A. J. P. TAYLOR: THE OPTIMISM OF DISILLUSIONMENT

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A mon professeur et guide, Joseph M. Gallanar, avec plus extrême gratitude et humilité pour sa secours et sa confiance.

PREFACE

To understand the work of Alan John Percivale Taylor is no easy task. Journalist, historian, polemicist and gadfly are only some of the roles he seems to have played. But they were only exterior impressions covering a quite distinct personality and mind. Through the use of each of his many guises, Taylor manifested his approach to the writing of history which was centered always around a single theme--the People. To see this essential point is the purpose of this essay.

There are two aspects to the scope of Taylor's writing. One is his changing view of Europe and her political, social, and ideological role in the world. The second is his unchanging idealism concerning the rights of men and democratic liberalism. The two factors are inseparable in his work. As Europe declined in world power, he saw the possibility of realizing the great ideals of modern humanity, i.e. freedom, a materially better life, a new interest in human society, and a greater sense of justice. Thus his scope shifted regarding his historical concentrations from orthodox historical monographs to more polemical comments on past and present. But the ideals which had always lain underneath remained firmly in place; in fact they grew more determined in ratio to his recognition of Europe's decline.

If at times this essay seems puzzling or contradictory, it is only because so is the life-work of the man with whom it deals. Following the twists and turns of A. J. P. Taylor's agile mind recalls a journey through a narrow, twisting, multi-channeled cave. Links between the many passages became thread

thin, tenuous, often nearly severing.

My gratitude for helping make the task easier goes especially to Professor Joseph M. Gallanar for his expert advice and unflagging patience, often in the face of my overwhelming incomprehension. As well, A. Stanley Trickett, once Taylor's student, extended a helping hand to gain for me a correspondence with Taylor, without which a certain void in the portions of this paper dealing with his early career might have existed. And finally, to my wife who read the manuscript, and to my many friends and colleagues, whose words of cheer and watchful eyes kept open for stray bits of material, I extend my appreciation and thanks.

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A world of words, tail foremost,
    where
Right--wrong--false--true--
    and foul--and fair
  As in a lottery-wheel are shook.

Shelley
"Peter Bell the Third"

CHAPTER I. ENGLAND BETWEEN THE WARS: THE SPRINGS OF A. J. P. TAYLOR

I

A. J. P. Taylor has written a great many words during his prolific thirty year career as an English historian. He has stepped on an endless number of toes, shattered many traditions, exploded a variety of myths, and perpetrated some controversial revisions in modern history. To some readers he has appeared as the spokesman for great truths, enuciated in phrases of penetrating erudition; to others he has represented a fiendish perpetrator of blasphemy, irrational revision, and polemics solely for their own sake. His works cover a wide range of material from short book reviews and journalistic essays to long and highly complex studies of significant historical problems. Whatever he wrote, one thing was always certain: his style would be clear, leaving no doubt with any reader that he was skilled in the use of the linguistic tools of his profession. Taylor has applied a master's skill to his work which few critics could dismiss. His ideas, however, were another matter; many critics could, and have, rebuked them. Understanding what motivated him constituted a puzzle which has not yet been solved.[1] But a careful study of the writings to fathom his attitudes, mentality, tastes and biases could have solved that puzzle. The purpose of this thesis is to carry through such an investigation.

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[1] V. Mehta, "Onward and Upward with the Arts," The New Yorker, XXXVII (December 8, 1962), p. 137. In a bright and penetrating essay, Mehta looked into the sources of conflict among English historians, attempting to learn what motivates the British historical mind. He left an interview with Taylor very perplexed. Not only was he still uncertain of what made him act as he did, but felt uncomfortably aware that Taylor was consciously laughing at his perplexity.

Born in 1906 in Southport, an upper middle class resort town in Lancashire, England, Taylor grew up in the turbulent era of World War I and the years of climactic change which followed it. Before entering Oxford, he had attended Bootham School, a Quaker institution, where it was customary to offer an annual prize for a John Bright oration. He once proposed to debunk the revered memory of Bright by giving one of his speeches against the Factory Acts. Taylor revealingly commented on this incident himself: "I, in revolt as usual against my surroundings, sought only something to Bright's discredit...."[2] Later he came to admire Bright greatly; but the "Taylor in revolt" was perhaps prophetic, for he has seldom been else, since.

After receiving a B.A. from the University of Oxford he went abroad to Vienna and Prague.[3] He met and came to admire A. F. Přibram, the last survivor of the once great Vienna school of historians.[4] He was never Přibram's student formally, but often attended his seminar on Oliver Cromwell, which was instructive though far removed from the historical research toward which Pribram directed him. At that time he was interested in doing "something historical, perhaps a comparison of British and Austrian radicals in 1848."[5] Přibram suggested the Austrian diplomatic archives, which proved somewhat different than Taylor's original idea. Nonetheless, he was soon on the path to his first book, The

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[2]A. J. P. Taylor, Englishmen and Others (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), p. 45. Taylor attended Oriel College, University of Oxford. At Oxford, there is now a legend that after doing well on his written examinations to enter Balliol College, his first choice, he was asked what he planned to do there. He replied that he would "Blow it up." He does not now recall the incident, though he smiles at the possibility. But whether true or not, the legend underlined his rebellious nature.

[3]Mehta, loc. cit., XXXVIII, p. 131.

[4]A. J. P. Taylor, London, letter, 12 January, 1966, to the author.

[5]A. J. P. Taylor, London, letter, 19 February, 1966, to the author.

Italian Problem in European Diplomacy, which was published in 1934. His Oxford studies had been in nineteenth century European history, but this concentration on political and diplomatic events was largely the product of his encounter with Pribram, who taught him the rudiments and techniques of studying diplomatic archives and of whose lectures Taylor wrote complimentary lines.[6]

Taylor returned to England to take a post as assistant lecturer at the University of Manchester in 1930. This was his home country, and he fitted in well with the spirit of unorthodoxy which characterized the "redbrick" University. A former student of his, A. Stanley Trickett, recalled that he was a quiet man, not given to great affection for people in general. Sir Louis Namier, then the leading historian at Manchester, and A. F. Pribram were exceptions.[7] His work at Manchester continued in his nineteenth century interests, partially to assist Namier and partially to prepare his own publications on Austria. In 1938 he moved to Oxford where he became a Fellow of Magdalen College, and in 1953, University Lecturer in International History. He brought with him a breath of northern radicalism which added to the upheavals taking place in Oxford at that time.

The Oxford to which Taylor came was still the old University of upper class sons, few women, and reputation for jinks often high and sometimes unsavory. But it was also the Oxford of change where old traditions were being accosted by new ideas. For Taylor, an immediate struggle must have begun in what Keith Briant wrote of as "a house divided." The reference was partially

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[6] A. J. P. Taylor, London, letter, 12 January, 1966, to the author.

[7] A. Stanley Trickett, Professor of History, Omaha University, Omaha, Nebraska, personal interview with author at Hastings, Nebraska, 2 November, 1965. Taylor gave Trickett considerable help, and left him with several interesting thoughts, like: "Never try to oversimplify history. It isn't simple and can't be oversimplified." and, "There is no reason why history can't be written so someone wants to read it."

to the "socialist dons" who wanted modernization of the University as well as a political orientation toward the Left, and to virtually everybody else who adhered with varying degrees of tenacity to old methods and ideas.[8] Another part of the division refered to the "personalities," i.e. eccentrics who were sometimes brilliant but more often got by on the strength of being characters, and the business-like scholars with both feet planted firmly on the ground.[9] Actually, Taylor--more in his later years than when he first came to Oxford--combined some of both qualitites. His elbow patches, belted jackets, baggy trousers and classic English sport car denoted something of the "personality," though his early scholarship was quite business-like.[10] There was no question at all of whether or not he would be on the left side of the fence in the other aspect of the division.

Beyond the battles of the socialist dons was what appeared to be growing discontent among Oxfordians with their own country and government, a movement which at Oxford was only part of a nationwide sentiment. According to Briant, it was largely an expression of the working class on the move.[11] The University Labour Club greatly increased it's strength during the thirties, while the University Conservative Association was eclipsed and declined in effectiveness. A revival of liberalism among undergraduates accompanied a growing desire to incline toward any policy other than conservatism. In essence, the University

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[8]Keith Briant, Oxford Limited (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1938), pp. 16-29.

[9]Ibid., p. 19.

[10]Trickett, loc. cit.

[11]Briant, op. cit., p. 90.

was moving from a Tory stronghold to an independent institution sending two non-aligned members to parliament in 1938. Taylor, a Lancashire radical who reached manhood during the turbulent years after World War I, arrived in the midst of this upheaval. At Oxford there was much to be concerned with: the conservative traditionalists fought to retain their position against the dramatically rising tide of the Left; the equally dramatic growth of Fascist elements demanding the presence as a speaker of Sir Oswald Mosely--his appearance was consistently forbidden--for the fledgling Fascist Society; and interest in democratic attitudes growing strong where before they had been kept weak by the disdain of the upper classes who dominated the University.[12] It was the kind of situation in which Taylor could take part with the zeal of an intellectual reformer.

Taylor was an active campaigner against appeasement in 1938, for reasons based partially on his anti-Germanism, and partially on his sympathy with the Left Book Club which urged opposition to Hitler as a result of the Fascist attacks on the Republican Government of Spain. Taylor had been a convinced Labour intellectual before coming to Oxford, though it was not until then that he began expressing his views in the acerb and scalding manner which was to become his trademark. In the preface to the American edition of The Origins of the Second World War he wrote, "I was addressing public meetings against appeasement--and very uphill work it was--when my critics were confining their activities to the seclusion of Oxford Common rooms."[13] Although this comment was in part aimed at the violent criticisms of The Origins of the Second World War,

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[12] Ibid., pp. 91-94. Although Briant was consistently conservative in his contemporary view of Oxford, he presented a realistic picture of the Oxford he attended, and the new Oxford being created by changing attitudes.

[13] A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1961), p. xi.

it revealed something of the polemical character of Taylor's early career. While many Lancastrians no doubt emerged from environments similar to Taylor's as hide-bound Conservatives, it is not unwarranted to attribute his radicalism in large part to the factors discussed above: his northern origins, the turbulent period in which he matured, and the sharp controversies wracking Oxford when he arrived there in 1938. In any event, a survey of the England he faced in his early years seems in order and of some ultimate value.

II

All of English society was changing. Even before World War I, a revolution was in progress against the German domination of English culture. Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore challenged German Hegelianism and English Utilitarianism. G. M. Trevelyan struck blows against German scientific history in reaction to the danger it presented to the writing and reading of history as a literary pursuit. George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy gave new life to the English theater which brought it to the leadership of Europe and America. Of greatest importance in the cultural rebirth was in the realm of ideas--novels and drama of social problems like women's rights and human equality; ethical problems of family and industrial relationships; and the political problems of labour unions and Socialism.[14]

World War I burst upon England with traumatic force, leaving in its wake a void. The old world with its Victorian social and moral codes were dead, or at least fatally ill; but nothing was operatively prepared to replace it. The welfare state was far from being realized though the problems which it would eventually attack were very much realitites. Arthur Marwick wrote of the impact

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[14]David Thomson, England in the Twentieth Century (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 29-30.

of science during the war years, where it ceased to be "a proper occupation for the leisure of an English gentleman," and became instead the "central industry in modern civilization."[15] Chemicals, the internal combustion engine and mass communication sprang from the drastically increased emphasis upon scientific research and technology made necessary by modern warfare and total mobilization.

As these innovations increased, so did the number of ways for spending incomes, which, due to the retention of pre-war attitudes toward the rights of the working class, often remained low and became increasingly inadequate. Though the war had stimulated production and therefore cut into unemployment, the wage scales were not always raised sufficiently to keep pace with rising prices. Particularly after the war, when prices tended to stabilize at higher levels, producers tried to institute some wage reductions. Coal was a critical area for this kind of arrangement. Unemployment also loomed critically large as a result of post-war cutbacks in military production. Riots occurred in Glasgow; and a general strike was attempted in 1919 but failed significantly to materialize.[16] However, unlike other European nations in the post-war years, notably the defeated powers, strikes and riots did not lead to the wholesale disruption of normal political activities.

The problem of economic readjustment was only a part of the emphasis upon change after World War I. An increase in the use of contraceptives and the slaughter of potential fathers in the war sounded the death knell for the large families of Victorian times. This meant a breakdown in part of the traditional standards of family relationships and attitudes. A related change occurred in

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[15]Arthur Marwick, The Explosion of British Society, 1914-1962 (London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1963), p. 21.

[16]Thomson, op. cit., p. 66.

sexual mores. Sexual liberty before the war had been permissible only for the male; during the conflict official opinion came close to condoning anything which might be offered to the heroes returning from the trenches. Afterward, a generation of young men and women, sexually emancipated during the war, were not so anxious to live the restricted lives considered more normal before 1914. Large families and the often overwhelming social and financial responsibilities attendant to them were no longer as desirable.[17]

Innovation, freedom, and skepticism were the characteristics of British society in the twenties. The economic problems of the working classes were in part lessened as the decade progressed for the whole of society became materially better off. Paradoxically, this created new social problems, which found intellectual expression in what Marwick called the "two prophets of the age," Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. Freudian psychology, popularly conceived, encouraged free expression of natural instincts; and Einsteinian relativism created a challenge to all accepted absolutes. "Everything being now relative, there is no longer absolute dependence to be placed on God, Free Trade, Marriage, Consols, Coal or Caste."[18] Out of this breakdown of traditional concepts, most obvious among intellectuals and the educated in general, came a spreading influence toward radical change which affected all classes, high and low, educated and illiterate, rich and poor. With greater affluence and lack of traditional restraint came the desire for more progress in terms of better working conditions, higher pay, greater social equality, political participation, and more egalitarian educational and economic reforms. The General Strike of 1926,

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[17] Marwick, op. cit., p. 23.

[18] Ibid., p. 47. As quoted from John Galsworthy's preface to his trilogy of novels, The Modern Comedy.

though it failed to achieve its immediate objectives, laid the foundations of a new society by weakening irrevocably the traditional prerogatives of the owner class, particularly coal mine owners, and bringing to the surface the actual magnitude of the needs of all the people. Thereafter wages tended to decline less during economic emergencies as the old cure for depression, i.e. wage cutting, ceased to be operative. What followed might be called "Tory Socialism," a term coined by Charles Loch Mowat to describe the trend toward nationalization of industry under boards of producers and some social welfare innovations such as Neville Chamberlain's Widow's Pension Plan.[19]

In the thirties came the point of departure from the old half-way measures. The great depression provided the necessary break with the past socially and economically and introduced the era of planned economy. J. M. Keynes completed his Treatise on Money in 1930, and his General Theory in 1936. The blueprint was laid out, and government--Labour, National Coalition, and Tory--proceeded to move in this direction with great haste. Russia's five year plans captured the imagination of many of her former English critics. In practical terms, planning in England meant a rush of publications advising the populace on everything from holiday plans to limiting the size of families. In industry, it meant production levels were predetermined by experts in economics and finance. The welfare programs were increased to answer the needs of impoverished, unemployed, and otherwise needy people. All such programs were the result of

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[19] Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 338-343. Further discussion of the General Strike may be found in Taylor's own work, English History, 1914-1945, published in 1965; in the autobiography of Herbert Viscount Samuel; and in Michael Foot's biography of Aneurin Bevan.

planning councils, that is committees of "brains."[20] Planning was in some respects a revival of tendencies established during the war and disbanded immediately after it. At any rate, it revealed the extent to which all the aspects of the breakdown of pre-war society had extended. In the midst of these two decades, which Ronald Blyth for reasons of his own cynically called the "Age of Illusions," A. J. P. Taylor grew up, attended and taught at the universities, and participated in the revolution of society by being an enthusiast for reforms and for the recognition of the newly emancipated "People."[21]

The politics of the inter-war period were varied and checkered as the social changes. The period saw England's first Labour Government, and the eclipse of traditional liberalism. By 1940 Liberals and Conservatives had, for all practical purposes, become one. Free Trade and laissez faire were replaced by planning in both economics and government as the predominance of the Tory Establishment was successfully challenged by the Left. The power of the People had emerged under Lloyd George, the greatest twentieth century Liberal prime minister. When Labour replaced the Liberal party as the leader of the Left, the People became the major force in politics. The period saw as well the creation of a real two-party system in which for the first time the prime minister was selected on the basis of being the leader of whichever party had a majority in Commons. This is not to discount splits and splinters within the

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[20] Marwick, op. cit., pp. 75-81. Marwick devoted a well written and revealing chapter to the implimentation and perhaps overzealous preoccupation with planning.

[21] Ronald Blyth, The Age of Illusions: England in the Twenties and Thirties (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963). A very provacative and engrossing study of an age both cynical and inspiring. His theme of illusion and his tongue-in-cheek style are merely symbolic of the age itself.

parties, however. The Labour Party had its bouts with the Communists, radical extremists and the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.)--the latter being the political club from which the Labour Party had grown.

In general terms, the Labour Party platform called for closer association with the Soviet Union in trade, nationalization of heavy industries, particularly coal, greater unionism, and wider participation of the working classes in political power. Early in the post-World War I decade Loftism--often indefinable--had been the predominant feature of Labour. But in many respects it tended to equalize with the Right after the first Labour Government had been in office, and even more as Labour was forced into coalition with the Conservatives. The early secret of Labour had been the working classes' desire for political power.[22] Also, the more Labour was attacked as being subversive, or unpatriotic, the more firm was its internal cohesion. Labour's first turn in office made the old guard Conservatives uneasy, and in spite of King George V's admonition to "give them a fair chance," got little cooperation. Labour soon fell from power.[23]

The Conservative Party, paradoxically not so far removed from Labour in terms of policy, took power after Ramsey MacDonald's fall with a program for overcoming unemployment, a continuation of Labour's foreign policy (Give peace in our time, O Lord), and an attempt to recover normalcy.[24] The General Strike of 1926 did much to upset the equilibrium aspired to by the Conservative Government, and though the miners were put down without realizing their aims,

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[22]Richard Lyman, The First Labour Government, 1924 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1957), p. 10.

[23]Thomson, op. cit., pp. 91-95.

[24]Ibid., pp. 98-99.

it was clear that the producers could no longer ignore working class demands. Subsequent governmental activities were increasingly aimed at solving the social and economic difficulties generated by the rapidly changing face of English society.

The second MacDonald Government was put down by a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives. The crisis of 1931 resulted in the creation of the National Government which was an uneasy combination of Labour, Conservatives, and a few remnants of the old Liberal Party. Such was to be the political situation throughout half of the thirties, power being shared by MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, until the beginning of the Chamberlain era in 1936.

In general, the politics of the interwar years were like society and economics--in a state of turbulence and upheaval. Socialist theories of politics and economics were produced in great quantity by Left intellectuals; equally striking was a dearth of constructive Conservative theory at the same time. Even so, as the twenties were the age of the Left, the thirties were the age of the Right, offering in addition to Baldwin and Chamberlain, Sir Oswald Mosely, once a Socialist, now the leader of the British Union of Fascists.[25] Appeasement, the catchword of Chamberlain's era had actually grown out of MacDonald's tenure in power, but was destined to be the bête noire of the Conservatives because it failed to work in 1938 against Germany. This, in essence, was the politics of the years between 1919 and 1940--the Age of Illusion--and in this climate of left-right conflict, Taylor, nurtured on the independent, individualistic and radical spirit of red-brick Lancashire, began his career.[26]

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[25] Blyth, op. cit., p. 175.

[26] George David Carter, Graduate Student in History, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, personal interview with author at Manhattan, Kansas, 17 May, 1966.

III

It was perhaps natural for Taylor to preface his first major historical work, The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy, with a statement concerning what he believed to be the historian's role. He proposed that secret forces were not really the point, or even there to discover, but that historical studies of national policies were based upon the discovery of

> a series of assumptions, with which statesmen have lived since their earliest years and which they regard as so axiomatic as hardly worth stating. It is the duty of the historian to clarify these assumptions and to trace their influence upon the course of every-day policy.[27]

What were these assumptions? One striking answer appeared early in the book--the assumption of political and economic truths. Austria assumed her empire to be based upon power, and acted accordingly in Italy and with regard to the rest of Europe. The assumption was true so long as nothing occurred to disprove it. England assumed a truth as well--the advantage of retaining peace. It was Lord Palmerston's view that peace was the necessity for the maintenance of international trade. Trade was England's power, and indeed, her existence. Truth was on her side as long as she pursued peace. Taylor recorded, as being a fair motto for English policy in the nineteenth century, this statement reputedly made by an anonymous English authority on international affairs: "I do not care for justice; all I care for is peace."[28] The assumption of French statesmen in 1847-1849 was likewise unquestioned--the freeing of France from the isolation imposed by the Congress of Vienna. Guizot, until his fall, worked to this end without hesitation.

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[27] A. J. P. Taylor, The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy, 1847-1849 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934), p. 1.

[28] Ibid., p. 5.

This work was remarkable for its lack of variation from the usual techniques used in English historical scholarship. Nothing set it off save its style, and even that was a reversion to a Macaulayesque manner, though without the equivalent exuberance and sharply critical slant. Such was the tendency of all of Taylor's work prior to World War II. His theses were not as unorthodox as they would be in later years; his themes were not determinedly revisionary as they would be after the war. In essence, his three books, researched and written prior to 1940, were mongraphic studies in nineteenth century problems, virtually unmarked by anything fundamentally new. They all stuck closely to his avowed historical viewpoint that the historian's role was to clarify assumptions: The Italian Problem dealt with the effect of Italian liberal uprisings upon the political assumptions of the European powers; Germany's First Bid for Colonies was concerned with Bismarck's assumption of Germany's role in relation to her European position; and the first edition of The Habsburg Monarchy revealed the assumption of the Habsburg dynasty that its duty was to exist by any means possible and necessary. Perhaps the influence of the scientific style as it was still practiced by many of Taylor's colleagues still influenced him. Perhaps Pribram, who taught him to work on diplomatic affairs, dominated Taylor's approach as Die Grosse Politik dominated his own.[29] In any case, the Taylor of the thirties appeared to be a historian in a rather conventional sense.

But there was another factor. Taylor was a radical in viewpoint as well as in temperament. The underlying theme of all of his historical work, as well

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[29] Ibid., p. viii. "From Professor Pribram I learned...the elements of scientific research." Pribram had done a great deal of work on Die Grosse Politik, which was the massive publication of German documents relevant to the decades prior to World War I.

as his later polemics, was the People, who to him were the common working classes. He saw them as overburdened, discriminated against, and viewed at best with mild distaste by their enemies, the privileged classes. This attitude cut across national lines and applied to the peoples of all Europe. In the thirties, he applied it particularly to the Austrian minorities and the Italian nationalists. Clear as the idea was for him in his early career, it became doubly so after World War II.

Whig historians had for a century before Taylor defended a view that history progressed always toward a "brave new world" of abstract liberties. But for Taylor this was only a partial understanding. The world was not constantly progressing as the Whigs thought, because they saw the wealthy Whig merchants as the inheritors of the world. Not until Taylor's era did the common man, the real heir of what he saw as right and justice in the world, achieve his proper position in history. Progress, liberalism, a new world--Taylor approved them; but only when they worked to emancipate the People into egalitarian society, free from inequality, and based upon truly democratic principles. This was his great theme for over thirty years of scholarship and polemics.

There were several areas in which Taylor manifested his basic disapproval of the nineteenth century attitude toward exclusion of the People. The concept of peace had been based upon the preservation of traditional states and systems of government, and upon the interests of the ruling classes. Realpolitik was a diplomatic concept present from the Congress of Vienna to World War I. In the hands of the Congress powers it was turned against any submerged people or nation which aspired to national independence, as the first step toward the

realization of democratic principles.[30] Austria was a sincere advocate of peace because she was satiated. Her positon was assured by the acquiesence of Europe in Habsburg aspirations. A typically epigramatic Taylor statement followed this assertion: "It is easy, after a good dinner, to condemn the dissatisfaction of the hungry."[31] Given the total picture of his basic sympathy with the idealism of men who pursued national emancipation and liberalism in the nineteenth century, the comment becomes even more pointed. England also sought peace, though for reasons of trade--a Whig principle Taylor recognized as justifiable, but not to the extent of perverting justice. To ensure peace, the British vacillated between supporting Austrian rights and discouraging nationalism, and then supporting nationalism when Austria was turned out of Italy.[32] France was the least peaceful of the lot and sought to renounce the Congress of Vienna though its provisions for a weak, divided Italy and Germany were to her advantage. But French nationalism was a considerable factor, and drove first Guizot and then his successors to favor the rebels against Austria.[33] Yet a Conservative peace was sought by all three powers. The story of the negotiations of 1847-1849 gave Taylor ample opportunity for exploring the fact that at no time did the diplomatic agreements adhere to broad principles in the People's interest. Secret diplomacy had its points, as he later pointed out in an essay

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[30] This view, emerging through the numerous discussions of diplomatic arrangements made between the Great Powers in 1848, was one Taylor held throughout his life. In 1956 he applauded the national emancipation of Egypt symbolized by the successful seizure of Suez.

[31] Taylor, The Italian Problem, p. 3.

[32] Ibid., p. 5.

[33] Ibid., p. 7; pp. 50-51.

on the subject; but not when people and nations suffered for it against their will.[34] Peace was not a justification for arbitrary political and diplomatic actions.

The people comprise nations and support or negate the effect of government. In the nineteenth century, Taylor found only the first postulate to be true. One of the great and most basic motivations for policy is national interest. But in the nineteenth century he saw national interest as the wishes of the privileged few. National interest and Realpolitik were virtually synonymous. Sometimes, the nationality principle might have seemed to rise above the self-interests of the Powers, as in the case of Palmerston's, and even more Russell's, defense of Italian national rights. But Taylor's evaluation showed that Palmerston was motivated by the same principle that guided the continental states. He was playing Italian interests in order to put France and Austria in positions where they could not justify actions which might lead to war. His chief asset was the necessity of English support for successful operations by Austria against the rebels, and France's awareness that English opposition put too much of an obstacle in the path of French success. In short, for reasons of self-interest, Palmerston asserted the "sentimental principle of nationality" on behalf of Italy in diplomatic relations with the continent.[35] Taylor excused him for this self-interest somewhat, because it was his obstinacy which forced the Austrians into granting administrative reforms in the provinces of Lombardy and Sardinia.

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[34]A. J. P. Taylor, "Case for the Old Diplomacy," The New York Times Magazine, (March 18, 1951), pp. 9-35.

[35]Benjamin Disraili, as quoted by Taylor, The Italian Problem, p. 143.

In the two other works prior to World War II, Taylor's occupation with motives of national self-interest were perhaps more pointed. German diplomats, inspired by Bismarck, used colonial aspirations as a means toward gaining closer relations with France by dividing France from England over parts of Africa. The goal, of course, was the national well-being of Germany. But the aim was unachievable because France was likewise being Machiavellian, and would only cooperate with Bismarck in return for Alsace and Lorraine.[36]

Germany's First Bid for Colonies demonstrated Bismarck's policy of securing Germany against the encroachment and threats of other powers. This book was published in 1938 and was perhaps strongly influenced by contemporary problems, a view held by some of its reviewers.[37] The methods of negotiation of Hitler's diplomats after 1936 were not unlike those of Bismarck's statesmen in 1884-1885, i.e. they were Machiavellian and therefore somewhat barbaric. Taylor wrote that the ways of the English diplomats, Grenville and Derby, were those of gentlemen, not barbarians. National and government interests were more justly and fairly served by such men as opposed to the "cardsharpers and bullies" who comprised the executors of policy for Bismarck and later Hitler.[38]

The entire policy of Austria after the Napoleonic wars was oriented toward preserving the Habsburg Monarchy. Again an association with contemporary problems marked The Habsburg Monarchy as Taylor sought to demonstrate how the

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[36] A. J. P. Taylor, Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-1885 (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1938), p. 84.

[37] Mary Townsend, Review of Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-1885 by A. J. P. Taylor, The American Historical Review, XLIV (July, 1939), p. 900.

[38] E. L. Woodward, Review of Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-1885 by A. J. P. Taylor, The Spectator, CLX (March 25, 1938), p. 538.

dynasty had collapsed, thus ushering in the monumental problem of the national minorities, by studying its failure to do more than preserve itself.[39] It would be stretching a point to speak of Austria's national principle; rather one should refer to Habsburg self-interest, he wrote. In any case, Habsburg policy was totally negative and summed up the view Taylor developed concerning national interest for the benefit of a privileged class.

The most obvious way to approach Taylor's concern with the People was to view his discussions of the liberalism and reforms of the nineteenth century. It was apparent that in his works before World War II he often found himself adhering to his avowed non-partisan position with difficulty. A Labour intellectual and radical, he was impatient with the class oriented liberalism of Palmerston and other Whig politicians. He found it much easier to write about the technicalities of diplomatic manoeuvres and negotiations. But he also found it neither possible nor desirable to refrain from comment on political ideas. The Palmerston government was not unreasonable--though, as discussed above, it was selfishly motivated--concerning the possible European disruption inherent in Italy's rebellious ness. In fact, Italy had considerable support from Whigs such as Russell and Minto, whose enthusiasm frequently caused Palmerston some embarrassment. Palmerston, though twice a Whig prime minister, was not fundamentally a Whig, and therefore was perhaps more realistic--or more Machiavellian--in his actions. He was never hesitant in abandoning his liberal principles when more important political considerations arose.[40]

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[39] A. J. P. Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 (1st edition; London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1942), p. 230.

[40] Taylor, The Italian Problem, p. 108.

But he was sincere about the value of administrative reform. Here he stood firm against Austria, whose administration of her Italian provinces stood in need of much improvement. Other statesmen shared his views. Guizot welcomed and encouraged reform as long as it was carried out by "men of the rich and enlightened classes."[41] Therein lay the concept of classical liberalism to which Taylor was prepared to oppose a modern democratically oriented liberalism of the People of all classes and origins. The nineteenth century liberalism which he approved was the concept of national unity in which peoples moved out from under the oppression of foreign rule, and that radical brand of liberalism which was expressed by the Social Democrats in the later years of the century. The difference between the Social Democrats and men like Palmerston was that they saw first the needs of the people, whereas Palmerston looked out for the interests of businessmen.[42]

In The Habsburg Monarchy, Taylor differentiated between Western European liberalism and that practiced by Germans. The latter never rose above the conception of parliament as simply a body of dissent, and never considered liberalism itself as a way of opposition. Further, he contended that though liberalism continued to flourish in the West after 1848, the Germans, whether in Austria or the other German states, assumed it would always fail for themselves, and gave in to dynastic and conservative principles.[43] This was the failure of the last hope for Austria and Germany, since reforms of a lasting

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[41] Ibid., p. 26. Quoted from Guizot, French Prime Minister in 1848.

[42] Ibid., p. 90.

[43] Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy (1942 edition), p. 120.

and progressive nature thereby were rendered virtually impossible. The People, as individuals and nationalities, were more of concern here than in his other books of this period. He pointed to their plight and his sense of historical frustration with regard to them when he wrote that

> The legacy of history is that there is no conceivable settlement of Central Europe which will not involve injustice to some of those living there; this is no excuse for tolerating the maximum of injustice, but all the same it would be romantic to deny or conceal it.[44]

In effect, whether dealing with the Italian people in 1848, or the subject people of the Habsburg Empire, Taylor recognized two factors: one, that it was the historic policy of the ruling classes, whether the Whig aristocrats of England who postulated constitutionalism on a property owning basis or the aristocrats of the continent supporting legitimism and natural inequality, to carry on government and diplomacy free from interference by the people most directly affected by it--the masses; and two, that the ideal goal of men living together peacefully, justly, and democratically was finally dependent upon the inclusion of all of the peope in the affairs of government. But he also recognized that the second factor was not a contribution to practical politics as conducted in either the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.[45] That it should be was his conviction.

Public opinion might justifiably be described as the modern force behind governments of democratic nations, and is increasingly being regarded as a paramount force in diplomacy by modern historians. Cynically, Taylor did not accept this view. "Statesmen tend to shelter behind public opinion only when

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[44] Ibid., p. viii.

[45] Ibid.

they are seeking an excuse for not doing something which they would not do in any case."[46] Public opinion in 1848 though an essential element in the Italian problem, had been educated into thinking in ways beneficial to official policy. In any case, he wrote, public opinion was more of a negative than a guiding force when it was considered at all; and at best was only the opinion of small, politically conscious classes who were themselves on the fringe of diplomacy. In 1848 the British cabinet let itself be swayed by what it thought was public opinion. Palmerston was indifferent to what anyone thought particularly the common people, and was the real maker of policy. No matter what the public might have thought of him, he made his own decisions uneffected by it either positively or negatively.[47]

With regard to public opinion in nineteenth century Germany, Taylor dismissed the views of his colleagues that Bismarck was pushed into colonies by his fear of a parliamentary defeat. That would be, he argued, to transfer to Germany the concept of a constitutional government as practiced in England or France, where suffrage was the expression of the current public opinion. Rather, he felt, Bismarck controlled public opinion to further his colonial campaigns when it suited his interests and used it against parliament which seldom if ever represented public wishes. That public opinion forced him into the conquest of colonies after his years of skepticism over them Taylor found difficult to believe.[48]

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[46]Taylor, The Italian Problem, p. 7.

[47]Ibid., p. 192.

[48]Taylor, Germany's First Bid, p. 5.

These references to the role of public opinion in nineteenth century policies revealed a touch of Taylor's own skepticism, and at the same time, his tendency toward idealistic principles. His point concerned what is and what should be. The interests of the ruling classes were cared for. Those of the masses should have been. But they were not; and Taylor found his historical committment somewhat pressed by his radical desire to denounce and criticize the men of the past for their failure to develop properly the trends inherent in nineteenth century movements toward emancipation of the People. That Taylor's immediate post-war writings tended toward contemporary events and those immediately concerned with the war itself indicated another aspect of this basic theme.

Taylor placed considerable emphasis upon the personalities of the men who made policy and those who carried it out. In his writings of the thirties, each statesman was characterized in terms of political attitudes, personality, and role in shaping policy, the latter always being dominated by the first two. In the case of men like Palmerston, Russell, and Minto, he pointed to their awareness of changing times and at least partially liberal ideas. They appeared to Taylor as men looking ahead as opposed to those hanging back, always a positive sign. To Metternich, Bismarck and Schwarzenberg, he attributed narrowly conservative attitudes which made their policies take regressive turns and have certain negative qualities. In all cases the individuals were the key to understanding the developments, misunderstandings, and assumptions that determined how things would develop. In some respects, as shall be seen, these tendencies were sharpened in his later writings.[49] In other cases, such as

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[49]For example, his numerous short essays on biographical studies and autobiographies, and his personality oriented work on Bismarck published in 1955.

The Origins of the Second World War, he tended away from this approach to deal more in terms of the events themselves.

The publication of The Habsburg Monarchy in 1941 was Taylor's last attempt at an objective scientific history for more than a decade. The reason was the war which sharpened his radicalism, anti-Germanism, and concern with the failures of the old world. The People had been betrayed by their leaders and had suffered the agonies of war and persecution. The sum of his motivations in the pre-war period can be expressed best by saying that he was young, concerned with a methodical approach to writing history, but always a radical ready to release the sentiments he had acquired through association with men of the Left and the schools where they were known, listened to and thoughtfully considered. Not without consequence was the fact that the extreme Right, in the person of men like Oswald Mosely and the followers of the Fascist Union, urged silence, by force if necessary, upon men who voiced contrary opinions. Unorthodoxy was never far beneath the surface of Taylor's mind. War in 1940 and the brief triumph of right wing extremism nearly ended forever his attempts to deal with history and the People in an objective, disinterested manner. The unhappy fact was that he would go to the other extreme with only infrequent examples of the rare scholarship and objectivity he has achieved in his most recent book, the Oxford English History, 1914-1945.

CHAPTER II. THE YEARS OF CATHARSIS: TAYLOR AND THE WAR

I

War broke over Europe in 1940, marking the failure of collective security, appeasement, and the idealistic goals of Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points. 1940 was a different sort of year than 1914. It came upon Europe at the height of political and social change. More significantly for political ideas, it raised the curtain on the final act of Europe's drama of mass dictatorship. The People finally had been emancipated from traditional class inequality and the despotism of ruling aristocracies--and subjected to a new kind of arbitrary authority. The new politique, Fascism, was called the "wave of the future." It would outrun itself between 1940 and 1945.

A. J. P. Taylor was at the University of Oxford in 1940. He had just completed his third book, The Habsburg Monarchy. Later he would rewrite it along the lines of his wartime disillusionment. But he published the first version without substantial changes, in spite, as he wrote in the preface, of the "consequences of the events of the past twelve months."[1] The other major work he published during the period, The Course of German History, was a vitriolic comment on the responsibility of Germany for the breakdown of European order, justice, and freedom. Its point was the failure of the German people to respond to the liberal ideas of Western Europe, and instead to turn to the traditional assumptions of militarism, obedience to the state, and national egoism.

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[1]Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy (1942 edition), p. viii.

The people of Germany were, one feels after studying this work, as guilty in their sins of omission as were their leaders in their sins of commission. One important generalization to be drawn from Taylor's work in the forties was that his idealism was at once reinforced by the failures of the old systems, and lessened by the recognition that the People had not held in check the officials of these systems.

During the late forties, a new dimension appeared in Taylor's work which was to occupy him as much as his historical studies for the next quarter-century. He became a publicist in a very nearly journalistic sense, as a wave of articles and essays poured from his increasingly prolific pen. In 1950 he published an end-of-decade collection of some of these pieces designed to demonstrate the century and a half long "search for stability in an unstable world."[2] Much more, they represented a cross section of his views on the problems which came to a head in the forties, all of which had historical bases whether in terms of inevitable clashes between liberal idealism and illiberal authoritarianism or of the breakdown of traditional political and diplomatic alliances and the void thus created. National independence, a cause Taylor had championed all of his life, was being threatened by both factors.[3] But most of these journalistic efforts came after the war. The years from the publication of The Habsburg Monarchy to the last days of World War II were largely empty compared to the second half of the decade. Not that he was idle. In addition to being thoroughly outraged by the events of the war years, he was preparing materials for the publication of The Course of German History.

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[2]A. J. P. Taylor, From Napoleon to Stalin (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950), p. 9.

[3]Ibid.

Several subjects occupied Taylor's mind in connection with his concern for the failure of the old world. He dealt with them in both book and journal. The "German Question," the "Russian Question," and the "East European Question;" all were problems he felt to be of great significance. The basic theme was still the People; their changing role, their attitudes, their successes and failures, and their position juxtaposed to traditions and classes. As well, Taylor applied himself to comments on peace, justice, and moral principles--shifting steadily toward the masses--as he had before the war. There was more skepticism involved in these writings, provided in part by the war--in this he was not alone--and in part by the failure of the people to respond properly toward their new role in politics and society. A great wave of idealism had been manifest in England's Labour movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. To a great extent, adherents to Labour principles had idealistically assumed that the People were the holders of the political and social future. Taylor shared this view. But the triumph of barbarism in Germany and Italy during the thirties provided a major setback for both the People and Labour principles. It was at least partially the fault of both, and Taylor reflected his disappointment in much of his post-war work. The other side of the coin showed at the same time an optimist's opinion that every problem had an answer, and that solutions still rested with the political emancipation and maturity of the People along liberal democratic lines.

II

The German question occupied Taylor largely as the result of the war and the triumph of National Socialism. He approached the problem historically, concerned with discovering both the origins of German's failure to assimilate peacefully into Europe, and the peculiar nature of German liberalism which

prevented its becoming an effective opponent to National Socialism.[4] He accused the Germans of being the only nation to have made extremism a thousand year policy. Whether for good or bad, their history was the history of extremes; at no time did common sense prevail.[5] The character of German politics, always torn between the concept of the Reich and the autonomy of the several states, Taylor regarded as a problem almost beyond the ability of the historian to solve. The conflict continued throughout German history and even overwhelmed the basic idealism of the Social Democrats in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He referred to the "war-mongering" majority socialists in 1914 who murdered the true German liberals in the interest of nationalism and Pangermanism.[6] Taylor was somewhat bitter where Germany was concerned, a fact which clearly colored his evaluations of the problem. But in the forties, with Germany as the enemy, and with the nearly universal desire to put her for once and all in her place, his attitude was not unique. Leo Gershoy wrote that though Taylor overgeneralized in The Course of German History, his evaluations of the Republic seemed cogent and he demonstrated "insight and provacative flashes."[7] Hans Kohn likewise found much to admire in the book.[8] Taylor's

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[4]These points are the themes of The Course of German History. Essays and reviews on the subject of Germany supplement the book by making specific critical references to the faults of particular aspects of German history.

[5]A. J. P. Taylor, The Course of German History (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 14.

[6]A. J. P. Taylor, "What Can We Do About Germany?", The New Statesman and Nation, XXVIII (November 11, 1944), p. 321.

[7]Leo Gershoy, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review, (July 7, 1946), p. 2.

[8]Hans Kohn, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The New York Times, (August 18, 1946), p. 22.

concern to point out the futility of finding a German solution was objected to, however, by R. H. S. Crossman. His one point of agreement was with Taylor's accusation that the misconceptions of the Goochian school of Germanists about German liberals had had "a serious consequence for British policy."[9]

Taylor saw Obriegkeit as a serious problem in German history.[10] Obriegkeit was a form of feudal obedience fortified by German Protestantism and which was still present in German thinking in the twentieth century. It caused those who occasionally wanted liberal reforms to wait passively to be liberated by the French in 1806. In this light Taylor wrote of the German liberals as having no sympathy with the propertyless masses, nor having any feeling that liberal institutions need to be fought for and defended. The western Germans received the benefits of the French Revolution without exertion on their part. Thus every liberal institution increased its dependence on "authority."[11] With this in mind he wrote of the success of the authorities in quieting radicalism and revolution after 1848 by granting universal suffrage. Reforms from the top were not lasting nor real, but rather paved the way for dictatorship.[12]

The failure of liberalism was basic to Taylor's German theme. It dominated The Course of German History as well as other writings in the forties. In the nineteenth century, the German liberals were largely from the middle class. They claimed a nationalistic spirit; but Taylor asserted that that was

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[9]R. H. S. Crossman, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXX (July 28, 1945), p. 62.

[10]Obriegkeit means obedience. It was the attitude expressed most significantly for the German concept when Frederich the Great reputedly said, "You may think what you will, only obey."

[11]Taylor, The Course, p. 33.

[12]Taylor, From Napoleon, p. 36.

a sham, for the liberation of 1813 was carried out by drill hardened conscripts in the service of the ruling class not by a popular national uprising. Nationalism was a myth spread by the intellectuals. In fact, most of Germany passively endured liberation. Many western German princes actually regretted Napoleon's overthrow for he had put them on their thrones. The Bavarian Army was not comitted to the allied side until the results of the Battle of Leipzig became known. And on all sides the People, as usual, were not consulted; politically they did not exist.[13]

Paradoxically, Taylor wrote, in Germany constitutionalism was the enemy of liberalism. In the years between 1820 and 1840, constitutionalism prevailed because no class would allow another's ideas to prevail. It was the result of bureaucratic concentration on legal procedures, precision and rule, rather than of freedom and achievement. The representatives of the state played the game among themselves with no thought beyond service to the throne and tradition. At this point, he triumphantly leaped to the defense of the People. He asserted his logic to construe German constitutionalism in association with particularism: therefore, national unity--an integral feature of liberalism--could be achieved only with the cooperation of the masses. As the masses were feared by everyone else, constitutionalism was added to liberalism which then took on an air of hostility to democracy; and the People remained excluded from political life.[14] It was a simple matter of the Germans feeling more secure in abstractions than in realities, and in obedience rather than in freedom maintained by independence of mind and action.

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[13]Taylor, The Course, pp. 45-46.

[14]Ibid., pp. 53-56.

The revolution of 1848 was the focal point of liberalism in the nineteenth century. Tensions increased and the adherents of the rights of the common man moved into action at last. Taylor felt that the moment was climactic in German history. The Grossdeutsch movement, comprising one segment of the nationalist movement, echoed the Holy Roman Empire, while the future was anticipated by the emerging masses who gave limited voice to the doctrines of Rousseau and Marx.[15] "Never has there been a revolution so inspired by limitless faith in the power of ideas.", Taylor wrote; but also, "Never has the power of an idea been so discredited as a result."[16] The masses wanted emancipation. The idea of Rousseau's general will and Marx's concept of the proletariat, were forces rumbling beneath the surface in 1848. Late in the year, these ideas came into the open and the German liberal middle class turned to the Right. These liberals would not recognize the Rights of Man--that is, man in the universal sense--but only the particular rights of middle class idealists. Partially from fear of the masses, partially from their inability to sever class consciousness, and partially from a sense of loyalty to the political traditions of the "men of the rich and enlightened classes," the liberals betrayed their historic trust. Further, the national cause which they espoused at Frankfurt was only a continuation of the German traditions of state egoism, cultural superiority, and certainly a very selfish concept of national independence.

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[15] Grossdeutsch literally refered to Great Germany. It meant a unified German nation under the domination of the Habsburgs which would include all German and Slav peoples of the Habsburg Empire as well as Germany proper. The opposing viewpoint was expressed by the Kleindeutsch, or Little German party, which desired a federated Germany comprising only those German states which lay in the geographic area already basically defined as Germany. Taylor proposed that the Little Germans held a negative view, projecting their idea only because it was more desirable than a Germany ruled by the Habsburgs. Bismarck was a spokesman against Grossdeutsch, and only reluctantly for Kleindeutsch.

[16] Taylor, The Course, p. 68.

Taylor wrote that

> In the struggle against the Czechs, against the Poles, against the Danes, the German liberals unhesitatingly supported the cause of the Prussian and Austrian armies and were then surprised when these weapons were turned against themselves. Liberalism was sacrificed to the national cause.[17]

Subject peoples, the masses, and human rights were liberal concerns only in theory; in practice they proved to be empty ideals, given up for the illiberal course which would one day produce National Socialism. The men of 1848 who were true radicals, who despaired of Germany, completed their own revolution by emigrating to freedom in the United States.

> The adventurers, the independent, the men who might have made Germany a free and civilized country...were lost to Germany forever. They, the best Germans, showed their opinion of Germany by leaving it forever.[18]

This was the indictment Taylor leveled against the German liberals. But perhaps there is here also an indictment against the men who left, because had they stayed, things might have worked out differently. Men in other nations had stood up against arbitrary policies, perversions of freedom and subjection of peoples. Why couldn't the real democrats of 1848?[19]

The final act of the German drama with regard to liberal failures came in the Weimar period. Taylor felt that the socialist groups springing up in the late nineteenth century might have made the difference. But they too failed to uphold the ideals of democracy on a wide scale, and likewise sold out to national pride. They possessed what Taylor had described as the German penchant for extremism, and, more abstractly, a too shallow sense of objectives and goals.

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[17] Ibid., p. 77.

[18] Ibid., p. 88.

[19] A. J. P. Taylor, "What Can We Do About Germany?", The New Statesman and Nation, XXVII (October 28, 1948), p. 285.

The socialist groups were emasculated by the increasing prosperity of the masses who, with security attained, proceeded to give up radical, revolutionary ideas. Where in Western Europe affluence enabled leftists to advance politically, in Germany it produced political impotence. The growing power of the German state brought about an unconscious desire among Social Democrats to enter a Lasallian alliance with the Junkers, not against the middle class, but against the liberal states of the West. In this situation, the intellectuals became a superfluous group, existing only because the Reich did not trouble to exclude them.[20] All of this Taylor was displaying against his idea of German extremism. He found the ideas of arbitrary state power equally suitable to the needs of Lasallian leftism and Junker rightism. In either instance the state existed for the traditional purpose of regimenting the masses, in which case they remained politically excluded.

In The Course of German History, Taylor proposed that the view regarding National Socialism as an aberration in German History broke down, because this concept implied that there had been a long trend toward liberal democracy. The opposite was true. The real aberration was the six years after World War I in which Germany was almost a democracy. This was the Germany that should have been the rule, but in practice was not. Further, he proposed, the Weimar Republic was caused by factors other than "the beauty of the German character," an obvious reference to the Germanophiles who he felt had been significantly responsible for the British myopia of the interwar period.[21] At this point he had a good word for the Communists who he felt were making a noble attempt to

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[20]Taylor, The Course, pp. 152-154.

[21]Ibid., p. 190.

uphold democratic ideal, where the middle class, poisoned by "national passion," could not. But, by playing the economic and political games of the bourgeoisie, the Communists increased the unscrupulousness of German political life. Basically, the six year period was democratic because it was unsettled and because the "national passions" of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Germany had not yet jaded the men who created the Weimar Republic. This came soon enough as they rallied behind Hindenberg as President, the man most clearly symbolic of the very sentiments to which radicalism and republicanism were opposed.

The post-World War II period was the climax of Taylor's concern with Germany regarding his views as expressed in The Course of German History. He felt that Germany should be enclosed and prevented by industrial and military emasculation from contemplating new aggressions; he was not displeased that she had been divided. He foresaw future German problems when British policy turned against the Soviet Union. The first indication of the switch was "the battle of the colored books" which was the publication of secret notes, documents and papers for the purpose of proving nefarious points.[22] This could only create further tensions when what was need was cooperation. Meanwhile, he did not excuse the Soviets who were doing the same thing.

Taylor could do more than criticize. His solution for Germany merely reflected his conception of a greater plan: a framework for a planned European economy, which he expressly differentiated from the "wild guesses of the Marshall Plan," which would include a non-military, pacific Germany.[23] The

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[22] A. J. P. Taylor, "Vagaries of British Diplomacy," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (December 18, 1948), p. 542.

[23] Ibid.

fault inherent in what he saw as the post-war diplomatic trend lay with the failure of a socialist British government to apply socialist principles in international affairs, allowing the reconstruction of capitalist industrial empires.[24] "War does not stop at the Channel, and if the Ruhr is rebuilt the second German war will have been in vain."[25]

III

A related problem was the question of the Soviet Union. Here, Taylor was torn between his sympathies with the Soviet attempts to construct a new and better system, and the obvious fact that the people still were not the beneficiaries of a free and liberal democratic society.[26] With Soviet Russia, as with Germany, Taylor was concerned with the problem of post-war readjustment. He dealt with the Soviet Union's position in Europe, her aspirations, and the motivation behind her policy and politics. He felt that western policy regarding the Russians would depend largely upon what could be determined about these questions. Taylor proposed answers and explanations by basing his views upon a rational approach to contemporary history, and by rejecting the notion of the pre-World War II radicals that Soviet Russia was the Utopia toward which the world should strive.

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[24]It might be noted that Socialism was Taylor's way of saying economic planning. His political socialism was milder, and he became increasingly a proponent of what one might loosely call a classical democracy based upon the direct rule of the people. He omitted the overtones of state intervention in the independence of the individual usually implied by modern definitions of Socialism, such as that found among Conservatives, particularly those in the somewhat emasculated American Republican Party.

[25]Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (December 18, 1948), p. 542.

[26]A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (November 27, 1948), p. 465. Taylor was sure that the masses would, being unsatisfied, rise eventually against the communists.

Taylor conceived Soviet policy as being rather more traditional than revolutionary, finding various precedents for her contemporary behavior. The non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin, in spite of its appearance, was simply a typically Russian diplomatic move. Soviet Russia "bought out" of European affairs in this manner, just as Nicholas I had with official neutrality toward Austria in 1848.[27] The effect was the same in either case--security and a balance of power beyond a buffer ring.[28] Stalin had said, "A strong Germany is the absolute requisite for peace in Europe."[29] To complicate relations with the Soviet Union, the West had also supported German strength, but as a buffer against Bolshevism. Taylor saw the situation as a struggle for German friendship between Russia and the West as it had been in the nineteenth century. Worse, the immediate actions of both sides after 1945 indicated a continuation of the contest.[30] If the West should destroy the natural European balance, he feared that the Soviets would be driven into competition for Japanese favor as well. Russia had a history of interest in the Far East. Situated between the Orient and the Occident, she had historically attempted equal intimacy with both--a fact often overlooked by Western statesmen.

The balance of power the Soviet Union sought was not herself against the rest of the world, but rather everybody else balanced against each other, leaving her alone and unmolested. Necessary to such a situation was the buffer ring which the West had once attempted to create against Bolshevist expansion,

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[27]A. J. P. Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 (2nd edition; London: Hamish Hamilton, Ltd., 1948, paperback reprint by Harper and Row, 1965), p. 56.

[28]A. J. P. Taylor, "Springs of Soviet Diplomacy," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXV (May 22, 1948), p. 410.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

and after World War II, the Soviet Union was recreating as protection against the West.[31] The ancient Polish lands had been Russia's western barrier in the nineteenth century, and the same territories would serve that purpose in the twentieth. The ideological change in the Soviet Union, particularly under Stalin, had little effect upon these traditional views. The same nations were Russia's enemies in the twentieth century that had been in the nineteenth. Now their governments were referred to as the "Enemies of the People," but they represented the traditional diplomatic and political threats.

Soviet objectives were also traditional--control of the Baltic Sea and the Straits to the Black Sea. These were defensive aims, linking together the East European nations as part of a great buffer against the West. The Soviet planners simply inherited the mantle of Menshikov, Nesselrode and Giers, just as Stalin inherited the mantle of Catherine, Nicholas and Alexander. Marxism replaced Orthodoxy, the Politburo took the place of the Holy Governing Synod, and as the Tsars had remained unapproachably above the latter, Stalin dominated the former.

Taylor found himself in the midst of a chaotic world in the immediate post-war years. He was not a member of the Establishment and so felt free to speak out as his conscience dictated. The object of his discussions on the Soviet Union was to show up the psuedo-historical speculations of Western journalists and statesmen. He felt that the publication of German archival material was aimed at proving Stalin's war-guilt, and that "we are right and they are wrong."[32] By pointing out the true origins of Soviet policy, he hoped to avert

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[31]The Cordon Sanitaire, created by the West after World War I, was the West's buffer. Russia rebuilt it after 1945 for the same purpose, only against the West.

[32]Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXXV (May 22, 1948), p. 410.

Western policy makers from the same mistakes which dominated the thinking at Munich in 1938. "What will prove successful with Russia must be the result of serious political analysis, not the twaddle of history found in Munich...."[33] The question of Trieste was one major post-war problem which, if viewed realistically, could become a point of departure for Western-Soviet co-operation; or, if viewed in the Munich spirit, could become another bone of contention adding to the aggravations of post-war disputations.[34] He saw the men of Munich once more in power, and intent upon recreating the Europe of 1938 which had excluded the Soviet Union. Such questions were the subjects of his 1945-1946 talks on the BBC. For reward, he was denounced in Commons by Herbert Morrison, himself a member of the Labour Party, as being "anti-British, anti-American, and not particularly competent."[35] But Taylor was not in the least put off by such approbations, and acidly refused to be one of those expounding "the British way of life. I hope never to be numbered in this band of secular missionaries."[36]

While revealing the historical realities behind the Russian question, Taylor made it quite clear that he was suggesting cooperation economically, if not politically, as the point upon which the peace of the world might finally rest. The exchange of foodstuffs and machinery could be the determining factor for gaining Soviet friendship. And, too, the West had to understand the

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[33] A. J. P. Taylor, "Ten Years After," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (October 2, 1948), p. 279.

[34] A. J. P. Taylor, "Trieste or Trst?," The New Statesman and Nation, XXVIII (December 9, 1944), pp. 386-387.

[35] Taylor, From Napoleon, p. 10.

[36] Ibid.

basically defensive flavor of historical [illegible] policy, which invalidated the assumptions that the West must arm to the teeth and be warlike in order to halt a planned Soviet aggression which, in fact, did not exist. In these remarks, Taylor was primarily concerned with European peace and readjustment. His purpose centered around a long-range plan of a European community built upon economic cooperation. This point demonstrated his basically rationalistic view of economics, politics, and diplomacy. It was the flavor which made him attend the Wroclaw Congress of Intellectuals in 1948, where he surprised everyone by delivering a conservative, anti-communist talk.[37] The Congress had been suggested as a genuine attempt to lessen international tensions by bringing together men of cultures. It was, he felt, rigged for the purposes of communist propaganda, though not so much as succeeding sessions. The Russians dominated it and turned it into the forerunner of the World Peace Movement.[38] Taylor's concern for the People was not in evidence in his first published remarks on the Russian question. But we may read into his comments on the Wroclaw Congress something of his prejudice in their favor by recounting such statements as:

> ...the treason of the communist, who is prepared to sacrifice liberty and intellectual standards for the victory of the party...The Congress (like the parliaments of the New Democracies) was to listen to a series of prepared speeches, reiterating the same theme in an exhausting process of mass hypnosis and reaching a climax in a unanimous resolution against American Fascism. Uniformity and unanimity are essentials of Communist culture....[39]

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[37]Mehta, The New Yorker, XXVIII (December 8, 1952), p. 124. A fellow Don remarked to Mehta that "...and then he had the gall to come over to me and whisper in my ear, 'I've been dreaming of giving a speech like that since God knows when!' In Oxford, at a meeting of blue-blooded Conservatives, he would have delivered a stinging, left-wing harangue."

[38]A. J. P. Taylor, Oxford, letter, 19 February, 1966, to the author.

[39]Taylor, From Napoleon, p. 222.

Taylor, who had apparently shared the pre-war illusion of Soviet Russia's political enlightenment, was not one to remain long in the same position. The Wroclaw Congress elicited numerous other remarks to indicate his ever changing attitude; a letter to The New Statesman and Nation, for example, caught him repudiating the blindness of a fellow intellectual, Olaf Stapledon, who had given the Soviet representatives credit for more honesty than they possessed. "The Russians did not agree to incorporate all of Julian Huxley's resolution. In essence they agreed to allow to work and travel, the people the Cominform approved...as long as it suits the convenience of the Cominform."[40] The People, Taylor learned, were in Soviet Russia's eyes only those who were at odds with their rulers. The Soviets regarded the People and government of Russia as one; a proposition which Taylor impatiently dismissed.[41] In general, Taylor felt that the Congress was aimed at subversion of the principles of liberty, peace and justice to which he subscribed. In effect, this supported his idea that the Soviet Union was yet more traditional than revolutionary, as the People were no closer to freedom in Soviet Russia than they had been under the Tsars. Some years later he echoed this thought in an essay on Alexander II who he felt was perhaps more truly a man of the People than any of the Soviet leaders.[42]

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[40] A. J. P. Taylor, "Wroclaw Congress," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (September 18, 1948), p. 238.

[41] Ibid.

[42] A. J. P. Taylor, "Men of the 1860's: Alexander II, Tsar of Russia," The Listener, LXIX (June 27, 1963), pp. 1069-1071.

IV

Taylor's concern for the People was more clearly seen in his intellectual peregrinations over the Eastern European Question. The post-war settlements in Eastern Europe in 1919-1921 had been imposed upon defeated peoples, much against their will. He defined the new national states as ones in which "The great majority of the inhabitants are of a single nationality and in which the inhabitants who are not of the prevailing nationality are not partners but are "minorities," whether protected by special legislation or not...."[43] As a result, these settlements failed to have a positive and lasting influence. The story of Eastern Europe between the wars was one of explosiveness and turmoil. Eastern European failures were in part the result of the "Austrian Idea" which had been the professorial solution for the Slavic minorities before the demise of the Empire. The idea involved a federation of some fifty million people under the Habsburgs, combined for mutual defense and economic advantage. It had failed because neither Austrians nor Magyars would accept equality with subject peoples. The same problem beset the new states created after World War I. The Czechs sought to dominate the Slovaks, the Serbs to rule over the Croats, Bosnians, and so forth. The result was friction which kept Eastern Europe constantly upon the brink of new Balkan crises of one sort or another.[44] After the collapse of the Habsburgs, it remained for the subject peoples to create a cooperating and workable organization. But they were not allowed to do so without the interference of the Great Powers. Hence the political difficulties of the twenties and thirties. A basic problem was the fact that

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[43] A. J. P. Taylor, "National Independence and the Austrian Idea," The Political Quarterly, XVI (July, 1945), p. 234.

[44] Ibid., p. 236.

most of the new governing classes were elderly bureaucrats trained under the Habsburgs and with little inclination to escape the subsequent influence of that mentality.[45]

There are several probable reasons why Taylor was concerned with the Eastern European problems when most of his colleagues were more involved with the obvious German and Russian questions. For one, he had an intimate acquaintance with Austrian politics through A. F. Pribram and Heinrich Friedjung. His first research on the Habsburgs and the Italian settlement of 1847-1849 had been done under Pribram's direction. Through these investigations he had familiarized himself with the plight of the Balkan and East European Slavs in the twentieth century.

Another factor was Taylor's idealism which caught him up in a passionate defense of the People. He felt a deep sense of injustice at their fate in the hands of German and Magyar overlords. At times his sympathy led him to indulge in what one critic called a "dogmatic temper, at the expense of a well-considered appraisal of men and things."[46] A good example was his treatment of Austrian Foreign Minister Aehrenthal which The (London) Times reviewer regarded as being inaccurate in facts and marred by ill-chosen epithets. In the face of such criticism it should be remembered that Taylor's bias against Germans in Austria as well as in Germany proper was sharpened by the war and its immediate consequences. He did not even begin to soften this view until many years later.

A third, and major, point was Taylor's belief that successful European politics after World War II were hinged in part--as he felt had been the case

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[45] Ibid., p. 242.

[46] Anonymous, Review of The Habsburg Monarchy by A. J. P. Taylor, The Times (London) Literary Supplement (1948 edition; February 26, 1949), p. 132.

historically--upon the just and peaceful settlement of Eastern Europe. The Slav nations should have been the platform for East-West cooperation, not just for the sake of the minority peoples, but for all of Europe. A touch of Taylor's cynicism was evident in his work on this point. Believing in the justice of Slavic national emergence, he was nonetheless pessimistic. For instance, he felt that Yugoslavian control of Trieste was morally and nationally right; but at the same time it was impossible because of the constant disruptive threat of Italian irridentism. With crystal clarity he described his feelings regarding the settlement:

> Trieste has something of the air of Danzig between the wars. Just as the Germans paraded their superior civilization against the Poles, so the Italians win Anglo-American approval against the barbarous Yugoslavs. How tiresome that liberated peoples always behave so crudely, and that their oppressors have such good manners!"[47]

There are no fewer than five criticism of the political fate of the port city apparent in this typically Tayloresque barb.

His concern for the oppressed Slavs was more indicative of his radical democratic bias than any other subject in his war-decade writings. Notwithstanding his considerable pre-war interest in the Eastern European world, nor his sense of the role Eastern Europe had played in European political tensions, he found that problem to be an excellent platform for expounding his own basic political philosophy. He pointed to the centuries old traditions of the established institutions such as estates, serfdom, absolutist, or aristocratic governments which had characterized Eastern Europe. They had obscured the numerically superior Slavs in relation to numerically inferior Germans and Magyars who epitomized the arrogant inequality of privilege which Taylor hated.

47A. J. P. Taylor, "The Free Territory of Trieste," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVIII (October 29, 1949), p. 478.

In fact, this attitude was one of the few points upon which he remained consistent throughout his career, with virtually no variations. He explained the mistreatment of the Slavs by Germans and Magyars as being based on fear--a view which corresponded to his overall view of class struggles. "Sooner or later, the Slav people, with their deep sense of equality, their love of freedom, and their devotion to humanity, would end the artificial lordship of both Germans and Magyars."[48] Though somewhat pangyric, these words clearly expressed his passion for these downtrodden people. Moreover, Taylor's deep feeling for the minority peoples of Eastern Europe was part and parcel of his democratic sense which went far beyond party politics. He blamed the Social Democrats in Austria as well as those in Germany. In Austria too they had national aspirations, and by adhering to them (here the blame falls particularly upon the intellectuals) they sacrificed liberty and democracy.[49]

However, the Eastern European problem was inevitable, as Taylor felt to some degree all historical problems were. "The conflict between a supernational dynastic state and the national principle had to be fought to the finish; and so, too, had the conflict between master and subject nation."[50] This was the secondary theme of his revised edition of The Habsburg Monarchy, which he published in 1948. He also discussed the clash, which was another inevitable consequence of history, between mass and intellectual nationalism. This clash was inevitable because of the Habsburg objective of existing in greatness whatever the cost; ideas and peoples were exploited shamelessly for

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[48]Taylor, The Course, p. 221.

[49]A. J. P. Taylor, Review of 1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals by L. B. Namier, The Manchester Guardian, (April 5, 1946), p. 3.

[50]Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy, (1965 reprinting), p. 7.

dynastic interests. The middle class Germans, who constituted the bulk of nineteenth century intellectualism in Austria, and could have wrought a significant change in the fate of the Slavic groups, sold themselves to self-interest and the futility of the Austrian Idea, which in effect brought down the curtain for the dynasty and themselves. Though the die was cast for future Slavic emancipation, it took much longer to materialize and also created the political tensions of the twentieth century by pitting politically naive minorities against one another in a rude copy of the antagonisms of the Great Powers. In the first version of this book Taylor had held what he called the liberal illusion that the Monarchy could have been saved possibly to the benefit of the Slavs. His surrender to inevitability ended this liberal illusion and made his whole historical outlook of the late forties more pessimistic.

Taylor always displayed a great sense of frustration in these studies: as a rationalist he was distressed by the chaotic situations constantly arising in the Slavic nations; and as a historian he was nonplussed by the inevitable failures assured to his favorites by their misguided actions. He appeared as a defiant challenger of history who chaffs to be freed from the restrictions imposed by his own mortality. If he was, he would intervene and force his favorites to do the right thing at the right moment when it would guarantee sanity and justice. The constancy of this tendency marked his career; consequently, the evaluation of Taylor as a historian as opposed to a polemicist became difficult, and ultimately too narrow, to maintain.

V

In every piece of writing during the forties, Taylor revealed at least a sense of his newly sharpened concept of values. In the thirties he had been an "undefined" radical leftist in politics with orthodox historical ideas. After

the war, he emerged as a full-blown Left idealist, prepared to dispute any historic tradition or philosphy which did not subscribe to his morality. In part, his values--peace, justice, human rights, and whig moral principles--have been indicated in the preceeding pages. The clearest examples remain to be viewed in terms of several highly controversial events which arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

There was still the matter of the Germans. National pride and arrogance overrode a necessary adherence to liberty and justice. He wrote of the effect on modern Germany of the military system created by Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. It was admired all over Europe for its "academic freedom." But this freedom was for the purpose of adopting the weapons of civilization for uncivilized ends, i.e., the education of a whole nation into militarism. Thus all later German education was a giant engine of conquest rendered the more effective by being conducted by volunteers.[51] Here the process of subservience to national interest was sharpened. That was the curse which robbed the 1848 intellectuals of any truly liberal goals. They relied on "moral strength" which evaporated before the militaristic goals of conquest against the Poles and CZechs. Moral strength proved to be a disastrous idealistic weapon, providing the intellectuals were really serious about it to begin with. Of course the Hitlerian Reich was Taylor's classic example of Germany's educational system.

Another mark against Germany--in the same military vein--was the end-of-century policy forcing unfavorable commercial terms upon foreigners. This gave her an excuse for conquest which was further inspired by the related chance to add to national glory and prestige. The failure of "good" Germans to see reason

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[51]Taylor, The Course, p. 43.

in this respect was Taylor's moral indictment against all of Germany. The rest of the world had to pay the penalty for the political incompetence and timidity of the German middle class. Their crime against European civilization was too much taste for blood and too little responsibility regarding the actions of "bad" Germans.[52]

A point Taylor seemed quite taken with was his idea of German society's truly liberal and righteous features. He had no sympathy for the "good" Germans who silently disapproved of the trends in the twentieth century. He accused them as a group for having never opposed an attrocity committed in the name of Germany. Individually, he denounced Max Weber as a national chauvinist and Martin Niemoller as a "war-monger."[53] He clinched this indictment by naming Kurt Eisner as a truly pacific and European German as opposed to the Pangermans who murdered him.[54] Eisner had led a government of men who dreamed of making Germany into an association of free states on the Swiss model. These men, Taylor asserted, were the last and noblest of German liberals. But this virtue was their undoing, for they had therefore sought to escape from the immorality of power politics. Taylor accused the leaders of the Weimar Republic of betraying idealists like Eisner with their inability to shake off the old dreams of power and glory.[55] He concluded this point by delivering a moral to the "good" Germans: "It may be a hard doctrine for liberally minded Germans that,

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[52]Ibid., p. 146.

[53]Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXVIII (October 28, 1944), p. 285.

[54]Kurt Eisner was a German Communist who was murdered by what might plausably be termed the rightist revolutionaries in Bavaria in 1919.

[55]Taylor, The Course, p. 83.

until they struggle for the freedom of others, they cannot themselves be free; but it is a doctrine they must sooner or later accept."[56] Probably at no other place in his writings did Taylor make so obvious his basic feeling that any Germany beyond a militarily weak collection of states similar to those that existed before the Napoleonic conquests, was dangerous and oppressive to European freedom and security.

Closely related to German failures was the equally ominous failure of other Europeans to thwart German ambitions. In the post-war years, the most obvious and most controversial instance was the Munich Pact in 1938. Taylor felt that the appeasers had lacked a clear moral cause, and that the intellectuals above all had failed to provide them with one.[57] There was a moral cause--self determination.[58] But the greater cause should have been a higher morality of justice regarding the People. Many might have been expected to hold up against pressure from the Nazis, most of all the Czechoslovakian President Beneš, himself an idealistic intellectual. But force, the only answer to Hitler which could succeed, was beyond Beneš capacity, and it remained for Poland's Beck, a man of considerably lesser moral calibre, to signal Hitler's fall by going to war.[59] The comparison defined Taylor's paradoxical morality quite clearly. It was that democratic liberalism was moral, quasi-fascism was not. But the latter could apply brutal methods necessary to thwart oppression in

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[56]Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXVIII (October 28, 1944), p. 285.

[57]Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (October 2, 1948), p. 278.

[58]Taylor wrote that it did not matter in English eyes whether Hitler or Beneš ruled in Prague, so long as Pangermanism--and thus Hitler--could be satisfied short of war.

[59]Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (October 2, 1948), p. 279.

1939. Therefore, Benes was immoral for failing to check Hitler, while Beck was moral for doing so: yet Benes was a moral man and Beck was not. The ultimate outcome of Munich was not seen until a decade later. Once again the appeasers were in power, and again they were trying to recreate German strength, ostensibly as a buffer against Russian aggression. The greater their resolve had been to conciliate Hitler in 1938, the greater their resolve to oppose Russia in 1948. But the ends remained the same: a private club of misguided men dreaming of the old days when Europe was composed of England, Germany, and France. It was but another of many foolish mistakes which Taylor regarded as threats to whatever rational future might still be possible for Europe and the world.

Finally, Taylor rested his case upon the ultimate responsibility of the intellectuals and idealists in every nation. His writings throughout the forties had become increasingly pessimistic, frustrated, and weary. But at bottom he was more firmly a convinced rationalist, idealist, and political radical than ever. In the course of writings which dealt with liberals and intellectuals, he laid down rules of conduct for men of high thoughts to follow. He accused Alexis de Tocqueville of letting down on the job, as it were, and withdrawing from politics because the extreme left in 1848 appeared uncouth and too radical. In the process he had joined forces with the Conservatives against them. At this point came a warning:

> Liberty has to be defended against all comers; all the same, the enemies of liberty are always on the right, and the lovers of liberty must never be shaken from their position on the left. Above all, he who loves liberty must have faith in the people.[60]

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[60] A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (November 23, 1948), p. 465.

In reviewing Pieter Geyl's book Napoleon: For and Against, he wrote admiringly of French historians who, unlike many foreigners, had never been taken in by the increasing amount of liturgy on the first Bonaparte, but rather had maintained a high degree of critical judgement. They approached Napoleon with "a priori values against which he was shown to be lacking."[61] There was, in these words, a distinct departure from Taylor's earlier idea that the historian's task was only to explain and understand, to a moralistic view of history as a parade of actions which could and had to be judged on the basis of high and true principles. This change fell into perfect line with his own evaluations during the forties not only of event, but of men and ideas.

Taylor was concerned with what he regarded as the true ideals of man's existence. Perhaps he was inexact concerning the means to these ends, but he was clear enough what the ends were. Thus he came to regard Communist methods and even the ideology itself as suspect. Of the Wroclaw Congress he wrote desparagingly of the Communists attempts to browbeat the delegates into a purely Soviet line. He concluded that "Two ways of life and of thought are in conflict throughout the world and it should be the task of intellectuals to resolve the conflict by peaceful means.[62] He identified himself not with the West per se, but with the rational ends of the modern western intellectual traditions which aimed at goals of human freedom, dignity, equality, and justice. As the World War II decade ended, Taylor had clearly stated what his remaining years of thinking and writing would aim for.

But men cannot always foresee what changes will be wrought by the pressures

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[61] A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVII (February 26, 1949), p. 207.

[62] Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXXVI (September 4, 1948), p. 195.

of daily existence, nor the changes forced by cataclismic developments in that world upon the fringe of which we live--science. The idealism of the Taylor who wrote glowingly of the intellectual's responsibility would be tossed and torn by the realism of the political world and the relativity of life under the threat of atomic destruction.

CHAPTER III. THE NEW ERA: INTO UTOPIA

I

One of the striking features of A. J. P. Taylor's work in the fifties was his growing realization of the role of reason in human affairs. In this respect he demonstrated a greater degree of historical and intellectual maturity. Though vitriolic comments against the Germans appeared frequently, there was a marked turn toward an appreciation of the larger view of European affairs. Taylor began to settle into well defined paths, presenting short essays on traditional problems, but focusing all the while on the essential task of redefining the role of Europe in a rapidly changing world. He recognized the post-war emergence of two giants, the Soviet Union and the United States. They were to become the poles of East-West conflict with traditional Europe sometimes as a mediating influence and sometimes as a pawn. This chapter will seek to penetrate the wealth of material Taylor has provided, to arrive at some understanding of his greatest concerns and the gradual readjustment he made in his own approach to politics, diplomacy, society, and history.

Whether as historian, polemicist, or journalist, Taylor did not immediately change his views. At first his comments on European affairs were imperceptibly less critical, and his proposed solutions basically the same. The most noticeable changes occurred within the context of his overall orientation. He had scarcely touched upon the historical factors involved in World War I. But in 1949-1951, several articles, concerned with some of the diplomatic juggling prior to 1914, appeared in various scholarly journals. They were like the detailed works which had characterized his historical writings of the thirties,

with a slight difference. They contained his anti-Germanism of the forties, and hold a breath of his rationalism of the fifties. The invectives of The Course of German History were gone. But in his study of the Franco-Russian alliance, for instance, there appeared a revision of the traditional view that the alliance was part of a contest for German favor.[1] Rather he saw it as having been meant to isolate Germany in favor of the Western Powers. His underlying theme that the Fashoda incident, the Moroccan crisis, and the Nile controversy were prime examples of the irrationalism and stupidity of old world diplomatic and political principles indicated his growing concern about irrationality, and thus his inclination toward rationalism as a basis for historical evaluations.

Taylor carried rationalism more specifically into the fifties with a reconsideration of the meaning of the twentieth century wars. Comparing the effects of the two world wars upon the Western nations, he analyzed the resignation to reality which dominated the post-war generations. Gone was the sense of having fought a war to end wars; gone as well was the confusion of values which had accompanied the Great War. In their place was a conviction that World War II had been worthwhile, that the enemy had been clearly defined.

> Hitler's Germany really was a beastial tyranny; the concentration camps, the extermination of the Jews, the Gestapo, all were real. No allied soldier who saw Buchenwald or Dachau could doubt that the war had been worthwhile.[2]

But more to the point for Taylor's convictions in the new era, was his comment on the position of the Left and Right:

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[1] A. J. P. Taylor, "Les Premieres Années de l'Alliance Russe," Revue Historique, LXIII (July, 1950), p. 63.

[2] A. J. P. Taylor, "Up From Utopia," The New Republic, CXXIII (October 30, 1950), p. 16.

> World War One was, on the whole, a bourgoise war: the masses fought for their masters, not for their own convictions. The Right fought enthusiastically, without reserve; the Left fought regretfully or not at all. The fifth column, a phrase in World War Two, had been a reality in World War One....In World War Two it was the Left that fought with conviction, the Right with regret.[3]

In effect, it was a totally different kind of war, fought not for diplomatic objectives so much as for ideological convictions--freedom, democracy, and the common man. He approved of the second war whereas he objected to the first. Yet he did see some value even there. Belgium, the Slavic minorities, and many other oppressed people had been liberated as a result--afact that the Left had not recognized.

The absurdity of the petty diplomatic wrangling of the pre-1914 years and the failure of idealism in the years after the war were the points at which Taylor crossed the bridge into the new era. The fifties were for him, as well as for the rest of mankind, the beginning of a quite different approach to civilization. It was at once an era of pessimism and optimism, which would mark both his writing and the general execution of diplomacy and politics. It was, as Taylor saw it, the beginning of an era of European decline, when Europeans perhaps would prefer subtlety to animal vigor in their statesmanship.[5] It was the logical point for the planned economy, the finesse of second power diplomacy, and the awakening of new ideas and freedoms.

An interesting paradox appeared in an essay on historiography. Though Taylor was becoming more rationalistic, he was able to find excused for an irrational approach to history. His view, as usual, was tied to political theory. He felt that the Whig concept of "up and up and up and on and on and

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XL (August 19, 1950), p. 204.

on" was no longer the essence of historical truth.[6] In a review of Keith Feiling's book A History of England, he delivered his usual pejoratives against the valuelessness of Toryism, but felt that it might be the logical historical approach to replace an antiquated Whig history. Liberty should be the revolutionary doctrine of a minority, he wrote. In England it had become traditional and universally accepted, therefore placing it in the category of Tory institutions. What Taylor was attacking appeared finally to be Conservatism in historical writing, i.e. the history of administrations rather than the history of ideas. His implication was that ideas were out of fashion; that "technical history" was more in vogue and safer in the bargain. Feiling wrote his history of England from such an approach. It was clear that Taylor preferred Whig rationalism to the basic irrationalism of the Tory. The Tory was skeptical of ideas, impatient with reform, doubtful of human nature, and overall pessimistic; the Whig view was the opposite. But Taylor also revealed some skepticism by deciding in this review that perhaps historical truth lay somewhere between the poles of Toryism and Whiggism.[7]

Perhaps Taylor's most lucid thought was the realization that man only reluctantly accepts social, political, and moral changes. When he does, he tends to go overboard on some points and hangs back on others. Taylor proposed a new rationalism based upon a Tayloresque brand of relativism:

> There is a third way between Utopianism and despair. That is to take the world as it is and improve it; to have faith without a creed, hope without illusions, love without God.[8]

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[6]A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XXXIX (May 6, 1950), p. 517.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Taylor, The New Republic, CXXIII (October 30, 1950), p. 18.

He felt that this was the only possible answer; a solution at once idealistic and pessimistic though in effect, he was still the idealist. The same essay contained a comment on the great ideological conflict of the fifties:

> The Western world is committed to the proposition that rational man will in the end prove stronger and more successful than irrational man. If the Western world abandons this proposition, it may conquer Communism but it will destroy itself.[9]

Taylor applied his new thoughts on the fifties in a variety of ways. As an historian trained in diplomatic studies, he was acutely sensitive to the factors which prevented international agreements. The major point of contention at that time were Soviet-American relations. The Korean conflict brdke out in 1950. Though it was a clash ostensibly between communist North Korea and the Western controlled Republic of South Korea, the least secret aspect of the struggle was the underlying confrontation between the United States, which supplied the major military support and leadership to South Korea, and Russia which, through its new ally Communist China, was the partner of North Korea. Taylor asked if the fact that World War III coming only five years after World War II was the result of the wrong diplomatic methods? The answer was both yes and no. But he was not being contradictory for though he called for a return to the methods of the "old diplomacy," i.e. the diplomatic methods of Metternich's era, he was firmly attached to the idea that its practicioners be governed by the people.[10] The "new diplomacy" of the post-war period actually grew out of the bitterness of World War I and the subsequent tendency to blame secret diplomatic agreements. However, diplomatic secrecy was a beneficial

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[9] Ibid.

[10] A. J. P. Taylor, "Case for the Old Diplomacy," The New York Times Magazine, (March 18, 1951), p. 35.

approach, Taylor wrote, for it gave the diplomats room for much greater latitude. But that was the problem. People no longer trusted diplomatic moves. An addition to this problem--and it was one of the weaknesses of the United Nations--were the changing objectives of diplomacy. The element of compromise had been lost because Soviet aims demanded an end to single state existence and an "international world run from Moscow rather than Lake Success."[11] On the Western side, the objective was to hold firm against Communist expansion; the result was an unwillingness to give diplomats the opportunity to compromise, even if the Soviets might have been willing.

These new views on diplomatic objectives created two conflicting outlooks: one, arbitrary dictation from Moscow, and the other, open agreements before the eye of a judge--public opinion. This seemed an unresolvable problem as Korea clearly demonstrated. But Taylor suggested three possible outcomes: a war to the death; mutual isolation, both sides ignoring the existence of the other; and the third, not unlike revolutionary France, both sides conflicting until they lost their zeal and would begin to make agreements of a limited sort, settling finally into a lazy mutual suspicion. This was, in fact, the basis of the old diplomacy, best characterized by Metternich and Talleyrand.[12]

Taylor best described his own uncertainty and conflicting thoughts on diplomacy in several articles which appeared during 1951. The essay on the old diplomacy, discussed above presented his hopes for a slackening of tensions into mutual, if suspicious, toleration, most clearly indicative that he had to some degree ceased to hope for Utopia. When Hans Morganthau expressed a similar

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[11] Ibid., p. 33. Lake Success is located in Geneva, Switzerland which is the acknowledged diplomatic capital of Western Europe.

[12] Ibid., p. 35.

skepticism in his book In Defense of the National Interest, Taylor attacked him. Morganthau decried American foreign policy for being Utopian, sentimental and legalistic. He urged national interest and nothing else. Taylor wrote in defense of the ideas which Morganthau saw as unrealistic. This was the point of departure. Morganthau defined realism in terms of national interest, non-Utopianistic and practical. Implied was a military establishment of considerable strength, adequate to prevent even the temptation of Soviet aggression. Taylor disapproved of such Machiavellian realism, for he felt it not only betrayed the real national interest, i.e. peace and justice for the People, but misread the secret of Soviet policy which was the fear of a power ten times as strong as itself. Fear could drive Russia to drastic actions leading to a catastrophic end. Behind this reasoning, Taylor exhibited his real concern--the arbitrary rule of any great power over the rest of the world. Soviet domination would be undesirable; but so would that of the United States, even though American democracy was preferable to Communist unanimity. "That is why it is possible to be devoted to American ideals--and even to care for the American national interest--and yet desire the re-emergence of powers independent of the United States."[13] Not military strength, but unequivocable principles of morality denoted realism--the very realism which America was practicing and which Morganthau dismissed as Utopian. Since any policy hinged upon understanding the Soviets, Taylor turned his next analytic glance in their direction.

Several factors emerged. Taylor considered the belief that Stalin was a shrewd and calculating diplomat with a brilliant grasp of international situations to be a myth. In fact, he was a relatively dull and unimaginative

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[13]A. J. P. Taylor, Review of In Defense of the National Interest by Hans J. Morganthau, The Nation, CLXXIII (September 8, 1951), p. 196.

dictator whose isolation and unequaled personal power enabled him to appear successful. Often he was not, or else he was only fortunate. The myth that he was a kindly old gentleman kept on a tight rein by the Politburo further enhanced his success.[14] Stalin, Taylor felt, saw Russia as being weak when in fact she was strong. Further, her policy under Stalin was heavy-handed and crude. He saw her as being threatened when she was secure, which led to a policy of suspicion and double-dealing. An understanding of Stalin's policy in this light would greatly facilitate the West's dealings with him. The West had to see that Stalin was old-fashioned, and changeless. The best answer to him would be strength, unity, and then friendship.[15]

Another point was that Soviet policy dictated American policy by opposites. America should make up her own mind about what she should do at a given time and place rather than being driven to action by what she thought the Russians might do.[16] American policy was naive in this light, but Morganthau's propositions were even more so. His idea of partitioning Europe between Russia and America would be completely impractical, if not impossible. Taylor's personal enmity to this idea was pointedly clarified when he wrote critically of the proposal that England should be placed virtually under the dictatorship of the United States in terms of arms and economics.[17] This would, of course, combine the United States and Great Britain as enemies of the Soviet Union.

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[14]A. J. P. Taylor, "Stalin as Statesman; a Look at the Record," The New York Times Magazine, (November 18, 1951), p. 53.

[15]Ibid., p. 59.

[16]Taylor, The Nation, CLXXIII (September 8, 1951), p. 197.

[17]A. J. P. Taylor, "The Battle Bill," The Nation, CLXXIII (September 8, 1951), pp. 186-187.

Taylor, and one must assume a majority of his countrymen, was not a little opposed to such an idea. He was suspicious of American "great heartedness," and convinced that national independence was no less a virtue of old states as of new ones.

East-West relations rested finally upon the question of Western agreement with Russia. Taylor felt that there was no simple answer. It hinged upon the old antagonism between Democracy and Communism. One point that Taylor consistantly made was that the question of diplomatic manoeuvring paled beside the controversies of ideals. This emphasis appeared not in lengthy historical studies and short scholarly essays which usually constituted the historian's media, but rather in his far more numerous reviews and journalistic efforts, which were more frequently the media of the polemicist. Anticipating some of the ideas that would be echoed in "Case for the Old Diplomacy,"[18] Taylor proposed something other than World War III for the failure of Russia and the West to coexist peacefully and without interference. Essentially he saw two real possibilities: non-recognition, or secondly, agreement on limited points with mutual suspicions being retained on major points. The problem of finding the correct answer lay in the lack of knowledge about the Soviet Union. Admittedly guessing along with everyone else, Taylor proposed that Soviet rulers were neither more nor less gifted, diabolical, and omnipotent than any others. They were, however, more confused on one point than anyone else. They had gotten rid of opposition in Russia, but did not know how to deal with it elsewhere. Their abuse of foreign opponents was that which they learned to use against opponents at home, seemingly unaware that it wouldn't have the same effect upon

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[18] The New York Times Magazine, (March 18, 1951), pp. 9ff.

nations. They were somewhat affected by the People, though differently than in the West. The necessity of regimenting the People created a fear of conspiracy and intervention, though the Communists sincerely believed that Marxism was the best system in the world.[19] Communism was not a product of Russia but of social and economic ills. Therefore, the Russian state could be dealt with only in terms of concrete interests, not ideology. Communism flourished on hardship. The best approach for the West to take would be to make Russia increasingly prosperous, negating more and more the effects of Communist propaganda. Western policy also should have sought always to lessen fears and suspicions, not to see how many guns could be trained on Russia. Political initiative should have been taken from the Russians and kept, leaving the West always ready to discuss, talk, and conciliate. Taylor concluded his suggestions with a lesson from history.

> What we aim at is more truce than agreement, confident that everything which lessens tensions and postpones crises furthers our cause. This is what happened between Islam and Christianity. Every truce between Communism and Democracy will show how much more constructive and fertile is Democracy, and Communism will be shown for the barren thing it is.[20]

This view of Russia differed only slight from the one he had held in the late forties. He had, by 1952, concluded that though Russia had justification for being suspicious, she was also somewhat dominated by the evil reality of Communism as opposed to the idealism of the Marxist philosophy. Thus his suggestions for cooperation with the Soviets were the same; only they were couched in terms to suggest that it was necessary to overcome not only Soviet suspicions, but the impact of their undemocratic doctrine.

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[19]This discussion of the Soviets and the possibility of getting along with them, consumed the whole of an essay in The New York Times Magazine, (March 4, 1951), pp. 2ff. called "One Question: Agreement with Russia."

[20]Ibid., p. 55.

The problem presented by Taylor's shifting attitudes in this period has a both simple and complex explanation. He was becoming a skeptic. He was disillusioned by events and the secularization of ideals such as the Marxist Utopia. He moved from extreme left to left center. But on another level, and ultimately the real one, he was no less a man of the left than ever. The key to understanding this paradox is to recognize that practical definitions of terms such as Marxism, Socialism, Whiggism, Toryism, Conservatism, or any other social or political philosophy vary as needs change. Taylor did not change as much as did the labels and terms. His basic faith in the common man never lessened, nor did his belief in the ultimate truth of a rational approach to political and social life. The apparent fluxuations in his views were only expressions of the changes which occurred so rapidly between the time Taylor first appeared in academic life and the decade of the fifties. Political orientations were shifting; Europe was in decline; the world was split between the United States and the Soviet Union; the age of automation and bureaucracy had become the inheritance of the post-war period; and the Rights of Man had been replaced by the Right to Work.[21] He became a greater moralist and individualist, asking for a new expression of the old radical ideals.[22] He still clung to the People, as he had seen them represented in the I.L.P., the Left Book Club, and the inter-war social revolution. That this People might be only a

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[21]Taylor regarded Right to Work as a term indicative of the general resignation to economic security. It was another symbol of humanism surrendering to the machine age. But even this was a contradiction. The machine age was also the symbol of Taylor's People, i.e. the working class.

[22]A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XLII (November 24, 1951), and (September 8, 1951), pp. 594ff, and 257-258. In reviews of books by Herbert Butterfield and Alexis de Tocqueville Taylor pleaded for morality as a total scope, and for repudiation of the Tocquevillian conservatism which painted nineteenth century America as undemocratic, when in reality it was de Tocqueville who was undemocratic.

passing phase probably bothered him more than anything else.[23] He resigned himself to the possibility when, in his later years, he became a reluctant member of the Oxfordian Establishment, thus compromising with what he always called the realities of academic politics.[24]

II

From his post as an Oxford don, Taylor attempted to remain true to his avowed allegiance to the Left; therefore he found it expedient to cast stones, sometimes at other historians, sometimes at institutions and statesmen.[25] One example was his criticism of E. H. Carr, the "rationalist's rationalist," for worshipping success with a pragmatism which allowed him to go along with Hitler at one point, the Communists at another.[26] Carr's motive, he felt, was to find out which way history was moving and then ignore everything which didn't move with it. Hitler, and then the Communists, seemed to hold the key to historical motion. Taylor asserted that humanity does more standing still than moving. Yet, "I am not making a case for conservatism. I detest conservatism. I am a radical; and I want to see most of the changes that Mr. Carr

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[23]A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XLV (January 17, 1953), p. 69.

[24]It would be impractical to attempt a lucid discussion of each piece of Taylor's writing within the limitations of this essay. Each writing is in itself revealing and worthy of consideration. However, it is possible, and far more profitable, here to note a few examples which tend to reveal the more significant trends in this period.

[25]In a review of Herbert Butterfield's History and Human Relations, Taylor gave him a good drubbing for the moral fallacies in his Christian oriented "technical history."

[26]A. J. P. Taylor, "Mr. Carr Backs a Winner," Twentieth Century, CL (November 15, 1951), p. 408.

announces in his book."[27] But the changes Carr announced in his book The New Society had not yet occurred. Taylor's attack was upon Carr's pragmatism, not his ideals, for he regarded such an approach inimicable to the maintenance of the ideals Carr thought had been realized.

The work Taylor did in the early fifties demonstrated his expanding horizons. He could be dogmatic, attacking men for being wrong; but pragmatically, he could have great admiration for their abilities. Of his profession he wrote with apparent pride, "The English historian calls no man master. He works alone, following his own bent, thinking occasionally of the reader...but rarely of his colleagues, and never of his critics."[28] At the same time he attacked even his old mentor and a man he sincerely admired, L. B. Namier, for warmly regarding established institutions.

> He treats the English aristocracy with what a Lancashire born radical like the present writer feels to be an exaggerated veneration: he can even admire the Times before Northcliff turned it upside down; and he seems to welcome the Labour Party only because the trade unions are historical institutions and their leaders a conservative aristocracy of a different kind.[29]

Taylor also had his heroes among public figures. They too were lauded and criticized like his favorite historians, depending upon their reactions to the questions of morality, political thought, and principle. He admired Bismarck for his unprecedented lack of orthodoxy as a youth but disliked him for becoming a reactionary in his later years.[30] The younger Bismarck, modeled after

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[27] Ibid., p. 410.

[28] A. J. P. Taylor, Rumours of War, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1952), p. 1.

[29] A. J. P. Taylor, Review of Avenues of History by L. B. Namier, The Manchester Guardian, (May 20, 1952), p. 4.

[30] A. J. P. Taylor, Bismarck: the Man and the Statesman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). At various places within the pages of this interesting character study, Taylor asserted both Bismarck's individualism and desire to fit into a pattern.

the young Cavour, was a much greater man than the old Bismarck fashioned after Metternich.[31] Bismarck was not larger-than-life as he had traditionally been made out even by the exiled Erich Eyck, but was admirable nonetheless for his abilities and singularity of character. It was like Taylor to despise Germans, especially Prussians, and to admire Bismarck, who many have felt was the most Prussian of Germans.

Thomas Garrigue Masaryk was a Taylor hero for quite different reasons than was Bismarck, though the note of individuality was an essential quality in both. Masaryk was "one of the nobel human beings of history, one of the great men of our century. He was more of a realist than Bismarck because he knew how to use the force of ideals--in his case democratic ideals."[32] Masaryk was the kind of East European that caught Taylor's imagination and was proof for his own brand of realism which was the eternal reality of high ideals encompassing peace, justice, and the People. His objection to Masaryk was that he was not enough aware of history, and created a state without regard for the historical existence of the non-Czech's whom he would amalgamate. Masaryk was too much the humanist, and therefore was set to be undone when the masses rose up. Taylor's ideal presented a difficult standard to live up to because it contained the elements of pure rationalism. His formula for East Europe needed to be drawn from his understanding of the People's needs: "Nationalism without humanism is harsh and destructive. Humanism without nationalism is barren and academic."[33]

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[31] Taylor, Rumours, p. 66.

[32] Ibid., p. 72.

[33] Ibid., p. 74.

Taylor felt that one personality, Joseph Chamberlain, had committed the worst of crimes. Once Chamberlain had been a social reformer and revolutionary. But his energy was without principle and he became the willing tool of the capitalist magnates. He thought of the empire as power without being conscious of the lone moral justification for imperialism, the progress of the natives.[34] Chamberlain's perversion of liberalism, which lay at the heart of this criticism, was one of the traditional points in Taylor's writing.

Taylor's emphasis upon the qualities and failures of human personalities was in some part inspired by his association with L. B. Namier who was a great figure in the development of personality study as an approach to historical scholarship.[35] But of greater importance than Namier's influence was the post-war evaluation of Europe which Taylor summed up quite concisely:

> I have clean hands. I do not really care--though this may sound untrue--I do not really care about the Germans any more one way or the other. I am prepared to believe that Europe is finished; and I am only curious to know what happened to Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century without worrying anymore about the outcome.[36]

He applied this idea both to personalities and to a wide collection of particular events, which he wrote about with a certain epigrammatic flair and freedom, not common to his more heavily documented diplomatic studies. Many of his comments appeared as book reviews; others as short essays, written from a considerable depth of historical knowledge. In any case, there was a substantially resigned air about many of his judgments, alleviated only by his lifelong committment to democratic ideals which he demonstrated by favorable comments on

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[34] Ibid., p. 161.

[35] John Brooke, "Namier and His Critics," Encounter, XXIV (February, 1965), pp. 47-49.

[36] Ibid., p. 52.

Harold Laski, Thomas Carlyle before he repudiated Chartism, and others.[37]

Taylor's new view of Europe's future appeared to give him a sense of assurance, almost contentment, which had been clearly lacking in the late forties and early fifties. He grew more confident in the ability of European Everyman to make his own decisions--perhaps because his decisions were no longer under the pressure of world leadership. The professional statesmen were traditionally jealous of their prerogatives. Taylor felt that they might well be; for they were no more, perhaps less, qualified to handle great questions of foreign policy than were the People they represented. The great majority of mankind, he wrote, were not dominated by self-interest. A government could no longer appeal to them on these grounds. Therefore, mankind, with a higher sense of morality, could better run the world than could the often class-biased professionals, most of whom traveled in an isolated circle, out of touch with popular needs, and certainly with the People.[38] The professional tended to call this view mysticism. But the People knew what was best for them and this had to be the prime consideration. The same themes of common man, liberty, human rights, and idealized democracy continued in Taylor's writings; at the same time he was more contented, even more optimistic about the ultimate outcome of these ideals.

III

Taylor took a year off from his Magdalen College duties to prepare the material presented in his greatest work on diplomatic history, The Struggle for

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[37] A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XLV (January 17, 1953 and April 18, 1953), pp. 68 and 459.

[38] A. J. P. Taylor, "The Judgement of the Diplomat," The Saturday Review, XXXVII (December 11, 1954), p. 9ff.

Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918, which was published in 1954 as part of the Oxford History of Modern Europe. A perusal of his objectives and themes will serve to throw considerable light on the essential change in his outlook during the first half of the decade.

Taylor had dealt with various "questions" during his career. In the thirties he had been concerned with the Slavic minorities, aiming essentially at explanations of particular events as they occurred, and subtle pleas for the rights of the minorities. The solution of European problems was paramount to his interests. In the forties, caught up with the war and its consequences, he had continued with the minorities and Austria, including studies of Germany and Russia. Except to argue for East-West understanding and place blame upon the Germans, his motives and aspirations were not largely different from those of the thirties. The only major variation lay in his use of historical explanation to suggest solutions for contemporary problems. The fifties revealed the major changes in his thinking. Specifically with regard to "questions," he turned to the "European question." Most of his writing from about 1952 on was done with the view in mind that Europe's day was past, that as a collection of single states she was finished, and even as a unit on the world scene, she was no more than an equal of the United States or the Soviet Union. Approaching the problem from a discussion of the meaning of "Great Power" and the theory that the Power Balance, when ended, marked the end of significant European participation in the political world, he built a picture of European decline before the rise of two new world powers who would begin directing international affairs, unfortunately in opposition to, rather than cooperation with, each other.

Taylor asserted that in the nineteenth century, war was never consciously a plan of the European nations, not even of Germany--a major reinterpretation

when compared to his discussions of a few years earlier.[39] The fact that conflicts, such as Crimea, had occurred was chiefly a matter of accident and the idea that the various interests of the Powers had to be protected at any price. Crimea was significant in terms of the catastrophic conflict which ended the nineteenth century. The Crimean conflict ended forever the old power system and initiated a new one based on Realpolitik and mutual distrust. Bismarck set the tone for the new system, and it therefore came to depend even more upon Germany's actions. "The gang of Bonapartist adventurers who ran France..."[40] during the Second Empire had contributed little to any constructive design for Europe, even though logically France should have held the reins on Germany.

In addition to a change in methods of statesmanship, the post-Crimean period saw a greater trend toward the Left. Taylor suggested that liberalism, radicalism, even Marxism affected the international policies of nations. In Austria, in Germany, in France, and in England the Left came to exercise a growing influence, if only by opposites, on the policies of the ruling classes. The new Machiavellism led to World War I; and the new radicalism led to the mass revolutions which accompanied the war. Bot contributed to the decline of Europe.

The Struggle for Mastery in Europe was a revisionary work. The tendency in 1954 was to blame the treacherous struggle to retain the Power Balance for causing World War I. Taylor argued that the war came more because of a breakdown in the balance, not because it existed.[41] Neither did he overlook logic

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[39] A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. xxiii.

[40] Ibid., p. 75.

[41] Ibid., p. 528.

where it existed, even though diplomats and their advisors did, usually in the name of national interest and with the plea that no other course existed. He was able to criticize with detachment every power that helped create war by not adhering to broad rational concepts of war prevention and the best interests of all. The Powers had to make their differences seem greater than they really were in order to provide a fundamental conflict, e.g. the allied idea that Germany governed harshly in peace and conducted war brutally. Germany, he asserted, was no different in principle than any other European state. All the Powers were aware of this fact, just as Germany knew facts about the Powers that she chose to ignore or else to alter.[42]

To end the picture, Taylor presented a revisionist view of the "war to preserve democracy" tradition. Wilson he compared to Lenin. Both were Utopianists; neither really believed it was attainable. Both sought to end the Power Balance; Wilson to substitute national self-determination, Lenin to substitute the dictatorship of all states by the Moscow controlled masses.[43] The most sincere advocates of both attitudes were the people of the allied countries. The Versailles settlement was the end for old Europe, introducing a new idealism and a new philosophy which, if accepted, would resign her to an internationalism which could not support the old power state ideas. This was part of the picture. The rest Taylor summed up in this way:

> In January 1918 Europe ceased to be the centre of the world. European rivalries merged into a world war, as earlier the Balkan wars had prepared the conflict of the Great Powers. All the old ambitions...became trivial and second-rate, compared to the new struggle for control of the world.... The Soviet Union and the United States...was more than a rivalry of power; it was a rivalry of idealism. Both dreamt of "one world," in which the

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[42] Ibid., pp. 536-537.

[43] Ibid., p. 567.

> conflict of states had ceased to exist....Though Germany was defeated by a narrow margin, the legacy of her attempt was Bolshevism and American intervention in Europe. A new Balance of Power, if it were achieved, would be world wide; it would not be a matter of European frontiers. Europe was superceded; and in January 1918 there began a competition between Communism and liberal democracy which has lasted to the present day.[44]

In a word, this decline of Europe did not displease Taylor as it did his revered friend, Pieter Geyl, who was conservative enough to regret the passing of European greatness. Quite the reverse; Taylor felt that though the East-West struggle and the cold war were oppressive, Europe was at last free to pursue man's true goals: peace, democracy, and an enlightened way of life.[45] Taylor's own energies now could be turned inward to the inadequacies of English society and the tiresome Establishment, and, ironically, to attacks upon the paternalism of the United States toward England in particular and the rest of the world in general.

> I am not a philosphic historian. I have no system, no moral interpretation. I write to clear my mind, to discover how things happened and how men behaved.[46] If the result is shaking or provocative, it is not from intent, but solely because I try to judge from the evidence without being influenced by the judgments of others. I have little respect for men in positions of power....Englishmen interest me most, and after them Europeans. They may be of small account now; but their behavior in the last century and a half is the subject of some curiosity and even of some importance.[47]

These words were a statement of Taylor's historical view as it existed in 1956.

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[44] Ibid., p. 568.

[45] An amusing note, Taylor found time within his new outlook to present two short essays most unusual for him: "Gourmet's Europe," a survey of where and what to eat when traveling the continent, and "Wilder Wines," a statement on the off-beat wines around the world and particularly in Europe. Typically Taylor, the two essays are humorous comments on the way various foods and drinks reflect the attitudes of the countries to which they are native. (Recommended reading for the connoiseur, as well as the sophisticated humorist.)

[46] Taylor still holds this view which he expressed in Taylor, London, letter, 7 December, 1965, to A. Stanley Trickett.

[47] A. J. P. Taylor, Englishmen and Others (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), p. vii.

It was neither a great reversal of his past approach nor an exact reaffirmation of it. It was a restatement of the words he had first set down regarding the historian's role as the interpretor of assumptions.[48] But there was now a difference. European actions, he felt, could now be judged independently of the influence of the Great Power traditions since Europe was no longer arbitor of the world's destiny. Men could be viewed for their own sins, and abstract principles could be set up to form a system of values against which all men and events might be compared. Taylor's attention quickly turned to historical problems with a much lighter air. Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman, published in 1955, was a bemused, somewhat light character sketch of the great German chancellor. Similar sketches of other personalities, their actions and ideas, came flowing from Taylor's pen. Englishmen and Others was a collection of his essays from the first half of the decade, including comments on Hobson, Cobbett, de Gaulle, Disraili, and many others. Sometimes he admired them but disapproved of their influence on later generations. Such was his estimate of Leopold von Ranke, the great German historian, whose occupation with the facts of history, whatever abstractions they might include, led to an unhealthy disdain for real moral judgment by the historians who came after him. "The English or American scientist who believes he has discharged his duty to society by working devotedly in his laboratory evades responsibility as Ranke did; and will end in the same service to blind power."[49] He found ample occasion to again assert his own liberal democratic conviction through these essays. "I am not sure that Macauley and the Whig view of history were all that mistaken,"[50] he

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[48] Taylor, The Italian Problem, p. 1.

[49] Taylor, Englishmen, p. 18.

[50] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

wrote when he found that Macauley's critics did not appear to care for liberty or also thought it needed no assistance to survive. Though this comment was a shift from his attitude when he reviewed Feiling's book, the difference was not very large. In both cases his chief concern was for liberty.

Taylor's writings were also indicating a more adamant stand on political philosophy. The comments on George V's advice to the first Labour Government to be prudent and sagacious were at once revealing and amusing.

> These were good words to have addressed to a Conservative administration; prudence and sagacity are the best that can be expected of it. They are not the right virtues for a government of the Left. Initiative, energy, creative daring--these are the qualities which even a minority Labour Government should have shown. If not, why go the trouble of having a Labour Party at all? Why not leave it to the Conservatives?[51]

Now, Taylor felt, was the moment to rebuild society along the lines of justice, equality, and liberty. It could be done only by a bold, forward looking administration. Only Labour, whether in 1922 or 1956, could fill this role.

A most interesting essay in Englishmen and Others was a highly lauditory critique of Hugh Trevor-Roper's book, The Last Days of Hitler. Taylor concluded with the words,

> It vindicated human reason....Fools and lunatics may overrun the world; but later on...a rational man will rediscover The Last Days of Hitler and realize that there were men of his own sort still alive. He will wish as every rational man must, that he had written Mr. Trevor-Roper's book.[52]

This statement was one of the earliest hints of yet another twist which he would make after 1957. The triumph of fools and lunatics referred to new tensions which grew within the complacent decade. He was afraid of the consequences of the military use of atomic power and afraid of the effects the complacency of

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[51] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[52] Ibid., p. 183.

the fifties was having upon European Everyman. Not merely the futility of existence under the threat of The Bomb, but paradoxically the material affluence of the post-war world was creating a generation of non-thinkers. "Progress has been the great casualty of our age. We have arrived. This is the earthly paradise. We are safe, secure, and contented."[53] Thus was beginning a new era of pessimism and disillusionment for Taylor. He would once more get on the platform, once again agitate; his writings would pour more vituperation on the heads of the Enemy, whoever he might decide they were. Though still paying convincing lip-service to his faith in the old ideas, he lacked a suitable logic for the rapid twists of the coming sixties. He turned his attention to some of the old problems, some new ones, and often appeared the old fireater; but he was losing the image that had once made him so widely admired. Perhaps it was the changing European climate which, in 1954, he had so much welcomed. At any rate, as one critic wrote, "It was at first an amusing trick to invent the Enfant Terrible (which may be anglicized as an intellectual teddy-boy) to serve as the serious historian's alter ego, but it is in danger of becoming an obsession and the obsession can become involuntary and irreversable."[54] Certainly this reviewer did not speak for all, but the point was made. As a historian, Taylor was to face his most trying years in the sixties. Though his most prolific years, they were also his most defensive. The Regius Chair of Modern History at Oxford, given to Hugh Trevor-Roper in 1957 instead of to himself,[55]

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[53] A. J. P. Taylor, "Hope No More," The New Statesman, LI (April 14, 1956), p. 391.

[54] Anonymous, Review of The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy, by A. J. P. Taylor, The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (June 21, 1957), p. 382.

[55] Anonymous, "Battle of the Dons: A. J. P. Taylor and H. Trevor-Roper," Newsweek, LVIII (July 31, 1961), p. 72.

became the bete noire of his life, not so much because of his own aspirations, but because many of his critics would not let him forget it.

CHAPTER IV. UNFINISHED CHAPTER: INTO THE SIXTIES

I

The problems of any particular age can and often do rest more heavily upon the shoulders of some than upon those of others. There is no rule to indicate what class, party, or particular group may feel the impact of problems the most. Finally, their import is largely a matter of the individual, whatever his station or affiliations, and his personal sensitivities. A. J. P. Taylor, historian, polemicist, and personality, felt a concern which appeared to have outreached that of his colleagues in many ways. It grew out of his desire to persuade society to come to its senses. He was, as he had always claimed, a "born radical," steeped in leftist tradition and thoroughly convinced of the justice of the cause of liberal democracy. That, in the latest phase of his career, he seemed at times to be laughing at the world only indicated a loss of faith in the means by which progress was traditionally made, not in the ideals behind it.[1]

The sharpest salient in these writings was his vituperative attacks upon the Establishment. But of great importance--to be discussed more later--was the problem of the Regius Chair of Modern History at Oxford. It is not axiomatic to say that historians, embittered by some unpleasant experience, turn to revision and disputation. Some quit when turned upon by their colleagues. Others, like Arnold Toynbee, smile inscrutably and continue upon their chosen

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[1]Mehta, The New Yorker, XXXVII (December 8, 1962), p. 137.

course, unperturbed and unrepentent. Taylor, it became clear, was embittered by the Regius professorship, which he did not get, in spite of his protestations to be contrary. But this did not necessarily make him revisionary, reticent, or indifferent. He had already become a revisionary before the Regius affair, and his attacks upon the Establishment and other disagreeable institutions began early in his career. What the affair does indicate is that for Taylor the distinctions were completely clarified for the first time. Hugh Trevor-Roper, himself something of an iconoclast, was none the less a a party-line man when it came to official views--and Trevor-Roper was named Regius professor in 1957.[2]

From 1957 the change in Taylor was steady. He began to assert his leftism in ever more vocal terms. An essay on the City of Manchester was almost romantic in its conception of the virtues of that conclave of northern radicalism. There could be no doubt that Taylor was demonstrating a great reverence for the city:

> Manchester is the only place in England which escapes our characteristic vice of snobbery. Manchester cares no more for the Royal Family and the landed gentry than Venice did for the Pope and the Italian aristocracy.... There are few royal statues in Manchester--only the Prince Consort in Albert Square and Queen Victoria in Piccadilly. The others are local dignitaries or Liberal statesmen. Many of the Burghers were German in origin; and having shaken off their subservience to their own authorities felt no awe of any others. They sent their sons to Rugby, not to Eton;

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[2]It should be noted that this author does not have at his disposal more than perfuctory information covering Trevor-Roper's actual appointment. These speculations are based in part upon the knowledge gleaned from A. Stanley Trickett, the accusations implied by some of Taylor's critics, and a few of his own remarks, the most pointed of which occurred in 1965 in the Oxford English History, page viii. Another indication of his resentment was the caustic, almost libelous, remarks he directed at Trevor-Roper in their debates on The Origins of the Second World War. There was more here than merely academic disagreement--at least so it seems.

> and this produced highmindedness, not snobbery. Achievement is what matters in Manchester, not a historic name or cultivated accent.[3]

In these lines were his lifelong admiration for individuality, contempt for institutional authority, and identification with the man of popular qualities. The essay continued with characterizations of the people, the countryside, and even an assertion that Manchester should be considered worthy because her industrial wealth was built upon cotton manufacturing, a more peaceful commodity than steel and heavy industries by virtue of having done some good by clothing people. The theme of the essay was Manchester as the center of all those things which were good in English society. Because of men of egalitarian attitudes like the Jew Samuel Alexander, the University was a center for democratic ideals. The intellectual climate, Taylor wrote, was unequalled when men like Alexander, Rutherford, Tout, and Unwin sat there. The essay contained an air of nostalgia; it was a symbol of "the good old days" but with an added twist: these good old days were when the ideals of democracy and high intellectual achievement worked together to make every man a positive and energetic member of highly progressive society--which was certainly not the case in the late fifties.[4]

The other side of the picture was the conclusion that Manchester was losing this high cultural and democratic capacity, becoming more like the cities of the South.[5] On this point Taylor's pessimism emerged. Not just Manchester, but all English society was losing its edge; that progressive and radical-mindedness which had been the logical force to project England into the post-war age

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[3] A. J. P. Taylor, "Manchester," Encounter, VIII (March, 1957), p. 5.

[4] Ibid., pp. 7-9.

[5] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

as the prototype of democracy and highmindedness. Manchester was only symbolic of that failure, for if radical, independent Manchester should fail, where then could success be found?

Taylor seemed to see in the society at end-of-decade the apathy generated by the fifties translated into a way of life threatening the vitality of every aspect of English society--in short, what Toynbee would have called "the deadly danger" of loss of faith.[6] Taylor, however, was not his admirer, or even in basic agreement with him. The loss of faith in Taylor's work was of a quite different kind than that Toynbee envisioned. Taylor's faith was in rationalism, not religion. Rationalism meant to him Everyman thinking reasonably and acting accordingly. The Labour Party was Everyman's platform from which to activate the high moral principles of human freedom and responsibility. This simply had not happened.

A great part of the responsibility lay with the People themselves. When asked by The Saturday Review to do an essay on the profuse definitions of Fascism, Taylor used the opportunity to unburden himself once more on the dangers of self-interest and mindlessness. Fascism, he wrote, is a disease of democracy or at least of the mass-age. A few self-chosen leaders control a mass party of disciplined followers. It exists to express emotions, particularly those of resentment. The leaders of such a group are always corrupt, and in this way prove a sort of sanity of self-promotion in an essentially insane environment. Fascism is always irrational.[7] From Taylor's comments it is no problem to deduce that he was talking about the very features of a society

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[6]Pieter Geyl, Debates With Historians (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 160.

[7]A. J. P. Taylor, "Fascism," The Saturday Review, XL (June 8, 1957), pp. 9-10.

losing its independent interest in politics and public affairs. Only one element in his description was lacking in 1957--resentment. Once, in 1951, Taylor had denied the existence of "the masses" except as a term of approbrium applied to the majority when they disagreed with the presiding minority. No one, he felt, actually would come out and claim to be a part of the masses. The Communists, claiming the dictatorship of the proletariate, actually meant dictatorship over it.[8] The masses, he now proposed, came into existence only when a majority of men had been bowled over by an appeal to their emotions, or when a select few had proven able to employ sufficient guile to overwhelm reason. The implication was that the Establishment might now contain the elements of this kind of seduction.

The Establishment, the Power Elite, or any one of numerous other terms which applied to the Anglican-oriented institutions to which one had to belong in order to be an acceptable public leader, was the guilty party. It even affected historians. Many historians on the origins of the two wars and on the development of the English nation were influenced by political realities to stay away from discovering ideas inimical to official policy. One is reminded of Feiling's treatment by Taylor. Taylor arrived at an extension of Feiling's "administration history" when he wrote of the trend among academics toward becoming "jobbers" as opposed to independent scholars. He wrote,

> Now a historian is a professional which means he has an academic "job" with all of its eighteenth century overtones. He needs influence to get into the academic world and greater influence to ascend the academic

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[8]A. J. P. Taylor, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, XLII (September 8, 1951), pp. 257-258.

> ladder. He avoids committments to cause or creed and can't imagine anyone sacrificing promotion for principle.[9]

The Establishment was responsible for this arrangement--one with which Taylor rather vanely felt that he had not complied. The historian who did was cynical, and impatient of principle. Michael Foot's book The Pen and the Sword was an exception to this rule in one respect: it was a serious study of an important political problem of the eighteenth century, the General Election of 1710. Taylor suggested that the reason for prior ignorance of it was that exploring it might have led to the discovery of ideas and principles, "things which are nowadays decried or even denied existence in scholarly history."[10] The central figures in Foot's book were Jonathan Swift and The Duke of Marlborough; the incident was the War of the Spanish Succession. Foot and Taylor both found Swift to be the real hero, Marlborough the villain. Swift set the example for radicals for the next two centuries, Marlborough for the Establishment. Swift's pamphlet, The Conduct of the Allies, condemned the conspiracy of the rich and powerful, and the total lack of any real British interests at stake. Charles Fox could have endorsed it, Taylor felt, as Cobden explicitly did. "I still find the argument convincing, and not only for the War of the Spanish Succession. We are lured to the present dance of destruction by the vanity of scientists, politicians, and generals."[11]

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[9] A. J. P. Taylor, "Another Version of The Same," The New Statesman, LIV (November 30, 1957), p. 743. There is, in this statement, a taste of Taylor's combined feeling of resentment and moral superiority over the Regius professorship--moral superiority because he felt he had not compromised his principles as Trevor-Roper might have done to get to this high academic rung.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

The leaders, whoever they happened to be, followed the dictates of the Establishment. In Taylor's final analysis, it was the most negative, the most cynical aspect of British society. It was a creature handed down historically from ancient institution: the Church of England, the Aristocracy, the Monarchy, the morality of war, the profits of empire, and so on. His denunciation of it became the mainspring of virtually every piece of writing to which he set himself after 1956. "The Thing" invaded every part of society, and made "what we call democracy...merely a system by which the members of this power elite receive an occasional popular endorsement."[12] It ruled morality through men like the puritanical Scotsman John Reith who had determined to bring English tastes and morals to a solid Victorian level through the BBC. Worst of all, Labour, many of whose leaders were Anglican by origin, were never able to escape winding up on the Right because they lacked radical instincts. Even those remnants of the Free Churches, once the leaders of radical dissent, had come to think of themselves as a junior branch of the Establishment.[13] Radical dissent was everywhere on the decline; and with it the true ideals of English society, after having enjoyed almost a majority opinion between the world wars. Most of the books Taylor reviewed from this point on, and many of his essays, may be understood most lucidly from the viewpoint that they attacked some feature of Establishment domination. But, once more, he was willing to extend a ray of hope. "Economics will succeed where dissent has failed. The time is coming when the readers of the Daily Express will get more than the readers of The Times. Who will care then if the readers of The Times go on imagining that

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[12]A. J. P. Taylor, "The Thing," Twentieth Century, CLXII (October, 1957), p. 293.

[13]Ibid., p. 295.

they are the Top People?"[14]

Dissent was the subject of the 1956 Ford lectures which Taylor gave at Oxford. He applauded and idolized, not too competently some of his critics charged, those who had criticized the Tory aspects of British Foreign policy. As if in sympathy with his subject, he began campaigning for nuclear disarmament in the late fifties. One of the most enthusiastic statements on the state of dissent to come from his later writings was found in the "Campaign Report" on the crusade against the Bomb.[15] He applauded the energy and alertness of the younger generation, which was involved, and turned his guns against the Establishment which was preventing, for various reasons, the presence of the nuclear scientist. In America and Germany they led the campaign, and even in Russia some had dared to speak out against such destructive methods. "It is a gloomy thought" he wrote, "that the pull of the Establishment is stronger than Germany or American patriotism, or the terror of Soviet Communism."[16] But his joy at the vigor of the students and youth almost made up for this drearier side. They though the nuclear problems laughable. Taylor soon agreed. An Archbishop who could call an unwed mother immoral and yet find theological arguments for the Bomb was one example of the unreasoning stupidity of the existence of nuclear weapons.[17] Taylor asked Labour to accept the moral leadership of

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[14] Ibid., p. 297.

[15] Bertrand Russell, grandson of Lord John Russell, the nineteenth century Whig, was one of these dissenters. Today, well past ninety, Earl Russell still participates in Ban-the-Bomb demonstrations in London.

[16] A. J. P. Taylor, "Campaign Report," The New Statesman, LV (June 21, 1958), p. 799.

[17] A. J. P. Taylor, "Backward to Utopia," The New Statesman, LIX (January 2, 1960), p. 5.

the world which it had abandoned and to realize that though disarmament and morality had failed in the thirties, in the fifties they offered the only hope of survival.[18] Though in other offerings he had his doubts, Taylor himself, and those who joined him in the disarmament campaign, were proof that dissent was not dead; perhaps not even really dying. But when he "Looked Back at British Socialism," he could not help feeling that from here on, it was all up in the air, and that a believing radical's only recourse was to keep barbing the reader and hope without hope that he would come to his senses.[19]

The fifties ended with Taylor in a disgruntled mood. Things weren't working out as he had earlier thought they would. Freedom, both social and individual, had as many enemies as ever. The statesmen in 1959, after having once been glad that the Metternichian system was dead, were gloomily viewing its remains and silently wishing it were still in operation. Taylor felt that in fact it was being recreated. In 1848 the Powers still had felt Austria to be a European necessity. In 1859, they all rejoiced in her defeat. In the twentieth century there were new Metternichs and the Austrian necessity was in vogue again among the Powers. "They are all agreed upon it because the Austrian Empire...of Metternich has ceased to exist. Yes, he is dead all right."[20] In fact, there were new Metternichs all around, wearing the guises of European statesmen defending the West against the East. Though Taylor was committed against Communism, he saw the danger of the old forces of repression inherent in the Western diplomatic system

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[18]Taylor, The New Statesman, LV (June 21, 1958), p. 800.

[19]A. J. P. Taylor, "A Look Back at British Socialism," Encounter, X (March, 1958), pp. 27-33.

[20]A. J. P. Taylor, "Metternich and His 'System' for Europe," The Listener, LXII (July 30, 1959), p. 168.

as being no better.[21] In a relative reference, European archives were a part of this picture. There was a fifty year rule in effect throughout Europe which meant simply that official documents had to lie in state fifty years before they could be viewed by scholars other than those selected by the Establishments to write the official histories. The reason was the protection of public servants. The rule was an absurdity to begin with, Taylor felt, because they didn't need protection. But worse, it gave rise to another group of Metternichs who welcomed the restrictions. "(The Archivist) regards all readers as his enemies, disturbing the neat arrangement on his shelves, and handling or often mishandling, his precious hoard."[22] So as Metternich still lived to prevent the disarray of the comfortable, bourgeois continental arrangement of peoples and states, he also still lived to prevent the similar disarrangement of official history. What was the point? "This secrecy is not a service to the public. It thwarts the spirit of democracy, which is, no doubt, why officials seek to maintain it."[23] The end of this exercise was most unlike Taylor. While supporting the American practice of having no secrets, he ended by taking the cheerfully resigned position that "Speculation is half the fun and more fun than being certain. Anyway, most historians hate writing. What excuse would be left for not writing if all the evidence were really before them?"[24]

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[21]There is a distinct echo here of his post-war evaluation of the treatment of Yugoslavia at the hands of the allied powers.

[22]A. J. P. Taylor, "Keeping It Dark," Encounter, XIII (August, 1959), p. 40. The parentheses are this authors.

[23]Ibid., p. 45.

[24]Ibid.

Taylor's contradictions have always been perplexing to his readers. When held up against the wide range of his interests, these Volte Face can be more easily understood. Many of his subjects inspired dire pessimism--the Establishment, nuclear armaments, etc. Others brought out great optimism--the spirited youth, the movement of Europe from center stage, and the liberalization of the Eastern dictatorships. But this was only a partial explanation. Beneath it all, Taylor was one of England's most notable contemporary skeptics. He often mixed optimism and pessimism in a bewildering display which left the reader puzzled. The secret finally rested in his skeptical aloofness.

In 1960 he took it upon himself to sum up the fifties for The New Statesman. The result was surprising, given his mood of the period. He was cheerful, optimistic, and confident once more that Utopia had nearly arrived. His idea was that the fifties brought us into contemporary times; we had turned the corner, put away the past and joined the new society. Men had become sane in the fifties, though insanity remained. Complete sanity would not be realized until "we have pulled down every building and re-made every road that existed before 1945."[25] That this remark was symbolic was apparent. Everything that existed before 1945 was representative of the old order which had failed, and was, just as the highways and buildings of the pre-war years, failing to provide for the needs of the new Everyman. He looked at the great fears that had prevailed in 1950, the great events that had transpired since, and was confident that the worst, if not over, was proving to be surmountable. The world had not gone Communist. The loss of Suez by Britain had not signalled the collapse of the canal, but rather its renewed prosperity. Europe was used to

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[25]Taylor, The New Statesman, LIX (January 2, 1960), p. 5.

the idea of giving up greatness. De Gaulle alone continued to pronounce the greatness of his nation--which meant only that he was great, with which Taylor professed agreement.

The key to it all was the end of belief.[26] This was a classic contradiction. Taylor defined belief only in the context of the dead belief in national greatness and conquest--not as the belief in man, rationalism, and the other causes which he had always supported. He added to his definition the belief in dogmas about individual behavior.

> The young in the twenties were in conscious revolt against tradition.... They even went to bed together conscientiously as a matter of principle.... The young of the fifties left such principles to their elders. They conducted their lives on the basis of common sense; went to bed together only when they wanted to--which turned out to be seldom; and became the sanest and healthiest generation in the history of the world.[27]

But again Taylor believed in the individual if not in individual dogmas. What does appear in these lines is a faith--a belief if you will--in the young generation growing up without the stigma of the second war about them. That Taylor was always willing to see hope, in spite of the obvious failures he observed, was by now axiomatic. He saw it in the new, not in rebirth of the old--such was the optimism always inherent in his disillusionment. Hope hinged around common sense, even though much of what Taylor wrote in the fifties demonstrated his wishing that common sense would prevail, rather than the conviction that it had. Taking this piece as a whole, it boiled down to Taylor's grateful acknowledgment that the world had survived a decade without a debilitating war, and his trust that perhaps people--particularly young people--had in fact become more insistent upon peace so that the material benefits of

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

the new age, their birth-right, might be enjoyed at leisure.

He felt that the fifties had been a wonderful decade, and that if the next ten years could do anything like as well, they would do very well indeed. Such was Taylor's conclusion to the decade. But these words were from one who had seen much, hoped for much and realized little, and still looked to the future for the realization of all his democratic dreams. In 1960 the Establishments still very much ran every nation in the Western world; nuclear war still was a distinct threat, e.g. Berlin and the Far East, to East-West cooperation; all factors of which Taylor was much aware. That he was still the pessimist's optimist was clear in his comments about the state of Hungary five years after her abortive revolution against Russian overlordship. In 1960 Hungary enjoyed more academic freedom, greater abundance of consumer products, a higher standard of living, and less coercion in private life than at any other time. But the Communist government still was there, and whether or not the apparent changes for the better were actual was impossible to tell. "It may be so. No one can tell; and any snap judgement is as unfair and as misleading as any other until it is tried out."[28] Just as he looked for the good things in Hungary in 1960, he had looked for the positive elements in the fifties; in neither case could he quite escape the conclusion that perhaps it was "too good to be true."

II

How would Taylor have defined a skeptic? Would he have thought of himself as one? Possibly not. When this writer began collecting material for this essay, Taylor was contacted through A. Stanley Trickett and asked to answer

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[28] A. J. P. Taylor, "Too Good to be True?," The New Statesman, LIX (April 30, 1960), p. 614.

questions by correspondence. In the letter which expressed his willingness to do so, he wrote, "If he is looking for my philosophy of history, he is wasting his time. I write to find out what happened and how it happened....He won't believe this and will write rubbish however much he is warned."[29] These lines, a distinct echo of his preface to Englishmen and Others a decade earlier, contained elements of skepticism. A shadow of doubt, a denial of any esoteric values, and refusal to be committed, indicated the cogitations of a mind unwilling to attach itself to a particular side. The body of his writing in the fifties contained a strong element of this. After 1960 it became even more noticeable. Skepticism, i.e. the refusal to accept completely any side of a given story without pointing to the features of its opposite, lay in his reevaluations of the unscrupulous nature of both Nazi and Communist accusations concerning the Reichstag fire in 1934. Van der Lubbe, the arsonist, was not a mental defective, but the reverse; and more, unlike the Communists who denounced him as a Goering stooge, he was the only one who actually took an overt action against the Nazis.[30] In the same essay Taylor made a simple but skeptical judgement of what motivates history. The Nazis did not, nor did the Communists, plan the fire. But Hitler was clever and turned the fact to his advantage. "That is the way of history. Events happen by chance; and men then mold them into a pattern."[31] The skeptic's role led him to see Lloyd George as a both positive and negative element in politics--though he became negative primarily

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[29]Taylor, London, letter, 7 December, 1965, to A. Stanley Trickett.

[30]A. J. P. Taylor, "Who Burnt the Reichstag?," History Today, XXII (August, 1960), p. 520.

[31]Ibid., p. 522.

when he turned against his leftist instincts.[32] Another was Neville Chamberlain, who was actually more unlucky than incompetent. In the process Taylor took what was for him a slightly startling new approach to appeasement, which came off somewhat differently than his post-war comments on it.

> The only clearheaded opponents of appeasement were those who preferred Russia to Germany. Most of those who comdemn appeasement are even more indignant at the consequences of its failure, a consequence which was, in their own favorite word, "inevitable"--the eclipse of the British Empire by Russia and America.[33]

It should be noted that inevitable had also become one of Taylor's important words, though he often confused it with "accident," and "chance."

Taylor was a skeptic whose comments were sardonic, witty, and clever; they were designed to intrigue, amuse, baffle, and sometimes exasperate the reader. For example, his judgements on eye-witness accounts in history. "Those who wish to learn about the past should employ a historian."[34] And later, with reference to a book by Asa Briggs called They Saw It Happen: An Anthology of Eyewitnesses' Accounts of Events in British History, 1897-1940, and another by Georges Pernoud and Savine Flaissier, The French Revolution, he wrote: "Both these books demonstrate that we cannot do without the historian. This, no doubt, was Professor Briggs intention. Otherwise, he would be out of a job like the rest of us."[35] To the casual reader these comments would elicite a chuckle or at least be dismissed as mere humorous asides. But to the historian and serious reader of history they contain a second level of meaning, a conscious effort to comment

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[32]A. J. P. Taylor, Lloyd George: Rise and Fall (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 35.

[33]A. J. P. Taylor, "Unlucky Find," The New Statesman, LXII (December 1, 1961), p. 833.

[34]A. J. P. Taylor, "Do-It-Yourself History," The New Statesman, LXI (January 13, 1961), p. 52.

[35]Ibid., p. 53.

upon the value of historical exploration by trained professionals. In either case, the evaluation has merit, because the Tayloresque skeptic could no more accept his profession unquestioningly than he could the subjects of his profession.

Likewise, Taylor, who applauded the appearance of commercial television as a step in the direction of democracy--i.e. giving the people what they want in programs--nonetheless felt the phenomena was not the result of a mass rising but came about as the result of a small but powerful pressure group.[36] But more power to such pressure groups. They reflected in this case a simple answer to a complex question: many people were growing weary of the rule of the culturally sophisticated. These comments were in a review of a book by H. H. Wilson, Pressure Groups. In principle, Taylor disagreed with Wilson's criticism of the commercial television supporters. "Professor Wilson has the usual outlook of intellectuals that anyone who has money or makes it must be wicked. It never occurs to him that it is possible to make money by acting according to one's convictions."[37] Again the serious and casual readers might take different views of this and similar statements. But again it is the skeptic's attention given to the inadequacies of any biased and dogmatic approach to a problem. It is also a singular statement on the one point about which Taylor was never skeptical--the value of democracy.

In 1961, Taylor published his first serious book since Bismarck in 1955, though some have questioned that point.[38] The Origins of the Second World War

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[36]A. J. P. Taylor, "Television Wars", The New Statesman, LXII (July 21, 1961), p. 85.

[37]Ibid.

[38]The Troublemakers was serious, but was a collection of lectures rather than a researched, scholarly dissertation on Taylor's usual book length subjects.

caused a great uproar; in some respects it was the real turning point of his career. The reaction to it was as varied and extreme as any historian could ever have cause to expect. It was the only piece which was so viciously assaulted that Taylor felt compelled to reply--he did so with scathing sarcasm.[39] With typically Tayloresque individuality--he would not have said this had the book been well or even indifferently received--he wrote that The Origins of the Second World War was written "...as a relaxation when much taken up with college administration."[40] This modesty, presented in a letter to this author, was most likely his way of saying that he cared little what was believed about the book. The idea leads nicely into the question of his new revisionism, which clearly was the bone of contention.

The Origins of the Second World War was a first class example of the revisionism toward which Taylor's period of skepticism had been aiming for some time. The controversy it unleashed fell most heavily upon the point of departure between the contradictory Establishment view of two Germany's, the bad one of the Nazis and the good one of the other Germans. The leading spokesman for the Establishment view was Hugh Trevor-Roper, friend of Harold Macmillan and Oxford Regius professor. Trevor-Roper considered it heresy to regard the Nazis as anything but gangsters; and was equally unwilling to regard the post-war Germans as anything but pacific burghers. Taylor's revision of the former point was the essence of the book, for at the same time, it marked the "good Germans" of the pre-war period as being guilty of as great a crime as the Nazis--complicity. For example, he blanketly stated that no German acquiesed in the

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[39] A. J. P. Taylor, "How to Quote--Exercise for Beginners," Encounter, XVII (September, 1961), pp. 72-73.

[40] Taylor, London, Letter, 14 February, 1966, to the author.

Versailles treaty. Thus everyone was willing to help throw it off, or at least some part of it.[41] When the Nazis came to power, it was at least partly the fault of the neutrality--and perhaps secret encouragement--of the good Germans. These views tended to put the post-war good Germans in a bad light as well, for many of them were those who had claimed resistance to, or at least abstention from, any activities inspired by the Nazis.

This development was not in fact contrary to what Taylor himself had always contended (c.f. The Course of German History). But it was a strongly revisionist stand against the trend of Western Germanists in the late fifties and early sixties to reconstruct Germany as a true friend of the West--just as The Course of German History had been a revision of the Goochian myopia of the post-World War I period. But The Course of German History was not at that time considered revisionary because most historians and the Establishments, shocked by the ravages of Nazi tyranny, had agreed with Taylor's views.

An important contention was Taylor's view that Hitler "...was no more wicked and unscrupulous than many other contemporary statesmen....The policy of Western statesmen also ultimately rested on force--French policy on the Army, the British policy on sea-power."[42] The chief difference was that Hitler intended to use his, the others hoped they would not have to. The critics leaped upon this idea. Associated with the assertion that Hitler was not any more wicked than others, were accusations that Taylor was condoning persecution and atrocities, unjustly heaping coals upon the heads of allied politicians, etc. The list of faults grew impressive as the actual impact of the work was felt. Taylor believed, probably with considerable smugness, that those who attacked

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[41] Taylor, The Origins, p. 32.

[42] Ibid., p. 72.

him were not so much in disagreement as they pretended or they would not have been so volatile in their criticism.

Obviously the work had difficulties. It was easy to misread Taylor's intentions in such statements as that on Hitler's wickedness. That he added to the above quotation, "In wicked acts he outdid them all.", was not sufficient counterweight to excuse the unconventional implications of the rest of the comment.[43] Although this writer is not sufficiently prepared to affirm or deny them, the assertions that Taylor misused documents may well have validity. If they do, this was the most telling criticism, and justly so, of a professional historian who has made some excellent contributions to historical literature.

The great debate, which will be covered in more depth in the last chapter of this study, was both serious and amusing at times. Basically, Taylor was assaulting the mistakes of the Establishment in terms of official historians and statesmen. Through his attacks, he revealed his skepticism which had been growing steadily over the preceding decade. The study actually revealed more about Taylor than about his subject. His chief fault lay in his assumption that rational men would understand, even agree, without the scholarly necessity of assiduously challenging each major point. To call Hitler a rational man, in spite of the application of the term only to his statesmanship, was to invite charges of incompetence and misrepresentation.[44] Taylor assumed more than a cautious historian ever should. But then, he was not, as revisionists usually are not, cautious. This work can be criticized justifiably for its mistakes; but it can also be read for its purpose--a needed revision of a problem which historians had for too long regarded as a closed book.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., p. 188.

With The Origins of the Second World War the table seemed set for revisionism as the main course of a new outburst of writing. Though there were many obvious publications which were little, if at all, concerned with rewriting opinion and theories traditionally held, a significant number of pieces did appear in this vein to set down Taylor's interesting revisionism.[45] Sometimes the re-evaluations tended to be of his own point of view, a fact which occasionally had a depressing effect upon his students.[46] He had second thoughts about the standard position on the appeasers. The story was tired and too well known. A new book by a pair of young historians, The Appeasers, by Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, ignored "...the climate of the times. There is no reference to contemporary newspapers and political literature...."[47] The point was the question of alliance with the Soviet Union. A further change of Taylor's mind was his reflective comment that "Alliance with Soviet Russia remains a dark speculation. I advocated it passionately as the cure for all our ills. I now recognize its doubts and difficulties."[48] This was only one of several implications that association

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[45]When writing contemporary history, which this writer attempts, however feebly, to do here, the use of "traditional" is in question. However, the word, with a substantial re-evaluation of its meaning, may be used to apply to any idea, standard, view, or evaluation, which is generally accepted by members of a particular group, in this case English historians, for any period of time. We may in the case of events preceding and succeeding World War II, use the term to apply to historical interpretations which fall into any sort of category generally understood to mean a particular thing.

[46]"The Seventh Veil," The New Statesman, LIV (September 28, 1957), p. 377. A perplexed and somewhat idle student who despaired of finding an agreeable idea to present to his unpredictable tutor said, "It's no good going to that bloody man with an essay cribbed from his own books; he's against it, even if he thought of it himself."

[47]A. J. P. Taylor, "Old Tunes," The New Statesman, LXV (February 15, 1963), p. 238.

[48]Ibid., p. 240.

with the Soviet Union was losing its appeal for Taylor, and that association with the United States, for all of its disadvantages, might now be more desirable.

On "Men of the 1860's," a series of BBC broadcasts reprinted in The Listener, Taylor dealt with statesmen of that decade who had come under his eye at other times. In general, these men were either more sympathetically viewed here or else they were looked at for their virtues rather than their vices. Napoleon III was less the conscious leader of a "gang of Bonapartist adventurers" than he was a procastinating, reluctant revolutionary, nearsighted and often misguided--but not necessarily bad.[49] While the study of Francis Joseph was fundamentally not different from references made in The Habsburg Monarchy, it was at least less harsh and treated the last great Habsburg with an awareness of the heavy burden, however mishandled, that he had taken up as a mere boy.

> ...as Francis Joseph...was signing the document which made him emporer, he said, 'Farewell youth!' Indeed, it was more than 'farewell youth'--farewell life, farewell individuality, farewell anything except his persistent, endless duty to maintain the institution.[50]

A reluctant, and therefore sympathetic, Francis Joseph. On Bismarck, he wrote not of the arbitraryness of the great reactionary as he had done in Bismarck, but of his understanding--and defeat--of the Marxian analysis through his extraordinary social legislation. He did not criticize Bismarck's wars as he would have earlier. Actually Bismarck's wars ended with plans to stop them, which was not often the case with others. He was a puzzle to Taylor as he had not been in 1955. Bismarck was a man of various contradictions--ruthless, but

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[49] A. J. P. Taylor, "Men of the 1860's: Napoleon III," The Listener, LXIX (June 6, 1963), pp. 955-957.

[50] A. J. P. Taylor, "Men of the 1860's: Francis Joseph, Emporer of Austria," The Listener, LXIX (June 13, 1963), p. 994.

gentle and loving with his family; a revolutionary with a reactionary outlook; a regret for his blood and iron, though that was the way he ran Germany and Europe; and a constitutionalist, even if an involuntary one.[51] "If he is a puzzle to you, he is a puzzle to me; and he was very much a puzzle to himself."[52] These were minor revisions, and they were perhaps more notable for their implications than for their overt comments. They reflected a Taylor somewhat subdued in tone, perhaps by the outcome of the furor created by The Origins of the Second World War. But more importantly this was a mature Taylor, reflecting upon his writings and ideas of the past. One point which he never revised, however, was his more abstract view of freedom and the Left.

> Why people should become radicals and revolutionaries by emotional feeling I do not know. Other historians have spent a long time puzzling over this. It puzzles me the other way round. Why people are not all revolutionaries; why they are not all carrying the torch aflame to set the whole boiling alight.[53]

Taylor's concern with men was the object of his frequent assertions that wars were mistakes; men were killed and nothing was proved. In the sixties this fact was doubly significant. "Clemenceau said that war was too serious a business to be left to soldiers. Nowadays it is too serious a business to be left to anybody."[54] Illustrated History of World War One was a compilation of photographs, each with a revealing caption, set down in line with a brief narrative

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[51] A. J. P. Taylor, "Men of the 1960's: Bismarck," The Listener, LXX (July 11, 1963), p. 48.

[52] Ibid., p. 49.

[53] A. J. P. Taylor, "Men of the 1860's: Karl Marx," The Listener, LXX (July 4, 1963), p. 14. Amusing, for an American, that the only essay dealing with a revolutionary in this lot should have been published on July 4.

[54] A. J. P. Taylor, "Bombing Germany," The New Statesman, LXII (October 6, 1961), p. 483.

of the events. The purpose of the illustrations was to show men dying for no reason, being pushed and pulled by events over which they had no control. There was Taylor's "accidental" view of history here, which V. Mehta had called a roundabout way of getting to a determinist historical philosophy.[55] But there was also relativism, which was the major point of his work in so far as there were any really consistent points; the accidents, he felt, were relative to the emergence of a rational man. "Maybe, if we can understand it the war better, we can come nearer to being, what men of that time were not, master of our own destiny."[56] Such was the aim of Taylor's rationalism.

An understanding of history as the key to the realization of such a possibility may well have been the spur which drove Taylor to criticize the Namier Heresy, that is, the view underlying Namier's work that there is justifiable doubt that we can ever know anything worth knowing; a view which would ultimately paralyze all thoughts and actions, according to John Brooke.[57] He felt Namier's view was irrational, and was a heresy because in fact man's essential rationality is the last belief to which he clings; once abandoned there would be little point in writing history. For Taylor, rationality was indeed the last hope. He not only wished to continue writing history, but wished as well to bring rationality to the surface as a conscious guide for man's actions.

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[55]Mehta, The New Yorker, XXXVIII (December 8, 1962), p. 128.

[56]A. J. P. Taylor, Illustrated History of the First World War (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1964), p. 9.

[57]John Brooke, "Namier and his Critics," Encounter, XXIV (February, 1965), p. 49.

Taylor's last collection of published essays, which were of any moment,[58] covered a single major theme: the conduct of politically minded men in wartime. Many labored irrationally, though with good intentions.[59] Some worked sincerely but futilely for worthy ends.[60] In any event, all were men and all were in the position of making some sense of the crises and political turmoil which always accompanied war and social upheavals. The book was only a repetition of the Taylor view of the Left and the Right, the just nature of the common man and the oppressive nature of the privileged man, and the futility of most human actions. It nonetheless underwrote in some detail the revisionism of the sixties and the hope for a better future which Taylor still envisioned.

The last major work of Taylor's career to date, and perhaps overall his best, was the Oxford English History, 1914-1945, published in 1965. He accomplished a fairly mature evaluation of the twentieth century in England, through which he had lived, and with which he had suffered and rejoiced. Echoed were the thoughts and ideas of three decades; proposed was the idealistic summation of England, and symbolically of Europe, which he had begun to expand in 1950.

> In the Second World War the British people came of age. This was a people's war. Not only were their needs considered. They themselves wanted to win. Future historians may see the war as a last struggle for the European balance of power or for maintenance of the Empire. This was not how it appeared to those who lived through it. The British people had set out to destroy National Socialism--'Victory at all costs.' They succeeded. No English Soldier who rode with the tanks into liberated Belgium or saw the German murder camps at Dachau or Buchenwald could doubt that the war had been a noble crusade. The British were the only peoples

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[58] A. J. P. Taylor, From Napoleon to Lenin (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). The title was borrowed almost intact from an earlier book of essays, and the work itself is a collection of essays from other books of essays previously published by him. They are, From Napoleon to Stalin, Rumours of War, and Englishmen and Others. There was no unusual purpose involved.

[59] A. J. P. Taylor, Politics in Wartime and Other Essays (New York: Atheneum, 1965), pp. 203-207.

[60] Ibid., pp. 45-48.

> who went through both world wars from beginning to end. Yet they remained a peaceful and civilized people, tolerant, patient, and generous. Traditional values lost much of their force. Other values took their place. Imperial greatness was on the way out; the welfare state was on the way in. The British Empire declined; the condition of the people improved. Few now sang 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Few even sang 'England Arise!' England had risen all the same.[61]

This was the last expression of his historical perspective; change, the hope for a rational control by man of his chaotic world and therefore of his destiny. It restated his own peculiar Whiggism which he had once doubted. It was, perhaps, even an adequate symbolic utterance to bring up to date his own tempestuous, brilliant, career. At any rate, it was hopeful and well put, even though the other side of this dynamic scholar appeared equally well at the beginning of the book.[62]

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[61] A. J. P. Taylor, Oxford English History, 1914-1945 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 600.

[62] Ibid., p. vii. "Sir George Clark, the general editor, honoured me by his invitation to write this book and sustained me when I was slighted in my profession."

CHAPTER V. THE RESPONSE: TAYLOR'S CRITICS

I

The preceding chapters have attempted to display the underlying motives behind A. J. P. Taylor's work as expressed through his writings. Although it is clear that no school of history, or even necessarily a devoted group of followers, has spring up, he has had an effect upon the academic world, not only in England but abroad. He has been sufficiently controversial that virtually no one has been able to speak indifferently of him or his work since the end of World War II. Many have tried to fathom him objectively with a balance worthy of detached and inquiring scholarship. Others, with their own axes to grind, have either heaped plaudits upon him or else leveled every weapon in their intellectual arsenals against him.

In the earlier years, Taylor elicited comments of general approval.[1] E. L. Woodward wrote of Germany's First Bid for Colonies, "It is the way diplomatic history should be written."[2] Interesting as these comments were, there was another factor of greater importance. The book came out in 1938 when the crisis in Europe was nearing its climax. General interest in German affairs was heightened, and Woodward, as did others, looked at Taylor's book to see

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[1]The reviews, fewer in number than in later years to be sure, of Taylor's first book are not included in this work. This author was unable to acquire them in the limited time and with the limited resources available, as they are relatively obscure and are not noted in the standard resource reference works. That they do exist, however, has been verified by Taylor himself, and would surely throw greater illumination on this early period.

[2]E. L. Woodward, Review of Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-1885 by A. J. P. Taylor, The Spectator, CLX (March 25, 1938), p. 536.

what it could say about the German problem. Woodward wrote, "Gladstone, misjudging German qualities, might have given a less hearty 'moral' welcome to Germany as a colonial power if he had forseen the brutal, ruthless and illiberal methods German colonies administration would take."[3] The analogy with Hitler's Germany and Chamberlain's England was too striking to be coincidental. Many reviewers felt that Taylor overstated his case, which was that Bismarck's colonialism was a facade behind which to hide his real anti-English aims. But most agreed, as Mary Townsend said, that Taylor's suggestion of the close relationship between the European situation and the colonial question continuing after 1884-1885, was "a conclusion particularly significant in view of the present German demands."[4] Consensus with his anti-German tone went far toward revealing his historical orthodoxy at this time.

After the war, The Course of German History met with general approval as well. Again, reflected in many of the reviews, there was a sense of the urgent need to understand Germany as well as a recognition of Taylor's skill. Hans Kohn felt that he wrote with great brilliance and style, and urged readers to study the book and "gain some insight into the task of how to find an answer to the German Problem which faces the allies."[5] E. L. Woodward wrote that Taylor's attempt to explain Germany historically was long needed. Elizabeth Wiskemann was even more explicit: "One must be grateful to him for his clear appreciation of the unpleasant significance of Martin Luther and of half absurd figures like Turnvater Jahn (one misses the mention of S. S. Obergruppenfuhrer

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[3] Ibid., p. 537.

[4] Mary Townsend, Review of Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-1885 by A. J. P. Taylor, The American Historical Review, XLIV (July, 1939), p. 900.

[5] Hans Kohn, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The New York Times, (August 18, 1946), p. 22.

Fredrich William I)."[6] Of his style and skill, Louis Wasserman wrote "...the supurb quality of his scholarship is clear on every page. He writes trenchantly, pointedly, with an equally keen perception into the policies of German statesmen and the temper of the German people."[7] Woodward made similar comments on the probable timelessness of the book and of Taylor's talent for a superior summation of a large subject.

Taylor's arguments against the liberals in Germany was well received at a time when European liberalism so clearly had been eclipsed. The Geochian school had been overcome as well. R. H. S. Crossman agreed with Taylor's denunciation of its myopic misreading of German history, for the Geochians represented the kind of liberalism which had characterized Germany between the wars and which had so obviously failed to live up to expectations.[8]

But the disagreements also appeared, and were expressed by men with qualifications equally as impressive as those of the applause makers. Crossman did not agree on all points; Taylor's reference to Switzerland as the model which Germany should build on was impractical. "Wouldn't a collection of Switzerlands, devoid of natural frontiers, threatened by East and West be as absurd a proposal as any of those put forth by German liberals whom Taylor derides for their failure to understand the realities of power politics?"[9] Even more laughable

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[6] Elizabeth Wiskemann, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The Spectator, CLXXV (August 10, 1945), p. 132.

[7] Louis Wasserman, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The San Francisco Chronicle, (July 14, 1946), p. 16.

[8] R. H. S. Crossman, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXX (July 28, 1945), p. 62.

[9] Ibid.

was Taylor's claim for Kurt Eisner as the noblest of German liberals. Crossman was also disquieted by "his pugnacious temperament and proclivity to judge absolutely" which robbed the work of "dignity and strength."[10] His eagerness to refute Gooch led him to the other extreme of one half-truth after another. His "wisecracks contain an element of truth, but they have no place in a book which Taylor claims is 'meant to be history'."[11] The New Yorker echoed this with comments on his muddled thinking and idealistic assertions that the Nazis would have been packed off to the colonies as remittance men had they been in England.[12] Not surprisingly Taylor was considered a controversialist by some critics; Germany was, after all, a difficult value to assess.

Controversy came into the picture even more clearly with the criticism of Taylor's revision of The Habsburg Monarchy. One reviewer was already seeing the fatalism and "gloomy determinism" which would later become a reality.[13] Alan Bullock attributed to Taylor's writing a sense of positive controversy. In any case, controversialism grew out of either his shocking epigrams or his disagreeable references to views not acceptable to others, such as the concept of the futility of liberalism in Austria, which underlined his post-war evaluation.

More recent comments on The Habsburg Monarchy have called it one of his best works. However, at the time it was published, the weight of words seemed

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Anonymous, Review of The Course of German History by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Yorker, XXII (June 22, 1946), p. 87.

[13] F. W. Deakin, Review of The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 (2nd edition) by A. J. P. Taylor, The Manchester Guardian, (March 4, 1949), p. 3.

to be on the side of his opponents. The Times (London) Literary Supplement wrote that "It is not easy to resist the temptation that in rewriting the book Taylor has indulged in a dogmatic temper at the expense of well-considered appraisals of men and things."[14] To call Taylor a dogmatist was a surprising accusation--except that during the five years after the war he was embittered, keen on denunciation of the old order, and exasperated by the fallacies of professional statesmen; all of which tended to narrow his viewpoint. A minor thing, but amusing, and perhaps after all the most revealing, came from The Christian Science Monitor reviewer. Concerning Taylor's obsession with the proper spelling of German and East European words, he wrote, "This writer has always held that the spelling of 'Hapsburg' adopted in this country a few years ago is 'apsolutely' wrong."[15] Perhaps many did not take Taylor seriously as he appeared to be an upstart who was perhaps not really worth considering; more of an irritant than a contributor to historical knowledge. But he was making an impression--though not always favorably--upon his profession and the public.

In the early fifties, when Taylor was attempting a reconciliation with the world he faced, his critics were quite active. He had his opponents; however, they were more or less outweighed by those who saw in him a bright and energetic new voice needing to be heard. The opposition referred frequently to his lack of "solid, scholarly study which should be reflected in the best journalistic efforts of the trained historian."[16] His insight was doubted, as

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[14]Anonymous, Review of The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 (2nd edition) by A. J. P. Taylor, The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (February 26, 1949), p. 132.

[15]E. S. P., Review of The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 (2nd edition) by A. J. P. Taylor, The Christian Science Monitor, (November 25, 1949), p. 11.

[16]Dwight Lee, Review of From Napoleon to Stalin by A. J. P. Taylor, The American Historical Review, LVI (July, 1951), p. 938.

was the pride in detachment which he often claimed. Elizabeth Wiskemann, possibly smarting from his scathing review of her book on Hitler and Mussolini, took him to task for contradictions and myopia, and for his witty epigrams by using some of her own: "Taylor is known to behave rather like a nervous dog who barks furiously at any vehicle passing the house, and then for no reason at all allows something past without making any disturbance."[17] In general, these opponents seemed doubtful of Taylor because they thought he overstated with epigram and epithet, and because he appeared to prefer half-truths and generalities to accurate, cautious, and less exciting evaluations.

But of greater importance were those who liked him. In their comments were implied a recognition that new views were needed in the face of an altering world. Often these comments were somewhat cliché as if Taylor's words had become catchphrases: "The dullness of facts, the stupidity of the human race, the tragedy of European history brightened up by the epigram, the bon mot, the scintillating quip. Taylor is of the finest Oxford vintage and genuinely chateux-bottled."[18] His iconoclasm seemed to stimulate his friendly reviewers. They had seen that his "historians detachment", which in effect meant disagreement with the Establishment opinion, caused BBC to discontinue his radio talks. In 1948 at Wroclaw it had caused him to disrupt the planned unanimity of that meeting.[19] They saw him as the Enfant Terrible of contemporary English historiography. He was regarded as the most outstanding of the "bright young men

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[17]Elizabeth Wiskemann, Review of From Napoleon to Stalin by A. J. P. Taylor, The Spectator, CLXXXIV (June 16, 1950), p. 831.

[18]Leonard Woolf, Review of From Napoleon to Stalin by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XXXIX (June 3, 1950), p. 635.

[19]Carol Weiss, Review of From Napoleon to Stalin by A. J. P. Taylor, Commenweal, LIII (January 19, 1951), p. 380.

of Oxford and Bloomsbury."[20]

That Taylor was moving toward a brighter view of things than his immediate post-war years had indicated was also reflected here, though sometimes uncertainly. His fire and brimstone, wit and ferocity, indicated that he was looking ahead into the new world when Europe was no longer the center of the world. He could criticize history in the nineteenth century with freedom and ease because it was past in every sense. His comment on the future ways of faith, i.e. faith without a creed, hope without illusion, and love without God, was the hope of life for the twentieth century man. Men of Taylor's radical humanist stripe saw this as supremely optimistic realism, and applauded.[21]

When The Struggle for Mastery in Europe was published, Taylor was more than just a bright young Oxfordian; he was a well-established contributor to historical literature. This thick volume elicited a different sort of response from the critics than had essays and polemics on problems tied up with the war. Fritz Stern wrote, "There is something Shavian about A. J. P. Taylor and his place among academic historians; he is brilliant, erudite, witty, dogmatic, heretical, irritating, insufferable, and withal inescapable."[22] He felt Taylor to have created a masterful work, showing a keen intelligence and mastery of documentary material. His views were controversial and basically revisionary. Stern gave to him a historical viewpoint which seemed to define most accurately his lifelong theme. Referring to two historical levels--accurate condensed narrative of historical events and an effort to probe the historical meaning

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[20]Frank Underhill, Review of From Napoleon to Stalin by A. J. P. Taylor, Canadian Forum, XXX (September, 1950), p. 139.

[21]Asa Briggs, Review of Rumours of War by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, XLIV (December 6, 1952), p. 648.

[22]Fritz Stern, Review of The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 by A. J. P. Taylor, The Political Science Quarterly, LXX (March, 1955), p. 113.

of given ideas and conditions--he wrote: "Here his intelligence leads him along Hegelian paths with the tacit assumption that the historical process is rational, that each act or motion has reason, however absurdly ignorant the historical agent may be."[23] Taylor's later changes of mind did not subvert this evaluation--his "roundabout determinism", his accident in history, were all part of the concept of history as change, always flowing dirctly out of the particular events which took place with or without the conscious effort of individual agents. Change was always rational for it seemed beyond the irrational to affect it negatively. Change was also inevitable in that history, whatever its expression at a given time, should march inexorably on.

Though widely hailed as a superior study, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe came in for some criticism--leveled as often at the Oxford series it represented as at the book itself. Henry Fairlie wrote that the value of the book was destroyed by the series editors who pulled Taylor's approach away from a discussion of the societies which existed during the era he covered. And Taylor as a serious historian was condemned for allowing his Germanophobia to bring on unhistorical statements such as that the German people had trained themselves psychologically for war. "This may be good enough for the readers of the Sunday Press; but Mr. Taylor should keep his different activities separate."[24]

The historian of The Struggle for Mastery in Europe was making a marked impression upon his profession. Stern's descriptive adjectives were perceptive comments on the effect he was having. Some would like his work because he was

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Henry Fairlie, Review of The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 by A. J. P. Taylor, The Spectator, CLXXXIX (November 19, 1954), p. 628.

the exciting young radical; others would dislike it for the same reason. The numerous descriptions of Taylor's "trenchent wit," "absorbing style," "bright epigrams," and the like, were not really more than tiresome filler for publisher's columns, ultimately of little consequence. The serious attempts, such as Stern's, to fathom his work were of the greatest importance; the kind of inquiry which best lent itself to evaluating the soundness of his scholarship and purpose.

When Taylor wrote his first--and only--biography, Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman, the comments on it were little varied from those on his previous books. He was again witty, trenchent and epigrammatic. He wrote a justifiably severe criticism of Bismarck's traditions. It was a highly provocative study of the most dynamic personality between Napoleon and Hitler. But the opinion of one critic stood out in stark contrast to these typical comments. Michael Howard wrote,

> But now even Cocteau is one of the immortals, and Mr. Taylor's daring paradoxes have become the shibboleths of sixth-form and university. He has suffered the fate of all great radicals and become a pillar of that Establishment against which he has waged so long, so splendid, and so fruitless an attack.[25]

This was a switch in the usual approach indeed. Most reviewers would have been very hesitant to accuse Taylor of such a thing. In a sense, Howard's comment was a link in the chain which saw the beginning of serious dissatisfaction with what Taylor would write.

When The Times (London) Literary Supplement reviewer referred to Taylor as an Enfant Terrible who was growing tiresome, it was only the beginning of the disillusionment with his work. The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign

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[25]Michael Howard, Review of Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, L (July 9, 1955), p. 48.

Policy was the published Ford lectures which Taylor delivered at Oxford in 1956. The Times (London) Literary Supplement review was only one which drubbed the publication for its faults. Richard Lyman wrote "With author and subject so well established it is a pity that this often perceptive and amusing book is marred by carelessness, exaggeration, and a straining for paradoxical effect."[26] Kingsley Martin accused Taylor of triteness, and failure to analyze properly the role of the dissenters in the twentieth century.[27] All of this criticism of The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy simply indicated that Taylor was a complex problem as Stern had so astutely suggested. This was a bother; it bothered those the most who did not like the boat rocked. Others were bothered because they looked upon Taylor's radicalism as old fashioned. But attempts to write him off as merely an academic dissenter fell short and still do. William Neuman pinpointed, perhaps unwittingly, what bothered Taylor's contemporaries the most:

> As the "Peck's Bad Boy" of British historians, Taylor is ever ready to stick a deflating pin in his more proper colleagues or to tip over the tribal gods of his profession. Having written what he calls a "respectful diplomatic history" (The Struggle for Mastery in Europe) these lectures are offered as a "gesture of repentence."[28]

The historians tried to analyze Taylor, dissect him and find a reason for him. By 1957 no one had come much closer than Fritz Stern. A writer for The New Statesman tried to fathom Taylor's personality and came up with an

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[26]Richard Lyman, Review of The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy by A. J. P. Taylor, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCCXXIII (May, 1959), p. 180.

[27]Kingsley Martin, Review of The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy by A. J. P. Taylor, The New Statesman and Nation, LIII (June 8, 1957), pp. 740-741.

[28]William L. Neuman, Review of The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy by A. J. P. Taylor, The American Historical Review, LXIII (April, 1958), p. 723.

interesting analysis of why people liked to watch him on television. Taylor, he wrote, was famous for being himself, not for what he thought or said. He was a star, a household word. But, after having decided that he fished about the past not caring for anything but the search itself, with no philosophy or system, the writer could find no answer; no difference between the star in the studio and the don in his study.[29] It was no answer to what the critics really sought--Taylor the historian and polemicist; were they two people, or two levels of the same person; or were they one person, motivated in everything by the same basic attitudes and ideas?

The sixties brought down the sharpest reaction to Taylor as an historian, most notably concerning The Origins of the Second World War. For the first time, the historical criticism got mixed in with politics--the sly, name-calling kind, where the real question is not quality, but personality and affiliations. The Origins of the Second World War was greeted initially with some exultation. The Times (London) Literary Supplement reviewer (some believe it was E. H. Carr) made much of Taylor's demolition of the myth of German war-plans. It was "simple, devastating, superlatively readable and deeply distrubing."[30] Though finding some fault with Taylor's use of materials, and perhaps with his evaluations, the reviewer nonetheless rejoiced that at last someone had written a work on the subject which was scholarly and historical, not a re-living of personal experiences. One of his faults, the reviewer went on, was that he damaged his reputation by continuing in his role of the top angry young man of

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[29]Anonymous, "The Seventh Veil," The New Statesman, XIV (September 28, 1957), pp. 376-377.

[30]Anonymous, Review of The Origins of the Second World War by A. J. P. Taylor, The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (April 21, 1961), p. 244.

historical scholarship. David Marquand called Taylor a "chance-minded historian." All happens by chance, he wrote of his historical view; history is a road-accident. Applying this to World War II produced "a masterpiece: lucid, compassionate, beautifully written in a bare, sparce style, and at the same time deeply disturbing."[31] All good history should be disturbing. Marquand felt the accepted myths around the war origins were expressions of guilt among Englishmen. Taylor had simply said that no one was guilty, and therefore no one was innocent; a reinterpretation Marquand believed necessary.

When the reaction came, which was soon, there was a deluge of criticism, mostly of two sorts: either Taylor had misread the documents, or he simply misrepresented what he knew to be the truth concerning German policies. Isaac Deutscher, writing in The Times (London) Literary Supplement refused to recognize the book as historical scholarship. He even threw stones at The Course of German History:

> He poses as an "unorthodox" and "radical" historian. Yet in each of these two books he has only provided a psuedo-academic justification for a prevalent trend of official policy; The Course...justifies Yalta and Potsdam's "unconditional surrender"...and The Origins...is in striking harmony with the mood which now dominates and is in favor of Western alliance and German rearmament.[32]

Another letter to The Times (London) Literary Supplement accused Taylor of ignoring information which disagreed with his preconceived thesis. Elizabeth Wiskemann pointed dourly to the enthusiastic reception of the book by neo-Nazis who appeared to rejoice that Taylor misread the Hossbach Memorandum.[33]

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[31]David Marquand, "The Taylor Doctrine," The New Statesman, CXI (April 21, 1961), p. 627.

[32]Isaac Deutscher, "Letter to the Editor," The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (June 2, 1961), p. 341.

[33]Elizabeth Wiskemann, "Letter to the Editor," The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (June 2, 1961), p. 341.

The New Yorker, taking a slightly different tack, wrote that tempting as his view of historical reality was, it failed ultimately to escape from donnish irony and undervaluation of the intelligence of men of action. Taylor's disdain for those remarks was neatly summed up in a letter to The Times (London) Literary Supplement:

> Sir--I have no sympathy with authors who resent criticism or try to answer it. I must however thank your correspondents for the free publicity which they have given my book.
>
> --A. J. P. Taylor[34]

It was Trevor-Roper who leaped most harshly upon The Origins of the Second World War and it was he alone that Taylor deigned to answer--an answer which led to a debate in the most exciting tradition of English scholarship. Trevor-Roper has been termed the only British historian who would be consciously and intentionally rude.[35] Taylor's response to Trevor-Roper, in one opinion, was consciously balanced and sincere, making Trevor-Roper appear defensive and overanxious.[36] It was publicly rumored that the Taylor-Trevor-Roper problem stemmed directly from the question of the Regius Chair. The implications that Trevor-Roper was ill at ease for having gotten the Chair instead of Taylor were probably baseless, for his earlier attacks on Toynbee were fully as unkind as those on Taylor. The further implication that Taylor was resentful seems better founded, even though Trevor-Roper began the argument, for Taylor had never before replied to any attack. In any event, the air between Magdalen and Christ Church was unusually frosty.

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[34]A. J. P. Taylor, "Letter to the Editor," The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (June 9, 1961), p. 357.

[35]Kingsley Martin, "Is History Bunk?," The New Statesman, LXX (December 31, 1965), p. 1025.

[36]Mehta, The New Yorker, XXXVIII (December 8, 1962), p. 70.

Trevor-Roper began the assault with his review of the book. He accused and denounced Taylor by pointing to his errors of interpretation, i.e. Hitler as a traditional statesman, his limited aims, his lack of planning for the large scale oppression of Europe, the unpremeditated war, morality as realism, etc. A typical statement in the essay, and a fair summation of its theme was:

> In spite of his statements about "historical discipline," he selects, suppresses, and arranges evidence on no principle other than the needs of his thesis; and that thesis, that Hitler was a traditional statesman, of limited aims, merely responding to a given situation, rests on no evidence at all, ignores essential evidence, and is, in my opinion, demonstrably false. This casuistical defense of Hitler's foreign policy will not only do harm by supporting neo-nazi mythology; it will also do harm, perhaps irreparable harm, to Mr. Taylor's reputation as a serious historian.[37]

Overall, it was the most vituperative, personality oriented attack that would be delivered. Taylor was held up for ridicule not only for his misinterpretations but because he appeared to have forgotten the tradition that all Englishmen who lived through the war must hate and disparage the Third Reich and unswervingly hold to the emotions of 1940.[38]

Taylor soon appeared with Trevor-Roper on a televised debate in which he gave a rather lackadaisical performance, devoid of the fire and brimstone which usually characterized his approach. Newsweek called the meeting lackluster with little personal acrimony flowing between the two antagonists. Of importance was its inclusion of Taylor's comment on the Regius Chair: "It is not my fault that Hugh got the chair for political reasons. Most people, including Hugh himself, thought it should have gone to me."[39] Newsweek asserted that it

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[37]Hugh Trevor-Roper, "A. J. P. Taylor, Hitler and the War," Encounter, XVII (July, 1961), p. 95.

[38]Ibid., p. 88.

[39]Anonymous, "Battle of the Dons," Newsweek, CVIII (July 31, 1961), p. 72.

was political in fact, as Taylor's vociferous attacks on British policy in Suez insured that he would be given no sinecures from a Tory Government. Trevor-Roper, on the other hand, was a staunch Macmillan man, once even proposing that when a conservative met an angry radical he should give him a stiff punch in the nose.[40] Resentment gave Taylor impetus to lash back at Trevor-Roper in Encounter. Even the title was a study in how to put one down: "How to Quote--Exercise for Beginners." He compared statements made by Trevor-Roper to the passages in the book from which they came. Each scored heavily upon some apparent misinterpretation Trevor-Roper had made. The most meaningful was the last one which read, "The Regius professor's methods of quotations might also do harm to his reputation as a serious historian, if he had one."[41] Trevor-Roper, confident, assured, and quite pleased with himself, entered an equally scathing rebuttal, which concluded,

> If Mr. Taylor had been able to convict me of any "quotations" comparable with his own version of the German documents...or if he had shown my summary to be as inconsistent with his theories as he so often is with himself...I should be ashamed. But if these "exercises" represent the sum of his answer to my criticism, I am unmoved.[42]

It was obvious that the only critic Taylor was really concerned with was Trevor-Roper, and that not because of the historical comments but because of what could only appear to be professional jealousy. The Regius professorship weighed on his mind. Not just this debate, but his comment upon giving up his

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[40] Ibid.

[41] A. J. P. Taylor, "How to Quote--Exercise for Beginners," Encounter, XVII (September, 1961), p. 73.

[42] Hugh Trevor-Roper, "A Reply," Encounter, XVII (September, 1961), p. 74.

university lectureship. He had been sent off to Oxford to get a start on the Chair "which has in fact repeatedly proved beyond my reach."[43] And then again his comment in the Preface to the Oxford English History referred to in a previous chapter. In Taylor's defense one might say that some of Trevor-Roper's charges were perhaps overstated. But one cannot adequately justify Taylor's willingness to become involved in what amounted to a personal grudge over an affair which, however just or unjust, was not necessarily the fault of his opponent. That the attack was aimed in part at the Establishment's role in the affair still does not entirely excuse it; nor does the fact that Trevor-Roper was widely disliked.

The accusations were intensified by 1962. Some could not conceive the Hitler Taylor wrote of as having ever existed. A crowning argument was that even West Germany rejected his Hitler, and for that, most of his other ideas as well. One writer laughingly referred to Taylor's statement that the book was designed to appear as some future historians might see the war as "imaginable history." More seriously, he called it a "political act on a par with Keynes and the revisionist historians of the interwar years in the United States."[44] This comment was echoed by another historian who had a dislike for mixing politics with history. A. L. Rowse wrote that Taylor's Enfant Terriblism, partially stimulated by his extreme leftism, was only a source of his contradictions. The book essentially was designed to affront and shock rather than to seek the truth. Hitler was whitewashed, since "we all know that the primary cause of

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[43]A. J. P. Taylor, "On Satan's Side," The New Statesman, LXV (May 31, 1963), p. 826.

[44]Robert Spencer, "War Unpremeditated," The Canadian Historical Review, XLIII (June, 1962), p. 137.

the war was Hitler's drive for world power."[45] Rowse had been known to speak out against Taylor in public before. His opinion on Hitler was similar to that of H. Trevor-Roper's, just as was his opinion of Taylor.[46]

Of the book, Taylor himself had said he was committed to its thesis as a matter of principle. But he would be alarmed if it were accepted widely on grounds of revision alone. A few months later a review appeared from H. E. Barnes which compared S. B. Fayc's re-evaluation of World War I as the "shocker" closest to The Origins of the Second World War. The balance of the article praised the revision in and for itself. "Perhaps the best thing about the frenetic reaction to Taylor's book is the fact that, at long last, a revisionist book on World War Two is getting extreme attention--rather than the silent treatment."[47] Barnes has usually been the outspoken defender of revision in the United States. His approval then was somewhat suspect; but nonetheless, the questions Taylor raised in the book are in need of re-evaluation.

The dissent over The Origins of the Second World War is most likely not dead. It is kept alive by the fact that on the one hand Taylor remains committed to its thesis, and on the other, because through its revolutionary assertions, doubt has been cast upon his qualifications as a reliable historian. Of course not everyone had been disappointed in it. But enough critics had been let down to make him suspect in his profession, and to cause keener eyes

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[45] A. L. Rowse, "Beneath the Whitewash the Same Old Hitler," The New York Times Book Review, (January 7, 1962), p. 6.

[46] Trickett, Hastings, Conversation, 2 November, 1965, with the author.

[47] H. E. Barnes, Review of The Origins of the Second World War by A. J. P. Taylor, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCCXLI (May, 1962), p. 128.

to be cast upon his subsequent work. One cannot escape the feeling that more than the reaction to a debatable thesis lay under the controversy. There was also the suspicion, particularly in England, that Taylor's rancor at the Regius professorship may well have influenced his thinking in this book. Historical veracity was the real goal, regardless of the outcome. Interestingly enough, it was Taylor's irreverence for the Establishment, be it political or historical, even if the facts sometimes got misplaced, which elicited admiration from many critics.[48]

Skepticism lingered on. Of Illustrated History of the First World War, Michael Howard wrote, "We know what to expect from Taylor and it is all here. Brilliant, incise writing, wide knowledge, and the self-destructive itch to wreck his reputation to keep himself out of the fell grasp of the Establishment, by the regular enunciation of petulant and silly bêtises."[49] Newsweek put these words into Taylor's mouth, implying defensiveness after The Origins of the Second World War as well as his determination to keep above what popular opinion or official opinion might hope for or want:

> It is not necessarily as I would have wished it. I don't care a damn what you would have wished or suppose. It is, so far as we can possibly make out from the evidence at hand, when that evidence is scrupulously examined by a professional (not by bumbling, sentimental, fatuous amateurs) what in fact did happen.[50]

Illustrated History of the First World War got some good notices, and some seemed singularly constrained by the skepticism generated by The Origins of the Second World War. Yet there were doubts. E. H. Hinsley put it in so many

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[48] Such as H. E. Barnes.

[49] Michael Howard, "Lest We Forget," Encounter, XXII (July, 1964), p. 61.

[50] Anonymous, Review of Politics in Wartime and Other Essays by A. J. P. Taylor, Newsweek, LXV (March 1, 1965), p. 88.

words. "Taylor is a prominant, though not necessarily distinguished, historian. He is even more controversial. No one has yet quite assessed his real worth."[51] He personally had found Taylor to be an acute and mature historical mind. He was revisonist in temperament, and perhaps somewhat deficient in the powers of wide speculation and logic which are essential to the best historical minds. Hinsley finally pronounced Taylor to be more journalist than historian; this was not to castigate him, but rather to make him out a worthwhile object of attention though not a true historian.[52] Oddly enough, Taylor had once questioned in his own mind which he was, and, typically, had decided that the question was irrelevant.[53]

The problem of Taylor's identity was still unsolved when he produced the Oxford English History. This book was to be the climax of his career. From the relative indifference given him in the thirties, through the growing impatience with him in the fifties to the bombshell of The Origins of the Second World War, the critics have idolized him and dispaired of him. The Oxford English History reviews revealed that the answer had not yet been found. Was his bite the maddening sting of a gadfly or the therapeutic surgery of a historian who had at last succeeded in an operation with distinguished detachment from Olympian heights, asked The Times (London) Literary Supplement? In answering the question a distinction was made. He was no political party polemicist as the Left gained as much criticism as the Right. His quality as a historian remained far apart from his political faith. The latter had not

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[51]F. H. Hinsley, Review of Politics in Wartime and Other Essays by A. J. P. Taylor, The New York Review of Books, IV (May 6, 1965), p. 24.

[52]Ibid., p. 25.

[53]Mehta, The New Yorker, XXXVIII (December 8, 1962), p. 132.

changed--a combination of a cross-bench radical's distrust of at least the intelligence of all politicians and the historian's awareness of the limitations which restrict freedom of choice and action in all political contingencies. Finally, the answer was that the "cross-bencher's beady eyed distrust" had given way to the historian's imagination and understanding. This, his most mature work, was the high point of his career in technique, style, quality, and erudition.[54] Kingsley Martin wrote that Taylor had thrown off the chips which made him spoil The Origins of the Second World War, i.e. the attack on the Establishment because of the Regius Chair. "He should have been Regius professor--he is Oxford's best historian--but he should know that his left-wing controversy on television every week and popular writing, would, in this wicked world, deny him that."[55] Geoffrey Barraclough wrote that Taylor was too good a historian to take politicians very seriously.[56] Whether the book meant that Taylor was ignoring the furor of The Origins of the Second World War, i.e. consciously not letting it effect his subsequent writing, or simply that he was too good a historian, as was suggested by some reviewers, to let political biases effect his work, remained an open question. Probably it was not that important.

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[54]Anonymous, Review of Oxford English History, 1914-1945 by A. J. P. Taylor, The Times (London) Literary Supplement, (December 16, 1965), pp. 1169-1170.

[55]Martin, The New Statesman, LXX (December 31, 1965), p. 1025.

[56]Geoffrey Barraclough, Review of Oxford English History, 1914-1945 by A. J. P. Taylor, The Manchester Guardian Weekly, (October 28, 1965), p. 11.

II

What matters now is that the opinions of Taylor's critics suggest that he is still a question mark as he has always been. His work has been sharply divided between journalism and history. The essays on Fashoda and Villafranca were serious and scholarly studies; his comments on Trieste and Munich were editorials. Most of his reviews came closer to newspaper columns than to objective criticisms of what he had read, a fault shared by many who reviewed him. His television personality, his "Seventh Veil," further clouded his appearance, opening more doors for speculation. He has not been much help in solving the puzzle. After conversing with Taylor in 1962, Ved Mehta could only say,

> I simply saw the serious historian, the Manchester radical, the tutor, the journalist, the bon vivant, and the lover of music--all of them equally real. What Taylor undoubtedly achieved, often with unsurpassed brilliance, he seemed to mar with his antics, and for me the proportion of mischief to intelligence in his last and most controversial book remained a puzzle.[57]

Taylor is, and has always been, these various things. But the key to the puzzle is there. The secret is that he must always be viewed as a man of parts; a radical, idealist, visionary, and a cynic, skeptic, and moderate. His ideas have been a mirror reflecting the aspirations of those with whom he has always identified--The People. His writings have changed, not in style, but often in viewpoint, as The People have changed. Taylor's secret to his often skeptical touch, as well as to his idealism, has been that he did not always agree with his People, but never doubted that because they represent the sum of the world they must have their way. His historical approach was difficult to adapt to this humanistic view. Perhaps he should not have tried. But he

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[57]Mehta, The New Yorker, XXXVIII (December 8, 1962), p. 138.

managed it by simply becoming one of The People as he viewed the petty squabbles of class oriented statesmen who were caught up in the absurd defense of silly traditions and institutions. He could admire Bismarck's style and deplore his politics, just as a drayman might admire the equestrian skill of a royal coachman while sniffing at his dandy manners. That Taylor will remain a controversial figure is most probable. To understand him fully is not to remove controversy and difference of opinion, but rather to be more fully aware of a versatile, agile mind with an appreciation of humanity and life which are rare enough in the sometimes stuffy heights of academe.

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A. J. P. TAYLOR: THE OPTIMISM OF DISILLUSIONMENT

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AN ABSTRACT OF

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ABSTRACT

A. J. P. Taylor represents a most interesting question in terms of contemporary history. Ostensibly he is a historian, though he has appeared in many other guises. It is not the purpose of this paper to decide precisely by what label he can be historiographically recognized, but rather to accept him as basically a man of parts and to develop an analysis of his historical writings against the backdrop of his political philosophy. Conclusions in this vein, revealed through his reactions to a variety of political events and institutions, cover the essence of all of his numerous public faces.

There were two dominant features in Taylor's work which became clear after 1950 and toward which he had been moving since he began to write in the thirties. One was his changing view of Europe and her political, social, and ideological role in the world; the second was his unchanging idealism concerning the proper adjustment of the people in terms of egalitarianism and human rights. As Europe declined in world power, he saw the possibility of realizing the great ideals of modern humanity, i.e. freedom, material well-being, social and political participation, and egalitarian justice. Another two-fold awareness was generated from these concepts, in part punctuated by skepticism and resignation. While the dissolution of Great Power status created a more egalitarian society, it also created greater apathy; and the full emancipation of the people brought about a trend toward mediocrity. Nonetheless, Taylor's idealism and dedication to the people remained constant.

Taylor's early attitudes were largely the products of his university associations and the influence of changes occuring in England during his youth.

Much of his political idealism can be found in his first book, The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy. How he came to possess it can be recognized with equal facility in Keith Briant's Oxford Limited and Ronald Blyth's The Age of Illusion; England in the Twenties and Thirties. After 1940, there occurred a marked crystalization of Taylor's dedication to leftist ideals as a result of World War II. The political upheavals generated by the war reached every segment of European society, and shook the political structures of every European nation. The Course of German History in 1946 and the 1948 edition of The Habsburg Monarchy hinged upon the political failures of the historic pillars of central Europe, Germany and Austria. The maturation of Taylor's view of Europe's decline and the ascendancy of idealism grew out of his discussion of these failures.

Two works best reflected the elements of decline and democratic idealism in Taylor's historical postulations. The Struggle for Mastery in Europe in 1954, and the Oxford English History in 1965, concluded with assertions that the people had come into their own because the old world had finally passed away. But between these publications lay a decade of soul-searching and agony over the question of nuclear warfare, preservation of class through the governing establishments, and the apathy of a generation bred to indifference with only a rare demonstration of political and social sensitivity. Though growing skepticism marked this decade, there was ultimately no great departure from Taylor's constant dedication to democratic ideals and the people.

Many historians and journalists have found cause to comment upon Taylor's work as he managed to be a constant irritant. They were generally divided into those who supported him and those who opposed him. The former liked his style, freshness, unorthodoxy and idealism. The latter disliked him for the

same reasons, adding some of their own. Most of these reactions stemmed from personal values. This essay has attempted to cut through the personal references and see Taylor only in terms of his own ideas in relation to their source. From this has come the revelation of the underlying motivation of his entire career which has been orientation toward the people.