘A Constructive Proposal for European Union’, *Eleventh Hour*, 19 December 1934, p. 89.

<sup>642</sup> Evidently, Carter’s views were strongly endorsed by the movement’s prominent figures: the article later appeared in *New Britain* quarterly New Series (Autumn 1934) and in three issues of *Eleventh Hour*.

<sup>643</sup> W. Horsfall Carter, ‘A New Foreign Policy for Britain’, *New Britain* weekly, 25 July 1934, p. 275.

to ‘make armed force police power.’ ‘International defence’ would make it unnecessary for each European state to maintain a ‘huge margin’ of armaments ‘over and above what is required for preserving domestic law and order.’ Carter stated that

a policy of federalism and disarmament *through* security – *i.e.*, co-operative defence – for *Europe* is both practicable and essential. A metropolitan police force for the metropolitan continent is the first step. And, since the coming of the aeroplane, the British Isles are bound to Europe ‘by links as strong as steel and as light as air.’

Aviation was both a curse and a blessing: ‘effective defence against aerial attack’ was ‘impossible,’ but ‘Air Transport’ was ‘the heaven-sent federative link of our generation,’ given that ‘physical bonds of unity’ had to ‘precede and condition the coming of [a] “European state of mind.”’<sup>644</sup> Carter proposed that ‘European air police power’ be vested in a federal authority, and ‘national air forces’ abolished. Doing likewise with armies and navies, though, would ‘obviously be a gradual and lengthy process.’ Carter believed these changes would allow Europe to ‘cross the Rubicon to an era of federal government and peace.’<sup>645</sup>

Some readers of the NEG/NBM’s periodicals were entirely convinced by these arguments. A. Griffiths of Barking, for example, wrote to the editor of *New Britain* weekly following the publication of Carter’s article. Griffiths stated his agreement that ‘a collective system of security for Europe’ could ‘only eventuate by a surrender by National Governments of their sovereignty.’ For Griffiths, national sovereignty meant

the right of any nation to defend itself by any means whatsoever: from pop-guns to bacteriological and chemical and super-physical weapons. With these weapons past and present imperia have been established. The psychology that has accompanied the foundation and the preservation of these empires cannot ‘keep company’ with the

---

<sup>644</sup> Eighty years later, an airline chief executive would claim, not entirely without merit, that ‘No company has done more in the last 20 or 30 years to boost the process of European integration than Ryanair’ (*The Independent*, 24 December 2014).

<sup>645</sup> Carter, ‘New Foreign Policy’, p. 275.

psychological background of federation as it must be understood even by those who have but a passing acquaintance with European politics.

Griffiths put the onus on ‘individuals in all lands’: they had to make the ‘bold gesture’ of ‘declaring their intention to make a personal resistance to War.’ Once the individual had surrendered ‘his sovereign right, *i.e.*, his right to use arms, with others, to assert his will,’ the ‘goodwill’ of Europe could ‘be established by patience in conference, without the “threat” of armed national forces to fortify weak argument, unjust claims, and impatient militarism.’<sup>646</sup> Clearly, the movement’s periodicals not only provoked readers to reflect on the issue of sovereignty, but prompted some to develop their own nuanced views and to share them with others in the NBM’s networked audience.

#### ***Four Lines of Reasoning: the NEG/NBM’s Case for Eurofederalism***

The NEG/NBM’s prominent figures, along with some other contributors to the movement’s periodicals, consistently advocated the creation of a European federation – but on what grounds, exactly? I have discerned four lines of reasoning that entwined to form the tightest and strongest argument for Eurofederalism woven by any group in Britain before the Second World War.

The NEG/NBM’s first line of reasoning was that, given the inefficacy of the League of Nations, ‘only Federation’ could stop the crisis turning into a disaster.<sup>647</sup> The second was that the nations that pooled sovereignty had much more to gain than security; economic and other benefits would accrue to all. The third line of reasoning was that federalisation would reinforce Europe’s geopolitical position, which had been weakened by the Great War. The movement’s fourth line of reasoning was that Europe

---

<sup>646</sup> A. Griffiths, ‘Sovereignty and What It Means’, *New Britain* weekly, 8 August 1934, p. 363.

<sup>647</sup> ‘And Still It Goes On’, *New Britain* weekly, 6 June 1934, p. 67.

was one community and as such ought to be one polity (this was, in part, a rationalisation of the prominent figures' deep emotional investment in the idea of European unity). These four lines of reasoning will be discussed in turn.

*i) Federalisation as the only means of preventing disaster*

The line of reasoning that the NEG/NBM articulated with the greatest sense of urgency was that disaster could be prevented only by federalisation. 'Without doubt,' the NBM declared, the 'dominant fact' in Europe was the 'struggle (against ever-shortening time) for constructive integration before disintegration works irrevocable havoc.'<sup>648</sup>

In September 1934 the journalist C. F. Melville argued that 'Nationalism and Expansionism threaten to destroy Europe as an entity,' making it 'more clear that the only alternative to European chaos is European Federation.' He conceded that 'fear' was 'not the highest of motives,' but thought the prospect of 'European disintegration' might drive the nations of Europe to 'find a lasting solution by means of the Federative idea.'<sup>649</sup> That same month, Carter wrote that Europe had to federate in order to 'survive at all': it was 'just a simple case of self-preservation' given 'the appalling prospect of aero-chemical warfare.'<sup>650</sup>

Five months later, Palmer argued that if the 'gigantic reform' of 'Federation' did not 'occur peaceably during the next fifteen years,' it would be 'forced upon Europe by war.'<sup>651</sup> The League of Nations 'functioned too idealistically and illogically,' so it was

---

<sup>648</sup> *The Meaning of New Britain*, no date but mid-1930s, p. 13.

<sup>649</sup> C. F. Melville, 'Federation or Chaos', *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*, 26 September 1934, p. 3.

<sup>650</sup> Carter, 'Exploring the Approaches', p. 23.

<sup>651</sup> As it turned out, a 'gigantic reform' occurred 16 years (and one total war) later, when the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community was signed in 1951.



the responsibility of ‘good Europeans’ to ‘make clean the house of Europe’ before the ‘Wrath of God’ did it for them.<sup>652</sup>

Prominent figures in the NEG realised that the League was ‘in actuality’ a ‘League of dominant and self-seeking *States*.’<sup>653</sup> Carter supposed there was a need for ‘a loose universal cadre, such as we have in the League,’ but wanted ‘continental operation of federal machinery’ within it.<sup>654</sup> ‘The Reader’s Guide,’ however, fretted that if European cooperation were to be institutionalised within the League, Europe’s reconstruction would be ‘stultified by precedent.’<sup>655</sup> The NBM noted that the League had not welcomed the prospect of a ‘move towards a Federation of Europe’ because it saw in it ‘a challenge to itself.’ Ultimately, the League was ‘futile’ and ‘a farce’ because ‘no nation takes it seriously.’<sup>656</sup> Only ‘the welding of Europe into unity’ would ‘make arms unnecessary.’ The NEG/NBM’s prominent figures asked:

Why does not Manchester fight London? Because the two cities, with others, form a political unity. Germany and France will cease to look upon each other as enemies when they have common political interests in the Federation of Europe. That Federation is the one way to disarmament and world salvation.<sup>657</sup>

But any ‘*federative attempt*’ stemming merely ‘*from fear of disaster*’ would not succeed: only ‘*a positive vision*’ for the continent could ‘*disarm Europe and organise her for peace and survival*.’<sup>658</sup>

*ii) Federalisation (particularly the pooling of sovereignty) as a means of mutually reaping benefits beyond those in the sphere of security*

---

<sup>652</sup> Palmer, ‘British Initiative’, pp. 254–5.

<sup>653</sup> *Disarmament*, p. 5.

<sup>654</sup> Carter, ‘Exploring the Approaches’, p. 23.

<sup>655</sup> ‘The Reader’s Guide,’ ‘Sir Arthur Salter’, p. 243.

<sup>656</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 13 December 1933, p. 97.

<sup>657</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 14 June 1933, p. 97.

<sup>658</sup> ‘Editorial’, *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), p. 2.

The NEG/NBM made a strong case that a European federation would ensure permanent/active continent-wide peace – but what other benefits would accrue to nations that pooled sovereignty, in the view of the movement’s prominent figures? Drawing into focus a ‘*positive vision*’ of Europe that would promote ‘Dignity, Freedom and Happiness,’ the NEG/NBM argued that Europeans would enjoy ‘greater physical and spiritual comfort’ and other benefits under a Kantian, rules-based order than under the established disorder.<sup>659</sup> While adamant that federalisation was not to be attempted ‘just for the sake of ... bourgeois comfort,’ the movement’s prominent figures recognised that ‘material advantage lies in unity rather than disunity,’ as McEachran put it.<sup>660</sup> He prophesied that ‘enormous’ advantages would result from the creation of a floating (‘freed from gold’) single European currency ‘managed by experts from each nation in the interests of the whole.’<sup>661</sup> McEachran favoured free trade in Europe because ‘every argument in favour of a Zollverein for one nation holds equally well for any group of nations.’<sup>662</sup> Bauer, for his part, saw that Europe would face ‘much harder competition in the world, which forces us to ... larger collectives into which we are growing together.’<sup>663</sup>

But in contrast to the Paneuropean Union, which emphasised the economic rationale for European unity, the NEG/NBM devoted few column inches to the matter.<sup>664</sup> This was mainly because the movement’s prominent figures thought that nations could ensure their prosperity only by making cooperation, rather than competition, the basis of their national economies. They believed that if financial and

---

<sup>659</sup> ‘Sentinel’, ‘The Shape’, p. 41; *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 5; and ‘Sentinel’, *Ibid.*

<sup>660</sup> ‘Editorial’, *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), p. 2; and McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 7. McEachran translated the work of Friedrich Nietzsche; it is likely that by 1932 he was familiar with the philosopher’s prophesy that the ‘empires and states’ of Europe would ‘become economically untenable’ due to ‘the absolute tendency of industry and commerce to become bigger and bigger, crossing natural boundaries and becoming world wide.’ Nietzsche, quoted in Heater, *Idea of European Unity*, p. 123.

<sup>661</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 26. In 2016, ‘experts from each nation’ managing a single European currency ‘in the interests of the whole’ could serve as a one-sentence description of the mandate of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank.

<sup>662</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 24.

<sup>663</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 49.

<sup>664</sup> Bugge, ‘Nation Supreme’, in Wilson and van der Dussen (eds), *History*, p. 98.

economic reconstitution did not precede or accompany federalisation, states in a federal Europe would still need to transform their financial systems, and modes of production and distribution.

The ‘private control of credit’ was, in the NEG’s view, ‘largely, if not wholly, responsible for our present inability to consume more than a fraction of the abundant wealth which is available,’ so the ‘concentration of financial powers controlling a larger area [all of Europe] by the same methods would be quite likely to make matters worse.’<sup>665</sup> In Mairret’s view, the ‘plans and intrigues’ of a ‘super-government’ of ‘banking and financial interests’ had already impaired the ability of politicians to determine their nations’ vital interests.<sup>666</sup> The politicians were controlled by financial ‘advisors’ who were, in turn, controlled by stock-market reports as ‘fantastically uncontrollable as the weather.’<sup>667</sup> Believing that the economic sovereignty of nations had been weathered and eroded, the NEG/NBM’s prominent figures anchored their radical ideas for financial and economic reform at the national level, knowing that changes would be hard enough to effect in their own country.

Other than permanent peace, a single European currency and free trade in Europe, what else did states that pooled sovereignty stand to gain? Four more benefits had been identified by C. F. Heerfordt, a Danish doctor and author of *A New Europe* (1925), whose ideas were publicised by the NBM. The first additional benefit would be the ending of what Heerfordt saw as ‘national duplication of shipping and transport.’ The second benefit would be ‘immense’ savings in the defence expenditures of states, given that those pooling sovereignty would need merely ‘to contribute towards the support of one international armament instead of maintaining many competing armies.’

---

<sup>665</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 6.

<sup>666</sup> Storm Jameson stated that a financial ‘autocracy’ was ‘ruling every pseudo-democracy’ (‘Women and Dictatorships’, *New Albion*, April 1934, p. 38). Soddy argued that the banks had ‘reduce[d] Parliament to a sham’; see ‘The Paradox of Plenty’, *New Britain* quarterly vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1932), p. 3.

<sup>667</sup> Mairret, ‘Necessarium’, pp. 11–12.

The third benefit would be the ability to ‘combine in the execution of vast schemes of development of mutual benefit unhindered by national jealousies.’

The fourth benefit that Heerfordt had identified, namely the ‘great sense of freedom and power’ that comes ‘when a longstanding fear of neighbours gives way to trust in them,’ is worth examining in detail. For centuries, ‘evil dreams of illegitimate power [had] cankered every cultural flowering,’ but federalisation would end the ‘nightmare,’ freeing up energies for ‘cultural expansion.’ Far from imagining that the national lives of small nations (such as his own) might be drowned in a pool of sovereignty, Heerfordt thought that all their talent ‘crippled by the dread of national extinction’ would gain ‘the freedom to take cultural forms which has come only to great nations hitherto.’ The Great Powers, for their part, would lose ‘nothing but a reputation for bullying rapacity.’ The ‘sacrifice of a portion of their autonomy’ would leave ‘still secure the advantages which their abilities as peoples have won for them,’ and would in fact free those abilities for ‘beneficent enterprise.’ In short, a federal Europe’s ‘powers and possibilities would be immense.’<sup>668</sup> The NEG expressed similar sentiment: federalisation would allow European states to ‘gain the larger life’ and attain ‘their full significance in history.’<sup>669</sup> The movement’s prominent figures were very much in sympathy with Heerfordt’s ideas, which they discussed not only in *New Atlantis: For Western Renaissance and World Socialism* (hereafter *New Atlantis*), but in *New Britain* weekly and *Eleventh Hour*, too.

### *iii) Federalisation as a means of reinforcing Europe’s position in the world*

The NEG/NBM’s third line of reasoning was that if Europe federalised, it would strengthen its geopolitical position, which had been weakened by the Great War. For

---

<sup>668</sup> *Respublica Europae*’ by ‘Homo Europaeus’, *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), pp. 31–2.

<sup>669</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 2.

the movement's prominent figures, Europe was 'universal' and 'the world's heart of culture'; its canon of virtue consisted of '*Personality, Individuation, Human Freedom*.'<sup>670</sup> Europe had 'proclaimed to the World that reason is the guide to human action,' yet was 'betraying its principles,' Delahaye wrote. The depths to which Europe was sinking were only to be apprehended through 'consciousness of the high destiny she should fulfil.'<sup>671</sup>

Delahaye's concerns were features of the European intellectual landscape between the wars, when elites were troubled by the continent's diminution and loss of prestige. The United States (the sole anti-colonial Great Power) had 'temporarily suspended' its pre-eminence when it shunned the League of Nations and politically retreated to hemispheric isolation.<sup>672</sup> This did not, however, temper Europeans' fears of the economic eclipse of their continent, which was another preoccupation of elite discourse.

In 1920 Albert Demangeon had proved, in *Le déclin de l'Europe*, that the continent's share of world trade had fallen, which he took to be one symptom of the de-Europeanisation of the world.<sup>673</sup> Trade recovery in the 1920s did not stop Somerset de Chair fretting in 1931 – a year after the publication of Ludwell Danny's *America Conquers Britain: a Record of Economic War* – about the prospect of European 'vassaldom.' Americans were exercising an 'astonishing' degree of 'industrial control,' de Chair argued, and Continental Europe was being 'bought up' via 'a mortgage' on 'indebtedness.'<sup>674</sup> What was less clear, though, was the extent to which the Great War had undermined Europe's claim to global *political* leadership.<sup>675</sup>

---

<sup>670</sup> 'Editorial', *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), p. 1.

<sup>671</sup> J. V. Delahaye, 'Disarm! Federate!', *New Britain* weekly, 23 May 1934, p. 3.

<sup>672</sup> Stirk, 'Introduction', in Stirk (ed), *Unity in Context*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>673</sup> Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea*, pp. 91–2.

<sup>674</sup> Somerset de Chair, *Divided Europe* (London, 1931), pp. 164–5.

<sup>675</sup> Katiana Orluc, 'Decline or Renaissance: The Transformation of European Consciousness after the First World War', in Bo Stråth (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other* (Brussels, 2000), p. 135.

In the long nineteenth century, European hegemony had seemed to be underwritten by history itself. Fear of the loss of this hegemony increased during the Great War, but debate on the vexed issue intensified in 1919, when Paul Valéry asked:

can Europe hold its pre-eminence in all fields?

Will Europe become *what it is in reality* – that is, a little promontory on the continent of Asia?

Or will it remain *what it seems* – that is, the elect portion of the terrestrial globe, the pearl of the sphere, the brain of a vast body?<sup>676</sup>

By 1926, Toynbee was discussing ‘the dwarfing of Europe’: with the world adopting Western practices, Europe risked being overwhelmed and outpaced by industrialisation elsewhere. Two years later, Herman von Keyserling wrote that Europe had ‘become weak and very small in relation to the new world,’ but that if the continent allowed ‘the supranational to overcome the national’ it might be able to hold at bay the forces of homogenisation and mechanisation.<sup>677</sup>

In 1934 the NEG/NBM published an article by Alexandre Marc on ‘the weakening of the importance of Europe.’ Previously ‘the centre of the world,’ Europe had become ‘a mere peninsula of Asia,’ the leader of l’Ordre Nouveau wrote.<sup>678</sup> A year earlier, Spengler had taken an even more pessimistic view: the European powers – having lost ‘the respect of the coloured races’ – had ‘abdicated from their former rank,’ shifting ‘the political centre of gravity.’<sup>679</sup> Woolf, a neighbour of the NEG in Bloomsbury, had argued as early as 1928 that ‘The revolt against the European’s

---

<sup>676</sup> Valéry imagined Britain and India on a set of scales, tilted in Britain’s favour – but he foresaw ‘a gradual change in the opposite direction’ (‘The Crisis of the Mind’, *The Athenaeum*, 2 May 1919).

<sup>677</sup> Ifversen, ‘The Crisis’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 24. The Great War weakened the centuries-old tendency among painters and illustrators to personify the continent as dominant. See Michael Wintle, ‘Europe on Parade: The First World War and the Changing Visual Representations of the Continent in the Twentieth Century’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, p. 127.

<sup>678</sup> Alexandre Marc, ‘Young Europe and a New France’, *New Albion*, April 1934, p. 46.

<sup>679</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Hour of Decision: Part One: Germany and World-Historical Evolution*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York, 1934), p. 210.

political domination and economic exploitation, which we have already seen in Asia, will inevitably be repeated in Africa.<sup>680</sup>

The NEG/NBM's prominent figures acknowledged that the Europe-centred world order was in a state of disrepair, but did not regard European enfeeblement as inevitable. The NEG stated that 'the *potential* power and splendour' of the continent was 'not less than before the War.'<sup>681</sup> Bauer argued that a federal Europe would 'regain' the continent's '*lost supremacy amongst the Peoples of Earth* – not by violence, but with prudence and wisdom.'<sup>682</sup>

Stirk has noted that advocates of European unity in the interwar years 'tended to reassure' their audiences that all was not yet lost for Europe's cultural heritage.<sup>683</sup> This tendency was strongly in evidence among the NEG/NBM's prominent figures, but they made clear that the revival of Europe depended on federalisation. They argued that failure to federate would make it 'most unlikely' that western Europe could 'live for long as a chief world-power,' and 'doubtful' that the British Empire could 'long survive' – for failure would lead to the world being 'divided between two dynamic forces of the Soviet States and of America.'<sup>684</sup>

As prominent figures in the NEG/NBM saw it, Europe had a responsibility to set an example: federalisation would assure Europe's future as the 'internation,' the 'country of the world,' as McEachran put it.<sup>685</sup> In Mitrinović's view, Europe rightfully stewarded much of the world, though he couched this in terms of service to humankind.

---

<sup>680</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Imperialism and Civilization* (New York, 1928), p. 122. During the Great War, the 'colour bar' had further shaken African and Asian troops' faith in the Empire as a 'community of equals'; see Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London, 1995), p. 436. Diner has noted that when African and Asian troops were 'not only *allowed* to kill white soldiers but were ordered to' they achieved a precarious equality that contrasted their usual subjugation. The 'emancipatory trenches' gave many the will to lead liberation struggles against European powers (Diner, *Cataclysms*, p. 32).

<sup>681</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 4.

<sup>682</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 59.

<sup>683</sup> Stirk, 'Introduction', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>684</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 5. One contributor to the movement's periodicals prophesied that 'unless the uncertainty and disturbance in Europe are not quickly ended,' 'the centre of gravity in world affairs would pass to the Pacific and to the countries which bordered on it or lay within it' ('Anglo-Saxon', 'Imperial and Anglo-Saxon Affairs', *Eleventh Hour*, 13 February 1935, p. 212).

<sup>685</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 27.

Among the NBM's aims was that 'less industrialised countries' receive 'assistance,' ultimately 'leading to a World Federation of free peoples.'<sup>686</sup> For the movement's prominent figures, then, European centrality was a matter of custodianship, not hegemony. The Soviet Union and the United States were not ready to be 'left alone in charge' because they needed 'European and British Guidance if the necessary world-planning of our age' were to proceed 'in the human interest,' Mitrinović wrote.<sup>687</sup>

Mitrinović's statements about American and Russian unfitness to take up the mantle of global leadership echoed those of José Ortega y Gasset.<sup>688</sup> The Spanish philosopher had argued that it would not matter if Europe 'ceased to command' if its place could be taken by another entity – but there was not 'the faintest sign of one.'<sup>689</sup> Ortega y Gasset's ideas, though, had a greater influence on the NEG/NBM's fourth line of reasoning for Eurofederalism, as we shall now see.

*iv) Federalisation as the means of actualising the community of Europe in a polity*

The movement's fourth line of reasoning was that Europe needed to become a federal polity because it was one community with a 'common history and cultural development.'<sup>690</sup> This was the sincere belief of the movement's prominent figures, who wrote of 'the great European brotherhood,' divided by 'unreal barriers.'<sup>691</sup> One of Ortega y Gasset's ideas that resonated with them was that Europeans were 'checked' in their economic, political and cultural projects: their 'vital possibilities' were 'out of

---

<sup>686</sup> *New Britain Constitution*, p. 7. One contributor to *Eleventh Hour* considered it 'reasonable to expect that federal movements will also take place in other parts of the world,' at least in 'countries not under the sway of Fascism and Communism.' Though 'these latter will constitute obstacles to progress,' it was 'not too much to hope that humanity will one day emancipate itself from them,' the contributor added (C. R. Yuille-Smith, 'Towards World Federation', *Eleventh Hour*, 9 January 1935, p. 135).

<sup>687</sup> Mitrinović, 'Urgent Appeal', *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), Supplement. Neither the US nor the USSR could handle the 'burden of Initiative and Guidance,' the editorial in this issue noted (p. 2).

<sup>688</sup> *New Britain* weekly's first issue featured a discussion of *The Revolt of the Masses* (1932, in English translation); see Frank Watson, 'A Spanish Individualist', *New Britain* weekly, 24 May 1933, p. 18.

<sup>689</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York, 1932), p. 98.

<sup>690</sup> Carter, 'Constructive Proposal', p. 90.

<sup>691</sup> *Disarmament*, p. 6.



proportion' to the 'puny' states that hemmed them in.<sup>692</sup> Ortega y Gasset thought that the greater part of Europeans' 'opinions, standards, desires [and] assumptions' came to them from 'the common European stock,' which led him to conclude that the continent's nation-states were obsolete and needed to be led to a 'higher evolution.'<sup>693</sup>

Princeton professor Christian Gauss, an occasional contributor to the NEG/NBM's periodicals, explored these ideas in an article for *New Atlantis*. Nationalism had 'fulfilled its cultural mission,' and was 'as defunct as paganism or feudalism,' he declared. 'Henceforth it can beget only sterile destructive conflicts and final catastrophe,' so 'to realise the richest life open to the modern man, we can no longer be merely Englishman or Germans or Frenchman,' he argued.<sup>694</sup>

The current of thought channelled by Ortega y Gasset and Gauss was part of a wider investigation into the 'unity' of European civilisation undertaken by intellectuals in the interwar years. Some of these intellectuals, Lipgens has noted, took the 'conscious rediscovery' and 'passionately renewed awareness' of what they saw as common European values to be an 'indispensable preliminary' to political unification. They realised that in the aftermath of the Great War, victors and vanquished alike were less secure.<sup>695</sup> Jay Winter has written of the 'wrenching experience of loss,' the 'universality of grief and mourning' and the 'bond of bereavement' as features of the 'commonality of European cultural life' at this time.<sup>696</sup>

In a way, the universality of suffering brought Europe back together, as the NEG recognised in 1931:

[S]uffering for their millions slain, diminished altogether as a group of world powers, the nations of Europe have one thing which they have not had for centuries. And that is the dawning *consciousness of a common*

---

<sup>692</sup> 'New Europe Speaks to New Britain', p. 88.

<sup>693</sup> Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt*, p. 133.

<sup>694</sup> Christian Gauss, 'Towards Euro-American Union and the End of Nationalism', *New Atlantis* vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1933), p. 17, p. 19 and p. 17.

<sup>695</sup> Lipgens, *European Integration*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>696</sup> Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp. 224–8.

*predicament*. They begin to know, in the ruins of their bloodiest rivalry, that the hour has come when, if they cannot live together they must go together to a worse downfall.

The NEG stated that Europe was mainly ‘one in culture’: there was a ‘natural unity to which our whole history, geography and anthropology bear witness, and which would save our situation if we recognised and took control of it.’<sup>697</sup> Europeans’ mere recognition of a deeply rooted shared tradition would not be enough – the natural unity had to resonate with them, so they would become cognisant of their ‘community of interest.’<sup>698</sup> The NEG/NBM promoted awareness of this unity through its publications and events, and encouraged the NBM local groups to engage with the idea at their meetings.<sup>699</sup>

McEachran was the member who explored the European ‘life lived in common’ in greatest depth.<sup>700</sup> The peoples of the continent would grow intellectually and culturally ‘more aware of its unity’ if there were a ‘general pooling’ of nations’ contributions to ‘the course of European life,’ he wrote. That would ‘clear the way for economic and political union’ by creating ‘more common feeling.’<sup>701</sup> Bauer, for his part, thought it necessary to ‘transform’ sometimes ‘exaggerated nationalisms into *enthusiastic European patriotism*.’<sup>702</sup> McEachran stated that, after all, an individual could love ‘the whole as well as the part, Europe as well as his nation.’<sup>703</sup> With the ‘growth of Europeanism,’ the continent would begin ‘to feel itself one country.’ McEachran recognised that a ‘critic may object’ that he had

---

<sup>697</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 4.

<sup>698</sup> ‘Atlanticus’, ‘Federation for the Survival of Europe’, *Eleventh Hour*, 10 July 1935, p. 181.

<sup>699</sup> Reflecting on these efforts in 1936, Fraser wrote that it had proved ‘difficult to interest the public in the fact that there is such a unity as Europe’ (NAFDMA, 5/1/8 File, Fraser to Edwyn R. Bevan, London, 4 May 1936, TS, p. 1).

<sup>700</sup> F. McEachran, ‘Imperialism and Patriotism’, *Eleventh Hour*, 17 July 1935, p. 194.

<sup>701</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, pp. 22–4.

<sup>702</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 56.

<sup>703</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 22.

advanced a European nationalism quite as deadly, if it came into being, as the national examples we have condemned. Europe, if created as a single country, would feel itself in opposition not only to Russia, but also to America, and would enter into the same conflicts that we now see operating within its borders. There is some truth in this, and it cannot be denied that some Europeans, fearing Russia or hating America, might envisage a European country in that spirit.<sup>704</sup>

But if a federal Europe were to be founded on the principles of ‘unity, diversity and mutual tolerance,’ it would entirely ‘contradict’ Euro-chauvinism.<sup>705</sup> At this juncture we must turn our attention to the NEG/NBM’s proposals for federal European institutions predicated on these principles.

### ***The NEG/NBM’s Proposals for European Governance and Institutions***

The NEG/NBM’s proposals for European governance and institutions – including a General Economic Council of the Federation, a General Parliament of the Federation, and a federal-level Cultural Assembly – were not detailed in a single publication. Rather, the main ideas were set out in several pamphlets, supplemented by scores of articles. The movement’s prominent figures were confident that all ‘wounds would be healed, and all the insoluble problems of butchered European minorities solved, in Federation’ – but how, exactly, did they envisage this happening?<sup>706</sup>

The NEG first published ideas for reforms in the spheres of economics, politics and culture in *Integration of Europe*. The movement’s prominent figures ‘strongly supported’ the creation of an ‘economic federation’ of European states, but they

---

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26. Here McEachran anticipated J. H. H. Weiler’s observation that although ‘a political union of federal governance’ would ‘constitute the final demise of member state nationalism,’ it could come full circle, transforming itself ‘into a (super)state.’ Weiler has noted that it would be ironic if the impetus for a union ‘set up as a means to counter the excesses of statism’ culminated in ‘a polity with the same potential for abuse.’ Just as McEachran imagined a critic would ‘object,’ Weiler has opposed the ‘unity vision’ of Europe on the grounds that its realisation would entail its ‘negation.’ See J. H. H. Weiler, ‘To Be a European Citizen – Eros and Civilization’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 4.4 (1997), p. 506.

<sup>705</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 26.

<sup>706</sup> *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 10.

believed its disposition would be ‘vitaly dependent’ on simultaneous developments in politics and culture, without which ‘economic federation might become little more than the control of the finances of the whole continent by the present financial houses, only acting in closer concert and in an even greater independence of political control.’ Having the ‘gravest objections’ to this prospect, the NEG sought to make finance ‘strictly instrumental.’ Believing the true basis of an economy to be production and consumption, the NEG wanted the financial sector to be reduced to merely ‘the balancing and distributive mechanism.’ It was workers – ‘from the most mechanical to the most cultured’ – who were the ‘source of wealth’; the NEG thus argued that each group (e.g. miners) needed to be granted the ‘freedom and incentive to develop in self-governing order.’ To this end, the NEG envisaged the creation of industry-specific national associations, each of which would include all workers in its particular field. These associations would delegate members to the General Economic Council of the Federation, which would be responsible for ‘regulating the co-operation of the different industries.’ In the Council the European banking sector would be powerless to prevent the repurposing of money, which would become a means of balancing production with consumption so as to ensure the distribution of all goods manufactured (e.g. money supply would be increased in line with the productive capacity of each national economy, so there would never be too little money chasing output).<sup>707</sup>

The political organisation of the European federation would be ‘necessarily more complicated’ than the reorganisation of any of the prospective constituent states, but its

principles and its scope will be much simplified by the presence of a well-integrated economic life. The present political parliaments are harassed and absurdly overburdened by work which is not in their true province, especially by economic and financial forces which they must endeavour to control, but which in fact control *them*.

---

<sup>707</sup> *Integration of Europe*, pp. 6–7.

The NEG proposed that each national parliament ‘adequately’ reform itself by transferring some powers to the General Economic Council and by devolving some other powers to ‘smaller councils of more local authority.’ The parliaments would then elect the General Parliament of the Federation, ensuring its ‘full respect’ for ‘autonomies’ while it exercised authority solely over ‘relations between the different states and language areas.’ European governance would thus be based on the principle of subsidiarity.<sup>708</sup>

In *Integration of Europe* the NEG argued that another ‘necessary feature of Federated Europe’ would be a Cultural Assembly. This ‘ought to be founded upon [prospective] similar assemblies’ in the constituent states. The NEG envisioned each national cultural assembly comprising appointees from ‘each and all’ of the bodies responsible for education, health, recreation, science, philosophy and art in the respective state.<sup>709</sup> ‘No great fantasy’ would be needed to envisage the creation of a federal-level Cultural Assembly, given that international organisations such as scientific congresses already existed. The Cultural Assembly’s principal function would be ‘the co-ordination of work in its own sphere of action.’ Its other crucial role would be to ‘advise’ the General Economic Council and the General Parliament of the Federation on many issues (including ‘genetics’ and ‘the waste or misuse of natural and human resources’) that ‘demand the highest expert knowledge.’ The three bodies would never sit together, but would confer ‘in the persons of specially elected delegates.’ If ‘cultural workers’ cooperated to an ‘as yet unheard of’ degree at the European level, the Council

---

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>709</sup> ‘In the State of the future,’ ‘bodies of workers’ would be responsible for organising their respective activities – for example, teachers would have ‘complete autonomy’ over ‘general education,’ freeing schools from state ‘interference’ (*Ibid.*, p. 8).

and Parliament would be provided with expert advice in every field, enabling Europe to ‘take more intelligent control’ of its destiny.<sup>710</sup>

In a 1933 lecture to the NEG, Bauer proposed the creation of a Central Scientific Institution, which would ‘carry on the necessary scientific work for all political and economic Conferences ... to build up’ the federation.<sup>711</sup> Personnel from ‘all [European] nations’ would study controversial questions ‘independent of any political influence whatsoever.’ The findings of these disinterested experts would inform the decisions of the federal bodies.<sup>712</sup>

Bauer argued that Vienna would be the best choice for the capital of a federal Europe. First, though, Vienna would have to become ‘*extraterritorial and self-governed*, according to general European interests’; that way, it would be insulated from ‘any political trouble.’<sup>713</sup> Bauer believed that this ‘*European supernational Metropolis*’ would have a civilising effect, for in Vienna the most intricate

*political questions would lose their acuteness. Any one coming under the influence of the very mild and spiritual genius of this locality, seems to be elevated upon a higher level of thought and feeling – and begins to get a more general view of European things, as one who stands on a high mountain and looks down into the valleys below.*<sup>714</sup>

Carter, too, proposed Vienna, which still had ‘the trappings of a capital.’ He also suggested that it first be made a Free City, ‘segregated’ from the rest of Austria.<sup>715</sup>

*New Europe* stated that if Vienna became ‘the Capital of the Federation,’ ‘the historic mission of Central Europe’ would be accomplished.<sup>716</sup> The same periodical stated that Tomáš Masaryk deserved ‘more than anyone else’ the European federation’s

---

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>711</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 58.

<sup>712</sup> NAFDMA, 5/4/1 File, Victor M. Bauer, *Europe: A Living Organism* [part 2], 1933, p. 8.

<sup>713</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 56.

<sup>714</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 2], p. 7.

<sup>715</sup> Carter, ‘Exploring the Approaches’, p. 24.

<sup>716</sup> *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 12.

presidency, but suggested neither a set of competencies, nor source of legitimacy.<sup>717</sup>

The ‘plea and advice’ offered – ‘Briand having failed, Man Masaryk, should you not try again?’ – indicates that Mitrinović was attempting to enlist the widely revered statesman as a *founding* president.<sup>718</sup>

*New Britain* weekly stated that it was ‘natural’ that a ‘beginning should be made’ in central Europe because ‘regionalism’ was ‘the only salvation for those distraught countries.’<sup>719</sup> Lavrin wrote that the increasing speed of communications was ending the ‘parochial isolation’ of small nations, making it possible for a European federation to be ‘instigated’ by small states that had ‘nothing to lose and everything to gain from such a policy.’ A ‘powerful Danubian Group,’ for example, could grow out of ‘mutual co-operation’ rooted in the ‘very instinct of political and national self-preservation.’ This idea, Lavrin argued, would ‘mature’ into the idea of ‘a *wide self-protective federation on the part of the small States of Europe.*’<sup>720</sup> In August 1933, *New Britain* weekly expressed ‘satisfaction’ over official consideration of the ‘economic Danubian confederation’ proposed by Czechoslovak foreign minister Edvard Beneš. The NEG/NBM’s prominent figures took this to be evidence that, ‘in the realm of *practical* politics and economics,’ the federative idea was ‘taking shape as the only *workable* solution’ to this ‘regional problem.’ For them, the ‘wider inference’ was ‘obvious,’ as it likely was for many readers, too.<sup>721</sup>

Delahaye, like Lavrin, believed a federal Europe could be ‘built up gradually from small scale federations’ of Danubian, Balkan, Baltic or Scandinavian states; there

---

<sup>717</sup> For an account of Masaryk’s unparalleled influence over Mitrinović and his generation of politically active South Slav intellectuals, see David Graham Page, ‘Dimitrije Mitrinović: Chameleon, Good European, and Exiled Yugoslavist’, MA thesis (University of British Columbia, 2005), pp. 15–35.

<sup>718</sup> *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 1.

<sup>719</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 19 July 1933, p. 260.

<sup>720</sup> Janko Lavrin, ‘Small Nations’, *New Britain* weekly, 15 November 1933, p. 812.

<sup>721</sup> ‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 16 August 1933, p. 387. When nothing came of the Beneš plan, the movement’s prominent figures complained that despite a ‘Central European Federation’ being ‘so reasonable and so natural,’ ‘nobody [in power] thinks it can be brought about’ (‘The World We Live In’, *New Britain* weekly, 28 March 1934, p. 563).

was no need, he argued, to ‘wait until all countries were simultaneously ready to unite.’ Delahaye proposed ‘co-operative pacts embracing both political and economic intercourse’ as the first step toward a European federation. He did not detail his thoughts on the ‘reconstruction of the League and the treaties to be concluded and re-written,’ but the ‘essential basis’ of the federation would be the application, by each constituent state, of the principles of federalism and

devolution *internally*. There must be the greatest possible devolution of autonomy upon racial groups within states, e.g. upon minorities in Poland, Italy and Yugo-Slavia. Linguistic and cultural self-government and indeed a considerable measure of political and economic autonomy must be granted to all ethnographic areas, such as Scotland and Wales.<sup>722</sup>

Delahaye called the prospective undertaking ‘desirable, intelligent, and no more than a statement of what must come to pass within fifty years,’ before assessing the chances of it being started within five years. As in the case of an individual,

so it may be of the nation that suffering leads to wisdom, that despair will render both peoples and their leaders receptive to the idea of intelligent co-operation. Financially, economically, and politically Europe is yearly becoming more desperate... Sanity may yet operate if a sufficient number of people here and abroad decide that it shall.

To Delahaye’s mind, it was not ‘wildly optimistic’ to suppose that smaller states would take (and larger states allow) steps toward federation, given that the alternative was sure to be war.<sup>723</sup>

---

<sup>722</sup> The NEG/NBM – whose prominent figures included two Scots (Fraser and Thomson) and a Welshman (Davies) – was alert to the stirrings of declining confidence in the Union in Scotland and Wales. Both were experiencing severe downturns in their extractive and heavy industries (in Scotland, Westminster’s legitimacy had begun to erode on ‘Bloody Friday’ in 1919); see Pugh, *We Danced*, p. ix and p. 429. Scottish unemployment was 26 percent in 1933 (Gardiner, *Thirties*, p. 9). The National Party of Scotland had been founded in 1928, and the Scottish Party in 1932 (in 1934, they became the Scottish National Party). Plaid Cymru first contested a seat in the 1929 election. By 1932 unemployment was 37 percent in south Wales; it was 62 percent in Merthyr Tydfil (Pugh, *We Danced*, p. 433), close to Davies’ place of birth. Thomson wrote that the NEG/NBM’s ‘emphasis’ on devolution resulted in ‘automatic support from Scottish and Welsh nationalists’ (Thomson, TS of autobiographical writings, p. 96).

<sup>723</sup> Delahaye, ‘The Next Step’, pp. 47–8.



The NEG/NBM's prominent figures and other contributors were not the only ones whose thoughts on prospective forms of European governance appeared in *New Britain* weekly: readers' correspondence on the subject was published, too. Richard de Bary (of Wimborne, Dorset), for one, welcomed the 'allusions to a Federal Europe.' He suggested 'the idea of calling a European States-General with its terms of reference to plan out a scheme for a common equal economic citizenship for every prospective citizen.'<sup>724</sup> Just as the weekly's articles on sovereignty prompted readers to share their ideas, so did its discussions of possibilities for European governance.

On the issue of economic citizenship, 'Sentinel' proposed that a General Economic Council-like body 'regulate scientifically the industrial and agricultural output of the whole of Europe,' 'abolish all currencies as commodities,' and 'establish one currency.'<sup>725</sup> Bauer argued that a single currency 'would remove all restrictions' in intra-European 'financial intercourse' and would 'save an enormous amount of profit drawn upon exchange.' It would have a 'sufficiently broad basis to withstand any attacks' by speculators, he added.<sup>726</sup>

Soddy discussed at length the prospect of an 'international currency,' which was 'quite easy to imagine' and 'well worth while attempting to come to grips with.' Initially, some 'sort of Central or International Mint' could issue the currency at a rate agreed by all the states that would permit its use as a second legal tender (the fair distribution of seigniorage revenues would not be difficult). Once that system was 'working successfully,' the machinery would be 'competent also to take over the issue for each of the several nations of its internal money, and as clearly, without anyone being a penny the worse off, of replacing national currencies in their entirety by

---

<sup>724</sup> Richard de Bary, 'A Federal Europe', *New Britain* weekly, 10 January 1934, pp. 233–4. Within two decades, a protocol signed in The Hague (in 1953) formalised the free movement of workers as a goal of economic union in Europe; see Willem Maas, *Creating European Citizens* (Lanham, 2007), p. 23.

<sup>725</sup> 'Sentinel', 'The Shape', p. 41. With the 1962 introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy, the European Economic Community began to regulate the agricultural output of its member states.

<sup>726</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 3], p. 53.

international money for internal and external use alike.’ But Soddy thought that present circumstances rendered all this ‘impracticable,’ given

violent fluctuations of the exchanges inseparable from the irresponsible issue and destruction of money, first in this country then in that, without the slightest reference to the welfare of the citizens of the countries in question. These difficulties can only be met by complete suppression of private mints and the restoration to the nations of the prerogative over the issue of money.

In other words, monetary reform in each European state would be a prerequisite for an international currency, in Soddy’s view. But if ‘restoration’ were effected, the need for and advantages of an international currency would ‘largely disappear.’ On the other hand, ‘hardly any further change’ would be needed to replace the national currencies with a single currency. Ultimately, Soddy feared that the necessary machinery would have the potential for ‘the perpetration of new social slaveries.’<sup>727</sup>

The NEG/NBM also discussed the principles that ought to undergird a federal European security architecture. *New Europe* argued that European states in the process of federalising would have the ‘responsibility to prevent a threatened aggression.’<sup>728</sup>

T. S. Bazley argued that a mere intergovernmental system of collective security would be only one degree better ‘than military alliances and the “Balance of Power.”’ This was because ‘it would be subject to the same weakness as are all treaties and alliances,’ namely that ‘pacts and conventions are never permanent – at least, not till they have been translated into something more.’ Bazley therefore advocated the ‘pooling of forces in a European federation.’<sup>729</sup>

In *New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State*, Catlin argued that an ‘international force’ would be the biggest stride toward the establishment of

---

<sup>727</sup> Soddy, ‘International Money’, pp. 75–6. Some would argue that such fears were realised 80 years later during the Greek sovereign debt crisis: ‘debt slavery’ has been a trope used by those opposed to Greece’s acceptance of the conditions (formulated by the European Central Bank, among others) attached to the bailout programme.

<sup>728</sup> *New Europe*, September 1934, p. 6.

<sup>729</sup> T. S. Bazley, ‘Peace Through Postponement’, *Eleventh Hour*, 3 July 1935, p. 157.

‘international sovereignty,’ but stipulated that it was up to ‘public opinion’ to give governments a mandate to create the force.<sup>730</sup> Bauer argued in favour of ‘a common army, especially a common General Staff.’<sup>731</sup> Carter, for his part, focused on plans to ensure that a European federation would have a monopoly on the use of aerial force across the continent, so that aviation would be ‘a boon,’ not ‘a curse.’ He argued that the abolition of national air forces would be made possible only by the ‘creation of a European Air Police plus establishment of Civil Aviation on a Continental basis.’<sup>732</sup> Following the founding of the Air Police, if a state threatened to commit an act of aggression, the mere

assembly of [the Air Police] force for purposes of warning might be enough [to stop it]. The difference between military activity and police activity is that the military uses the maximum of force to defeat the enemy and the police uses the minimum of force in order to bring the enemy to the law.<sup>733</sup>

Carter thought ‘an Air Disarmament Convention on the principle of pooled security’ would be the ‘*sine qua non* of any federal achievement in Europe.’<sup>734</sup>

*Eleventh Hour* argued that to ‘gain the support of the injured nations’ (i.e. the revisionist powers), it would have to be made clear that the objective of ‘a federation of military forces’ was not to be merely ‘a negative assurance of immunity from attack,’ but rather ‘a step towards political Federation.’<sup>735</sup> But even this blueprint for a new security architecture would not be sufficient to guarantee permanent peace. Something more was needed, because as Bauer pointed out: ‘If a man would try to set his neighbour’s household in the order he deems to be the right one, he would be summoned for housebreaking. International tact demands any nation to respect also a

---

<sup>730</sup> Catlin, ‘Is it Peace?’, p. 27.

<sup>731</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 2], p. 12.

<sup>732</sup> Presumably, ‘effective control of the civil machines’ was necessary to prevent their being weaponised.

<sup>733</sup> Carter, ‘Constructive Proposal’, p. 90.

<sup>734</sup> Carter, ‘Exploring the Approaches’, p. 24.

<sup>735</sup> ‘Disarmaments or Federations?’, *Eleventh Hour*, 27 February 1935, p. 249.

smaller one's individuality.<sup>736</sup> The movement thus saw the need for an institutionalised means of arbitration, specifically

a recognised tribunal of European powers to which the nations agree to defer... If security is to be collective and mutual there must also be collective and mutual justice. There must be agreement among the nations that force shall be the instrument of the law only, and not of aggressors or restrainers.

Acts of aggression would be judged, territorial problems 'unravelling,' and past grievances resolved by 'collective European will' channelled through such a tribunal.<sup>737</sup>

Ultimately, prominent figures in the NEG/NBM were committed to the idea of a federal Europe setting an example of 'unity,' by means of institutions that functioned on the principle of subsidiarity; economic governance based on cooperation; permanent peace; and international justice. They imagined that the precedent to be set by Europe would not only encourage other continents to 'follow suit,' but would 'invite internationalism' on a global scale.<sup>738</sup> The movement's 'far off' goal was nothing less than 'the federation of the world' – 'what man is meant for.'<sup>739</sup>

---

<sup>736</sup> Bauer, *Europe* [part 2], p. 9.

<sup>737</sup> 'Disarmaments or Federations?', p. 249.

<sup>738</sup> McEachran, *Unity of Europe*, p. 26.

<sup>739</sup> Purdom, 'Britain's Destiny', p. 400.

## Conclusion

I began this thesis by showing that the group of challengers to the National Government and the parliamentary regime was not comprised solely of the usual suspects; the NEG/NBM, too, should be recognised as a significant ‘positive’ antisystem formation in the first half of the 1930s. In spite of the movement turning its periodicals’ half-million-strong readership into a networked audience for its ideas, the NEG/NBM has escaped the notice of all but a few historians, and had never before been the subject of extensive research. This neglect I have shown to be an oversight – and not least because the NEG/NBM constituted a rare example of a movement dedicated to political perfectionism, an under-researched sub-field of political history. Previously, the NEG/NBM’s ideas had not been charted in depth, and its ‘aspidistra antisystemness’ was an unmapped feature on the British extra-parliamentary political landscape between the wars.

From 1933 to 1934 the NBM was a major politicised social movement; for reasons discussed in the introduction, though, few scholars have given the movement the attention it deserves. By examining the interplay between the NEG/NBM’s prefigurative politics and its outside-world activity, we can add to the literature on how political commitments are privately embodied and publicly expressed. In examining the rise and demise of the NBM, I have demonstrated how a politicised social movement can reframe (for those who comprise the movement’s constituency, at least) important politico-economic debates and be a formative influence on individuals; in the case of the NEG/NBM, these individuals included Niall MacDermot, who would go on to hold high public office.

More importantly, though, I have explained that the NEG/NBM was Britain’s first genuine European federalist group, predating FU by several years. Too few

scholars have come to appreciate that prominent figures in the NEG/NBM traced the path that second-wave groups followed. As discussed in chapter one, the movement's prominent figures 'resolve[d], in advance of their age, that Europe shall become one integrated whole.'<sup>740</sup> These first-wave thinkers, and others, may not have fully appreciated how technical the process of European integration would have been had they managed to make it the policy of states in the 1930s – and they certainly underestimated how difficult it would have proved to solve the problems that would inevitably have arisen. The NEG/NBM's prominent figures tended to argue that all that was needed for the process of European integration to commence was the states summoning the *will* to integrate. This naivety was only to be expected, given how little experience they had in (civilian) public service. But their naivety made possible the generation of audacious ideas that truly were 'in advance of their age.' Similar ideas had percolated up to Briand, whose initiative set the precedent that post-war statesmen could refer to – and draw lessons from. By examining first-wave Eurofederalist groups such as the NEG/NBM we not only shed new light on the interwar years, we illuminate the ideational foundations of the post-1945 political order in western Europe, too.

In *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Alan S. Milward has argued that the underlying purpose of the second-wave drive for European integration was to rehabilitate the nation-state following a second world war that was even more catastrophic than the first. The nation-states needed rescuing from ignominy, and this was achieved by taming them: they were embedded in a network of institutions, including the European Coal and Steel Community, which were designed to ensure peace. Indeed, the 'common policies of the European Community came into being in the attempt to uphold and stabilize the post-war consensus on which the European

---

<sup>740</sup> *Integration of Europe*, p. 3.

nation-state was rebuilt.<sup>741</sup> This was only possible because second-wave visionaries and theoreticians intersected with those in power, in contrast to their first-wave forbears, who had managed to gain little access to official circles.

It took a total war (including the mass extermination of millions) that devastated Europe, and led to its division, for statesmen to come to the realisations that the NEG/NBM had come to after the Great War – but the founding fathers of what we now call the EU saw fit to enable second-wave technocrats with visions to achieve what first-wave visionaries had not been able to. *New Britain* weekly stated ‘by our fruits shall we all be known in the end.’<sup>742</sup> The NEG/NBM’s greatest legacy is its body of thought on European integration: it generated a wealth of prescient ideas that linked first- and second-wave thinking on a political union that has had a crucial role in the prosperity and security of hundreds of millions of persons on this continent.

---

<sup>741</sup> Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, 2000), p. 44.

<sup>742</sup> ‘Reality and Prosperity’, *New Britain* weekly, 4 April 1934, p. 598.

## **Appendix: a Complete List of Periodicals under Mitrinović's Direction**

Below is the first complete listing of periodicals under Mitrinović's direction, with issue dates and page counts. They are ordered by the stated date of the first issue.

*New Britain* quarterly (large format)

Vol. 1, no. 1 (subtitled *Quarterly Organ of the XIth Hour Club*): October 1932 (32 pages, with a 2-page insert).

Vol. 1, no. 2 (subtitled *Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance*): January–March 1933 (40 pages, with a 3-page insert).

Vol. 1, no. 3 (subtitled *Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance*): April–June 1933 (40 pages).

*New Britain: A Weekly Organ of National Renaissance*

Vol. 1: 26 issues (each of 32 pages), issued as weeklies starting 24 May 1933 and ending 15 November 1933.

Vol. 2: 26 issues (each of 32 pages, except for the 24-page issues of 20 December 1933, 27 December 1933, 25 April 1934, and 2 May 1934), issued as weeklies starting 22 November 1933 and ending 16 May 1934.

Vol. 3: 12 issues, issued as weeklies starting 23 May 1934 (a 36-page issue) and ending 8 August 1934: issues from 30 May to 27 June had 28 pages (30 May and 20 June issues each had a 4-page insert, too), and those from 4 July to 8 August had 32 pages (11 July and 1 August issues each had a 3-page insert, too).

*New Atlantis: For Western Renaissance and World Socialism* (large format)

Vol. 1, no. 1: October 1933 (48 pages, with a 5-page insert).



Vol. 1, no. 2: January 1934 (52 pages, with a 27-page supplement titled ‘A View on Planning’).

*Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*

16 issues, issued fortnightly starting Easter 1934 (a 2-page issue) and ending 7 November 1934: issues from Mid-April to August 1934 had 4 pages, and those from 15 August to 7 November had 8 pages.

*New Albion: For British Renaissance and Western Alliance* (large format)

Vol. 1, no. 1: April 1934 (48 pages).

*New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State* (large format)

‘New Series’: Autumn 1934 (48 pages, with a 4-page insert and an 8-page insert).

*New Europe: A monthly Journal for Federation and Disarmament* (unique format)

No. 1: September 1934 (48 pages).

*The Eleventh Hour New Series*

Vol. 1: 26 issues, issued weekly starting 21 November 1934 and ending 15 May 1935: issues from 21 November to 13 February (except for the 32-page issue of 19 December) had 16 pages (the 6 February issue had a 4-page insert, too); issues from 20 February to 10 April (except for the 24-page issue of 20 March) had 20 pages; and issues from 17 April to 15 May had 24 pages.

Vol. 2: 9 issues (each of 24 pages), issued weekly starting 22 May 1935 and ending 17 July 1935.

At least three issues (29 January, 5 February and 12 February 1936) of another periodical, *The New Britain*, were planned, and a few sources suggest they were produced. They may never have been printed, however; in any case, no copy of any of these issues is extant in the NAFDMA.

## **Bibliography**

### Periodicals

*Action*

*Adelphi, The*

*Athenaeum, The*

*Birmingham Post, The*

*Bromley District Times*

*Cavalcade*

*Central Somerset Gazette*

*China Weekly Review, The*

*Conspiracy*

*Croydon Advertiser*

*Daily Worker*

*Economist, The*

*Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*

*Eleventh Hour, The*

*Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin*

*Golders Green Gazette*

*Guardian, The*

*Hendon Times and Borough Guardian*

*Herts Advertiser*

*Independent, The*

*Isis*

*Islington Gazette*

*Manchester Guardian, The*

*Midland Chronicle & Free Press*

*Nature*

*New Albion: For British Renaissance and Western Alliance*

*New Atlantis: For Western Renaissance and World Socialism*

*New Britain: A Weekly Organ of National Renaissance*

*New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State*

*New Britain: Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance*

*New Britain: Quarterly Organ of the XIth Hour Club*

*New England*

*New English Weekly, The*

*New Europe: A monthly Journal for Federation and Disarmament*

*New York Times, The*

*News Chronicle*

*North Devon Journal*

*Observer, The*

*Oxford Magazine, The*

*Patriot*

*Penang Gazette*

*Saturday Evening Post, The*

*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*

*Southport Guardian*

*Southport Journal*

*Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror*

*Wood Green Sentinel*

*World's Press News*

Primary sources: archives

Bradford, University of Bradford, Special Collections, The New Atlantis Foundation

Dimitrije Mitrović Archive

Farnham, University of the Creative Arts, Crafts Study Centre, Archives, Additional

Papers of Bernard Leach

New York, Columbia University, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Harry

F. Ward Papers, 1880–1979

Sils Maria, Nietzsche Haus, Bibliothek, Oscar Levy Papers

Vancouver, University of British Columbia, University Archives, Watson Thomson

Fonds

Primary sources: non-archival

Agnelli, Giovanni and Attilio Cabiati, ‘*European Federation or League of Nations?,*

1918’, in Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins and Development*, pp. 12–14

Boothby, Robert, *I Fight to Live* (London, 1947)

Boyd, Andrew and Frances Boyd, *Western Union: A Study of the Trend Toward*

*European Unity* (Washington, 1949)

Briand, Aristide, “Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal

Union”, 17 May 1930’, in Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins and Development*, pp. 18–19

Coudenhove-Kalergi, R. N., *Crusade for Pan-Europe: Autobiography of a Man and a*

*Movement* (New York, 1943)

——— *Pan-Europe* (New York, 1926)

——— ‘War Danger in Europe’, *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 88 (1926), pp. 549–

51

de Chair, Somerset, *Divided Europe* (London, 1931)

Drennan, James, *B.U.F.: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (London, 1934)

- Fletcher, John Gould, *Life is My Song* (New York, 1937)
- Graves, Robert and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939* (London, 1995 [1940])
- Hantos, Elémer, ‘The European Customs Union’, in Stirk and Weigall (eds), *Origins and Development*, pp. 15–16
- Hobson, S. G., *Pilgrim to the Left: Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (New York, 1938)
- Hutt, Allen, *This Final Crisis* (London, 1935)
- Iconoclast [Mary Agnes Hamilton], *J. Ramsay MacDonald: The Man of To-morrow* (New York, 1924)
- Keynes, John Maynard, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London, 1936)
- Laski, Harold, ‘The Economic Foundations of Peace’, in Leonard Woolf (ed.), *The Intelligent Man’s Way to Prevent War* (London, 1933), pp. 499–547
- Lasswell, Harold D., ‘The Garrison State’, *American Journal of Sociology* 46.4 (1941), pp. 455–68
- Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia* (London, 1936)
- Muggeridge, Malcolm, *The Thirties, 1930–1940, in Great Britain* (London, 1940)
- Ortega y Gasset, José, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York, 1932)
- Orwell, George, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (New York, 1956 [1936])
- *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London, 1998 [1937])
- Peacock, Arthur, *Yours Fraternally* (London, 1945)
- Priestley, J. B., *English Journey* (2nd edn, London, 1977 [1934])
- Purdom, C. B., *Life Over Again: An Essay in Autobiography* (London, 1951)
- Salter, Arthur, *The United States of Europe and Other Papers* (London, 1933)
- Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Amherst, 2000 [1759])

- *The Wealth of Nations* (London, 2007 [1776])
- Spengler, Oswald, *The Hour of Decision: Part One: Germany and World-Historical Evolution*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York, 1934)
- Stead, W. T., *The United States of Europe on the Eve of the Parliament of Peace* (London, 1899)
- Toynbee, Arnold J., *Survey of International Affairs 1931* (London, 1932)
- Waecher, Max, 'The United States of Europe', *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 86 (1924), pp. 607–611
- Weber, Max, *Economy and Society, Vols. 1 and 2*, eds Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, 1978 [1922])
- Wells, H. G., *The Salvaging of Civilization: The Probable Future of Mankind* (New York, 1922)
- *The Shape of Things to Come* (London, 1933)
- Woolf, Leonard, *Imperialism and Civilization* (New York, 1928)

Secondary sources: books

- Anderson, Gerald D., *Fascists, Communists, and the National Government: Civil Liberties in Great Britain, 1931–1937* (Columbia, 1983)
- Biddiss, Michael, *Age of the Masses: Ideas and Society in Europe since 1870* (London, 1977)
- Blythe, Ronald, *The Age of Illusion: Glimpses of Britain between the Wars 1919–1940* (Oxford, 1983 [1963])
- Bongiovanni, Francesco M., *The Decline and Fall of Europe* (Basingstoke, 2012)
- Bottome, Phyllis, *Alfred Adler: A Portrait from Life* (New York, 1957)
- Branson, Noreen and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties* (St Albans, 1973)

Brendon, Piers, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (New York, 2000)

Broderick, Francis L., *W. E. B. DuBois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* (Stanford, 1959)

Butter, Peter H., *Edwin Muir: Man and Poet* (London, 1966)

Cannadine, David, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992)

Capoccia, Giovanni, *Defending Democracy: Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe* (Baltimore, 2005)

Clarke, Peter, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900–1990* (London, 1997)

Crowson, N. J., *Britain and Europe: A Political History since 1918* (London, 2011)

Culver, John C. and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York, 2000)

Davies, D. R., *In Search of Myself: The Autobiography of D. R. Davies* (London, 1961)

Diner, Dan, *Cataclysms: A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe's Edge* (Madison, 2008)

Duke, David Nelson, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Tuscaloosa, 2003)

Dutton, David, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004)

——— *Neville Chamberlain* (London, 2001)

Foerster, Rolf Hellmut, *Europa: Geschichte einer politischen Idee* (Munich, 1967)

Friedman, Max Paul, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, 2012)

Gardiner, Juliet, *The Thirties: An Intimate History* (London, 2010)

Gerolymatos, André, *The Balkan Wars: Myth, Reality, and the Eternal Conflict* (Toronto, 2001)

Graham, Stephen, *Part of the Wonderful Scene: An Autobiography* (London, 1964)

- Grayzel, Susan R., *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge, 2011)
- Haas, Ernst B., *The Uniting of Europe* (Stanford, 1958)
- Hadžiselimović, Omer, (ed.), *At the Gates of the East: British Travel Writers on Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Boulder, 2001)
- Harding, Jason, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford, 2002)
- Heater, Derek, *The Idea of European Unity* (Leicester, 1992)
- Heffernan, Michael, *The Meaning of Europe: Geography and Geopolitics* (London, 1998)
- Hellman, John, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left 1930–1950* (Toronto, 1981)
- *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc's Ordre Nouveau, 1930–2000* (Montreal, 2002)
- Hendrick, Joshua D., *Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World* (New York, 2013)
- Himmelfarb, Gertrude, *Victorian Minds* (New York, 1968)
- Hinsley, F. H., *Sovereignty* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1986)
- Howell, David, *Mosley and British Politics 1918–32: Oswald's Odyssey* (Basingstoke, 2015)
- Hughes, Michael, *Beyond Holy Russia: The Life and Times of Stephen Graham* (Cambridge, 2014)
- James, Lawrence, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London, 1995)
- Jefferys, Kevin, *Politics and the People: A History of British Democracy since 1918* (London, 2007)
- Johnson III, Ben F., *Fierce Solitude: A Life of John Gould Fletcher* (Fayetteville, 1994)



- Jones, Nigel, *Mosley* (London, 2005)
- Kahler, Erich, *The Germans* (Princeton, 1974)
- Karvonen, Lauri, *Fragmentation and Consensus: Political Organisation and the Interwar Crisis in Europe* (Boulder, 1993)
- Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (Ithaca, 1998)
- Kent, Susan Kingsley, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918–1931* (Basingstoke, 2009)
- Kitchen, Martin, *Europe between the Wars* (2nd edn, Harlow, 2006)
- Kolinsky, Martin, and William E. Paterson, *Social and Political Movements in Western Europe* (New York, 1976)
- Kupchan, Charles A., *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton, 2010)
- Link, Eugene P., *Labor-Religion Prophet: The Times and Life of Harry F. Ward* (Boulder, 1984)
- Lipgens, Walter, *A History of European Integration 1945–1947*, vol. 1, *The Formation of the European Unity Movement*, trans. P. S. Falla and A. J. Ryder (Oxford, 1982)
- Maas, Willem, *Creating European Citizens* (Lanham, 2007)
- MacDermot, Violet, (ed.), *Dimitrije Mitrinović: Lectures 1926–1950* (Bradford, 1995)
- Macleod, Iain, *Neville Chamberlain* (New York, 1962)
- Mairet, Philip, *A. R. Orage: A Memoir* (New York, 1966)
- *Autobiographical and Other Papers* (Manchester, 1981)
- Marler, Regina, *Bloomsbury Pie: The Making of the Bloomsbury Boom* (New York, 1997)
- Marquand, David, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977)
- May, Arthur J., *The Hapsburg Monarchy 1867–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1960)

- Mayne, Richard and John Pinder, *Federal Union: The Pioneers: A History of Federal Union* (Basingstoke, 1990)
- Merricks, Linda, *The World Made New: Frederick Soddy, Science, Politics, Environment* (Oxford, 1996)
- Mikkeli, Heikki, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity* (London, 1998)
- Milutinović, Zoran, *Getting Over Europe: The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam, 2011)
- Milward, Alan S., *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (2nd edn, London, 2000)
- Moore, R. Lawrence, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Oxford, 1986)
- Morris, Benny, *The Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany during the 1930s* (London, 1991)
- Morrow, John Howard, *The Great War: An Imperial History* (Oxford, 2004)
- Moyes [née Fraser], Helen, *A Woman in a Man's World* (Sydney, 1971)
- Muir, Edwin, *An Autobiography* (London, 1954)
- Muir, Willa, *Belonging: A Memoir* (London, 1968)
- Overy, Richard, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919–1939* (London, 2010)
- Palavestra, Predrag, *Dogma i Utopija Dimitrija Mitinovića: Počeci srpske književne avangarde* (Belgrade, 1977)
- Passerini, Luisa, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London, 1999)
- *Love and the Idea of Europe*, trans. Juliet Haydock with Allan Cameron (New York, 2009)
- Payne, Stanley G., *Civil War in Europe, 1905–1949* (Cambridge, 2011)
- Pugh, Martin, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts': Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2006)

- ‘*We Danced All Night*’: *A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2009)
- Ramsden, John, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902–1940* (London, 1978)
- Rauch, R. William, *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy, 1932–1950* (The Hague, 1972)
- Rigby, Andrew, *Dimitrije Mitrinović: A Biography* (York, 2006)
- *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* (Boulder, 1984)
- Ritschel, Daniel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997)
- Rush, Gary B. and R. Serge Denisoff, *Social and Political Movements* (New York, 1971)
- Sartori, Giovanni, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge, 1976)
- *The Theory of Democracy Revised* (Chatham, 1987)
- Seaman, L. C. B., *Life in Britain Between the Wars* (London, 1985 [1970])
- Selver, Paul, *Orage and the ‘New Age’ Circle: Reminiscences and Reflections* (London, 1959)
- Singer, Margaret Thaler, *Cults in Our Midst* (San Francisco, 1995)
- Skidelsky, Robert, *John Maynard Keynes: The Economist as Savior, 1920–1937* (New York, 1995)
- Smart, Nick, *The National Government, 1931–40* (Basingstoke, 1999)
- Sontag, Raymond J., *A Broken World, 1919–1939* (New York, 1971)
- Spence, Richard B., *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult* (Port Townsend, 2008)

- Spiering, Menno and Michael Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe since 1914: The Legacy of the First World War* (Houndmills, 2002)
- Stevenson, John and Chris Cook, *The Slump: Britain in the Great Depression* (3rd edn, Harlow, 2010)
- Stirk, Peter M. R., *A History of European Integration Since 1914* (London, 1996)
- (ed.), *Unity in Context: The Interwar Period* (London, 1989)
- Stirk, Peter M. R. and David Weigall (eds), *The Origins and Development of European Integration: A Reader and Commentary* (London, 1999)
- Stone, Dan, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool, 2002)
- Thomson, David, *England in the Twentieth Century, 1914–63* (Harmondsworth, 1963)
- Thomson, Mathew, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006)
- Thomson, Watson, *Turning into Tomorrow* (New York, 1966)
- Thorpe, D. R., *Supermac: The Life of Harold Macmillan* (London, 2010)
- Tolley, Howard B., *The International Commission of Jurists: Global Advocates for Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2010)
- Trythall, Anthony John, *'Boney' Fuller: Soldier, Strategist, and Writer, 1878–1966* (New Brunswick, 1977)
- Villis, Tom, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt against Liberal Democracy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 2006)
- Viroli, Maurizio, *The Liberty of Servants: Berlusconi's Italy*, trans. Antony Shugaar (Princeton, 2012)
- Watt, Donald Cameron, *Too Serious a Business: European Armed Forces and the Approach to the Second World War* (Berkeley, 1975)
- Watts, Alan, *In My Own Way: An Autobiography 1915–1965* (New York, 1973)

- Webb, James, *The Occult Establishment* (LaSalle, 1976)
- Werckmeister, Otto Karl, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career, 1914–1920* (Chicago, 1989)
- West, Nigel, (ed.), *The Guy Liddell Diaries: MI5's Director of Counter-Espionage in World War II*, vol. 2, 1942–1945 (London, 2006)
- Whitelaw, Lis, *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton: Actor, Writer, Suffragist* (Columbus, 1991)
- Williamson, Philip, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926–1932* (Cambridge, 1992)
- Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995)
- Wood, Neal, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (New York, 1959)
- Worley, Matthew, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke, 2010)
- Zurcher, Arnold J., *The Struggle to Unite Europe, 1940–1958* (New York, 1958)

Secondary sources: chapters, articles, reviews, reports and discussion papers

- Armstrong, Tim, 'Social Credit Modernism', *Critical Quarterly* 55.2 (2013), pp. 50–65
- Behr, Shulamith, 'Wassily Kandinsky and Dimitrije Mitrinovic; Pan-Christian Universalism and the Yearbook "Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe"', *Oxford Art Journal* 15 (1992), pp. 81–88
- Breines, Wini, 'Community and Organization: The New Left and Michels' "Iron Law"', *Social Problems* 27.4 (1980), pp. 419–29
- Bugge, Peter, 'The Nation Supreme: The Idea of Europe, 1914–1945', in Kevin Wilson and Jan van der Dussen (eds), *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London, 1995), pp. 83–149

- “‘Shatter Zones’: The Creation and Re-creation of Europe’s East’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 47–68
- Carnibella, Giovanni et al., ‘Football Violence in Europe’, The Social Issues Research Centre, Oxford report to the Amsterdam Group (1996)
- Collier, David and Steven Levitsky, ‘Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research’, *World Politics* 49.4 (1997), pp. 430–51
- Conford, Philip “‘Saturated with Biological Metaphors’: Professor John Macmurray (1891–1976) and the Politics of the Organic Movement’, *Contemporary British History* 22.3 (2008), pp. 317–34
- Crafts, Nicolas and Peter Fearon, ‘Lessons from the 1930s Great Depression’, Centre for Economic Policy Research discussion paper no. 8057 (2010)
- Đuričković, Dejan, ‘The Poets of Young Bosnia’, *Survey Sarajevo* 2 (1975), pp. 74–87
- Eisenberg, Eric M., ‘Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication’, *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984), pp. 227–42
- Emmert, Thomas A., Review of *Certainly, Future: Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinović* ed. by H. C. Rutherford, in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 24 (1990), pp. 65–67
- Review of *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* by Andrew Rigby, in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 19 (1985), pp. 235–36
- Feaver, George, Review of *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* by Andrew Rigby, in *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), pp. 117–18
- Fokkema, Aleid, “‘And Down We Went’: Fragments of Interwar Europe Seen from the British Metropolis’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 142–59

- Garnett, Mark, Review of *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* by Luisa Passerini, in *Political Quarterly* 70 (1999), pp. 359–60
- Ifversen, Jan, ‘The Crisis of European Civilization After 1918’, in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 14–31
- Jeffrey, Tom, ‘A Place in the Nation: The Lower Middle Class in England’, in Rudy Koshar (ed.), *Splintered Classes: Politics and the Lower Middle Classes in Interwar Europe* (New York, 1990), pp. 70–96
- Keren, Michael, ‘Political Perfectionism and the “Anti-system” Party’, *Party Politics* 6.1 (2000), pp. 107–16
- Kotkin, Stephen, ‘Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture’, in Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin (eds), *The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789–1991* (Lanham, 2003), pp. 187–208
- Lawrence, Jon, ‘Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain’, *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003), pp. 557–89
- ‘The Transformation of British Public Politics After the First World War’, *Past and Present* 190 (2006), pp. 185–216
- Lawson, Tom, ‘The Myth of the European Civil War’, in Richard Littlejohns and Sara Soncini (eds), *Myths of Europe* (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 275–89
- Le Dréau, Christophe, ‘L’Europe des non-conformistes des années trente. Les idées européistes de New Britain et New Europe’, in Olivier Dard and Étienne Deschamps (eds), *Les relèves en Europe d’un après-guerre à l’autre: racines, réseaux, projets et posterities* (Brussels, 2005), pp. 311–30
- Lehmann, A. G., ‘Reflections on *Europa* (1935)’, in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 99–109

- Middleton, Roger, 'British Monetary and Fiscal Policy in the 1930s', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 26.3 (2010), pp. 414–41
- Mishra, Pankaj, Review of *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933–73* by Mark Grief, in *London Review of Books* 37.16 (2015), pp. 13–15
- Moravcevic, Nicholas, Review of *Dogma i Utopija Dimitrija Mitinovića* by Predrag Palavestra, in *World Literature Today* 52.3 (1978), p. 492.
- Orluc, Katiana, 'Decline or Renaissance: The Transformation of European Consciousness after the First World War', in Bo Stråth (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other* (Brussels, 2000), pp. 123–55
- Pinder, John, 'Federalism in Britain and Italy: Radicals and the English Liberal Tradition', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 201–23
- Rigby, Andrew, 'Training for Cosmopolitan Citizenship in the 1930s: The Project of Dimitrije Mitrinovic', *Peace and Change* 24 (1999), pp. 379–99
- Roobol, Wim, 'Aristide Briand's Plan: The Seed of European Unification', in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 32–46
- Rubinstein, William D., *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Political History* (Basingstoke, 2003)
- Sartori, Giovanni, 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *The American Political Science Review* 64.4 (1970), pp. 1033–53
- Smith, Stan and Jennifer Birkett, 'Introduction', in Jennifer Birkett and Stan Smith (eds), *Right/Left/Right: Revolving Commitments, France and Britain 1929–1950* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 1–5
- Spiering, Menno and Michael Wintle, 'European Identity, Europeanness and the First World War: Reflections on the Twentieth Century – an Introduction', in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 1–13



- Stirk, Peter M. R., 'Introduction: Crisis and Continuity in Interwar Europe', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 1–22
- Thorpe, Andrew, 'Introduction', in Andrew Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 1–10
- Tyldesley, Mike, 'The House of Industry League: Guild Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s', *Labour History Review* 61 (1996), pp. 309–21
- Weiler, J. H. H., 'To Be a European Citizen – Eros and Civilization', *Journal of European Public Policy* 4.4 (1997), pp. 495–519
- White, Ralph, 'The Europeanism of Coudenhove-Kalergi', in Stirk (ed.), *Unity in Context*, pp. 23–40
- Wintle, Michael, 'Europe on Parade: The First World War and the Changing Visual Representations of the Continent in the Twentieth Century', in Spiering and Wintle (eds), *Ideas of Europe*, pp. 105–29
- Worley, Matthew, 'What Was the New Party? Sir Oswald Mosley and Associated Responses to the "Crisis", 1931–1932', *History* 92 (2007), pp. 39–63
- Ziemann, Benjamin, 'Weimar was Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the German Republic', *German History* 28.4 (2010), pp. 542–71

#### Unpublished research work

- Kennedy, Dennis, 'Cicely Hamilton's Twentieth Century' (paper delivered to the Belfast Literary Society, 3 April 2000)
- Page, David Graham, 'Dimitrije Mitrović: Chameleon, Good European, and Exiled Yugoslavist' (unpublished master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2005)