

Chapter 6

British Army of Education, 1942-1944

The fateful evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk in the summer of 1940 prompted the army authorities to pay considerable attention to maintaining the morale of the large number of troops stationed in Britain. They turned their attention to army education. In 1941, the *Army Bureau of Current Affairs* (ABCA) was set up to provide booklets for the teaching of current affairs. As the resources of the Army Education Corps were insufficient to provide all the instruction required, the participation of regimental officers and of outside lecturers was enlisted. In addition, there were calls for some teaching relating to citizenship, and this led to the introduction of a course called *The British Way and Purpose* (BWP) as part of an intensive scheme initially limited to the winter of 1942-43. This was to be taught not only - so far as available - by Army Education Corps instructors, but also by civilian lecturers provided by the Central Advisory Council, an organ of the civil adult education movement, as well as by officers and other ranks in the military units themselves and Members of Parliament (1). Through a fortunate combination of circumstances, the new programme provided an opportunity for my participation.

Richard Samuel (2), while only a private in the army, was well connected and got me a place in a course held at Hertfordshire, near London, run by the Army Education Corps to train instructors for participation in *The British Way and Purpose* programme. Leading authors lecturing in the conference covered a wide variety of subjects past and present, including the political history of thought in the relevant parts of the world of the moment. They included Professor A. L. Goodhart from Oxford on Anglo-American relations and his talk of the devastating influence of Pearl Harbour; Dr. G.P. Gooch, editor of the *Contemporary Review*, on English History, who also spoke about Germany 1806-1933, covering and analysing a variety of subjects related to her history and political thought, and Dr. Stirk who introduced German culture and civilisation. Dr. Stirk talked about Walter Flex's *The Traveller Between Two Worlds*, the Prussian spirit, Goethe's *Faust*, Nietzsche's statement that there is no such thing as

progress. He elaborated on Goethe's and Nietzsche's attitude to Christianity, and on Oswald Spengler's (3) historical philosophy, which depicted man as a beast of prey, and interpreted his important work: *The Decline of the West*. Dr. Otto Kahn-Freund, under a pseudonym, talked about comparative law and Dr. Hawgood spoke about various aspects of German history and politics. The question about fighting a war of ideologies was raised in Major Hall's booklet: *What is at Stake?* Unfortunately, he was tempted to answer with personal opinions, which was not the thing to do in the army, and which later on got him into trouble. Talks were given about USSR and Nazi economics, the British Colonial Empire, India, China and Shanghai. They were always followed by discussions (4).

In November 1942 I was attached for instructional work to the Army Education Corps detachment operating from the Northampton barracks, whose activities covered the county of Northamptonshire. The staff consisted of a lieutenant, a regimental sergeant major and a number of sergeants, the rank to which I was appointed on an acting basis. We travelled all over the country on motorcycles. On one of my routes I was thrown off the bike when an Anglican parson emerged out of a country lane without first looking, but we both were none the worse for it, only now in my 80th year do I have some discomfort in the affected knee. As instructors of the Army Education Corps, (AEC) we were allocated to different units. And as the winter wore on, the scheme of a one-hour instruction devoted to citizenship given during the soldiers' training and working time was extended, and attendance remained compulsory. I remained attached to the AEC for a period of fifteen months, until February 1944. My task was to lecture to the troops on *The British Way and Purpose*. This rather amused my former masters at St. Paul's School when I told them.

While attending to the correspondence with Dorothy Buxton, I was also busy learning my new job as an instructor in the course *the BWP*. As background we were supplied with booklets issued by the Directorate of Army Education at the War Office, which appeared in three sequences. These were *Soldier-Citizen* (booklets 1-5, November 1942 to March 1943), *Report on the Nation* (booklets 6-12, April to October 1943) and *Today and Tomorrow* (booklets 13-18, December 1943 to May 1944).

Each booklet contained four chapters. They dealt with such subjects as what was at stake in the war, the British governmental system and public services, the Empire, British relations with other countries, the economy and labour relations, health, education, family life and the future international order. The basic pattern started with an account of the existing situation and proceeded to a discussion of what would be considered desirable for the future.

The material was partly produced by the staff of the Directorate of Education at the War Office, apparently with the help of specialists, and partly commissioned out to experts in the various fields. The standard was generally high and provided a reasonable balance between various political points of view. In the judgement of the anti-authoritarian author, Anthony Burgess, (5) the *British Way and Purpose* chapter was “embarrassingly die-hard” in places, while at the same time “promoting a sort of cautious egalitarianism whenever possible” (6).

Outside authors included such well-known authorities in their own fields as Reginald Coupland, Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford, who lectured on India; Denis Brogan, Professor of Political Science at Cambridge, on the USA; Sir Bernard Pares, formerly Professor of Russian History, Language and Literature at the University of London, on Russia and A.D.Lindsay, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, on *What More Is Needed of the Citizen*. Altogether the outside writers, with some lesser known and ideologically not so profiled names, were drawn from a variety of political outlooks.

Not surprisingly, in view of British admiration for the heroic fight of the Russian people against the Germans, Sir Bernard Pares’ piece on Russia is in retrospect the weakest of all. The chapters praise the achievements of the Soviet regime in general and of Stalin in particular (7).

In Britain at the time any negative reference to the Soviet Union was liable to be interpreted as an attack on the Russian people. Other surprising passages include Denis Brogan calling the “Holy Alliance,” agreed to after the Napoleonic Wars, as “the equivalent of the modern Axis” or alliance between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (8).

More worrying, was an in-house piece on Germany, talking about “the from 1919 up to 1933” (9). In fairness, it should be pointed out that this statement

was part of a thesis that the old ruling forces in the country retained a controlling influence in the Weimar Republic. In the same booklet, the text of the chronology of the maps on Germany's domination in Europe also leaves something to be desired. The total explanation provided for the Locarno Treaty of 1925 consists of the following: "French and British statesmen turn blind eye on German re-armament" and that the evacuation of the Rhineland by the French in 1930 was "done as appeasement; and resulted in strengthening the Nazi Party." But these negative points are outweighed by the meticulous care generally taken (10).

The relevant government departments normally vetted the text. Instructors did not have to follow the booklets strictly. They were regarded as background material, and I certainly found them a great help. Instructors were, indeed, officially encouraged to frame their own courses of instruction (11). Thus, I see from my notes that in lecturing on "The Information Services" I expressed the opinion that ownership of the press was confined to a narrow circle, and that this was of disadvantage to some of the parties, like Labour. I suggested the need for improved standards among journalists and for a better handling of news, as well as a reform of the libel laws. Then in the session on *The Responsible Citizen* I largely followed the pattern set in the booklet on the subject by Barbara Ward and A.D.K. Owen, Stevenson Lecturer in Citizenship, University of Glasgow (12).

But I took the opportunity when lecturing to address my listeners directly with the question on how seriously they themselves had taken their duties as citizens in a democracy: "How active have you been? Did you vote in the general election of 1935, assuming you were eligible to vote? If so, did you vote in full knowledge of the facts? How did you set about keeping up-to-date with political information?" Throughout my activities as an instructor in Army Education, I did my best to oppose the tendency of seeing problems primarily in materialistic terms, of emphasising the diseases of the body to the exclusion of those of the mind and spirit. I pointed out the drawbacks of a purely economic interpretation of history which did not pay sufficient attention to what man could do himself to put things right. In a later booklet: *What more is needed of the citizen?* A.D. Lindsay dealt with this question. He argued that while we do want a decent

standard of living, "if most people think only of the material conditions, if they think that being rich, and getting all the things which, you can buy with money, are the only things worth thinking about, we shan't ever be really satisfied" (13). On this topic Aldous Huxley's book *Brave New World* provided a grave warning (14).

I felt that there were a number of improvements that could be made in our instruction and organisation, but my detachment was not responsive to any suggestions, particularly after we lost our friendly and approachable officer following a motorcycle accident. Leadership was mainly in the hands of a regimental sergeant major, a school teacher by profession, who liked to play it safe. Fortunately, I had the company of a Scottish schoolmaster, John Taylor, who was highly cultured; his letters to me are a literary treat (15). In addition, we had the composer, Alan Rawsthorne, with us for a time, a wonderful conversation partner with a cosmopolitan outlook (16). But I had the impression that neither Taylor nor Rawsthorne were in a position to achieve very much innovation in the branch. John Taylor wrote to me:

My dear Frank,

I can detect a distinct undertone of disquiet in your illuminating letter...It would seem that culturally you are in the backwaters of civilisation. But hark! The whole set-up is purely temporary...You are at that well known transitional stage of the nomad, where the tents are folded, the trappings and hangings are put away, and await the call of: "On comrades, into the dawn!" Then I fancy you will scurry away from the caravanserai and plod on the trail alone. After all, despite the lukewarm reception (which you may even have anticipated), it is only a matter of time before you go to WOSB [War Office Selection Board]...I should infer from the information you've given me that the folks around you will be only too pleased to let you go further (17).

A couple of weeks later I received another letter from John:

There is no doubt... that the resumption of a more natural life will serve you well...It is entirely wrong and misguided of you to think that your work in taking ABCA etc. within the unit will pass unnoticed. For my part, I should fancy that particular attention will be paid to your effort by your officers, unless they are blind to the intellectual side of the unit's activities. As for this part of the world - we are still groping among the clouds and shadows of the dim, dim world - BWP; and wrestling Truth in all her beauty from the chains that bind her to the rock of Ignorance and

Lassitude. Each one of our band ...is a Perseus in quest of his Andromade, and who is Andromade but this maiden Truth? (18)

After writing to him about being engaged in the instruction of *The British Way and Purpose*, BWP, and international affairs for a year, I had put my ideas down on paper and circulated them to anybody who might be interested (19). My memorandum proposed beginning citizenship education based on the *Basic British Way and Purpose* course. It ran to about five foolscap pages and is summarized below on the basis of notebooks I kept at the time:

Though the existing BWP programme is well planned and contains a number of excellent booklets, it has unfortunately been unable to overcome some fundamental doubts on the part of many soldiers. They express views like "it is all propaganda."

In my opinion there are several reasons for this. Apart from an inadequate co-ordination between Army Education Corps personnel, civilian lecturers, and unit instructors, this is due to the booklets not taking the materialistic outlook of the soldier sufficiently into account. Also, lecturers and audiences usually start from different premises which kept them apart. There is an unfulfilled need for continuity of instruction. It is important to get hold of every soldier for one period a week in those units which consistently run the programme.

The BWP programme is not above the heads of soldiers. All the subjects chosen are topical and can be made interesting. The ordinary soldier does not suffer from lack of intelligence and common sense, or even an interest in politics. But being an adult, he has fixed ideas, which have to be taken into account.

Astonishingly, the same arguments recurred in one unit of the *BWP* course after another. These centre around a few slogans such as class distinction which, freely repeated, will win any constituency in the first general election after the war (20) Any discussion running open and unhampered by interference from a discussion leader will merely repeat these slogans and undigested arguments. In Harold Nicholson's words these stock phrases derive "from sources other than the person's knowledge, thoughts or feelings" (21).

This state of mind prevents the ordinary soldier from adding new information obtained in lectures to his existing knowledge. I propose that right at the beginning of the course these attitudes should be brought to the surface in discussion, so that soldiers can examine them and make up their own minds as to their validity. It may take several heated discussions under strong leadership on the part of the lecturer to reach a

certain number of general conclusions. It is only then that one can prevent discussions from always returning to catch-phrases of the "capitalism and class-distinction" brand and be sure of getting one's information and arguments across. Certainly, any attempt at standardised thinking of the Nazi type of regimentation must be avoided. Soldiers should be encouraged to give vocal expression to any disagreement or doubt, and should be made to feel that their reactions and responses are as valuable as the part played by the lecturer.

At the time I put down several key topics both as an outline of a tenable point of view for a lecturer and the kind of reaction encountered in response. Naturally, democracy often came up in lectures and discussion. An instructor would suggest, for example, that while - like any other system of government - democracy could not provide absolute equality, its indispensable aim was to progress towards greater equality of opportunity. Democracy is based on the realisation that changes will always be necessary and therefore provides the machinery to carry these out without the intervention of force. What they did with democracy was up to its rulers: the people. A certain degree of national educational standards was therefore of great significance for the performance of the electorate. How did the soldiers when thus addressed receive this kind of analysis? In my memorandum I summarised reactions to the topic of democracy as follows:

This country is no democracy. In fact, there is loud laughter every time the word is mentioned. Money talks; there is too much class distinction; the system of election is all wrong:

- 1) There should be the right of recall.
- 2) There is numerical unfairness.
- 3) The system favours the Conservatives.
- 4) The parties are in the hands of the wrong people.
- 5) Parties should be abolished.
- 6) The leaders of democracy, those who rise to the top, are all corrupted by the system.

Supporting these points, they argued:

- 1) Look at Jimmy Thomas! (22).
- 2) What right has Herbert Morrison to talk he was a conscientious objector in the last war? (23)
- 3) The House of Lords is an obstacle to people getting their way.
- 4) Why should Ramsay MacDonald be allowed to stand for a safe seat after being defeated in another constituency? (24).
- 5) Why do some people have several votes? (25)

In response to the question “what can the ordinary man do?” they invariably gave the answer that “the ordinary man” is:

- 1) Far too busy with his struggle for a living.
- 2) Has not got the knowledge.
- 3) There is bullying on the part of the employer, e.g. the big landowners.
- 4) There is bribery, for example bosses will say “have a pint of beer” and then add as a condition “you know you have to vote Conservative.”
- 4) Then your boss says if the Conservatives lose this seat, I shall have to close down and YOU will lose your job.
- 5) No wonder THE BOSSES are always afraid that we get too educated.
- 6) They are afraid we might get the wrong opinion that is why YOU have been sent here to talk us out of it.
- 7) There is a law for the rich and another for the poor.
- 8) The press is in the hands of a few people therefore democracy is a farce.

To soldiers, capitalism is the cause of all evils: “Capitalism causes unemployment, exploitation and starvation. If you can cut out profits and spread them over the masses, you will solve your standard of living problem.

There are frequent references to quite unnecessary poverty in the midst of plenty for example they point out that surplus fish and grain are often thrown into the sea.

There are demands for cutting out middleman. They often say things like:

State control will solve all our difficulties. Cartels are the root of the trouble. Monopolies must be abolished. Why should somebody do the work and another person make all the money? Capitalism forces people to walk over dead bodies.

When it comes to the causes of the war soldiers feel these have something to do with Germany challenging Britain's trading position. As a result, they make comments like:

Germany was forced to go to war for economic reasons, to secure raw materials, because of the pressure of surplus population, or to obtain markets for her goods.

The ordinary man did not want this war. Working class people all over the world are the same. This is not our war. It is fought for capitalism. Vested interests, like armament manufacturers, caused this war. Some of our people had money invested in Germany.

The names of Neville Chamberlain, Stanley Baldwin (26) and sometimes Asquith (27) are freely mentioned. There are vague references to cartels. The prize answer is: "in the last war we were told that was the war to end wars. This time we are told it is a war for democracy. That is bound to be a lie. It is just a blind (28). The present economic system is the cause of all wars."

When it comes to the Nazi system, the reaction is: "How do we know that all the atrocity stories are true?" To many of these people communism appears to be heaven. When it comes to imperialism they say that the Nazis are only trying to grab now what we got by force years ago.

There are also wide misconceptions about the status of the Dominions such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa. As a result, there is little recognition of the ideals on which the British Commonwealth of Nations is based. The question is often raised why India isn't given its independence according to the Atlantic Charter? Then they say things like "What about Ireland" and "what was the Boer War all about?" Finally, when the question of how to abolish wars as a means of settling international disputes came up, the view was expressed that: "there will always be wars."

Many of the points raised by the soldiers, such as those about class-distinction and the unequal franchise in Britain, are excellent. Several of the points put forward in discussion, such as the references to government ministers like Jimmy Thomas, Ramsay MacDonald and Herbert Morrison show that at least certain aspects of politics are followed with great interest. But the views of most soldiers are often incoherent and ill-informed. So, there is a lot of work to be done to help the ordinary soldier move beyond suspicion to a more constructive attitude which will enable him to understand the cause for which he is fighting and to play his part in British democracy after the war.

Teaching the elements of citizenship to the ordinary man will have had a better chance of success if it had begun prior to the war when there was a clear field for a sincere attempt to spread knowledge for the sake of knowledge and not for any ulterior purpose. And when the mind of the individual had not yet been poisoned by knowledge used for political ends

at a time when the ordinary man still had faith and a certain fundamental belief where now there is nothing but suspicion.

Any lecturer, who believes in the possibility of democracy, finds that he is speaking a language his audience is too prejudiced to understand. The basis and the root of these prejudices stem from the materialistic or economic interpretation which is so clearly seen in all the statements quoted above. Pamphlet No.12 of the *British Way and Purpose* course is a fine attempt to create a different standard but can only succeed if first the economic conception is proved wrong (29).

A new basic *BWP* Course will therefore have to aim at creating a common background and to deal with the prejudices outlined in this memorandum describing the soldiers' basic proved and unproved assumptions. It would not have to be planned to the last detail, it would have had to be handled as informally as possible, taking advantage of the certainty with which unmistakable trends of the arguments could be predicted. It is the method that counts and how far the basic assumptions are firmly shared by the audience at the end of the course.

Importantly, the Judeo-Christian tradition no longer has the hold over the masses it used to have. Consequently, the democratic idea is more and more separated from its religious roots. The ordinary man today has no allegiance to a spiritual ideal beyond the narrow confines of nationality, as A.D. Lindsay sees very clearly. At present, the teaching of history offers the only hope of the return to a moral interpretation. To do so one must first disprove all other possible interpretations.

Then the details of British and Empire history needs to be taught, because these are facts that cannot be doubted. To teach history without boring one's listeners is no easy job, but guidance can be given to the lecturer in Pamphlets and those trends stressed which have borne fruit.

It is impossible to know what this country stands for and what we are fighting for without having heard of Gladstone's pamphlet against the Bulgarian Atrocities of 1876 (*The Bulgarian Horror and the Question of the East*), (30) or Pitt's *Stop the War with America*" speech in 1777 (31).

Besides sending copies of this memorandum to my officers I also sent my report to people I knew well and to my old friend Ken Green with whom I shared an interest in analysing the political scene from the British perspective. He replied to me 15th March 1944:

Possibly, as you say, the men that are fighting this war will realise that their responsibilities do not finish with the end of the war. It will at least be apparent to many more people that some sort of national reform is necessary together with what is so vaguely termed by both main

belligerents of this war as a 'new-world order.' The Grey's, Russell's Wellesley's etc. did turn out some amazing men, but personally I don't think they were greater than some thousands of men nowadays. They lived in times when everything accompanied by them was loudly praised by their equals - the masses just brayed their huzzahs most volubly, but without a lot of understanding. In the last twenty-five years a new type of man has arisen in England - one who wants to be progressive but who becomes despondent when everything is sat on by a lot of old fogies who rely on professional advisers and permanent under-secretaries to shape the beginnings of a policy. Party politics have only served to strengthen the grip of the latter and if this war had not come we were in great danger of having a government consisting of a select clique of closely related men in 'safe' seats. The individualist... did not matter a lot to the adults whose minds were swamped and befuddled by masses of 'party' propaganda: in fact, the group with the most money usually got away with the prize. In the last major election, however, people began to take an interest in the people who represented them. The fear of war with another martial Germany was growing... But even then, Parties were strong enough to sway Parliaments in their vote of confidence in such things as the 'sealed-lip's' policy of Baldwin and 'appeasement-policy' of Chamberlain. I am glad that Churchill became PM. He may have been the only eligible. But he knew his history and world-politics... Although he did criticise, he knew when to shut up (32).

While his unit was successfully drilling wells, which he found increasingly interesting, Ken had the bad luck to spend several months in a Jerusalem hospital with a painful skin disease. Unfortunately, my letters to him did not survive but Ken gave some further answer to our exchange of thought on 26th May 1943:

Your work in the AEC rather interested me, although as a Britisher I am not exactly proud that our people should have to be taught the rudiments of Parliamentary Government. In fact, I think it is disquieting that so many people who live on those Isles should need educating in such subjects as the Empire I expect many will have a bad shock when they realise what our commitments under the Atlantic Charter may cost us nationally. Perhaps those pamphlets you mention, written by experts and not by Officials, will do a lot of good (33).

I had kept in touch with Dr. Maxwell Garnett who with his wife had so kindly hosted me during the summer holidays on the Isle of Wight in 1938 (34). The Garnett's had now moved to Oxford and I visited them when I was home on leave with my parents at Boars Hill. Early in 1944 I sent my memorandum to Dr.

Garnett, who wrote back that he had read it with deep interest, and had been discussing it with his son Michael, a Captain at the headquarters of the 1st Airborne Division, and who confirmed practically all I said about the mental background of the average soldier. Dr. Garnett thought that the memorandum might be of interest to J. B. Bickersteth, the Director of Army Education at the War Office, whom he knew. Subsequently, Dr. Garnett sent the memorandum to him and arranged that I should see Bickersteth when he lectured to the London International Assembly meeting. Bickersteth wrote to me on 14th February 1944:

I have now read your memorandum with care. It is an extremely interesting survey of the difficulties we are up against in attempting to put across what we have genuinely done our best to make impartial and factual treatment of domestic, imperial and international problems. I believe your main thesis to be right, namely that, until we can rid the mind of the ordinary man of the preconceived ideas and prejudices which he holds little constructive work can be done. We are, of course, well aware of the imputation on the part of the troops those BWP booklets (issued by the Political Warfare Executive) and indeed the entire lecture programme and much else which is done from the War Office is one vast system of clever and insidious propaganda.

Your idea of a basic BWP course is one which we have already considered in connection with the intakes in PTWs (Powered Two Wheelers which ran on diesel or paraffin); although so far it has not been possible to proceed with this proposal. Much of what you write has a bearing on various ideas we have been discussing with regard to the educational programme in the demobilisation period, i.e. from the armistice until the soldier is out of uniform.

I was very glad to make your acquaintance the other day at the London International Assembly meeting and wish I had read your memo before meeting you. I think you said your attachment to the AEC is shortly to end and that you are returning to your unit. I am passing your memorandum to Major I R.L. Marshall of this Directorate, who will be most interested in reading it and would I know like to get to talk with you. Could you let me know when you are likely to be in London so that we can have a further discussion about these matters? I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Maxwell Garnett so that he will know how much we appreciate his sending me your memo (35).

Particularly after the lukewarm reception I had received in Northampton to any suggestions I made on army education, I was delighted with the open-mindedness I found at the very top of the organisation. Naturally I was pleased to have my observations on soldiers' attitudes confirmed by the Directorate of Army Education. Professor Gilbert Murray commented that he found the paper very

interesting and rather disturbing. He wrote "It is so difficult to reach the background of uneducated and ill-educated people" (36). Dame Ellen Pinsent, the first woman to be elected to the Birmingham City Council and as pioneer worker in health services for the mentally ill, to whom my memo was also passed on, wrote to me that:

The paper interested me more than I can say and gave me some idea of what the soldiers are thinking. I wish it were possible to do away with their suspicious attitudes, though one can't be surprised at it. However, with all our faults we as a nation had raised the standard of living higher for working men than any other European country before the War. There is one consolation, i.e. that the men with grievances are always more vocal than the men with sturdy common sense and I hope that you have many of these latter among your audiences as well (37).

I would have liked to have stayed with the Army Education Corps, and Walter Oakeshott nearly made an effort to intervene with the new Director-General at the War Office, Philip R. Morris, whom he knew, but in the end decided not to do so.

After being superseded, partly in response to urgent appeals from Toronto to resume his duties at the University, Bickersteth resigned as Director of Army Education and returned to Canada in the late summer of 1944. I very much regret not being able to see him again. Later on, he was very helpful to me in giving me a testimonial in 1949 when I was in the process of graduating from Oxford and was looking for a job. In the testimonial Bickersteth wrote:

During the period I was Director of Army Education at the War Office (1942-1944) it was my duty to read many reports from officers and NCOs in the Army Education Corps. I was particularly struck by a report on the reactions and prejudices of the man in the ranks concerning domestic and international affairs in which the War Office publication - *British Way and Purpose* - was trying to interest him. This report was by Mr. Eyck, who at that time was a sergeant in the Army Education office at Northampton.

Early in 1944 I had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Eyck, who at my request expanded the report which was found of much value by those at the War Office responsible for producing *British Way and Purpose* (38).

Recently I have been trying to find out more about Bickersteth. I knew when I was in touch with him that he was Warden of Hart House in the University

of Toronto, but I was hazy about his duties there. He wrote to me in 1949 when I asked for the above cited testimonial that he had returned to Canterbury, where his mother lived and where his brother was Canon Residentiary and an Archdeacon. When I expressed condolences on the death of his mother in 1954, he sent me a fascinating note on his family.

Apparently, his mother, the daughter of the first professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, belonged to the group of little girls surrounding Lewis Carroll (39). 'The similarity between the photographs he took of her and the Alice as portrayed by Tenniel is striking.' She married Samuel Bickersteth, son of the Bishop of Exeter, the hymn writer, who became a Canon-Residentiary at Canterbury. J. Burgeon Bickersteth, the Director of Army Education, was one of six sons of this marriage.

Thanks to the help I received from friends and colleagues, Donald Smith, Professor of Canadian History at the University of Calgary, I now know more about this remarkable man who showed much kindness to me. When finishing his degree at Christ Church, Oxford, Bickersteth was recruited for the Anglican Western Canada Mission. Capable of great physical endurance, he spent two years in Alberta, from 1911 to 1913, often in quite primitive conditions, never considering the roughest and meanest work beneath his dignity as a lay missionary.

His letters to home to England have been published by University of Toronto Press in 1976 under the title *The Land of Open Doors* (40). During the First World War, Bickersteth enlisted in the Royal Dragoons, initially in the ranks, was commissioned and received the Military Cross and Bar. He returned to Canada after the war (41).

At first teaching for a time at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, he found his niche at the University of Toronto as Warden of Hart House, the community centre and debating forum of the university open to all men and eventually also to women from faculty to undergraduates (42). There he excelled in organising a wide range of activities with a minimum of authority through his notable ability to get on with people, based on genuine interest in them. In the 1930's he frequently travelled to Germany, and even attended a staged invitation to the Dachau concentration camp which he found somewhat incomprehensible

and “grotesque.” About a hundred half-naked, well-spoken men standing around him only were answering trivial questions. He talks about the “bitter hostility to the Jews,” who lived from hand to mouth.

He also witnessed the Nazi conflict with the churches: Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, preaching to huge audiences against the Nazi denial of Christ’s Jewishness (43). He witnessed the Nazi media-control and was certain of an immense, inarticulate liberal-minded majority in Germany who would speak up if they only dared. Bickersteth regarded the Nazi dictatorship with “distaste and suspicion.”

Nevertheless, he invited German exchange students, the brightest, selected by the Nazis, who took part in discussions in Hart House and who did not waver in their enthusiasm of their Regime. Bickersteth was Warden of Hart House from 1921 to 1947 with the interruption of his service in the Second World War, first as education adviser to the Canadian army and then as Director of Army Education at the British War Office from 1942 to 1944. This unusual man, whom I remember with gratitude, died in 1979.

Further to my job at Army Education I gave some instructions to the Women’s Auxiliary Territorial Services, or “Girls,” a branch of the British Army. Altogether about 74,000 women were enlisted in the Women’s Auxiliary Territorial Services and distributed over the various war theatres. They were a gifted and committed group of people filling in at home and abroad wherever they could to replace men so to free them for more active service.

In a mixed group discussion, the question was raised what the position of women should be after the war. The first problem considered was that of a couple with a child. Most ladies were definite that no employment be really practicable in these conditions. One man suggested that privacy is necessary to maintain freedom, and that women can fulfil themselves in the tasks at the home. Patience and tolerance would be destroyed if children were to be left elsewhere while the mother works, coming home she would be tired and the child or children would suffer.

A proposal was offered that women should enter a profession on equal footing with men, but there should be no compulsion applied. The idea of part-

time work was introduced in the discussion as an important consideration for a compromise. Others wanted to see a law passed that if there was not enough work for men and women, men should be the first choice. This was modified to preference for the bread winner. To employ trained and well-educated people to look after children in day nurseries was another suggestion to offer relief for the working mothers. But there was no consensus, and the questions were thought to be premature as one did not know what the situation would be after the war (44).

I also taught classes in remedial English and Literature. I vaguely remember that I even had the audacity to give homework. It did not make me popular with my audience. This led one of the men to offer me a partnership in his egg-distribution business in exchange for agreeing to stop teaching and prodding him, but with a smile and in good humour I declined both.

On the domestic front during 1943 there was an event that drew wide public interest, namely the release of Sir Oswald Mosley and his wife, Lady Diana from imprisonment. They had been closely associated with the Nazis. Sometime earlier he had been moved from Brixton into a small house of Holloway Prison to join his wife. They were allowed to grow a garden and employ other prisoners for services (45). The minister of Labour, Sir Herbert Morrison stated in his autobiography that the decision for release was taken on a doctor's advice, as Mosley suffered from phlebitis, which had the potential to kill him:

The quandary was whether to free this fascist... or whether to have a British subject die in prison without trial. Apart from such blot on history going back to the Magna Carta, martyrdom is the source of profound strength. My task was to decide what the right thing to do was (46).

I expressed my observation and thoughts in a letter 12th December 1943 which I sent to among others Heinz Alexander a correspondent to various British and foreign papers (47).

As the news of Mosley's release was easier to understand by the ordinary man, it rivalled to him in importance to the surrender of Italy, the Cairo and the Teheran meeting, the vague principles of the Atlantic Charter the geographical importance of the Azores. Next to Churchill, Mosley was the best-known politician. By the troops he was as much hated as Montgomery was admired.

Morrison had to answer the question whether Mosley's detention was still necessary, which is a matter of opinion. Most people had made up their mind against the release because Mosley was a man of obvious unpatriotic and treacherous views and intentions. It seemed Morrison was taking unnecessary chances; there was the feeling of insecurity and of fear. There was objection against the privileges the Mosley's received at Holloway. The medical reason given was considered a pretext.

The ordinary man had made up his mind and the tide of public opinion turned against the Home Secretary. When Defence Regulations 18B are attacked, only lip service is paid to the principles of justice and democracy for the purpose of government baiting (48). It is doubtful whether there is a genuine universal belief in this country in the importance of freedom of speech and freedom from arrest. Too many people would like to see the power of the government used against those who are unpopular. I thought the liberal idea is dead among the masses, and its place has been taken by a purely materialistic outlook.

Heinz Alexander answered, from London on 22, December 1943. He did not think the article could still be published in the daily press, as too much had already written about the case, but he tried to contact the Economist:

I found some of your remarks extremely interesting, though I do not agree with part of your attitude regarding Mosley...I feel it is wrong to treat enemies of democracy in a democratic way - too many continental democracies have perished that way. I do not advocate unconstitutional means but the phrasing of 18B would certainly have allowed for continued detention of Mosley, even if he died in prison, only those who would have considered him a martyr are Fascists anyway.

In one point I do not believe Morrison. I am sure, charges could be brought against him [Mosley] before the court, which would have condemned him as an ordinary criminal...But I feel that he could tell so many dirty stories on persons still enjoying some public respect that the cabinet does not like to have Mosley prosecuted ...

Thanks for allowing me to see your exposé. Though I disagree on some points, I found it most instructive to see what people in general think about it. I was also much interested in your concluding remarks about lack of concern on constitutional questions and questions of liberalism and personal liberty (49).

After this I was posted back to the Pioneer Corps at Buxton, reverting to rank of private, and the “delights” of the parade Ground. Given the opportunity to apply for other postings, I survived the Alpine Rope Climb, but nearly broke my neck in a fall. After that the army authorities wisely decided to earmark me for special employment rather than to attempt to make an infantry officer out of me.

In the run-up to D-Day we were given the facility for a change of name “to meet military requirements”, and I opted for the *nome de guerre*, the surname Alexander, though it was in fact that of my brother-in-law now living in the United States who was also a German refugee. According to English use, the name would at first sight appear to be a British one. Our army numbers were also changed, as the prefix indicated membership of the non-British Pioneer companies. One thus had a somewhat better chance in case of capture.

Soon I would be formally mobilised for overseas service. In this situation I felt that I had the right to make a decision on my religion. As I had not attended Jewish classes at school or learned any Hebrew, it was difficult to connect with Judaism in a religious sense.

At the Pioneer Corps in Buxton another soldier had put me in touch with a Methodist Minister, Tom Sutcliffe, who with his wife Mollie, regularly invited members of the Forces to their home, and I also attended his small Bible study circle (50). I was baptised by Tom Sutcliffe at a meeting of the local synod on D-Day plus one. On 7th June 1944, after long planning the massive invasion into Europe, the Allied Troops had started and advanced rapidly. My mother stayed with the Sutcliffe's from just before my baptism and Tom predicted a long pilgrimage for me.

During my many moves I worshipped with the Anglicans in London, Oxford and Liverpool, with the Methodists in Buxton and Exeter, Devon, with the Lutherans in Calgary, Canada. Later, my wife Rosemarie and I entered in communion with the Catholic Church celebrating Mass in the small missionary chapel in Bragg Creek nestled in the foothills near Calgary. To the great regret and disappointment of the hundred families worshipping there the mission, like many others in rural Alberta, was closed.

So far this was the outwardly visible “pilgrimage.” Inwardly, I had for some time the desire to find the truth for life’s basic questions. I had felt a void that could not be filled by rationality and secularism. To face the current maelstrom of moral decisions this step provided me with the spiritual conviction, strength and clarity of purpose to allow me to carry on with the work at hand. It was a long and richly rewarding process. As in the days of Christianity’s beginning I consider myself to be a Jewish Christian (51).

Over the years we stayed in contact with the Sutcliffe’s, visited each other whenever possible. Even my father respected Tom. When my mother was widowed he visited her in 1970, they felt close enough, for him to ask and her to answer his question of “her definition of what her religion was.” After some thought she answered: “The happiness of my children,” which Tom thought was rather good (52). On this important step Richard Samuel wrote to me on 18th May 1944:

Your spiritual decision is a very grave one and I think you are absolutely right feeling as you do. The Christian Churches all over the world will have a tremendous task after the war and need all sincere forces. I hope they will play an important part to stand Germany on her feet again after the war by providing international collaboration and strip themselves of the narrow nationalism and reactionary flavour they suffered from so long. There are many hopeful signs. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matth.6-8) ten times over and you will discover the essence of the Christian homily; and how the 10 Commandments are developed (and not denied) by Jesus Christ. The Jews can and will be helped in this spirit only; they would be totally lost, if it did not exist (53).

To my regret, owing to the posting and to the further moves which followed, I did not have an opportunity of seeing Bickersteth again nor the chance of meeting Major Marshall, the editor of the *British Way and Purpose* booklets, but I did correspond with him. I wrote the second paper on Army Education ‘Basic Citizenship’, which included some further suggestions running to 14 pages, while I was at the Buxton training centre (54). To begin with I added a number of observations about the soldiers’ opinions:

There was a recurring reference to, ‘they’ did not make provision for the soldier after the last war, ‘they’ do not want to implement the Beveridge Report, ‘they’ are going to prevent international co-operation and full employment and have done so in the past. Also ‘they’ did not re-arm in

time, carried out an appeasement policy, do not want to see us educated and will not get us decent housing. Interestingly, at a time when everything traditional is attacked, there is a marked abstention from saying anything derogatory about the royal family. There was still strong attachment to the Duke of Windsor in many quarters. The typical working-class soldier did have some realisation of his own shortcomings, referring to the apathy of the working man. "I expect we will get back to business as usual after the war." There was also a feeling so long as somebody had enough for himself; he did not care about anybody else. The Jews were widely identified with big business, and with the capitalist system. I came to the conclusion that 'anti-Semitism' is strong in the army today. Some soldiers even go so far as to justify the way the Nazis treat the Jews. Some will swear that all bus companies, railways, banks, the whole of industry, etc., are owned by Jews. There are such statements as: "You have never seen a poor Jew or a Jew work." Also, there are allegations that Jews have tried to evade military service by obtaining medical certificates on false pretences. Any Jewish participation in the Black Market has done the Jews a lot of harm. Generally, many men find complete satisfaction in the analysis that what is wrong with the world today is science and machines. This theory is applied to explain, among other things, the outbreak of this war and the unemployment problem.

On conscientious objectors, while there was wide objection to them, with comments like "they should be shot," at the same time they were praised as the only people who have guts. As to foreigners serving in the British Army, the insufficient use of non-British personnel is criticised, but on the whole the 1940 propaganda that "you cannot trust a foreigner" has been very effective. There is comparatively little actual friction between British and non-British personnel, but it would be an exaggeration to say that the ordinary soldier is very fond of foreigners, although with certain exceptions.

Winston Churchill had tremendous authority with the troops, as an opponent of appeasement, and, above all, for having won the Battle of Britain. However, he is considered a war-leader rather than a peacetime prime minister. Passages in his speeches dealing with home affairs are quoted as evidence to show that he wishes to ensure his continued presence at 10 Downing Street after the end of the war. In contrast, the 'Men of Munich', like Sir Samuel Hoare, (55) Sir John Simon (56) and Lord Halifax are remembered unfavourably. It would seem that Eden has lost some of the popular appeal he had in 1938 and 1939. As to the political parties, the Conservatives were regarded as the party of vested interests.

Whenever the Tory reformers appear, they are suspected of being official party propagandists who try to make the Tories popular, without actually being representative and having any influence in the party. None of the Tory leaders, with the exception of Churchill and Eden have ever caught

the eye of the public. The Labour Party benefited from the economic interpretation being in vogue. Socialist ideas have filtered through to the ordinary man to a greater extent than any other political doctrines. In the opinion of the present writer, the Labour movement, through the Trade Unions, and through the Workers' Educational Association, was the only political body which took any trouble to train ordinary men. Labour would thus spread their ideas where it was bound to have the greatest effect, in ordinary everyday life. Though the Trade Unions in a way gave the Labour movement its strength, in another way they weakened it. Trade unionism is bound to encounter, and encountered, many enemies. It certainly is not popular with every worker.

As to the other parties, the Liberals are hardly considered among younger men. Their idealistic interpretation is considered out of date. It was too early to judge how the Commonwealth party would do; the Independent Labour Party was not too well known. As to the Communist Party, in spite of all the admiration for Russian Communism, there is still a certain uncomfortable feeling about trying the thing too close to one's home, it might explode.

In the Middle Ages the world order was based on the ability of the local priest controlling the many functions of a community; that included education, health and 'unemployment relief'. For a long time, people accepted his authority without questioning. They were not supposed to think or challenge dogma. With the Reformation and the invention of printing press more and more people learned to read and write. Though today we have no obvious fetters, yet, we too, are tied, and our ability to think is affected adversely by the appearance of a large unskilled proletariat. The willingness to think has suffered owing to the wealth of technological refinement, the cinema where you watch a 'straight' story in a comfortable seat, the type of newspaper you can read by looking at the headlines and cartoons, the wireless which you can just switch on for 'background music'. Life moved so quickly that one has little time for thought.

The influence of the Army on the soldier's psychology is immense. Whether the apparent necessary preaching of the idea of 'doing as you are told' can be robbed of its disastrous long-term effects on the power of men to think is a matter of dispute. The present writer does not take the gloomy view that Army Education is a contradiction in terms. In a way the weekly talk perhaps provides a welcome relaxation from the discipline which is so important from a military point of view, as it provides a safety valve and diverts some of the spirit of opposition which would otherwise cause trouble in the internal running of the unit. In the post-war period, the vast majority wanted security of employment, 'a living wage', old age pensions, cheap entertainment and decent houses, there was an objection to flats (apartments) owing to the perceived danger of regimentation. They wanted to avoid violent changes, ups and downs.

They did not want to be 'got at'. There was a general belief in transferring industry very largely from private enterprise to state ownership, without consideration of the consequences. Capitalism is the scapegoat and state-control the New Messiah (See note 54).

Unfortunately, my report then went on to argue that there was an incompatibility between the materialistic interpretation of history and politics on the one hand, and religion and democracy on the other. It seemed doubtful as to whether a reformist programme of the Labour Party could be carried out within the framework of capitalist democracy. I did not know enough about Labour Party politics and was obviously proved wrong by events. I had been strongly influenced at that time by a book by Gustav Stolper in collaboration with his wife Toni: *This Age of Fable. The Political and Economic World We Live In* (57). Stolper, a leading writer on economics, had been a member of the *Reichstag* between 1930 and 1932, like our mutual friend Theodor Heuss representing the *Deutsche Staatspartei*, the successor party to the left-liberal *Deutsche Demokratische Partei*. As his wife Toni was Jewish, the Stolper's had to emigrate and in 1933 found refuge in the United States (58).

The book was completed in September 1941, about half way between the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the destruction of the US Pacific Fleet by the Japanese on 7th December 1941 at Pearl Harbour. It was a fervent appeal to public opinion in Western countries not to give up faith in liberty, democracy and private enterprise, and not to be taken in by the claims of economic achievement by the totalitarian regimes. The tract included a brilliant polemical analysis of pervading attitudes to current political and economic questions in the world at that time. The fables or myths Stolper criticises are the oversimplifications then in vogue, such as the notions of a perfect capitalism on the one hand and of perfect planning on the other. As to the former, in many European countries capitalism had, indeed, already been limited by a considerable degree of public ownership, without ceasing to be capitalist countries, to "both the outside world and their own socialist parties" (59). As to the latter, he warned against a socialist faith in perfect planning and asserted that "National Socialism in Germany and Fascism in Italy were never anything but socialist orders, all Marxist diatribes to the contrary notwithstanding." A socialist

order, including that of the Soviet Union, "by necessity must encroach upon the remotest abodes of private life, must become and remain totalitarian" (60).

What probably led me astray was the rather sweeping use of the term 'socialist' in these theories. I did not pay sufficient attention to the fact that Stolper indeed exempted the Labour Party, the Trade Unions after 1926, and the co-operative movement in Great Britain, from his general strictures on socialism. (61). But he was deeply worried about the radical left-wing influence Professor Harold Laski of the London School of Economics and Political Science exercised not only in Britain and on the Labour Party, but also on public opinion in the United States (62). In any case I infringed a code of conduct in which I very much believed and which I did my best to practice as an army education instructor, namely to leave it to the listener to draw his own conclusions as to the party-political implications of any subjects discussed.

As I was mobilised for overseas service in the summer of 1944 and could not always myself write and receive letters, my father in Boar's Hill, outside Oxford, helped me to keep in touch with my correspondents, particularly in the Oxford area. In reply to my second memorandum Dr. Garnett wrote to my father in July 1944 and stated that I had set down with admirable brevity and lucidity the opinions of the soldiers I had met. He added he felt sure that Mr. Bickersteth and others concerned with education in the Services would appreciate my valuable work in this field.

But he strongly - and rightly - criticised my speculations about the Labour Party, which were my "personal opinions - neither observed facts nor reasoned deductions from such facts." He also mentioned that Mr. Bickersteth was giving up his post at the War Office. "Perhaps the appointment of Mr. P.R. Morris as supreme Director of Army Education made him feel that he himself had become redundant" (63).

A favourable responses on my report came from professors Gilbert Murray and Reginald Coupland in the Boars Hill neighbourhood. Gilbert Murray wrote that the report on my teaching observations:

...confirms what I have already heard from other sources, and is certainly rather alarming. I think, however, that a great deal of the cynicism and pessimism is a sort of psychological self-defence. The men are conscious

of their ignorance and do not like to profess belief in anything. On the other hand, they do really believe in their own leaders, as your son's men do in Churchill. A man who has been dealing with the Guards told me their attitude was a great disbelief in all political parties and Government (64).

Professor Coupland also said that the report confirmed what he had heard from other quarters (65). Walter Oakeshott in a letter of 29th November 1943 thanked me for my two memos but preferred the original document of the 'anonymous civilian', and asked me for my permission to use it in his teaching, which I was certainly pleased to give (66).

I had sent my second memorandum to Heinz Alexander. On 7th March 1945 he suggested minor alterations and contacted the *British Survey* published by the 'British Association for International Understanding' edited by Mr. Eppstein, probably a pseudonym of Sir John Smithers MP, who was interested and prepared to read my report. He answered the following day:

My chairman Mr G.M. Young and I were much impressed by Mr Frank Alexander's [Eyck's] paper on 'Basic Citizenship.' There are one or two points where one would like to join issue with him but on the whole I feel that the analysis is correct. We could not, I am afraid, publish the report as it stands. It is mainly in the form of advice given to those who are in control of Army Education....Our surveys are read by all ranks and I am not sure how far it would be wise to purvey this kind of candid criticism to our general reader (67).

They suggested I try publishing the memo as a pamphlet in the *Spectator* with the title: *What the Army Thinks*. Heinz Alexander thought their decision was understandable, but "apart from the disappointment the letter is highly satisfactory," But, further attempts did not lead to publication either. Philip Whitting also pointed to my apparent Conservative prejudices (68).

Actually, I do not think that I had formed clear views by this time as to how I stood myself in relation to the political parties. It is true that for a time I thought that Labour planning and democracy were not fully compatible, but this was a phase in my development that passed fairly quickly. As a soldier, I was not particularly drawn towards the Conservative Party. After all, issues of foreign policy had been paramount for some time, particularly so for a German Jewish refugee. The mainly Conservative National Government had carried out a policy

of appeasement I thought was mistaken, though I did not sufficiently realise at the time that left-wing pacifism, which Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain had to take into account, was also very much to blame. Though Gustav Stolper's *This Age of Fable* had alerted me to some of the pitfalls of economic planning, some of the wartime measures, such as clothes rationing, had a certain appeal to him in advancing greater equality (69).

On a visit to St. Paul's School on leave from the army I got to know a new master, Mr. Osborne, who had rather left-wing views and who thought that my outlook was close to the Fabians (70). Serving in the ranks I shared an unmistakable opposition to authority with many other soldiers, though the sergeant majors rather than the officers were liable to make life difficult for me. I was critical of many of the rather aloof officers, some of whom seemed to me - perhaps quite unfairly - to owe their commissions simply to having been to the right school. I hope this was not a form of jealousy on my part for not having been commissioned. At any rate, what I regarded as a system of class distinction did not make me predisposed to the Conservative party, any more than their policy towards Nazi Germany in the pre-war period.

Finally, there is the question whether army education, such as the activities of the *Army Bureau of Current Affairs* and *the British Way and Purpose* booklets helped the Labour Party to victory in the General Election of 1945. Numerically, the service vote did not determine the election result, though obviously the feelings of members of the Forces were significant and may well have influenced the civilian vote of relatives and friends. My own knowledge only relates to 'other ranks', i.e. those below commissioned rank, in those parts of the army with which I came into contact as an army education instructor. Army Education had to deal with soldiers who were, so far as one can generalise, by and large mainly guided by three factors.

In the case of members of the working class and to some extent of the lower middle class their attitudes were strongly influenced by their perceptions of how they and their families had fared during the world economic crisis and its aftermath, especially; when it was stated how seriously their lives had been affected by unemployment. Secondly, there was the effect of their uprooting from

civilian life. They had been taken out of their normal social relationships, including the texture of their local society with their place in it. Many reacted against some aspects of their new unaccustomed environment by adopting what the troops called 'bolshie', that is somewhat rebellious attitudes.

They disliked excessive discipline, which often included an element of arbitrariness, with at times mindless routine, and the 'spit and polish' during periods of comparative calm. Discipline was mainly enforced by the sergeant major and it was he who was liable to arouse the greatest dislike, while the officers were more remote in periods of calm, though they would determine the fate of the soldier put on a charge. One of the best descriptions of the ordinary soldier's attitude to military authority I have seen is that of army life in Anthony Burgess' autobiography *Little Wilson and Big God: The First Part of the Confessions* (71).

Although the British Army would not have emerged on the side of the victors if it had been quite as inefficient as Burgess claimed, and even if it is likely that he did not emerge quite so victorious from his various encounters with sergeants and sergeant majors as he states, he does catch the atmosphere of relations between privates and NCOs. Reading his account in my early eighties, I found myself roaring with laughter. Though no longer under the thumb of sergeant majors, I only realised then, through the relief I gained from the reading of Burgess' musing, that I had not quite got over my experiences in the army even after nearly sixty years. To the more radical, the army with its promotion of 'public school boys' to commissions only seemed to perpetuate the system of social discrimination to which they had objected in civilian life. Sergeant majors and sergeants vented their resentment of what they regarded as class distinction on 'public school' boys serving in the ranks. The present writer can testify to this in the case of several sergeant majors.

Thirdly, there were the lessons which individuals drew from the changes that had taken place in wartime. Not all these were considered negatively. Although food rationing limited the ability of the better off to obtain more to eat, attention also focused on those at the bottom of the economic scale who had been undernourished and were now encouraged to adopt basic nutritional

standards. There is one aspect regarding attitudes, which things does not lend itself to generalisation and that is enclosed in the individual religious persuasion, like in the Christian and Jewish faith. While not likely to lead to the adoption of an economic interpretation of history and politics, concern for social conditions can easily, but not necessarily lead to the questioning of some features of capitalism. Well before the First World War, and before he became Archbishop of York 1929-1942 and Canterbury 1942-1944, William Temple (1881-1944) was engaged in social reform, inspired by the desire for social and national righteousness and Christian Unity (72). He presided over the Workers Education Association and played a leading part in the unemployment question and the Ecumenical Movement. On the political front Clement Attlee, who later became the first post-war Prime Minister, was similarly involved in social questions. He was a social worker before WWI in which he served in the Tank Corps and retired from the Army as Major in 1919. He was Under-Secretary of State in the Labour Minority Government of 1924, from 1935–1940 leader of the Labour Party and joined the Coalition Government in 1940. With a landslide victory he won the 1945 election and carried out many moderately balanced social reforms. Thus, the religious side is inconclusive in this context (73).

What was the effect of all this, apart from religion, in terms of party politics? There was a reaction against the traditional 'establishment', against privilege and elitism - rightly or wrongly - considered insufficiently mindful of the interests of the vast mass of the population. Clearly the experience of unemployment outweighed some of the achievements of the National, mainly conservative, Governments, for example in the field of house construction. The increasing care necessarily taken by the authorities of all sections of the population in time of war had certain appeal to the soldier and made him more amenable to state intervention and to its continuation into peace-time, with some 'planning'. Much of this pointed to the Labour Party. In contrast, the Conservatives were often seen as responsible for the bad times, or for not dealing adequately and swiftly with the problems that arose from them.

Bearing in mind that not all service personnel were covered at all times, what was the effect of Army Education programmes, such as ABCA and *the*

British Way and Purpose, on these attitudes on the part of the troops? Clearly in the case of BWP the general approach was often to give a critical assessment of the existing situation in a particular field and then to ask "how can we create a better world?" This favoured 'planning' and the position of the reformers among whom the Labour Party was regarded as the foremost, though in fact Conservative governments had frequently carried out reforms. Furthermore, the focus on the deficiencies of the past militated usually against the party in government, effectively the Conservatives. But in no way was this method, which was adopted to stimulate the interest of the troops, a deliberate attempt to favour Labour. It was the best way to gain and keep the attention of listeners.

An alternative approach might have been along historical lines, to demonstrate the gradual development of, for example, the constitution, and to emphasise not only change but also continuity. Alas, conditions in the armed forces did not provide the leisure for setting up courses of history lectures. The situation in 219 Pioneer Company where Richard Samuel and I could set up a course of four lectures on British history was rather exceptional. Indeed, one may ask to what extent an educational programme, however well conducted, can be able to change outlooks. Existing approaches to politics were deeply ingrained and often eluded questioning. Thus, it would be unusual for a soldier to be so impressed by something he heard in a lecture that he would reconsider fundamental approaches to political issues. After all, with the occasional course session and so many other matters occupying the soldier's mind, in-depth study was not feasible. Sometimes, existing attitudes might be reinforced.

All of these thoughts on the possible effect of Army Education on the Labour victory in 1945 is based exclusively on my papers and recollections from this period. Since the General Election of that year the question has aroused considerable interest and has resulted in a number of publications (74). The opening of some archives has also revealed a great deal about what was going on about army education behind the scenes, unknown to the ordinary instructor. From the beginning there was criticism of aspects of army education, such as by the *Army Bureau of Current Affairs*, ABCA, and by Conservatives, going up to the highest level, on the basis of being biased in a left-wing direction. The right-wing

Conservative Member of Parliament and Under-Secretary for War, Sir Henry Page-Croft, Lord Croft, fully supported the provision of education as well as entertainment for the troops in the winter of 1940-41 to improve morale after the setbacks of the previous summer (75). But both he, and more importantly the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, were seriously disturbed by the apparent left-wing tendencies of the educational programmes. "In the eyes of Page-Croft, to question whether something was right-wing inevitably was to stoke up discontent" (76). But questioning and frank discussion by the troops were essential in any educational activities involving current affairs and citizenship. Churchill voiced strong opposition to the setting up of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs in 1941, (77) and in October 1942 he asked that the ABCA courses should be wound up as quickly as possible, but was overruled. (78).

The continuation of army education in these sensitive socio-political areas owed a great deal to the steady support given by Sir James Griggs, Permanent Under-Secretary at the War Office who in an unusual move served as Secretary of State for War after February 1942; his support was joined by the Adjutant-General, Sir Ronald Adam, who felt great concern and understanding for the welfare of the troops, the extent of which would have surprised most of us serving in the ranks (79).

Interestingly, objections to what ABCA were doing occasionally came from the Labour side. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour in the war time coalition, objected to an ABCA poster depicting a pre-war child with rickets standing amid scenes of poverty, with the kind of new and modern health centre that should be the aim in post-war Britain superimposed on this image. Bevin complained to the Prime Minister on the grounds that it would undermine morale by suggesting that some of the country's children still lived in such squalor (80).

To what extent were ABCA and BWP in the hands of left-wing organisers and lecturers? Undoubtedly the Labour Party now reaped the benefit of having taken a far greater interest in adult education in time of peace than the Conservatives. The Workers' Educational Association had for years been doing excellent work among those who wanted to enhance their knowledge. It was only natural that in many cases Army Education officers and NCOs, as well as civilian

lecturers, should be drawn from the ranks of the Workers Education Association, WEA. In addition, the League of Nations Union had seen education as one of its main activities in the inter-war years; as a school-boy I had been one of the beneficiaries of a fascinating course on current European affairs in London just before Christmas 1938. While the Union was not affiliated to any political party, and while a Conservative, Lord James Cecil, J. Edward Hubert Gasscoyne, fourth Marquess of Salisbury; advocated a national government had been one of its leading personalities, the internationalism of the organisation at the time made a greater appeal to Socialists and Liberals than to Conservatives (81).

The Central Advisory Council (CAC) consisting of civilian adult education organisations, which supplied lecturers for army education, was thus bound to have at its disposal a supply of more speakers tending to Labour and Liberals, than to the Conservatives. And not surprisingly, Army Education officers who came from the Workers' Educational Association, frequently commissioned speakers from their left-wing network. Major Gilbert Hall, the AEC officer whom I heard lecture at an army education conference in 1942 or 1943, would have been a case in point. He and Major George Wigg appeared to advocate a commissar system into the Army. Hall was unusual in not following the King's Regulation that forbade servicemen to communicate unauthorised personal views. He caused exasperation in the War Office for his tendency to solicit 'unsuitable' lecturers like Communist Member of Parliament D.N. Pritt. Even among left-wingers, the degree to what we would now call his activism, he pushed beyond the limits of what was appropriate for an AEC officer. Because of his rather extreme left-wing communist teaching, he was transferred to Gibraltar and Egypt, but eventually was asked to resign his commission (82).

As to the higher appointments in army education, Croft had some misgivings about W.E. Williams becoming director of the newly set up *Army Bureau of Current Affairs*. Williams, executive member of the Workers' Educational Association, "enjoyed a radical reputation." (83). But he was considered to be particularly well qualified through his experience in popular education to supervise the new organisation.

Alas, suspicions Croft voiced in 1943 that J.B. Bickersteth, Director of Army Education, was an 'ardent Left-Winger' and was using his official position to promote state control are completely unjustified. Bickersteth was a man of integrity. In a completely different context, in connection with Hart House at the University of Toronto to which he devoted his life's work, he told an interviewer that he was "Conservative in England, usually Liberal in Canada, conservatively minded and patriotic" (84).

It is true that some left-wing AEC officers stand out, like Gilbert Hall and his ally George Wigg. The latter eventually became Paymaster-General in Harold Wilson's first Labour Government. Also, a relatively high number of AEC officers entered Parliament in 1945 and all six were Labour (85). But one must not assume that the Army Education Corps as a whole was left wing. As to my own Northamptonshire unit, which may or may not have been typical, I cannot recall any of the four regulars, Alan Rawsthorne was a temporary supernumerary with us, voicing Labour views. Of the four a Regimental Sergeant Major and three Sergeants, two struck me as a traditionalist and rather conservative in their outlook, one could have been a liberal, and the fourth one may well have been non-party.

In general S. P. MacKenzie in his *Politics and Military Morale* comes to similar conclusions as I about the effect of Army Education on the 1945 general election, MacKenzie regarded it as "questionable whether the socio-political attitudes soldiers adopted during the war can be attributed to the influence of Army education" (86). The various education programmes were only accepted by the troops so long as they matched their 'general interests and outlook.' The author also emphasises the soldier's negative reaction to the disciplinary role of the sergeants major who to him represented the authorities; these he in turn associated with the major coalition partner, the Conservatives (87). As Duff Cooper MP suggested, the exercise of the franchise gave the soldier an opportunity of expressing his opinion of the sergeant major (88). But, the historian Jeremy A. Crang stated that from 1940 efforts had been made to give remedial classes for illiterates (89). There had been a special network of *Basic Educational Centres* that were staffed by *the Army Education Centre, AEC*, even

if probably somewhat patchy, using *The English Parade booklet ABCA and BWP* had increased the critical thinking in place of prejudice. The troops had shown the same political instinct as the civilian population in their feeling that the Conservative Party had failed the nation that it was time for change and that Labour would provide a better future by enacting a kind of collectivist politics which the experience of war had popularised. But in general, Conservative politicians tended to blame the activities of Army Education for their defeat.