

London School of Economics and Political Science

THE INTERNATIONAL THEORY OF LEONARD WOOLF: AN EXPOSITION,
ANALYSIS, AND ASSESSMENT IN THE LIGHT OF HIS REPUTATION
AS A UTOPIAN

Thesis submitted to the University of London in
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in International Relations

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ABSTRACT

Leonard Woolf was one of the most prolific writers on international relations in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. In common with most thinkers of the time he is universally regarded as a utopian. This is largely due to his support for the 'ill-fated' League of Nations and his 'simple-minded' belief in the possibility of progress through reason. This thesis examines Woolf's thought in the light of this denigratory interpretation. First, an analysis of the way in which the so-called utopian school has been represented in post-War International Relations shows that the core or defining characteristics of the school are far from clear. It is argued that the label 'utopian' is more a term of rhetoric than a meaningful social scientific category. Second, to the extent that certain defining 'utopian' features can be identified, it is argued that they apply to Woolf's thought only partially. Woolf was a diverse thinker both in terms of the subjects he tackled and the conclusions he reached. He was also an eclectic thinker who borrowed from a number of intellectual traditions: Owenism, Cobdenism, Fabianism, Radicalism, and Functionalism. The thesis shows that although flawed in a number of respects, Woolf's thought in three key areas - international government, imperialism, and international economic organization - defies the simple designation 'utopian'. The complexity of the picture is complicated further when Woolf's response to Carr's landmark 'realist' critique of utopianism is taken into account. Although Woolf disagreed with many aspects of Carr's analysis - notably his 'worship' of power and his belief in the 'permanence' of conflicting interests - it is clear that the two men, contrary to conventional wisdom, had much in common. These commonalities demonstrate that the dichotomy between 'utopianism' and 'realism' which has prevailed in interpretations of the thought of the period is of doubtful descriptive and analytical value.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CWS	Cooperative Wholesale Society
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	The discipline of International Relations
ITU	International Telegraphic Union
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WTO	World Trade Organization

PREFACE

This thesis attempts to add to a body of literature that has grown up in recent years which casts doubt on the conventional picture of inter-war international thought. Since the publication of E. H. Carr's famous critique, The Twenty Years' Crisis, this period has been almost invariably seen as the 'utopian' phase of IR thinking. The working hypothesis of this study is that this largely pejorative label deceives as much as it reveals. Although they were guilty of many things the so called utopians were not as naïve in their assumptions, as simplistic in their analysis, nor as uniform in their outlook as the received wisdom suggests. I attempt to demonstrate this through a detailed analysis of one of the most prolific writers on international questions during the period, Leonard Woolf.

The thesis has been in the making, on and off, for nine years. During that time I have incurred many debts of gratitude and it gives me particular pleasure to record some of them here. I was lucky enough to receive an Economic and Social Research Council Competition Award for the years 1987/88 and 1988/89. This enabled me to get the project off the ground. Paul Taylor, my supervisor, first suggested that Leonard Woolf might be an interesting character to have a look at. He has been a consistent source of encouragement and good advice. I have benefitted considerably from conversations on the subject with Elaine

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An earlier version of what became Chapters 3 and 4 was presented to the British International Studies Association Conference at Newcastle in 1990. A slightly modified version of Chapter 2 was presented to the Millennium

Anniversary Conference in 1996. Various bits and pieces of 'work in progress' were presented to seminars and workshops at the LSE during 1989 and 1990. The comments, suggestions, and criticisms received at these meetings have been invaluable as have those of Katerina Delacoura, who read Chapter 7, Margot Light, who read Chapter 8, and especially Spyros Economides, who found the time during a busy teaching schedule to read and comment on the entire thesis.

Finally I would like to express my deep gratitude to Debra Mo who has had to live with this as long as I have, and to my parents, Ted and Gladys, who will be almost as pleased as I to see it done.

Chapter One

Fabian, Co-operator, Internationalist, Anti-Imperialist, and ... Utopian?

By way of introduction this chapter does two things. Firstly, it provides a sketch of Woolf's life and political career. Secondly, it enquires into and seeks to ascertain Woolf's position and reputation in post-war international studies.¹

Woolf's Career

Leonard Sidney Woolf (1880-1969) was born in London, the son of a prominent Q.C.. He was educated at St. Paul's and, on winning a scholarship, at Trinity College, Cambridge. Not long after arriving at Cambridge he was invited to join the Apostles. It was as a member of this exclusive intellectual and aesthetic circle that he first met J. M. Keynes, E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Thoby Stephen (whose sister, Virginia Stephen, later became his wife), and his tutor, G. E. Moore. Moore's philosophy that all essential truths are simple truths had a profound influence on the group. In a way it constituted the intellectual cement which held it together, in one form or another, long after Cambridge.

On graduation Woolf decided to pursue a career in the

¹ In using this term I have in mind not only the works of professional IR scholars, but any work - historical, philosophical, sociological, and so on - which seeks to advance our understanding of the relations between states and other significant actors in world politics.

civil service. His first choice of department, the Home Office, turned him down. Disappointed, he changed tack and applied, this time successfully, for an Eastern Cadetship. In 1904 he set sail for Ceylon. Woolf served as a colonial administrator in Ceylon from 1904-1911, gaining a reputation as a tough but efficient administrator. It is likely that he would have achieved high office had he remained in the colony.² But he missed the rarefied atmosphere of Cambridge, and in 1911 he resigned his commission, returned to England, and embarked on an at first highly precarious literary career. Within a few years he had married Virginia and published his first book, a novel subtly critical of imperialism, based on his experiences in Ceylon.³

Woolf's first foray into politics came with the suffrage movement and, in particular, the Women's Co-operative Guild. During the early War years he wrote a number of pamphlets for the Guild on Co-operative economic organisation.⁴ It was at this time that Woolf became a

² See Woolf, Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904-1911 (London, 1961); Letters of Leonard Woolf, (Frederic Spotts, ed.), (London, 1990); and T. J. Barron, 'Before the Deluge: Leonard Woolf in Ceylon', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 6, 1 (1977), 47-63.

³ Woolf, The Village in the Jungle (Oxford, 1981 [first published in 1913]). This is the only non-autobiographical work of Woolf's still in print.

⁴ For example, The Control of Industry by Co-operators and Trade Unionists (London, 1914); Education and the Co-operative Movement (London, 1914); Co-operation and the War: Co-operative Action in National Crises (London, 1915). Woolf was a lifelong supporter of the Co-operative Movement.

Fabian socialist. His first work for the Fabians, commissioned by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, was a study of professional associations. But before the work was finished Sidney Webb, conscious of Woolf's overseas experience, invited him to write a study on 'such international agreements as may prevent another war'.⁵ Up until this point the Fabian Society had shown remarkably little interest in the world beyond Britain. Woolf's study was the first major project on international relations to be commissioned by the Society.⁶ As well as being Woolf's first work on the subject it is also his most substantial and enduring. Sir Duncan Wilson has described it as 'perhaps the most permanently valuable of his political writings'.⁷

The combination of overseas experience and critical acclaim for his books secured for him the position of Fabian 'expert' on international affairs, a status he retained throughout the inter-war period. He took part in lecture tours and became a prominent member of various Fabian committees including the International and Colonial

⁵ Letter from Sidney Webb to Woolf, quoted in Duncan Wilson, Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography (London, 1978), 62. The project was funded by a donation solicited by George Bernard Shaw from the Quaker philanthropist Joseph Rowntree.

⁶ It was first published in the New Statesman ('Suggestions for the Prevention of War', Special Supplement Parts I and II, 10 and 17 July 1915); and later in book form, together with a much larger section on non-governmental organizations, as International Government (London, 1916) [further details provided in Chapter 3].

⁷ Wilson, Leonard Woolf, 62.

Bureaux of the Fabian Society Research Department. In 1918, however, his principal political affiliation shifted from the Fabian Society to the Labour party. In that year the Labour party commissioned Woolf to write his influential Empire and Commerce in Africa. The book established Woolf's reputation as a leading anti-imperialist thinker. From 1918-1945 he was Secretary of the Labour party's Advisory Committee on International Questions, and from 1924-1945 he was Secretary of the party's sister committee on Imperial Questions.

Outside the Labour movement, Woolf was a co-founder of the League of Nations Society, and a prominent member the Union of Democratic Control. He founded the Hogarth Press with Virginia in 1917. The press quickly established itself as a major publisher of modernist literature and poetry, publishing works by Eliot, Forster, Joyce, Keynes, Isherwood, Spender, Virginia Woolf, and some of the first English translations of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Freud.⁸ He helped to establish the Centre-Left journal Political Quarterly, and was one of its editors from its inception in 1931 until 1959. He also held, at various times, posts with newspapers, journals, and reviews, including the Contemporary Review (editor), the Nation (political and later literary editor), and the New Statesman (director).

Woolf wrote on a range of subjects, but his main works

⁸ The Woolfs were also great innovators in book design. Cover and title-page designs were often commissioned from Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, and other Bloomsbury artists.

concern international relations broadly defined. During his long career he wrote more than two dozen books, most notable among them being, along with his highly acclaimed five volume autobiography, International Government, Empire and Commerce in Africa, Imperialism and Civilization (1928), Barbarians at the Gate (1939), and The War for Peace (1940). He wrote about the same number of pamphlets, most notably The League and Abyssinia (1936), The International Post-War Settlement (1944), and the controversial Foreign Policy: The Labour Party's Dilemma (1947), and numerous articles. Woolf was also a prolific reviewer of books, reviewing many hundreds on a wide range of subjects with a strong preference for biographical and historical works.⁹

Woolf's Reputation

There are few references to Woolf's work in the landmark texts of post-1945 international studies. This is mainly due to the fact that Woolf is generally regarded, along with many other more or less like-minded thinkers, as an 'idealist' or 'utopian'.¹⁰ Since the publication of E. H.

⁹ For an analysis of Woolf's career as a reviewer see Leila Luedeking, 'Leonard Woolf and the Book Review', in Luedeking and Edmonds, Leonard Woolf: A Bibliography, 284-90. 1,703 items are listed in this outstanding work, around 1,000 of them book reviews.

¹⁰ Carr used the term 'utopian'. Most writers since, especially American, have used the term 'idealist'. The terms have become very largely interchangeable. I use the terms interchangeably throughout this study. For the most part I use 'utopian'.

Carr's famous assault on utopianism such thinkers have been generally viewed, in Bull's words, as 'not at all profound' and 'not worth reading now except for the light they throw on the preoccupations and presuppositions of their time and place'.¹¹ Yet Woolf does not feature in Carr's remarkably short list of utopian thinkers.¹² Like so many men of his time his fate seems to have been decided by his association with (a) the inter-war period, (b) progressivist writing, and (c) the League of Nations. Even though it is far from certain that Carr meant the term to be understood in this way, it seems to be the case that all those writing at that time who believed in the desirability and possibility of progressive change, and who saw the League as a useful instrument for bringing it about, have thereby stood condemned of 'utopian' inclinations.

The concept of utopianism will be scrutinized in the following chapter. At this point it is interesting to note that those post-war scholars who looked at Woolf's work in any detail have tended to shy away from using such uncompromising language. Martin Wight, for example, describes Woolf as a rationalist. J. H. Grainger describes him, somewhat elaborately, as a 'strenuous rationalist world-citizen in politics'. George Modelski, by way of

¹¹ Hedley Bull, 'The Theory of International Politics 1919-1969', in Brian Porter (ed.), The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919-1969 (London, 1972), 34.

¹² See Peter Wilson, 'The Twenty Years' Crisis and the Category of 'Idealism' in International Relations', in David Long and Peter Wilson (eds.), Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed (Oxford, 1995), 1-24.

contrast, sees him as a pluralist. And Craig Murphy, to briefly cite another example, sees him as a 'critical liberal internationalist'.¹³

In the post-war period four authors in particular have discussed or drawn from Woolf's work. That fact that each of these authors focus on different facets of it and offer different interpretations as to the kind of thinker Woolf was suggests that his thought is far more complex than the simple label 'utopian' implies. In order to set the scene for the chapters that follow I propose to briefly summarize what they have to say.

Thomson, Meyer, and Briggs on Woolf

In their impressive and regrettably neglected study of the principles and processes of peacemaking, Thomson, Meyer, and Briggs assess contemporary proposals for a 'New Order' in terms of the dichotomy between realism and utopianism. The differences between the two, they contend, are (a) psychological, and (b) sociological. Concerning (a), the two perspectives differ with respect to 'the capacity of human nature to adapt itself to organized society, whether on the national or the international level'. Utopians tend to be optimistic about the extent to which 'by deliberate and rational effort' human beings can control their own

¹³ Martin Wight, International Theory: The Three Traditions, eds. Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (London, 1991), 129; J. H. Grainger, Patriotisms: Britain 1900-1939 (London, 1986), 331; George Modelski, The Principles of World Politics (New York, 1972), 320; Craig Murphy, International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850 (Cambridge, 1994), 25, 268.

lives and the social environment in which they live. As a consequence, 'the gist and tone of [their] argument tends to become a sustained effort to persuade all men to accept one set of beliefs: and the assumption is that if only enough people can be converted to these beliefs, the problem will be solved.' Realists, in contrast, tend to be pessimistic and sceptical. Their argument takes the form of 'a demonstration of the consequences which are likely to follow from actual developments ... a warning rather than an exhortation ... an analysis of prevailing and probable conditions, and a calculation of the likely trend of events.'

But theories and proposals differ not only on the conception of human nature on which they are premised, and their assessment of human capabilities. They also differ on (b) what human beings should try to achieve. At one extreme, utopians 'propound a long range vision of what is desirable, with their eyes on the furthest horizon and their minds fixed on ends rather than means.' At the other extreme, realists insist that 'only the most short-range vision of what is attainable in the given circumstances has any practical importance'. The 'power of idealism', they contend, is 'circumscribed by immediate material conditions'.

An important set of proposals, however, do not fall neatly into either the utopian or the realist categories. Thomson et al therefore propose a further category, 'semi-utopian'. In this category 'Utopianism and optimism

predominate' but proposals are 'considerably qualified in detail and application'. Semi-utopian proposals 'try to keep in tune' with existing political, social, economic, and psychological conditions, but recognize that the real world of tomorrow may not be the same as the real world of today. Even though the targets set by semi-utopians may not be realistic now, they may become so with changed circumstances in the not-too-distant-future.¹⁴

For Thomson and his team the writings of Leonard Woolf constitute the 'most striking example' of proposals of this kind. They describe International Government as

a brilliant examination of the technique of peacemaking, and of how rational order and the rule of law might replace the disastrous 'balance of power' sought by pre-war diplomacy. It was a prophetic book, called utopian at the time, yet making proposals of the very kind that were attempted in 1919.

Moreover

after the failure of the League and the breakdown of all international government, Mr Woolf re-stated his thesis in modern terms. He adhered to the basic principles of the League of Nations (or rather of a League of Nations), as distinct from the cult of federalism then prevailing, and at the same time he counter-attacked the 'Realists' who regarded the conceptions of the League as dead and discredited. Again, with the shift of prevalent opinion away from federalism towards the notion of a 'revised League', Mr Woolf has had the sad satisfaction of seeing his 'utopian' proposals reaching their target a few years later.¹⁵

It is also worth noting that the authors of this study placed Woolf's International Government and his The War for Peace alongside Carr's The Twenty Years' Crisis and

¹⁴ David Thomson, E. Meyer, and Asa Briggs, Patterns of Peacemaking (London, 1945), 149-50, 162.

¹⁵ Ibid. 163.

Conditions of Peace, Hayek's The Road to Serfdom, Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia and Man and Society, and David Mitrany's A Working Peace System, as books 'which have evolved a more scientific approach to international relations, and which have exerted a special influence on contemporary thought about peacemaking'.¹⁶ With respect to one important study at least, therefore, Woolf's utopianism was qualified and not of such a kind as to preclude him from serious scholarly attention.

Archer on Woolf

In his wide-ranging historical survey and theoretical analysis of writings on international organization, Clive Archer divides his subject-matter into four categories: traditionalist, revisionist, Marxist, and Third World. He points out that these categories are not watertight and that there is some overlap especially between the traditionalist and the revisionist paradigms on the one hand, and the Marxist and the Third World paradigms on the other. The primary distinction between them is level of analysis. Traditionalists conceive international relations in terms of inter-state relations; revisionists in terms of inter-societal or transnational relations; Marxists in terms of class; and Third World writers in terms of class and core-periphery relations. Within each paradigm Archer identifies several main lines of thought. The traditionalist paradigm, for example, contains four such

¹⁶ Ibid. 389.

lines of thought: international law, world law, international government, and realist.¹⁷

Woolf is chosen as an exemplar of the international government perspective. Archer does not define what he means by 'international government'. Nor does he reflect on the various meanings that have been given to the term in the past. He, nonetheless, proceeds to summarize the major tenets of Woolf's position. He records Woolf's view that international government was not an entirely new phenomenon and that it had already, by 1916, been accepted in diplomatic gatherings, public and private international unions, and commodity agreements. Archer then briefly describes Woolf's plans for the further regulation of international activity and outlines his proposals for an 'Supranational Authority to Prevent War'. This would consist of: (a) an 'International High Court' for the settlement of justiciable disputes; (b) an 'International Council' of state representatives for the settlement of non-justiciable disputes; and, (c) an 'International Secretariat' for general administration, investigation, and recommendation. Woolf's proposal of a twelve month 'cooling off' period is noted, as is plan for a generalized system of sanctions in which all states would be bound to make 'common cause, even to the point of war, against any state violating a fundamental obligation.¹⁸

¹⁷ Clive Archer, International Organizations (London, 1983), 68-125.

¹⁸ Ibid. 73-4.

Although Archer regards Woolf as an exemplar of and, indeed, the main contributor to the international government perspective, he also recognizes that he was a forerunner of functionalism, and that there is therefore a considerable 'revisionist' element in his work. Indeed, Archer draws extensively on International Government for his own account of the nineteenth century development of both international governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations¹⁹.

Archer notes that Woolf along with other practical and intellectual supporters of the League are often classified as 'idealists' or 'neo-Grotians'²⁰. He relies on his assessment of the international government approach on Hedley Bull's analysis and critique of neo-Grotianism. Accordingly, Woolf: (a) overestimated the degree of solidarity in international relations; (b) exalted the international interest over the national interest without explaining how the former could be determined; (c) advocated constitutional reform over revolution as a means of transcending the international society without enquiring into whether 'states could become the agents of their own extinction'; (d) gave priority to respect for legality over the need for change; and, (e) failed to recognize the static nature of the international legal system as they

¹⁹ Ibid. 12-13, 83.

²⁰ Significantly, Archer puts the former term in inverted commas but not the latter. Ibid. 74.

construed it.²¹

There are a number of problems with Archer's reliance on Bull's critique and these will be examined in Chapter 4. For the time being it is only necessary to note Archer's hesitation to use the label 'idealist' as a descriptive term for Woolf's thought on international government, and his reliance, instead, on 'traditionalism', 'revisionism', and 'neo-grotianism'.

Etherington on Woolf

Woolf's writing on imperialism is critically discussed by Norman Etherington in his Theories of Imperialism. Etherington has no doubt about the impact of Woolf's work. He describes how, through books like Empire and Commerce in Africa and Economic Imperialism, and his political and propaganda work for the Labour party and the Fabian Society, Woolf became a major figure in the inter-war anti-imperialist movement. His ideas influenced some of the most prominent anti-colonialist writers and propagandists of the time. Indeed Empire and Commerce in Africa 'changed the way English-speaking peoples thought and wrote about imperialism'. It joined Hobson's Imperialism as a standard work on the subject and '(b)ecause it supplied far more historical detail than Hobson's book, it was much more

²¹ Hedley Bull, 'The Grotian Conception of International Society', in H. Butterfield and M. Wight, (eds.) Diplomatic Investigations (London, 1966), 51-73.

useful as a reference'.²²

But the extensive impact of Woolf's book is not something Etherington deems particularly worthy of celebration. He criticizes Woolf for his ignorance of pre-war debates and for not considering the classical theories of Hobson, Lenin, Hilferding, and Luxemburg. Woolf's work thus represented a 'sharp break with the past'. It also set in motion a 'monumental misunderstanding' of the meaning and significance of imperialism as a socio-political phenomenon.²³

Although Empire and Commerce contains many detailed and fascinating accounts of British and French activities, official and non-official, in various parts of Africa, Woolf sometimes, Etherington contends, displays a remarkable disregard for chronological accuracy. He unwittingly, for example, gives not one but several dates for the onset of economic imperialism: ranging from 1839 to the 1880s. This cavalier lack of precision severely blunts his analysis. Etherington further contends that although most of Woolf's examples are taken from the 1890s, an incautious reading would give the impression that all of Europe's dealings with Africa in the nineteenth century, not just the colonial annexations of the last decade, were motivated by economics.

According to Etherington, Woolf made five innovations

²² Norman Etherington, Theories of Imperialism: War, Conquest and Capital (Beckenham, 1984), 182.

²³ Ibid. 176-7.

in the definition and explanation of imperialism which many later scholars - including conservative-minded Round Table scholars whose object was to disprove Woolf's theory of economic imperialism - uncritically accepted. First, questions of imperialism became separated from broader questions of militarism, protectionism, and war. The classical theorists, by way of contrast, had linked these phenomena in an explicitly structural way. Second, the definition of imperialism became restricted to only those situations where, in Woolf's words, 'the power and influence of the European form of state' is used in those areas 'where the European form of state has not developed'. Actions not involving the state were not therefore considered ~~to~~ imperialistic. In sharp contrast to Lenin and other Eastern and Central European thinkers, Woolf thus excluded the non-colonizing nations from the imperialist camp: he wrote for the most part as if imperialism and the acquisition of colonies were synonymous. Third, the term 'imperialism' became associated with virtually all of Europe's colonizing activity in the nineteenth century. Pre-war theorists, by contrast, had used it to describe those colonizing and other aggressive activities that were a product of the economic necessities generated by the 'late nineteenth century crisis of capitalism'. Fourth, Africa became widely accepted as the 'test case' of imperialism and causal theories about it. Hobson, by contrast, had considered Asia to be more important. Finally, Woolf's work led to the role of trade and trading

companies in the imperialist embroglio receiving much greater attention than the role of 'surplus' or 'finance' capital. Hobson, Hilferding, and Lenin had attached much greater importance to the latter than the former.

Suganami on Woolf

In his study of the importance of the domestic analogy in world order proposals, Hidemi Suganami selects Woolf as a representative of those thinkers who have applied the analogy in a straight-forward, unsophisticated, way. Suganami arrives at a five-fold typology of the various proposals for world order that have been put forward in the last two centuries or so: legal, diplomatic, democratic confederal, federal, and welfare institutional. The first two types are accurately seen as poles on a spectrum. The reason for this is that, in practice, those who have thought along these lines do not fall purely into one camp or the other, but rest somewhere along the spectrum, according to whether their legalistic use of the domestic analogy outweighs their belief in traditional diplomacy. Suganami considers Woolf's views as representative of those on the legalistic end of the spectrum. These thinkers advocate the 'peace through law' approach which, in its fullest form, urges the creation of an international organization equipped with judicial, legislative, and executive functions, parallel to those found domestically. Suganami contrasts the approach of Woolf with the American opponent of the League of Nations, Edwin Borchard.

Borchard rejected the domestic analogy and insisted that the pre-1914 system was superior to the League system. Legal prohibitions on the resort to war, the division of belligerents into aggressors and victims, and collective action to assist victims, while central to Woolf's thinking, were considered by Borchard to be not only ineffective, but positively harmful. Woolf argued that a collective security system was essential if war was to be prevented. Borchard argued that such a system was more likely to result in the extension and intensification of conflicts rather than their mitigation and resolution.

Suganami points out that Woolf did not consider the problem of war and the maintenance of peace to be sui generis. In Woolf's view the resolution of international conflict was qualitatively the same type of problem as the resolution of any other conflict. It was not therefore true that there was no experience to draw on in building a new international order. On the contrary, Woolf asserted, there was a wealth of experience, in fact four thousand years' worth. Just as cannibalism, duelling, cock-fighting, witch-burning, and slavery had been largely eradicated, so could war. Woolf accepted that the prevention of war may be a more complex problem, but it was not an essentially different one.²⁴

Suganami also points out that Woolf was one of the principal exponents of the 'reformed League idea'. Soon

²⁴ Hidemi Suganami, The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals (Cambridge, 1989), 94-113.

after the onset of the Second World War the question arose as to whether a new organization should be created to replace the discredited League and, if so, what form it should it take. By this time the League had many critics, ranging from those who wanted a revision of the Covenant, meaning primarily a strengthening of its collective security procedures, to those who believed that the whole idea was flawed. Woolf maintained that the League's approach to the problem of world order was essentially correct. He recognized that it had failed to preserve the peace, but contended that one instance of failure did not prove that the whole idea was wrong. He had an answer to those critics, like Carr, who condemned the League as utopian. Carr's view that the interests of nation-states were inherently incompatible and that leagues of nations were therefore impossible was nothing more than a realist dogma. For Woolf there was no a priori reason why power had a different nature and reality in international than it had in domestic society. Both were 'equally amenable to elimination and control'. The failure of the League did not mean that the League idea was intrinsically utopian any more than the failure of appeasement, Carr's preferred policy, meant that the idea of appeasement was intrinsically utopian. As Suganami explains, the main cause of the League's failure in Woolf's view was 'lack of psychological motivation on the part of its members to uphold its principles'. Another devastating war, he argued, would serve to induce such motivation in the

future. Woolf thus recommended moderate reform of the League, particularly the regionalization of its collective security procedures.²⁵

It is not Suganami's main concern to critique Woolf's position, but he does make a number of penetrating remarks. He contends, for example, that Woolf's approach is underpinned by two problematic assumptions: (i) that the punishment of a murderer is the central problem of government (aggressors being analogous to murderers); (ii) that the problem of maintaining order between two large, organized groups of individuals is the same as maintaining order between a small number of individuals. He argues with respect to (i) that the main job of government is not to cope with individual murderers, but to manage the demands of large powerful groups. Following Carr, Claude, and Brierly, he asserts that if experience tells us anything it is not how certain states manage to successfully deal with murderers but how some states manage to avoid civil wars. With respect to (ii) he argues that when united a group of individuals possesses a strength qualitatively different from that which each possesses individually. Following Claude, he describes the tendency to draw simple analogies between individuals and groups when thinking about social order as 'schoolboyish'.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid. 95.

²⁶ Ibid. 180-81.

Chapter Two

Utopianism and International Relations: A Framework for Analysis

Notwithstanding the reluctance of Thomson et al, Archer, Etherington, and Suganami to label Woolf 'utopian', such characterization predominates in IR. As mentioned, this is largely due to the time during which he for the most part wrote, his enthusiasm for the League, and his strongly held progressive beliefs. But does being utopian amount to anything more than these rather general things? In order to answer this question I propose, first of all, to examine, in chronological order of publication, ten well known and widely-relied-upon overviews of inter-war utopianism. These overviews vary in length, purpose, style, and structure. In the interests of clarity and coherence I will examine them in terms of five simple categories: premises; substantive hypotheses; prescriptions; assessment; and idealists cited. What do each of the accounts hold to be the central premises of utopianism, its main hypotheses, and its principal prescriptions? What conclusions have been reached with regard to their validity? Which thinkers and/or practitioners are considered significant and/or representative?

I accept that this approach results in some loss of intellectual context, stylistic continuity, and subtlety of exposition. Hollis and Smith, for example, are interested

in utopianism only in so far as it throws light on certain methodological issues, and their account is tailored accordingly. Yet the approach does have the merit of setting out in a highly visible form the various meanings that have been ascribed to this most slippery of concepts.

In the interests of precision I have sought, within the grammatical and stylistic constraints imposed by abstraction, to use the words of the authors themselves. Without wishing to anticipate the outcome of this enquiry, it transpires that the degree of consensus on what it means to be utopian is at best moderate. The guilt Woolf shares partly by association is therefore accompanied by a degree of uncertainty as to the nature of the crime.

Analysis

1. Bull¹

For Bull the idealist or 'progressivist' doctrines of the 1920s and 1930s grew out of the experiences of World War One - though their origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century and, more immediately, to 'pre-war writings about arbitration, international understanding, and the binding effects of world finance and commerce'.

Premises (i) Belief in progress.²

¹ Hedley Bull, 'The Theory of International Politics, 1919-1969', in Brian Porter (ed.), The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919-1969 (London, 1972), 33-6.

² This, for Bull, is the 'distinctive characteristic' of idealism. Ibid. 34-5.

Hypotheses (i) World War One demonstrated that radical change was needed in the international system. (ii) The international system that gave rise to World War One is 'capable of being transformed into a fundamentally more peaceful and just world order'. (iii) Such an order is 'in the making' as a result of 'the awakening of democracy', the growth of the 'international mind', the creation of the League of Nations, and the 'good works' and 'teachings' of 'men of peace or the enlightenment'. (iv) The responsibility of students of international relations is to 'assist this march of progress to overcome the ignorance, the prejudices, the ill-will, and the sinister interests that stood in its way'. (iv) The War and the creation of the League represents a sharp break with the past. The 'pre-war system' does not provide a source of guidance but 'a series of object lessons' about anarchy and disorder. Present and future possibilities are not limited by the 'test of previous experience' but are 'deducible from the needs of progress'.

Prescriptions (i) Disarmament. (ii) Outlawing war. (iii) Establishing an international police force. (iv) Collective security. (v) Peaceful change.

Assessment Bull puts 'idealism' in inverted commas arguing that in some respects it is a misleading term. '[I]t is not the case', he suggests, 'that these writers were especially insistent on the moral dimension of international

relations, and still less that they contributed anything important to our understanding of it'. In saying this Bull sets the tone for the rest of his article. He says, following Carr, that utopian doctrine 'clearly' became the special ideology of the satisfied powers; and he asserts that '[t]he "idealists" were not remarkable for their intellectual depth or powers of explanation, only for their intense commitment to a particular vision of what should happen. In their disparagement of the past they lost sight of a great deal that was already known: in some respects their work represented not an advance but a decline in understanding of international relations, an unlearning of old lessons which a later generation found it necessary to restate'. Bull further criticizes idealists for: being guided more by their hopes than 'the evidence at hand'; being preoccupied with international law, organization, and society at the expense of international politics; 'exalting the international interest over national interests (but without asking how the former was to be determined)'; elevating 'constitutional reform over revolution as a means of transcending the society of sovereign states (but without considering whether states could become the agents of their own extinction)'; and privileging 'respect for legality over the need for change (but without facing up to the fact that the international legal system, as they construed it, could not accommodate change)'. In addition he arraigns them for their 'innocence', 'facile optimism', 'narrow moralism', and their parochialism of human

sympathies.

Utopians Cited Alfred Zimmern, S. H. Bailey, Philip Noel-Baker, David Mitrany, James T. Shotwell, Pitman Potter, Parker T. Moon, H. N. Brailsford, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Leonard Woolf, Norman Angell, Jan Smuts, Arthur Ponsonby.

2. Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff³

In their popular textbook Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff trace the intellectual origins of inter-war utopianism to eighteenth century Enlightenment optimism, nineteenth century liberalism, and twentieth century Wilsonian idealism.

Premises (i) Faith in reason.⁴ (ii) Human behaviour is improvable, 'perhaps even perfectible'. (iii) Assumption of a natural harmony of interests among nations. (iv) 'Confidence in the peace-building function of the "world court of public opinion".' (v) Assumption that 'statesmen enjoy broad freedom of choice in the making of foreign policy'.

³ J. E. Dougherty and R. L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey, 2nd edn., (New York, 1981), 4-6, 84-5.

⁴ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff refer rather vaguely to utopianism's 'heavy reliance on reason in human affairs'. Ibid. 5.

Hypotheses (i) '[P]olitics can be made to conform to an ethical standard'. (ii) The nation-state system can be transformed through international law and organization.

Prescriptions (i) International law and organization.⁵
(ii) Disarmament.

Assessment Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff's account, as they acknowledge, 'draws heavily' from Carr. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are most critical of utopianism for its legalism and moralism. Their model utopian is, however, rather insubstantial and given Premise (ii), somewhat straw-man-like.

Utopians Cited Woodrow Wilson.

3. Vasquez⁶

Like Bull, John Vasquez traces the 'immediate origins' of the 'idealist paradigm' to the experience of the First World War and the feeling that such a conflagration must never be allowed to happen again.

Premises (i) Faith in reason, particularly the ability of reason to 'overcome the problem of war'. (ii) Belief in a

⁵ It is difficult to be more specific since Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff are vague on the means by which utopians felt 'international law and organization' was to play its transformatory role. Ibid. 84-5.

⁶ John Vasquez, The Power of Power Politics: A Critique, (London, 1983), 13-19.

basic harmony of interests and a 'nascent world community' of all humankind.

Hypotheses (i) A 'system of peace' can be established under 'proper conditions'. (ii) The scholar's purpose is to reveal this fundamental truth. (iii) Democracy leads to peace whereas dictatorship leads to war.⁷ (iv) The masses never benefit from war.

Prescriptions (i) The promotion of democracy to enable the masses to 'prevent sinister interests from promulgating wars'. (ii) The promotion of education to eliminate ignorance and prejudice. (iii) The creation at the global level of those institutions effective at preventing violence at the domestic level. (iv) Allied to this, emphasis on international law, arbitration, disarmament, collective security, and peaceful change. (v) The study, empirical and normative, of international organizations.

Assessment This account is also couched in neutral terms. Vasquez describes the beliefs of idealists, however, as 'theory-laden', and concludes that '[i]n many ways, the purpose of the idealist paradigm was to provide a panacea for the major problem of the twentieth century - war'. This could be construed as pejorative. Similarly, he accepts unreflectingly, if in different - Kuhnian - terms,

⁷ According to Vasquez this 'Wilsonian' contention constitutes the 'heart of the paradigm'. Ibid. 14.

Carr's judgement about the inadequacy of the theory and practice of utopianism in the 1930s. According to Vasquez, World War Two was an 'anomaly' for the idealist paradigm which precipitated a 'scientific crisis' that led to its displacement by realism.

Utopians Cited Woodrow Wilson, Alfred Zimmern, S. H. Bailey, Philip Noel-Baker, David Mitrany, James T. Shotwell, Pitman Potter, Parker T. Moon, James Bryce.

4. Taylor⁸

In one of the most detailed analyses published since The Twenty Years' Crisis⁹ - though still a slender one compared with historiographical studies of other schools of thought - Trevor Taylor states that '[i]n general utopianism is concerned with the formulation of an ideal polity and, to a lesser extent, with how such a polity might be established'. This is one of the few works that have sought to systematically examine the structure of utopianism as a body of thought.

⁸ Trevor Taylor, 'Utopianism', in Steve Smith (ed.) International Relations: British and American Approaches (London, 1985), 92-107.

⁹ In making this judgement I exclude Hidemi Suganami's study of world order proposals even though many of the thinkers he discusses are generally perceived as 'utopian'. This is because my concern here is to examine how utopianism has been delineated as an explicit category of thought or phase of thinking. I also exclude David Long and Peter Wilson (eds.) Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed (Oxford, 1995), since many of the arguments I make in this volume are a product of the research conducted for this thesis.

Premises (i) Belief in a harmony of interests between nations and human society as a whole, actual or potential, the foundations of this harmony being variously attributed to capitalism, socialism, self-determination, free trade, and the discovery that in modern societies self-interest lies in co-operation. (ii) Belief in the existence of objective justice detectable through reason or experience. (iii) Belief that people are 'basically rational, intelligent creatures, creating their own destiny, capable of foolishness and evil, but basically good'. (iv) Ideas will be implemented if they are good, rational, ideas.

Hypotheses (i) Morality is not culturally bound but absolute and universal. (ii) Wars often result from miscalculation. (iii) Wars are often a product of the 'machinations' of weapons manufacturers. (iv) War can be eliminated.

Prescriptions (i) International law should be strengthened. (ii) Education promoted. (iii) Collective security established. (iv) Open diplomacy encouraged. (v) Democracy promoted. (vi) A standing conference for the resolution of international disputes established.

Assessment As with the previous two accounts Taylor's is couched in neutral terms. The 'emotional readiness' of utopians to 'accept world government as a desirable and logical outcome of increasing human cooperation' is the

only significant point of criticism.

Utopians Cited Lowes Dickinson, Norman Angell, Alfred Zimmern, Woodrow Wilson, Philip Noel-Baker, S. H. Bailey, David Mitrany, James T. Shotwell, Pitman Potter, Parker T. Moon.

5. Smith¹⁰

The author's main purpose, in this lucid and trenchant brief exposition, is to demonstrate how idealism, 'as a school of thought', provoked writers dissatisfied with it to formulate an opposing approach. His account is primarily based on a reading of works by Zimmern, Dickinson, Shotwell, and Toynbee, with Carr ever-present in the background.

Premises (i) Faith in rational argument. (ii) Belief in the primacy of ideas. (iii) Belief in the existence of an underlying harmony of interests between nations. (iv) Faith in 'the law of progress'.¹¹

Hypotheses (i) War stems not from 'evil human nature' but from imperfect political arrangements. (ii) War is a barbaric act which 'gradually evolving civilizations, given

¹⁰ Michael Joseph Smith, Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger (Baton Rouge, La., 1986), 54-67.

¹¹ The term is Davies's. Smith describes this premise as the unique, and most 'relentlessly criticized', facet of inter-war idealist thought. Ibid. 60-1.

the will to do so, can eradicate.'¹² (iii) Human beings are not by nature bellicose but they are 'frustratingly stubborn in their attachment to outmoded ideas.' Most people 'follow passion, not reason' and a chief obstacle to 'genuine internationalism' is 'muddled thinking'.¹³ (iv) The duty of the scholar is 'to educate people of all nationalities to a higher notion of internationalism'.¹⁴ (v) Pursuing 'strictly' national interests 'by means of a balance of power' is futile. The balance of power always ends in war. (vi) The cause of war lies in the international anarchy of sovereign states.¹⁵ (vii) Peace is a common interest and therefore every conflict is amenable to 'rational mediation to everyone's benefit'.¹⁶ (viii) Nationalism and the pursuit of national self-interest are 'atavisms inhibiting the progress of international civilization'.¹⁷

Prescriptions (i) Greater education. (ii) Promotion of public understanding of and broad support for the League (and internationalism generally). (iii) The application of

¹² Ibid. 55.

¹³ Ibid. 55-6, quoting Toynbee and Dickinson.

¹⁴ Ibid. 57.

¹⁵ This and Hypothesis (v) taken from Dickinson, *ibid.* 58.

¹⁶ According to Smith this conviction 'was basic to all idealists; indeed, it was their constant refrain, expressed in suitably apocalyptic rhetoric.' *Ibid.* 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 65, 67.

'sound academic and scientific principles to the recurring problems of national and international society'.¹⁸ (iv) An end to protectionism. (v) Disarmament. (vi) The construction of apparatus for the peaceable settlement of disputes. (vii) Putting an end, through the League, to the international anarchy. (viii) The creation of an international police force. (ix) Promotion of the international rule of law.

Assessment The structure of Smith's account consists of a relatively dispassionate description and analysis of idealism, accompanied by a few paragraphs of less dispassionate commentary generally satirical in tone. A good example of this is his vivid opening sentence: 'To move from Weber's world of inexorable conflicts and tragic ethical dilemmas to the progressive universe of the interwar Anglo-American idealists is like leaving an uninterrupted performance of Wagner's Ring Cycle for a civic meeting punctuated by communal singing of hymns by S. S. Wesley.'¹⁹ In several places Smith refers to the 'idealist hymn to internationalism' and, equally half-mockingly, to the 'higher truths' which they claimed to have held.²⁰ He also refers to the 'exasperated outbursts' of League devotees 'against inexplicably hidebound human nature' and the indignation they felt towards their

¹⁸ Ibid. 57-8, summarising Shotwell.

¹⁹ Ibid. 54.

²⁰ Ibid. 54, 60, 67.

'perfidious' governments.²¹ There is more than a hint of disparagement in references to the 'apocalyptic rhetoric' employed by idealists (the frequently expressed warning of the 1930s, often in theological garb, that mankind faced a fateful choice in which the very existence of civilization was at stake, was at the time, generally, and not unreasonably, held to be real not rhetorical).²² In concluding Smith argues, echoing Bull, that the idealists contributed little to the understanding of the moral problems of statecraft. Their strong normative beliefs rendered every question of policy simple: 'did it promote the League and the international rule of law? The only areas for discussion lay in devising the most effective machinery.'²³

On a more positive note, Smith contends that the idealists were right to insist that their governments take a principled stand over Abyssinia and hold firm on sanctions. Certain aspects of Toynbee's reading of events in the mid-1930s are held to be 'prescient'.²⁴ It should also be noted that Smith is highly critical of many aspects of Carr's analysis, particularly the way in which he employs the sociology of knowledge ('crudely teleological',

²¹ Ibid. 55.

²² Ibid. 59-60. Also note (62) Smith's comment that idealist writers greeted the Briand-Kellogg pact ('an undertaking by sinners no longer to sin') as 'an event just short of the Second Coming'.

²³ Ibid. 67.

²⁴ Ibid. 65-7.

'shallow', 'crudely materialist'), and the way in which he conceives and applies his concept of power ('extraordinarily broad and undifferentiated', 'debilitatingly inclusive', 'deterministic', 'platitudinous').²⁵ Carr's characterization of utopianism, however, is accepted largely unquestioned.²⁶

Idealists Cited Alfred Zimmern, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, James Shotwell, Gilbert Murray, Arnold Toynbee, Nicholas Murray Butler (internationalist writer and president of Columbia University), David Davies, Raymond D. Fosdick (president of the American League of Nations Association). Also mentioned: the 'liberal' (and therefore 'idealist'?) founders of the League of Nations Association: Charles Beard and Herbert Croly.

6. Kegley and Wittkopf²⁷

Although they do not suggest why, Kegley and Wittkopf begin their textbook survey by asserting that, of the various perspectives that competed for attention during the inter-

²⁵ Ibid. 69, 72, 97, 94, 93, 76, 94.

²⁶ I say 'largely' because Smith agrees with Hedley Bull ('The Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years On', International Journal, 24/4 (1969), 627) that Carr's series of dichotomies - free will:determinism = theory:practice = left:right = ethics:politics = utopia:reality - is 'breathtaking'. He adds that as well as 'artificial' and 'vastly oversimplified' they are also 'slanted obviously in favour of "reality" '. Ibid. 69-70.

²⁷ Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and Eugene R. Wittkopf, World Politics: Trend and Transformation (New York, 1989), 12-15.

war years, 'political idealism' emerged as dominant. Stimulated by the 'advent of a catastrophic global war in 1914' its main concern was to discover 'sustainable generalizations about the conditions under which war might be avoided and peace maintained'. They emphasize the theoretical nature of this endeavour: 'a theory was needed that could predict the outbreak of wars and that could tell policymakers what factors could be manipulated or controlled to prevent them'.

Premises (i) '[H]uman nature is essentially "good" or altruistic and people are therefore capable of mutual aid and collaboration'. (ii) '[T]he fundamental human concern for the welfare of others makes progress possible'; the 'Enlightenment's faith in the possibility of improving civilization' thus being reaffirmed.

Hypotheses (i) '[B]ad behavior is the product not of evil people but of evil institutions and structural arrangements that motivate people to act selfishly and to harm others - including making war'. War can therefore be eliminated by eliminating the institutions which encourage it. (ii) The balance of power system is 'anarchical' and 'war-prone'. (iii) War is an international problem requiring collective rather than national efforts to eliminate it. (iv) World public opinion stands behind peace and diplomacy.

Prescriptions (i) The creation of international

institutions such as the League 'to replace the anarchical and war-prone balance-of-power system composed of independent territorial states'. (ii) Increased international cooperation on social matters. (iii) The creation of legal institutions and processes, as represented by the Permanent Court of International Justice and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, to settle international disputes and inhibit recourse to war. (iv) Disarmament and arms control. (v) The promotion of attitudinal change away from parochial to more inclusive loyalties. (vi) Free trade. (vii) The substitution of 'open covenants, openly arrived at' for secret diplomacy. (viii) The abolition of 'interlocking bilateral alliances'. (ix) Self-determination. (x) The spread of democratic domestic institutions.²⁸

Assessment Kegley and Wittkopf acknowledge that idealists

²⁸ 'President Woodrow Wilson's celebrated Fourteen Points speech ... expressed the sentiments of the idealist image and program perhaps better than did any other statement'. Ibid. 14. See also Charles W. Kegley, Jr., 'The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities', International Studies Quarterly, 37, 2 (1993), 131-46. Here Kegley argues the case for a reconstructed realist paradigm inspired by 'Wilsonian idealism' a term which he uses interchangeably with 'liberalism', the 'liberalist approach', the 'idealist tradition', and 'neoliberal idealism'. In turn all of these things are identified with President Wilson's Fourteen Points which he variously, and equally confusingly, describes as a 'vision', a 'script', an 'image', a 'program', a 'philosophy', and a 'theory'. There are two significant additions to the earlier, Kegley and Wittkopf, inventory: (i) that the interests and goals of states are not immutable but subject to change with changed circumstances; (ii) that international machinery is needed to resolve ethnic conflicts and protect human rights and the rights of minorities (137-8).

held widely divergent views of world politics²⁹ and stress that not all of them subscribed to each of the tenets they list with equal conviction. They also acknowledge, remarkably, that their account is 'simplistically worded'. Certainly, Premise (i) and Hypothesis (i) make idealists sound childlike to say the least. This notwithstanding, their treatment of the subject is not on the whole pejorative despite the fact that their sympathies clearly lie with realism (which, notwithstanding certain deficiencies, they describe as 'compelling' and 'insightful'). As far as explicit assessment of idealism goes, they describe idealist discourse as 'laced with overtones of moralism, optimism, and internationalism'.

Utopians Cited Woodrow Wilson.

7. Hollis and Smith³⁰

In common with most interpretations Hollis and Smith state that idealism arose in the aftermath of the First World War and became the dominant mode of thinking until events in the 1930s began to challenge its basic assumptions.

Premises (i) Faith in progress grounded in the belief that

²⁹ Though not without ambiguity since idealists are united by their 'shared assumptions about reality' and the 'homogeneity of their conclusions', which makes one wonder about the matters they 'widely diverge' on.

³⁰ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, Explaining and Understanding International Relations (Oxford, 1990), 10-22, 217.

[a] human beings have reconcilable goals such as peace, health, and prosperity and [b] institutions are human constructs which, once created, can extensively influence people's thought and actions. (ii) A 'liberal' assumption of human nature. Accordingly, good men and women never want war. If war breaks out it is consequently due either to misunderstanding or 'the dominance of uneducated or uncivilized minds in the political process'.

Hypotheses (i) War is no longer able to achieve its objectives and has become an unusable form of statecraft. (ii) The causes of war are misunderstanding between leaders, lack of democratic control, and absence of 'suitable institutions to encourage cooperation'.

Prescriptions (i) The spread of statehood and democracy. (ii) The development of mediation processes and organizational structures 'within which leaders could perceive more accurately the (non-aggressive) aims of their potential adversaries'. (iii) The outlawing of war and the creation of an international police force.

Assessment Hollis and Smith's account is for the most part neutrally explicated. They implicitly accept, however, Carr's condemnation of utopians for privileging wishing over thinking, generalisation over observation, ends over means, and for adopting an uncritical approach towards 'existing facts and available means'. They also accept

Carr's view that utopianism could not explain the harrowing events of the 1930s and that it reflected the preoccupations and interests of the status quo powers in which it originated.

Utopians Cited Woodrow Wilson, Alfred Zimmern (whose The League of Nations and the Rule of Law is described as the best example of idealist writing).

8. Booth³¹

Since the end of the Cold War several attempts have been made to view utopianism in a more favourable light. Foremost among these is Ken Booth's attempt to restore the role and reputation of utopianism as a respectable intellectual tradition. Booth does not separate inter-war utopianism from the wider utopian tradition but a large part of his assessment is based on a reading of what happened during that period both in the world of ideas and in the material world.

Premises (i) Politics is rooted in ethics. (ii) It is possible, through reason, to arrive at a 'universal ethical standpoint'. (iii) There is a significant voluntarist element in international politics ('the world does not have to look like the one we are familiar with').

³¹ Ken Booth, 'Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice', International Affairs, 67, 3 (1991), 527-545.

Hypotheses (i) The setting of goals can be a catalyst for purposeful action. (ii) The world of sovereign states is not necessarily a 'war system'. (iii) The tendency of realists to privilege short-term over long-term problems can have disastrous consequences.

Prescriptions (i) The 'study and strengthening of international organizations and international law'. (ii) An international police force. (iii) Attention in IR to 'the possible' and 'the desirable' as well as 'the actual'. (iii) More attention to long-term problems. (iii) Change through the 'education of desire' - 'the desire for a better way of being and living'. (iv) More emphasis on ethics, less on power and order.

Assessment Whereas most expositors of utopianism define it in terms of its defects, Booth defines it in terms of its strengths. He is critical of certain 'brands' of utopianism, such as Lord Davies's ideas on the enforcement of peace by an international police force based on air power. He favours instead reformist and pragmatic 'process utopias' over 'end-point utopias' (which 'look towards a future blueprint, such as world government, when history virtually comes to a stop'). Generally, however, the aspects of utopianism he draws to our attention are the ones he considers salutary and of relevance for current thinking.

Utopians Cited David Davies. By implication: Leonard Woolf. Kant cited as the principal intellectual progenitor. Richard Falk as an important contemporary practitioner.

9. Olson and Groom³²

The idealist tradition, according to Olson and Groom, was one of four threads of international political thought that emerged in the nineteenth century and would be woven into IR in the twentieth. (The other three, incidentally^{al}, being: the study of diplomacy and international law; realpolitik; and Marxism). The formation of this new discipline was 'accelerated by the coming of the First World War', and idealism, 'combined with political activism in the peace movement', dominated the 'first period of consensus'. This lasted from 1916 until the demise of the League system in the early 1930s.

Premises (i) Hopeful and optimistic about the future of world affairs.

Hypotheses (i) Peace, as opposed to power, is the 'main currency of IR'.³³ (ii) The League constitutes an alternative to power politics. (iii) International law and organization is efficacious. (iv) The scientific study of

³² William Olson and A. J. R. Groom, International Relations Then and Now: Origins and Trends in Interpretation (London, 1991), 46-134.

³³ A curious analogy. Ibid. 79.

international relations will help end war.

Prescriptions (i) Open covenants, openly arrived at. (ii) Education for world citizenship. (iii) The scientific study of international relations. (iii) Promotion of the League and a 'spirit of international cooperation'.

Assessment It is difficult to pin down Olson and Groom's opinion of idealism. They say that idealism dominated the 'first period of consensus'. But they also say that the 'mainstream literature' of the 1920s did not 'particularly reflect' the 'idealist internationalist' paradigm 'however much some of those outside the IR professional literature may have done so'. The firm implication is that by 'mainstream literature' they have in mind those works produced chiefly by professional IR scholars, and that idealism (used interchangeably with 'liberal internationalism', 'idealist internationalism', and 'the new internationalism') was primarily an outlook shared and promulgated by non-professionals.³⁴ But Sir Alfred Zimmern, a 'mainstream' figure by any standard, is described as 'the consummate idealist'³⁵; and Olson and

³⁴ Ibid. 69-70, 73. See also 79-80 where, in discussing the decline of the idealist paradigm in the 1930s and its replacement by the realist paradigm, the authors clearly equate idealism with the work of non-professional 'popular' writers. The 'emerging professional or mainstream literature of international relations', by contrast, 'strove for balance between the two perspectives' (no evidence provided).

³⁵ Ibid. 94.

Groom provide no evidence to suggest that he was in any way exceptional - a professional scholar but also, uncharacteristically, an idealist. Moreover, despite to a large extent disassociating the 'mainstream literature', and therefore the discipline of International Relations, from the obloquy of idealism, they nonetheless describe the first period of 'disciplinary consensus' as the 'innocent phase', an adjective, following Carr, usually applied to idealism. This rather confusing picture is not, regrettably, clarified by Olson and Groom's definition of 'mainstream literature': 'works dealing systematically with the entire world, taking into account insights from several disciplines'.³⁶ A number of books by such consummate non-professionals as Wells, Brailsford, Hobson, and indeed Woolf, fit this definition depending on one's interpretation of 'dealing systematically'. They certainly sought to deal with the world as a whole and they utilized material from a wide variety of sources both from within the academy and without.

The confusion resulting from this lack of rigour in defining 'mainstream literature' and the failure to adequately distinguish it from 'the discipline' and 'idealism', makes it difficult to deduce Olson and Groom's opinions about the latter. It is difficult to be certain whether their criticisms refer to one, two, or all three of these items. This being said, the following critical remarks should be noted. (i) In a number of their works,

³⁶ Ibid. 52.

Zimmern and Ben Charrington (author of Methods of Teaching International Attitudes published in 1934) are criticized for seeking to 'make a point' rather than advance scientific understanding. In their work, '[a]ttitude outweighed analysis'. Furthermore, Zimmern is rebuked for 'broadened hopelessly the range of what IR should encompass' and his 'excessive eclecticism' impeded rather than encouraged acceptance of the field as a 'true discipline'.³⁷ (ii) The 'new internationalists' are reproached for failing to see the 'trees for the wood'. So too are various 'cause groups' for allowing 'ends to color means' in their 'zeal for international change'.³⁸ (iii) The 'literature of the League period' (post-1931?; mainstream, non-mainstream, or both?) is accused of 'naïveté'.³⁹ (iv) Carr's view that '[t]he course of events after 1931 clearly revealed the inadequacy of pure aspiration as the basis for a science of international politics, and made it possible for the first time to embark on serious critical and analytical thought about international problems', is quoted approvingly.⁴⁰ (v) There is, arguably, implied criticism in Olson and Groom's argument that the first period of (idealist) consensus was

³⁷ Ibid. 73-4. See also 110 where Morgenthau and Thompson are cited criticising Zimmern for his 'extreme vagueness', 'aimless humanitarianism', and 'unconcern with methodological problems'.

³⁸ Ibid. 74.

³⁹ Ibid. 81. See also 124.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 91-2. See also 109.

not entirely transcended by the second (realist) period since both were state-centric in approach.

On a more positive note it is contended that 'genuine idealists' like Zimmern and especially Toynbee were not totally out of touch with reality. Toynbee was 'a realist ahead of his time in that he clearly foresaw the coming impact of ... the "Third World".' Similarly, Zimmern is credited with anticipating 'the stress now being placed on values by statesman and scholar alike'.⁴¹

Idealists Cited Alfred Zimmern, Ben Charrington, Arnold Toynbee.⁴²

10. Knutsen⁴³

In his conceptually rich introduction to the history of international relations theory, Torbjörn Knutsen states that the 'new utopian discipline of International Relations', which he also calls the 'new Enlightenment-liberal discipline', was dominated by the arguments and vision of Woodrow Wilson, and 'preoccupied with finding reason-based substitutes for war'.

⁴¹ Ibid. 95-6.

⁴² Numerous other writers are cited, including J. A. Hobson, David Davies and Norman Angell, but it is highly uncertain whether or not Olson and Groom consider them idealists. See 47, 84.

⁴³ Torbjörn L. Knutsen, A History of International Relations Theory: An Introduction (Manchester, 1992), 184-207, 268-70.

Premises (i) Belief in reason, individual liberty, individual utility, equality, property, public opinion, social openness, enlightened self-interest, human progress. (ii) Belief in a natural harmony of interests which holds that as long as social actors obey the laws of nature their interests will be complimentary. (iii) Presumption that 'human nature can be understood in terms not of immutable facts but of potentialities which are progressively actualised in the course of history'.

Hypotheses (i) War is a product of 'ignorant, prejudiced, or self-serving autocrats and manipulative politicians'. (ii) Ditto the balance of power. (iii) Ditto secret diplomacy. (iii) War is incompatible with economic progress. Commerce will render war obsolete. (ii) Change is 'easy': 'through reason man can understand and control his natural and social environment. A rational and moral political order can be created through the exercise of 'mind and will'.

Prescriptions (i) Open diplomacy. (ii) 'Freedom of navigation upon the seas'. (iii) Free trade. (iv) 'Free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims'. (v) Creation of a League of Nations to guarantee territorial integrity and political independence of great nations and small alike. (vi) 'Open debate and proper education' (to dispel ignorance). (iii) International contact and cooperation (to dispel

prejudice). (iv) Popular democracy (to prevent 'self-serving, evil, and egotistical leaders from assuming autocratic power'). (v) Recreation at the international level of the democratic institutions that prevent violence within enlightened nations.

Assessment Knutsen's evaluation of idealism is critical verging on contemptuous. He says that 'the subject matters' discussed in the formative years of the idealist discipline of IR were 'curiously out of touch with the political realities of the age'. Though he does not offer supporting evidence he goes on to say that '[m]any of the courses taught were theoretically barren; many of the books written were ideologically myopic'.⁴⁴ Confining themselves to the 'Wilsonian vision' idealist writers 'rarely ventured to explore the many theories which swept the streets outside their ivory towers'. In this and in other matters Knutsen rather slavishly follows Carr, whom he cites frequently. Thus the 'aloofness' of idealism is accounted for by the fact that IR was in its infancy, a phase during which wishing - in this case the passionate desire to prevent war - prevails over thinking - attention to reality. The new discipline is censured for being a

⁴⁴ Knutsen later says: 'In British universities, the very first courses tended to discuss the historical roots and the diplomatic implications of international events; in the United States, these early courses were marked by a focus on current events and by a preoccupation with International Law.' These courses did not 'beat new paths' but they did 'promote some appreciation of the geography and understanding of the diversity of the world'.

reflection, in an American mirror, of early nineteenth century liberal thought, the Benthamite assumptions underlying which had long been discredited. Carr's infamous dichotomies (see n.26) are accepted uncritically and used as a basis for further analysis.⁴⁵

In addition, Knutsen accuses utopianism of reading the 'rich tradition of political liberalism' in a 'narrow economic light' (and, perhaps paradoxically, of 'having a narrow, liberal, view of war and peace').⁴⁶

Utopians Cited Woodrow Wilson, Norman Angell, Clyde Eagleton. By implication: Ernest Satow, L. Oppenheim, James Brierly, Hersch Lauterpacht, Alfred Zimmern, Pitman Potter, C. Delisle Burns, Frederick Schuman. Progenitors: the nineteenth century peace movement, Adam Smith and the classical liberals, Bentham.

Findings

The above analysis throws into sharp relief the rich variety of characteristics have been ascribed to inter-war utopianism. Among them, at least nine analytically

⁴⁵ See E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations (London, 1939), 3-15, 16-28, 36-8.

⁴⁶ Knutsen is able to arrive at the former opinion, expressed in a section on the resurgence of utopian thinking at the end of the Cold War, by equating utopianism with laissez-faire liberalism and Benthamite assumptions about the pursuit of individual utility and collective well-being.

distinct premises can be discerned (see Table 1). The most commonly cited are belief in progress, faith in reason, and belief in a 'natural', 'underlying', or 'immanent' harmony of interests. The first of these receives six references if Olson and Groom's 'hope and optimism about the future of world affairs' is held to be synonymous with it. The other two each receive five references. Belief in the primacy of ideas⁴⁷ receives four citations, and the belief that human nature is basically 'good', or 'pacific', or 'cooperative', three. Confidence in the pacific propensities of public opinion receives two, as does belief in the objectivity of justice, and the assumption that human beings are malleable.⁴⁸

I say 'at least' for the following reason: Knutsen's Premise (i) contains a list of nine beliefs which are in principle analytically separable but, because of their vagueness as stated (belief in 'property', 'social openness', 'enlightened self-interest', etc.), and because the author does not go on to clarify what he means by them, not all of them are included among the nine 'analytically distinct' premises. I have, however, counted separately

⁴⁷ I include Booth's Premise (iii) since one of the things conventionally understood by 'the primacy of ideas' is the belief that there is a sizeable voluntarist element in history which permits change, inspired by creative thought, to take place, despite the existence of prejudice, vested interests, and inhospitable structures.

⁴⁸ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff's Premise (ii) and Knutsen's Premise (i). Though expressed in different ways both encapsulate the same idea: the behaviour of human beings is not genetically or otherwise pre-programmed and immutable, as it is with (most?) other species, but subject to change and improvement.

those beliefs ('reason', 'public opinion', and 'human progress') mentioned by a number of the other authors on the presumption that Knutsen means by them much the same thing.

Table 1: Summary of premises cited and their frequency in ten studies of utopianism

1	Belief in progress	6
2	Faith in reason	5
3	Belief in a harmony of interests	5
4	Belief in the primacy of ideas	4
5	Human nature is basically good	3
6	Justice is objective	2
7	Public opinion is pacific	2
8	Human nature is malleable	2
9	Politics is rooted in ethics	1

It is fair to conclude that there is a moderate degree of consensus on the premises of utopianism given that at least half of the ten studies examined advance three premises in common. There is less consensus on the hypotheses of utopianism. Twenty-five analytically distinct hypotheses can be identified (see Table 2). The two most frequently mentioned are that autocracy leads to war and democracy to peace, and that the elimination of war is an achievable goal. These two hypotheses are cited in four of the studies. Three hypotheses are common to three of the studies: that the international system can be transformed through international law and organization;⁴⁹

⁴⁹ I include as a single hypothesis Olson and Groom's Hypotheses (ii) and (iii).

war is a product of imperfect or unsuitable political institutions; and, the duty of the scholar is to educate the masses, or 'public opinion', in internationalism. Five hypotheses are common to two of the studies: that human beings are often stubborn in their attachment to outmoded ideas, ruled by passion, muddled in their thinking; that the balance of power is unstable and ends in war; that wars result from the international anarchy; that war is increasingly becoming obsolete; and, that peace is a common interest. The remaining fourteen hypotheses are each advanced just once.

Table 2: Summary of hypotheses cited and their frequency in ten studies of utopianism

1	The elimination of war is practicable	4
2	Democracy leads to peace	4
3	The state system can be transformed through international law and organization	3
4	War is a product of imperfect or unsuitable political institutions	3
5	The duty of the scholar is to educate the masses in internationalism	3
6	Human beings are often ruled by passion and guilty of muddled thinking	2
7	The balance of power is unstable and ends in war	2
8	War is caused by international anarchy	2
9	War is becoming obsolete	2
10	Peace is a common interest	2
11	The shape of a new international system is deducible from the needs of progress	1
12	Politics can be made to conform to an ethical standard	1
13	War never benefits the masses	1

14	Morality is not culture-bound but universal	1
15	War often results from miscalculation	1
16	War is often a product of the machinations of armaments manufacturers	1
17	Nationalism is atavistic	1
18	War is a collective problem requiring a collective response	1
19	The setting of goals can be a catalyst for purposive action	1
20	The system of sovereign states is not necessarily a war-system	1
21	Privileging the short-term over long-term can have disastrous consequences	1
22	Peace is the main currency of International Relations not power	1
23	The scientific study of international relations will help end war	1
24	War is a product of secret diplomacy	1
25	War is incompatible with economic progress	1

A higher degree of consensus returns when we turn our attention to prescriptions, of which it is possible to identify twenty-one which are analytically distinct (see Table 3). Eight of the ten studies refer to promotion of the League and the extension or strengthening of international organization,⁵⁰ and six refer to the emphasis

⁵⁰ I include in this figure two references to the broad prescription that institutions effective at preventing violence at the domestic level should be replicated at the international level. This prescription encompasses a wide range of things, from the setting up of courts and arbitration tribunals to the promotion of social cooperation and the establishment of an international police force. I have categorized it under 'the League and international organization' as this seems a reasonable compromise between not counting it at all, on the grounds that it is far too general, and counting it whenever a prescription can be fairly said to be based on the domestic analogy.

put on education, especially education in internationalism. Half of the studies in one way or another refer to: the need to foster the spread of democracy; the importance of disarmament; the need to strengthen international law: and the hope held out for mediation, arbitration, and the judicial settlement of disputes. Four highlight the call for an international police force, and three emphasize the call for collective security, open diplomacy, and free trade. Two refer to peaceful change,⁵¹ the need to study international questions scientifically,⁵² self-determination, and the legal prohibition of war.

Table 3: Summary of prescriptions cited and their frequency in ten studies of utopianism

1	The League and international organization	8
2	Education	6
3	Mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement	5
4	Democracy	5
5	Disarmament	5
6	International law	5
7	International police force	4

⁵¹ Again, this is a general prescription which could encompass a wide variety of other prescriptions including strengthening international law, establishing arbitration tribunals, facilitating mediation, and promoting peaceable means of self-determination. Its claim to analytical distinctiveness is arguable. I have put it in a category of its own, however, because it was a key concept in discussion about international order in the 1930s. By contrast, the domestic analogy prescription (see previous footnote) is one retroactively imputed to 'utopianism' rather than one actually made, in those terms, at the time.

⁵² I include in this category Vasquez's Prescription (v) which I summarise as 'the study, empirical and normative, of international organizations'.

8	Open diplomacy	3
9	Free trade	3
10	Collective security	3
11	Peaceful change	2
12	Scientific study of international relations	2
13	Self-determination	2
14	Legal prohibition of war	2
15	Freedom of the seas	1
16	Impartial readjustment of colonial claims	1
17	The abolition of alliances	1
18	Greater cooperation on social matters	1
19	More attention to long-term problems	1
20	More attention to ethics	1
21	Greater attention to the possible and desirable	1

Less agreement exists on the thinkers deemed to be significant or representative members of the utopian school (see Table 4). Only one, Sir Alfred Zimmern, is mentioned in half or more of the ten studies, though nine out of a total of twenty-two are mentioned in at least three. Perhaps remarkably, some of the most prominent writers and publicists of the time - W. Arnold-Foster, Sir Robert Cecil, J. A. Hobson, Keynes, Harold Laski, Lord Lothian, H. G. Wells - are not mentioned at all. This is almost certainly due to the fact that they are not classified as 'utopian' in the two most influential expositions of the subject - The Twenty Years' Crisis (with the important exception of Sir Robert Cecil), and Bull's essay analyzed above. The team of utopians assembled by Bull, for example, is replicated almost exactly in two of the

accounts, and several of them borrow extensively from it.

Table 4: Thinkers explicitly identified as utopian and frequency of citation in ten studies of utopianism

1	Alfred Zimmern	5
2	Woodrow Wilson	4
3	James T. Shotwell	4
4	Norman Angell	3
5	S. H. Bailey	3
6	David Mitran	3
7	Philip Noel-Baker	3
8	Parker T. Moon	3
9	Pitman Potter	3
10	David Davies	2
11	Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson	2
12	Arnold Toynbee	2
13	James Bryce	1
14	Nicholas Murray Butler	1
15	H. N. Brailsford	1
16	Ben Charrington	1
17	Clyde Eagleton	1
18	Raymond D. Fosdick	1
19	Gilbert Murray	1
20	Arthur Ponsonby	1
21	Jan Smuts	1
22	Leonard Woolf	1

From this analysis it seems fair to draw the following conclusions: that there is a moderate degree of consensus on the premises and prescriptions of utopianism; a low degree of ~~ensignies~~^{consensus} on its hypotheses; and a low to moderate degree of consensus on its principal adherents (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of attributes cited five or more times and three or more times in ten studies of utopianism

Category	5 or more references	3 or more references
Premises (x9)	3	5
Hypotheses (x25)	0	5
Prescriptions (x21)	6	10
Utopians cited (x22)	1	9

Combining the attributes most commonly cited it might be said that the 'ideal type' inter-war utopian believed in progress, reason, the primacy of ideas, and presumed the existence of a natural harmony of interests. He argued that war was a product of imperfect political institutions, that its elimination was a practicable goal, that the spread of democracy would lead to peace, that the anarchic state-system could be transformed through international law and organization, and that the duty of the scholar was to educate the masses in internationalism. He advocated disarmament, the strengthening of international law, the promotion of democracy, the spread of political education, the establishment of procedures for the mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement of disputes, and, most importantly, the development of international organization, the League in particular.

Finally, to what extent do our authors agree on the failings of utopianism? This part of the analysis is difficult to summarize in tabular form due to the richness of the vocabulary in which criticism of utopianism is expressed. Should the accusation that utopians lack

intellectual depth be put in the same category as the claim that their theories lack explanatory power, or in a different category? Ditto the charge of self-righteousness, on the one hand, and moralism, on the other. Ditto the charge of being rhetorical in style, on the one hand, and being emotive, on the other. These examples not only illustrate the semantic problems involved in an attempt to categorize neatly the various criticisms, but also the fact that these criticisms are made at different levels of generality: some criticisms constitute sub-sets and in certain cases sub-sub-sets of others.

Though it is not feasible to summarize the various assessments of utopianism in tabular form, the following observations can be made. The most commonly accepted shortcoming of idealism, mentioned in at least half of the studies, is its moralism and/or self-righteousness. A number of studies refer to idealism's lack of explanatory power and related shortcomings of privileging wishing over thinking, ends over means, and generalization over observation. These and other criticisms suggest a general consensus that idealists failed to give sufficient attention to facts and empirical analysis. Several authors censure idealists for being overly optimistic, 'innocent', or naïve. They are also censured more than once for: not contributing anything, despite their pretensions, to the understanding of international morality; being legalistic in approach and rhetorical in style; being emotive and, indeed, apocalyptic; and for being unwitting exponents of

the special ideology of the satisfied powers.

The Legacy of Carr

The above analysis shows that to examine Woolf's thought in the light of his reputation as a utopian is not as straightforward a matter as it at first might appear. Utopianism means different things to different people. The level of agreement among students of the subject as to its meaning is, at best, low to moderate. To stand accused of utopianism is to stand accused of one or more of a wide variety of often unspecified sins.

It is not feasible to assess the entire corpus of Woolf's thought in the light of all the aspects and attributes, crimes and misdemeanours, which have been ascribed to utopianism. We need, therefore, to make a judgement on what aspects are most important. If these aspects are apparent in Woolf's work, it can be fairly concluded that his bleak reputation is deserved.

In trying to ascertain the key characteristics of utopianism, Bull's analysis might be a useful starting point. As mentioned, its impact on conventional understandings of utopianism has been pronounced. But it is slight compared with Carr's. Indeed, Bull's analysis itself bears the imprint of Carr. In order to ascertain the key characteristics of inter-war utopianism with any confidence, therefore, it is necessary to go back to Carr. Not to do so would be to run the risk of arbitrariness

given the sketchy nature of most subsequent accounts and the piecemeal way in which they borrow from the original.

So, firstly, what did Carr himself hold to be the main features and chief defects of utopianism? Secondly, which aspects of his analysis have contributed most to contemporary interpretations? In line with the preceding analysis I propose to answer these questions by attempting to distil from Carr's in many ways highly complex text what he took to be the premises, hypotheses, and prescriptions of utopianism; whom he considered its leading exponents; and what he believed to be its most characteristic defects.

Carr on Utopianism

Carr's account of the emergence of utopianism, or perhaps more precisely its re-emergence in the 'special field' of international politics, may be summarized as follows. The science of international politics, according to Carr, was created to serve a specific purpose. In this respect it followed the pattern of other sciences. Illustrating his case with examples from the early years of Geometry, Medical Science, Engineering, Political Science, Sociology, Chemistry, Political Economy, and (somewhat incongruently) socialism, Carr observed that new fields of enquiry do not proceed inductively but are dominated by the desire to fulfil certain purposes. Purpose is prior to and a condition of thought. 'The initial stage of aspiration towards an end is an essential foundation of human thinking. The wish is father to the thought. Teleology

precedes analysis'.⁵³

The field of international politics came into being in response to a popular demand that an end be put to war. It 'took its rise from one of the greatest and most disastrous wars of history'. The 'overwhelming purpose which dominated and inspired the pioneers of the new science was to obviate a recurrence of this disease of the international body politic'. This 'passionate desire to prevent war determined the whole initial course and direction' of study.

This course began to change, however, in 1931. From that point onwards events began to clearly reveal the 'inadequacy of pure aspiration as the basis for a science of international politics' and it became possible for the first time 'to embark on serious analytical thought about international problems'. 'Hard ruthless analysis of reality' was forced on the student of international politics as an 'essential ingredient of his study'. This development, the impact of thinking upon wishing, marked the end of the specifically utopian period of study, and the arrival of realism.⁵⁴

So what, for Carr, were the core features of the utopian school which so dominated the early years of the 'science' of international politics? The answer to this question is far from simple. This is because Carr does not set out systematically the key features of utopianism but,

⁵³ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 13-14.

rather, builds up an impressionistic picture of it sometimes by explicit assertion, but often through inference and insinuation. This problem is compounded by the fact that it is difficult to separate Carr's explication of utopianism from his critique of it. The way in which Carr represents a number of utopian propositions and assertions is, to say the least, rather loaded.

Two further obstacles lie in the path of an accurate synopsis of Carr's analysis of inter-war utopianism. Firstly, he uses the term to denote not one but two practically connected, but conceptually distinct things - one general and abstract, the other more specific and concrete. Utopianism in the first sense is a recurrent feature of all political thought: it consists of a body of ideas which waxes and wanes in influence, but one which is always above or just below the surface of political life. In the second, narrower, sense utopianism is the particular expression of these ideas found in thinking about international relations in the 1920s and 1930s.

While these two are clearly linked they are far from synonymous, and in places it is difficult to determine whether the object of Carr's concern is utopianism in the first or utopianism in the second sense. Similarly, it is sometimes hard to be sure whether Carr's often withering criticisms of utopianism in general can always and equally be applied, by extension, to utopianism in particular.

Secondly, in Parts III and IV of The Twenty Years' Crisis - dealing inter alia with international law and

morality, the sanctity of treaties, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the concept of peaceful change - it is interesting to observe that the frequency with which Carr admonishes an idea or view for being 'utopian' begins to decline. He continues with undiminished relish to condemn ideas for being 'fallacious', 'fictitious', 'hollow', and 'illusory' - but does this mean they are thereby 'utopian'?⁵⁵ This would not be an unreasonable conclusion to draw given the spirited way in which the term is employed to write-off a wide variety of ideas in Parts I and II.

With these provisos in mind an attempt is made in Tables 6-8 to summarize the premises, hypotheses, and prescriptions of 'inter-war utopianism according to Carr'. No claim is made to objectivity. Nonetheless, what follows is an attempt to summarize Carr as reasonably as the author's powers of comprehension and skill of judgement permit.

The Twenty Years' Crisis is more a great work of rhetoric - and one of considerable literary merit - than a great work of social science. Given this, interpretations of its manifold aspects and attributes are bound to vary. There is, in addition, some room for debate as to whether certain propositions should be categorized as 'premises' or 'hypotheses'. As with the earlier tables, level of generality and, in some cases, consciousness, are taken as useful 'rules of thumb' (the assumption being that

⁵⁵ See, for example, 219, 230, 244, 248, 267, 298.

premises, being the foundation-stones of thought, are generally speaking more general in nature than hypotheses which, as well as being more specific, are also things which cannot be advanced or maintained unconsciously).

Table 9 lists those thinkers referred to explicitly as utopian. It will be noted than even here there is a problem: on a close inspection it transpires that many of Carr's dramatis personae are far from unequivocally utopian. Indeed, those whose utopianism is implied, often vaguely, exceed in number those whose utopianism is firmly and unambiguously proclaimed.

As with the critical judgements made in more recent accounts of utopianism, it is difficult to express the wide range of criticisms made by Carr in tabular form. There is a sense, however, in which it may be profitable, despite certain pitfalls, to attempt to do so. Careful scrutiny reveals that although the form of Carr's objections varies considerably, the substance of most of these objections falls into three categories. That is, although Carr expresses his reservations and repudiations in various ways - often trenchant, often clever, invariably colourful; and although he illustrates his case with a wide range of historical examples, it is none the less true that Carr, for the most part, is essentially making just three claims.

The attempt to reproduce Carr's principal objections to utopian thinking is made in Table 10. It consists largely of key critical passages. The table is, inevitably, several pages long. Only by producing it in

full, however, can the contention of the preceding paragraph be effectively demonstrated.

Table 6: Summary of premises of inter-war utopianism as designated in The Twenty Years' Crisis

1	The purpose of the study of international politics is to find a cure for war (1st edn., 11)
2	Reality can be radically transformed by an act of will ('creative spontaneity') (16-17)
3	Political theory is a norm to which political practice ought to conform (17)
4	Human conscience is the final court of appeal in moral questions ('individualism') (32)
5	Human conscience is the voice of reason ('rationalism') (32)
6	Belief in enlightenment and progress through reason (34)
7	Belief in the compelling power of reason expressed through the voice of the people ('the Utopian doctrine of the efficacy of rational public opinion') (43-6)
8	Belief in a fixed and absolute standard 'by which policies and actions can be judged' (28, 96)

Table 7: Summary of hypotheses of inter-war utopianism as designated in The Twenty Years' Crisis

1	The task of the student of international relations is to convert everyone to his desires (13)
2	War is largely due to the control of foreign affairs by professional diplomats (24)
3	Politics can be made to conform to an ethical standard (28)
4	Public opinion, if allowed to make itself effective, is sufficient to prevent war (34-5)
5	The pursuit of good is a question of right reasoning (34-6)
6	The spread of knowledge will soon make it possible for everyone to reason rightly (34-6)
7	Everyone who reasons rightly will necessarily act rightly (34-6)
8	War results from a failure in understanding; the spread of education will lead to international peace (35-6, 67)

9	National self-determination is the key to world peace (60)
10	There is no necessary incompatibility between nationalism and internationalism (60)
11	There is no necessary incompatibility between the economic good of individual nations and the economic good of humanity as a whole ('natural harmony of interest in free trade') (56-61)
12	Every nation has an identical interest in peace ('natural harmony of interest in peace') (67)
13	War is useless, as proven by the experience of 1914-1918 (67)
14	'It is possible to eliminate self-assertion from politics and to base a political system on morality alone' (125)
15	The creation of the League will lead to 'the elimination of power from international relations and the substitution of discussion for armies and navies' (132)
16	The League is an expression of 'the organised opinion of mankind' with the power to control 'the military and economic power of governments' (177)
17	The personification of the state is meaningless and reactionary (189)
18	The same code of morality is applicable to states as to individuals (194)
19	International disputes can be 'classified by an objective test as <u>ipso facto</u> justiciable and <u>ipso facto</u> non-justiciable' (248)

Table 8: Summary of prescriptions of inter-war utopianism
as designated in The Twenty Years' Crisis

1	International police force
2	Collective security
3	World government
4	Free trade
5	General disarmament
6	Education
7	Outlawing war
8	United States of Europe
9	National self-determination
10	International government (meaning joint administration/shared sovereignty)
11	All-in arbitration (meaning compulsory settlement of all disputes by arbitration)
12	World federation
13	A 'more perfect League of Nations'

Table 9: Thinkers explicitly⁵⁶ identified as utopian in
The Twenty Years' Crisis

1	Woodrow Wilson
2	Robert Cecil
3	Nicholas Murray Butler
4	Alfred Zimmern
5	Norman Angell
6	Arnold Toynbee
7	Leon Duguit
8	John Dewey
9	Hersch Lauterpact

⁵⁶ Mention should be made here of some of the men whom Carr does not explicitly indict but whose guilt is strongly implied: Presidents Taft and Roosevelt, and Secretaries of State Stimson and Hull (for believing that public opinion will always prevail and can be trusted to come down on the right side); David Lloyd George (ditto with respect to the issue of disarmament); Anthony Eden (for echoing the Mazzinian doctrine of a pre-ordained division of a labour between nations, each with its special contribution to make to the welfare of humanity); Winston Churchill (for failing to recognise the interested character of his denunciations of, first, the Bolsheviks and, later, the Nazis); the Times, Cecil Rhodes, W. T. Stead, Arthur Balfour, Presidents McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt (for assuming that the national interests of their countries were synonymous with the universal good); Bernard Bosanquet (for separating politics from economics); Frederick Schuman (ditto); Karl Marx (usually quoted approvingly for his realism but in one instance (148-9) criticised for being dominated by the nineteenth century presupposition that economics and politics were separate domains); Gilbert Murray (for harbouring the 'illusion' that certain disputes are ipso facto judiciable and others ipso facto non-judiciable); Hans Kelsen (for entertaining the 'dream' of a tribunal 'exercising not only the judicial function of interpreting the rights of states, but the legislative function of changing them'); Lord Davies (ditto).

Table 10: Summary of criticisms of utopianism in The Twenty Years' Crisis

1	During the 'utopian', 'primitive', 'infantile', stage of the political sciences 'investigators ... pay little attention to existing "facts" or to the analysis of cause and effect, but ... devote themselves wholeheartedly to the elaboration of visionary projects' the 'simplicity and perfection' of which 'give them an easy and universal appeal' (8)
2	'Wish or purpose' is 'incapable by itself of achieving the desired end' (8)
3	In the initial stage of the study of international politics 'wishing prevails over thinking, generalisation over observation, and ... little attempt is made at a critical analysis of existing facts or available means. In this stage, attention is concentrated almost exclusively on the end to be achieved. The end has seemed so important that analytical criticism of the means proposed has too often been branded as destructive or unhelpful.' (11-12)
4	'Events which have occurred since 1931 clearly revealed the inadequacy of pure aspiration as the basis for a science of international politics.' (13)
5	'The utopian, purporting to recognise the interdependence of purpose and fact, treats purpose as if it were the only relevant fact, and constantly couches optative propositions in the indicative mood'. Utopian propositions 'are items in a political programme disguised as statements of fact; and the utopian inhabits a dream-world of such "facts", remote from the world of reality where quite contrary facts may be observed.' Furthermore, these propositions 'are not <u>a priori</u> propositions, but are rooted in the world of reality in a way which the utopian altogether fails to understand.' The exposure of the hidden, ideological, foundations of utopian theory is 'a necessary preliminary to any serious political science'. (16-19)
6	Collective security, general disarmament, and other such schemes are 'the product of pure theory divorced from practical experience.' (25)
7	'Ethics must be interpreted in terms of politics; and the search for an ethical norm outside politics is doomed to frustration.' (28)
8	'League circles ... avoid the concrete in favour of abstract generalisations.' (40)

9	'The metaphysicians of Geneva found it difficult to believe that an accumulation of ingenious texts prohibiting war was not a barrier against war itself' (41)
10	The belief that the potency of international public opinion renders material sanctions against a transgressor unnecessary is an 'outworn creed' and those that cling onto it 'gullible' (49)
11	'It seems undeniable that, in international affairs, public opinion was [between the wars] almost as often wrong-headed as it was impotent' (50-1)
12	'Much comment on international affairs during the past ten years has been rendered tedious and sterile by incessant girding at a reality which refuses to conform to utopian prescriptions. The simplicity of these explanations [that the breakdown of world order and the failure of the League is due mankind's stupidity or wickedness] seems almost ludicrously disproportionate to the intensity of the international crisis through which we are passing.' (52; see also 72)
13	'The common interest in peace masks the fact that some nations desire to maintain the <u>status quo</u> without having to fight for it, and others to change the <u>status quo</u> without having to fight in order to do so. The statement that it is in the interest of the world as a whole either that the <u>status quo</u> should be maintained, or that it should be changed, would be contrary to facts. The statement that it is in the interest of the world as a whole that the conclusion eventually reached, whether maintenance or change, should be reached by peaceful means, would command general assent, but seems a rather meaningless platitude.' (68-9)
14	'The assumption of a fundamental principle of economic policy whose application would be equally beneficial to all and detrimental to none' is 'economic utopianism in its most purblind form.' (73)
15	It is a fallacy to suppose that there is a natural harmony of interests in free trade: 'The clash of interests is real and inevitable; and the whole nature of the problem is distorted by an attempt to disguise it.' The idea that 'nobody can benefit from what harms another' is a 'hollow' and 'glib platitude'. (77, 80)

16	<p>The attempt to 'base international morality on an alleged harmony of interests which identifies the interests of the whole community of nations with the interests of each individual member of it' is 'inadequate and misleading'. 'What confronts us to-day is, therefore, nothing less than the complete bankruptcy of the conception of morality which has dominated political and economic thought for a century and a half. Internationally, it is no longer possible to deduce virtue from right reasoning, because it is no longer seriously possible to believe that every state, by pursuing the greatest good of the whole world, is pursuing the greatest good of its own citizens, and <u>vice versa</u>.' (80)</p>
17	<p>'The outstanding achievement of modern realism ... has been to reveal, not merely the determinist aspects of the historical process, but the relative and pragmatic character of thought itself.' The realist has demonstrated 'that the intellectual theories and ethical standards of utopianism, far from being the expression of absolute and <u>a priori</u> principles, are historically conditioned, being both products of circumstances and weapons framed for the furtherance of interests This is by far the most formidable attack which utopianism has to face; for here the very foundations of its belief are undermined by the realist critique.' (87)</p>
18	<p>The conviction that policy is deduced from ethical principles, not ethical principles from policy, is 'hollow' (93)</p>
19	<p>'The utopian, however eager he may be to establish an absolute standard, does not argue that it is the duty of his country, in conformity with that standard, to put the interest of the world at large before its own interest; for that would be contrary to his theory that the interest of all coincides with the interest of each. He argues that what is best for the world is best for his country, and then reverses the argument to read that what is best for his country is best for the world, the two propositions being, from the utopian standpoint, identical; and this unconscious cynicism of the contemporary utopian has proved a far more effective diplomatic weapon than the deliberate and self-conscious cynicism of a Walewski or a Bismarck.' (96-7)</p>

20	'It is a familiar tactic of the privileged to throw moral discredit on the under-privileged by depicting them as disturbers of the peace; and this tactic is as readily applied internationally as within the national community.' Toynbee's argument that international law and order are in the true interests of mankind whereas the 'desire to perpetuate the reign of violence in international affairs' is 'an anti-social desire' not even in the interest of the citizens of those 'benighted' countries which profess it, is 'compounded of platitude and falsehood in equal parts'. (105-6)
21	'The exposure of the real basis of the professedly abstract principles commonly invoked in international politics is the most damning and most convincing part of the realist indictment of utopianism.... The bankruptcy of utopianism resides not in its failure to live up to its principles, but in the exposure of its inability to provide any absolute and disinterested standard for the conduct of international affairs.' The 'supposedly absolute and universal principles [of the utopian] were not principles at all, but the unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time'. (110-11)
22	'In international politics, post-War utopianism became a hollow and intolerable sham, which served merely as a disguise for the interest of the privileged Powers'. (118)
23	'A game of chess between a world-champion and a schoolboy would be so rapidly and so effortlessly won that the innocent onlooker might be pardoned for assuming that little skill was necessary to play chess. In the same way, the simpleminded spectator of the game of international politics could assume, between 1920 and 1931, that power played little part of the game'. (132-33)
24	'The post-War assumption of the elimination of power from politics could only result from a wholly uncritical attitude towards political problems.' (133)
25	'The history of Locarno is a classic instance of power politics. It remains incomprehensible to those who seek uniform <u>a priori</u> solutions to the problem of security, and regard power politics as an abnormal phenomenon visible only in periods of crisis... power is an essential element of politics' (136-7).

26	Foreign policy can never be divorced from strategy. In ignoring strategy 'many contemporary books and speeches are reminiscent of those ingenious mathematical problems which the student is invited to solve by ignoring the weight of the elephant. The solutions proposed are neat and accurate on the abstract plane, but are obtained by leaving out of account the vital strategic factor If every prospective writer on international affairs in the last twenty years had taken a compulsory course in elementary strategy, reams of nonsense would have remained unwritten.' (141-42)
27	'It is one of the fallacies of the theory of collective security that war can be waged for the specific and disinterested purpose of "resisting aggression".' (144)
28	The divorce between economics and politics is an 'illusion'. (147; See also 149, 151)
29	'Attempts to solve international problems by the application of economic principles divorced from politics are doomed to sterility.' (150)
30	The 'fallacy' of the 'power of international opinion' began to be exposed in the 1920s. 'That it survived at all was due to the persistent use by League enthusiasts of slogans like peace and disarmament which were capable of a universal appeal precisely because they meant different, and indeed contradictory, things to different people.' (178)
31	'The monopoly of international studies in the post-War period by the utopian school has resulted in a concentration of interest on discussions of the question what international morality ought ideally to be. There has been little discussion of the moral behaviour of states except to pass hasty and sweeping condemnation on it in the light of this ideal morality.... Moreover, utopia has met its usual fate in becoming, unknown to itself, the tool of vested interests. International morality, as expounded by most contemporary Anglo-Saxon writers, is now little more than a convenient weapon for belabouring those who assail the <u>status quo</u> .' (187)
32	Students of international morality mistake denunciations of conduct for a scientific study of the subject, and have 'generally preferred the role of missionary to that of the scientist' (187-8)
33	'It is a curious and significant paradox that those utopian writers on international affairs who most vigorously denounce the personification of the state as absurd and sinister none the less persistently allocate moral praise and blame (generally the latter) to those imaginary entities, "Great Britain", "France" and "Italy", whose existence they deny.' (190)

34	Prior to 1914 the resort to war to change the existing order was not illegal. After 1918 such wars became increasingly condemned as 'aggressive' and nearly all nations signed a pact outlawing them. But no effective machinery was devised as a substitute for the traditional method of altering the <u>status quo</u> . 'The rejection of the traditional method as illegal and the failure to provide any effective alternative have made contemporary international law a bulwark of the existing order to an extent unknown in previous international law This is the most fundamental cause of the recent decline of respect for international law; and those who, in deploring the phenomenon, fail to recognise its origin, not unnaturally expose themselves to the charge of hypocrisy or of obtuseness' (244-5)
35	The idea of an international tribunal 'exercising not merely the judicial function of interpreting the rights of states, but the legislative function of changing them' is based on the 'grave fallacy' that politics can be 'dissolved' into law, that an essentially political function can be forced into a legal mould. (259-263)
36	'Power, used, threatened or silently held in reserve, is an essential factor in international change; and change will, generally speaking, be effected only in the interests of those by whom, or on whose behalf, power can be invoked. "Yielding to threats of force" is a normal part of the process of peaceful change.' This is 'ignored in most current writing about international politics'. (277)
37	'We can discard as purely utopian and muddle-headed plans for a procedure of peaceful change dictated by a world legislature or a world court.' (283)
38	'To attempt to ignore power as a decisive factor in every political situation is purely utopian.' (301)
39	'[T]he easy hypothesis of a natural harmony of interests, which a modicum of good-will and common sense would suffice to maintain, should be consigned to oblivion'. (303)

Table 10 gives some indication of the brilliance and vitality of Carr's argument. Yet careful scrutiny reveals that Carr, for the most part, raises just three broad objections. Firstly, utopians pay little attention to facts and analysis of cause and effect, devoting their

energies instead to the 'elaboration of visionary projects for the attainment of ends which they have in view' (as set out in 1; essentially the same objection is made in 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 26, 31, 32, 36; it is strongly implicit in 6, 24). Secondly, utopians grossly underestimate the role that power plays in international politics, and overestimate the role, actual and potential, of morality, law, public opinion, and other 'non-material' sanctions (this objection is made in 10, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 38; it is strongly implicit in 7, 9, 11, 18, 28, 35, 37, 39). Thirdly, utopians fail to recognize that their espousal of universal interests amounts to nothing more than the promotion and defence of a particular status quo. Here, as in other areas, utopians fail to appreciate the self-interested character of their thought (this objection is made in 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31; it is strongly implicit in 34).

Carr's Influence

Carr's influence is profound. Tables 6-10 demonstrate vividly the extent of his influence. All ten of the accounts analyzed in the first part of this chapter refer to his path-breaking work. Virtually every facet of utopianism and criticism of it cited twice or more in these accounts finds its original expression, in one way or another, in Carr.

Carr's analysis of the following has been particularly influential: (i) the emergence of 'the science of

international politics'; (ii) utopian faith in reason and the power of public opinion; (iii) the relationship between politics and ethics; (iv) the doctrine of the harmony of interests; and (v) the utopian belief in absolute standards of judgement. Carr does not explicitly stipulate 'belief in progress' as a premise of utopianism; nor does he stipulate the claim that 'democracy leads to peace', or the contention that 'the balance of power is unstable and ends in war', as hypotheses. These notions are, however, strongly implicit in, respectively, Carr's account of the evolution of the doctrine of a natural harmony of interests, his rejection of Zimmern's distinction between 'welfare' states and 'power' states, and his analysis of the utopian desire to eliminate power from international relations.⁵⁷ It should be noted, however, that the emphasis given in more recent accounts (Vasquez especially) to the 'democracy leads to peace' idea, far outstrips the emphasis given to it by Carr. It should also be noted that while several accounts refer to the utopian desire for, simply, 'peaceful change', Carr maintained that only certain conceptions of peaceful change - those based on substituting legal processes for political ones - were utopian. Carr himself was an advocate of peaceful change conceived as a process of give and take between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'; and the general notion was not something he considered incompatible even with utopianism's

⁵⁷ Ibid. 54-80, 152-4 (see also 105-6), 131-9.

polar-opposite, realism.⁵⁸

Many of Carr's more disparaging remarks are also echoed in contemporary accounts. Accordingly, utopianism is widely denounced for: its moralism (as opposed to an understanding of actual moral codes); its legalism (as opposed to an understanding of actual legal processes and their relation to politics); its ignorance of facts and cause and effect (as opposed to its espousal of alternative 'visions'); its tendency to privilege ends over means, generalization over observation; and its innocence and facile optimism (in not recognising the pervasive and inevitable role of power).

One final observation on Carr's influence should be underscored. Although the contention that the 'absolute and universal principles [of the utopian] were not principles at all, but the unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time', is one of the chief contentions - indeed arguably it is the unifying contention - of The Twenty Years' Crisis, it is mentioned in only three of the ten accounts examined (Bull, Smith, Hollis and Smith). This is an extraordinary fact for which I have no explanation.

Leonard Woolf and Utopianism: A Framework for Analysis

The above analysis suggests that it is questionable whether 'utopianism' possesses the necessary cohesion to be

⁵⁸ Ibid. 283-4.

properly considered a 'doctrine' or 'school of thought'. Despite the towering influence of a single text, agreement on its core features is limited. There are, in all probability, two reasons for this. Firstly, contrary conventional wisdom, Carr's account of 'utopianism' is not particularly systematic. It is beyond the remit of this chapter to properly substantiate this point, but there is strong evidence to suggest that the concept of 'utopia' is used by Carr, with characteristic ingenuity, as a rhetorical device for discrediting the many ideas with which he happened to be out of sympathy. One only has to look at the range of thinkers explicitly or tacitly charged with utopianism to find at least interim confirmation of this contention: from President McKinley to President Wilson, Cecil Rhodes to Norman Angell, Hans Kelsen to Lord Davies, the Times to the Union of Democratic Control, from Karl Marx to Winston Churchill. To a large extent the ideas Carr castigated were liberal ideas. Essentially The Twenty Years' Crisis is a critique of liberalism, particularly the way in which 'nineteenth century liberalism' (meaning classical economics plus utilitarianism plus constitutionalism) was applied to the emerging, twentieth century, field of international relations.

Secondly, subsequent accounts have perhaps relied too heavily on Carr. There has been a tendency to select items from Carr's big intellectual menu in a rather piecemeal fashion. There has been a reluctance to read the actual

works of putatively utopian writers. Consequently, Carr's often sweeping generalisations have, with time, become even more sweeping.

This leaves a problem for the analyst seeking to assess a thinker in light of his reputation as a utopian. Of the many premises, and especially hypotheses and prescriptions, of utopianism, and the many criticisms made of it, which should be held out as truly representative? There is no objective answer to this question. The 'ideal-type' utopian constructed on page 62 offers a positive way forward. But given that the term 'utopian' is first and foremost a term of abuse, it is the criticisms most commonly directed at those so abused which should, above all else, take centre stage. If these criticisms are found to be invalid, one of two conclusions follow: either (a) the thinker or idea under scrutiny is not utopian; or (b) utopianism is not so inadequate a doctrine as generally supposed.

Given that virtually all objections to utopianism flow from the three broad objections identified in Carr's analysis, I propose to use these three objections as my framework for analysis. Thus, with respect to the various areas of Woolf's concern I shall ask: To what extent, if any, did he 'ignore facts' and 'pay little attention to the analysis of cause and effect'? (Charge 1). Is it true to say that he 'grossly underestimated the role ~~that~~^{of} power' and correspondingly 'overestimated the role, actual and

potential, of morality, law, public opinion, and other "non-material" sanctions'? (Charge 2). Can it be fairly said that his 'espousal of universal interests amounted to nothing more than the promotion and defence of a particular status quo' and, following from this, that he 'failed to appreciate the self-interested character of his thought'? (Charge 3).

Chapter Three

International Government: An Exposition

This chapter explicates Leonard Woolf's thought on international government. It describes, by way of preface, how Woolf's main book on the subject came to be written and provides some information on the Fabian intellectual background to his early work.

The Commissioning of International Government

During the Autumn of 1914 Beatrice Webb invited Leonard Woolf to become involved in a project on professional organizations then being conducted by the Fabian Research Bureau.¹ Neither Beatrice nor Sidney Webb were particularly interested in international affairs - it was 'not their subject' - and they did not give much thought to the possibility of the Bureau getting involved.² It was George Bernard Shaw who suggested that the Bureau should become active in this area, and with this in mind he managed to secure £100 from Joseph Rowntree for the purpose of producing a study on how future wars might be prevented. Shaw persuaded Beatrice Webb of the virtues of such a study, who, knowing Woolf possessed considerable knowledge

¹ Founded in 1913 originally for the purpose of conducting research into the control of industry. Wilson, Leonard Woolf, 62.

² See Woolf's trenchant 'Political Thought and the Webbs', in Margaret Cole (ed.), The Webbs and Their Work (London, 1949), esp. 259-62.

of colonial affairs, asked him to shelve his current work and get involved in the Shaw-Rowntree project. The original plan was that the work would be undertaken by a small committee with Woolf as secretary. But early in 1915 a decision was made to allow Woolf to write the report himself, with complete freedom to proceed as he saw fit.³

Woolf set to work 'like a fanatical or dedicated mole' and within four months had produced the first draft.⁴ Part One of the report, 'Suggestions for the Prevention of War' was published as a special supplement to the New Statesman on 10 July 1915. Part Two, 'Articles Suggested for Adoption by an International Conference at the Termination of the War' (the 'Fabian Draft Treaty'), was published in the same form one week later. This was written by Woolf with Sidney Webb and was one of the first detailed plans for a league of nations to be published.

While working on these two projects Woolf became convinced that the prevention of war was part of a wider problem - the development of international government. At the time, as he later recorded,

It was commonly said or assumed that international government did not exist and could not exist among sovereign independent states; but a very little investigation convinced me that this was not true and that a considerable field of human relations had been subjected to various forms of international government. But practically no books existed on the subject and no attention had been given to it.⁵

³ Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911 to 1918 (London, 1964), 183-84.

⁴ Ibid. 185.

⁵ Ibid. 187-88.

Woolf consequently impressed upon Webb that it would be 'well worth while doing some serious work' on this subject since it would throw important light not only on the prevention of war but 'on the whole field of international relations'.⁶ Woolf was given a further £100 to write a second report. This report was published, together with the first report and the Fabian Draft Treaty, as International Government in 1916.⁷

The Fabian Background

The neglect by the Fabian Society of the world beyond Britain (some might say, indeed, London) meant that Woolf had little to build on by way of a Fabian 'tradition' or 'approach' to international questions. For well over a decade after the founding of the Society the existence of an international realm was barely acknowledged. During these years the Society, and more specifically its most senior members - the 'Old Gang' of Webb, Shaw, Pease, Bland and Olivier - concentrated their efforts on the development and propagation of ideas concerning domestic society, meaning first and foremost Britain. The early work of Fabians covered a wide range of economic, social and

⁶ Ibid. 187.

⁷ A second, American, edition with an introduction by Shaw also appeared in 1916. A third edition with an additional chapter on the Danube Commission was published in 1923. French and Swedish editions, and a German language Swiss edition, were published during the Paris peace negotiations.

political questions; some being general and theoretical, others being highly specific and practical. Questions such as the nature of Fabian socialism, the workings and effects of capitalism, the causes of mass poverty, and the role of women in society, are examples of the more general issues addressed; public health in London, the municipalization of tramways, the municipal drink traffic and liquor licensing, and the need for an 'Eight Hours Bill', are examples of the more specific.

Thought on the important international aspects of these issues is almost entirely absent. During this period Fabians clearly believed that events in the outside world held little relevance. As Bernard Porter has pointed out, apart from William Pember Reeves's The State and its Functions in New Zealand (Tract No. 74), the object of which was to provide Fabians with a model of working socialism, 'none of the first hundred or so Fabian Tracts was on external affairs; and the First series of Fabian Essays scarcely touched them'.⁸ A recent historian of the Society has reiterated this observation in an account of its involvement in socialist internationalism.⁹ Fabians were far from enthusiastic participants in the proceedings of the Second International and paid little more than lip-service to its proclamations. The British views expressed

⁸ Bernard Porter, 'Fabians, Imperialists and the International Order', in Ben Pimlott (ed.), Fabian Essays in Socialist Thought (London, 1984), 54.

⁹ Patricia Pugh, Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism (London, 1984), 72.

at international socialist gatherings immediately prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 were mainly those of Keir Hardy and the Independent Labour Party.¹⁰

Three crises of widely varying magnitude jolted the Fabian Society out of its parochial frame of mind: the war in South Africa, tariff reform and, most importantly, the outbreak of the First World War.

South Africa and Imperialism

The Boer War provoked a crisis within the Fabian Society of such magnitude that it almost led to its dissolution. Eighteen members resigned including prominent men like Ramsay MacDonald and Walter Crane. The wide-ranging and bitter debates demonstrate how intellectually ill-equipped Fabians were to tackle international issues. The diversity of opinion about the war can be categorized in terms of three broad positions: the equivocal anti-imperialist, the paternalist imperialist, and the quietist.

The principal advocate of quietism was the secretary of the Society, Edward Pease. His position, commanding much support, was that the entire subject fell outside the remit of the Society. The Fabian Society was concerned with the development and propagation of a particular brand of reformist socialism: particular in the sense of being designed to address the peculiar nature of British social,

¹⁰ Whose attitude to the war contrasted sharply with the majority of Fabians. See A. M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918 (Cambridge, 1966), 136-8.

economic, and political institutions. Phenomena such as imperialism and war did not give rise to questions of principle for socialists.

This position was based on the questionable assumption of domestic independence, as opposed to interdependence, and the consequent uniqueness of British society. The most likely explanation of the support it received is pragmatism. The quietism of Pease and others was based less on a coherent set of arguments than on the realisation that '[e]very shade of opinion in relation to the war is represented among the members'¹¹ and, therefore, that the Society as a matter of prudence ought not to commit itself to a definite policy since to do so would be dangerously divisive.¹²

The protagonists in the substantive debate were the equivocal anti-imperialists, represented most notably by S. G. Hobson, and the paternalist imperialists, represented most notably by Shaw. The position of the equivocal imperialists at first sight does not seem to be particularly equivocal. Hobson believed that it was morally imperative for the Society to articulate a policy on the war: after all, the war had been provoked by ideas and forces 'antagonistic to industrial democracy', and, given this, a 'settlement acceptable to socialists' was

¹¹ Pease quoted in Pugh, Educate, Agitate, Organize, 81.

¹² Pease later abandoned his view. See E. Pease, The History of the Fabian Society, 3rd ed., (London, 1963), 131-6.

highly improbable.¹³ The Government had announced that military action was taken in order to secure the political rights of the Uitlanders. Hobson refuted this. He argued that the most important factor was 'the aim of establishing British supremacy from the Cape to the Zambesi'. Since the Boer republics were determined to preserve their independence (and rightly so according to Hobson), a war had inevitably ensued. He attributed the direct cause of the war to 'the phase of imperialist passion that has overrun this country in recent years'; and he feared for the decline of democracy in the consciousness and spirit of the English people, the growing cooperation between financiers and the military, and the rise to predominance of militarism and other anti-socialistic tendencies.

Hobson clearly saw imperialism as an undesirable phenomenon, strongly linked to capitalism, 'vainglorious nationalism', and militarism. However, this seemingly unequivocal position is considerably weakened by a further statement on 'the expansion of Empire'. In the final paragraph to his resolution to the Society, Hobson asks the Society to pledge itself 'to support the expansion of the Empire only in so far as that may be compatible with the expansion of that higher social organization which this society was founded to promote'. Thus what prime facie appears to be an outright condemnation of imperialism as immoral and undesirable turns out to be much more

¹³ This and the quotations from Hobson that follow are from E. D. McBriar, Fabian Socialism, (Cambridge, 1966), 121. This work remains unsurpassed.

ambiguous. Hobson did not clarify what he meant by 'imperialism' and 'expansion of Empire'. But unless we assume that he meant to draw a distinction between them, his position is clearly contradictory.

The paternalist imperialist position, as advocated by Shaw, shares some common ground with the anti-imperialist position. For example, the sincerity of the British Government's justification for involvement in the conflict is doubted. Whereas the presupposition of Hobson's position seems to be the undesirability of imperialism per se, however, the presupposition of Shaw's position is the general desirability of imperialism. Shaw's view was that imperialism was perfectly legitimate as long as it brought along with it the good habits and practices of advanced or 'higher' civilizations to the 'backward' and 'unexploited' parts of the world. He maintained, with typical self-assurance, that Fabian Socialism and imperialism were both based on 'a sense of the supreme importance of the Duties of the Community, with State Organization, Efficient Government, Industrial Civil Service, Regulation of all private enterprise in the common interest, and dissolution of Frontiers through international industrial organization'. It should be realized, furthermore, that the Boer War was now being waged and regardless of whether it could have been avoided the important point for Fabians was to insist on a desirable outcome. This meant a British victory, the implementation of progressive legislation protecting workers' economic and political rights, their

health and safety, and a guarantee that the profits of industry would be ~~are~~ used for the benefit of the whole of South Africa. To this end, mines should, if necessary, be taken into public ownership.¹⁴

These views are not noteworthy for their analytical depth. There is no attempt to define 'imperialism' or to distinguish it from other terms frequently used in the debate: 'vainglorious nationalism', 'jingoism', 'aggressive patriotism', 'foreign domination'. There is no examination of the moral bases of 'imperialism' except for simplistic references to 'higher civilizations'. Also, a discussion of the matter of agency is absent. Both Hobson and Shaw failed to declare who or what they considered to be the agents or instigators of imperialism. Agency could be attributed generally to 'capitalism', 'militarism' or 'the state'. Or it could be attributed specifically to the British State, the British Government, British financiers, or particular companies such as the South Africa Company. The participants in the debate failed to adequately clarify their views. Indeed, recognition of the need for such clarification is entirely absent.

Several important votes were taken by the Fabian Society, including a crucial ballot of the whole membership as to whether an official pronouncement should be made. On all these occasions the voting was close - the membership being marginally in favour of a non-committal policy. However, a tract on imperialism and the War was published

¹⁴ Ibid. 121-22.

by the Society as part of its general election propaganda in 1900. The sense in which the Society believed this tract to be separate from an 'official pronouncement' is far from certain. A letter from Pease to the press on behalf of the Executive exemplifies this uncertainty. In it he said that the tract is 'an authoritative expression of its views' which 'represents the general view of the society as a whole, but is not binding on any individual members'. But it was in this letter that Pease stated that every shade of opinion on the War could be found within Fabian ranks.¹⁵ Therefore the possibility of constructing 'a general view' can, to say the least, be doubted.

The tract, Fabianism and the Empire, was drafted by Shaw.¹⁶ Following established Fabian practice, the draft was considered by a committee, but few of the suggestions subsequently made were incorporated into the final text. Significantly, the decision to produce the tract was made after those members most vehement in their opposition to both imperialism and the war had resigned. Nevertheless, there still remained a great deal of disagreement over the Boer War among Fabians, and Pease is full of praise for Shaw's literary skills in putting together a document which most members felt they could support. McBriar, not without a hint of irony, describes it as 'a supreme feat of Fabian

¹⁵ Ibid. 126.

¹⁶ The Fabian Society, Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto (London, 1900).

compromise'.¹⁷

The general tone and the principal arguments of Fabianism and the Empire can be illustrated with reference to four areas. First, much emphasis is given to the fact of Great Power partition of 'the greater part of the globe'.¹⁸ The tract is unclear, however, on whether this process is inevitable and, also, on whether such a process is desirable. Regarding the latter, the tone of the pamphlet is positive, though not unconditionally. For example, the Tract suggests that an ideal form of world political organisation would be the division of the world into a small number of large-scale empires each permitting extensive degrees of autonomy for those national groups 'sufficiently advanced'.¹⁹

Secondly, Pease in his letter to the press argued that it was incorrect to suppose that the Fabian Society was in favour of imperialism. Fabianism and the Empire suggests otherwise. In conformity with the zeitgeist of late nineteenth century Britain, the matter was discussed in terms of the notion of 'civilization'. Accordingly, states which obstruct 'international civilization' have no right, it seems, to exist. 'The State which obstructs international civilization will have to go, be it big or little', it is boldly, though not unambiguously declared. Countries of 'higher' civilization are entitled to dominate

¹⁷ McBriar, Fabian Socialism, 125-30.

¹⁸ Fabian Society, Fabianism and the Empire, 3.

¹⁹ Ibid. 17-21.

and even take control of countries of 'lower' civilization. As the Tract argues, the seizure of Switzerland by Czarist Russia would not be justified, since right is not predicated on right, but 'if Switzerland were to annex Russia and liberalise her institutions the rest of Europe would breathe more freely'.²⁰

A third area of importance concerns what are nowadays called 'global interests'. The Fabians recognized that the way of viewing the world just outlined is not without its difficulties - specifically with respect to China. The Chinese had an ancient and highly sophisticated civilization. Was Western civilization 'higher'? Probably not. Intervention and control, however, would still be legitimate in the 'international interest'. Echoing a long line of radical thought on foreign policy²¹, trade, the establishment of modern communications (railway, postal and telegraph routes), and travel, were held by the Fabians to be 'international interests'. Baulking these interests meant baulking the interests of the world as a whole. Moreover, these interests had hardened into rights and it followed that foreign trading powers had a right (and perhaps even a duty) to enforce them. The West could, therefore, legitimately intervene in China in order to

²⁰ Ibid. 46. During this period the term 'international' was often used to mean all states and all nations or peoples - what we would now call 'world' or 'global'.

²¹ On which see A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers: Dissent over British Foreign Policy 1789-1939 (Harmondsworth, 1976).

establish a 'settled government' which would facilitate the free operation of the international interests of free trade and communication.²²

Finally, whilst many Fabians unashamedly regarded themselves as imperialists, they took a great deal of care to point out that they were not 'jingo'. They abhorred the 'theatrical' and 'hysterical' patriotism of those who believed it to be corrupt or worse to criticize one's country or government.²³ While most of them felt that since the war was now a fact it was vital that the British prevailed, they also felt that the conflict could only be ultimately justified if, as Shaw argued, the administration of the Colony was radically reformed. Domination and control could be a legitimate means of advancement, but unlike jingo, they conceived progress in universal terms, and identified 'Western civilization' as the contemporary source of progress rather than any particular nation. They were explicitly opposed to national egoism and aggrandizement. This is exemplified inter alia in their belief that empires should concede considerable degrees of national autonomy.

Fabianism and the Empire is unambiguous in its condemnation of jingoism but little else. It failed to tackle the central questions, both practical and theoretical, raised by the war in South Africa: What is

²² Fabian Society, Fabianism and the Empire, 44-5.

²³ The former term is Shaw's, the latter McBriar's. McBriar, Fabian Socialism, 122, 127.

imperialism? How can it be defined? What are its forms? What are its causes? The Tract simply exploited the equivocal element of what has been termed the 'equivocal anti-imperialist' position. In doing so it in effect allowed the Society to agree to disagree: among Fabians there were still those who were opposed to 'imperialism' but believed that 'expansion of empire' was not necessarily a bad thing; and there were those who unashamedly called themselves imperialists, while at the same time being critical of many aspects of expansion.

Tariffs and Trade

The controversy over the Boer War did not stimulate lasting interest in the international realm. With the exception of one brief episode, the Fabian Society happily returned to the exclusively domestic agenda it had pursued during its 'golden years'.²⁴ This episode was disagreement over Joseph Chamberlain's proposals for tariff reform.

For most of the nineteenth century the pursuit and maintenance of free trade was considered by radicals and progressives (mainly liberals, but latterly socialists too) to be an incontrovertible tenet of their faith. This was certainly true of the majority of Fabians. Indeed, as late as 1900, in Fabianism and the Empire, the virtues of free trade were largely taken for granted. A certain degree of uneasiness with this orthodoxy had, however, begun to

²⁴ Generally deemed by historians of the Society as 1884-1900.

emerge in the 1880s during the 'long depression'. By the turn of the century more than a few liberals and socialists were moving towards qualified acceptance of a fair trade position.

The debate over tariffs never reached the ferocity of the debate over imperialism and South Africa. As with the South African controversy, however, opinion within the Society was deeply divided. Again, the drafting skills of Shaw were called upon to produce a document capable of mustering general approval. Following the incorporation of a number of amendments, none of them inconsistent with his main lines of argument, the draft tract was accepted by the membership and published as Fabianism and the Fiscal Question: An Alternative Policy.²⁵ Rather than a manifesto supporting either free trade or fair trade, the tract is a critique of both. As McBriar has noted, it is debatable whether one side or the other gets the better of the argument.²⁶ The 'alternative policy' proposed does not come down clearly on one side or the other. It involved nationalization (or 'imperialization') of merchant shipping and railways in order to reduce transportation costs; the expansion of the consular service in trade matters; the improvement of technical education; the conduct of more research into the British economy; and, perhaps most importantly, the establishment of a minimum wage for all workers. Discussion of principles was tactfully avoided

²⁵ Tract no. 116, (London, 1904).

²⁶ McBriar, Fabian Socialism, 133.

(or perhaps, more accurately, 'skilfully dodged'). The commitment to free trade implicit in Fabianism and the Empire was thus covertly abandoned.

The most vocal opposition to the draft tract came from those critical of the Society's earlier attachment to free trade - though the only resignation on this occasion came from a confirmed free trader, Graham Wallas. The spokesperson of those in favour of tariff reform was Robert Dell. Significantly, his case was made in terms of the national rather than the international interest. Dell's argument was as follows. First, free trade was based on the principle of laissez faire - the doctrine that the economic system functions most efficiently when allowed to operate 'naturally' - and therefore socialists, who of course reject this principle, should therefore reject free trade. Second, much English capital was being invested in newly-developing industries abroad, the products of which were largely protected, whilst traditional sectors of the home economy, notably agriculture, were in decline. Thirdly, England was in danger of becoming 'the pleasure ground of English-speaking peoples, living on tourists and rich men whose fortunes were made and invested in other countries and producing little or nothing'. Other countries were unlikely to dismantle their barriers to trade, and this, allied to the fact of British industrial decline, suggested to Dell that a system of protection, judiciously constructed and employed, was essential. A permanent body should be created for the purpose of giving

expert advice to the government on the scale of duties and 'what trades to encourage and what not'.²⁷

As with the South African conflict the issue of tariff reform raised a number of questions, conceptual and theoretical, which were not adequately addressed. The two tracts were considerably ambiguous both in their analysis and their recommendations. They demonstrate that the Fabian Society was deeply uncertain about how to conceive the outside world and the principles which should guide foreign policy.

World War and its Impact

The outbreak of the First World War had a profound effect on the Fabian Society. Not only did it bring into sharp relief the extent of the Society's neglect of the international realm, it also served to impress on it that domestic reform could not be achieved in the absence of international reform. Little Englanders Fabians could no longer be. An understanding of international relations would now have to form a much greater part of their work. Woolf's International Government was the first product of this new attitude.

The increased international tension evident for a decade or more prior to the outbreak of war does not seem to have much concerned the Fabian Society. The first lecture to consider the possibility of a war between Britain and Germany was not delivered until December 1911.

²⁷ Ibid. 132.

In this lecture W. S. Sanders argued that tension between these two countries was largely due to Germany's 'remarkable political, commercial, and industrial development' during the past 40 years, and England's (in part due to 'jealousy') not insignificant opposition to it. Sanders suggested that British foreign policy should be less motivated by fear and hostility and more by the desire to reach common understandings. Such understandings could be achieved given that (i) the 'German people in the mass were a sober, peace-loving people who had no great love of military glory'; (ii) the 'jingoists' were losing support because of the rising tax-burden resulting from increasing militarisation; and (iii) the pacifically-orientated Social Democrats were growing in influence.²⁸

An important debate on the matter between two leading members of the Society - the Australian historian, Dr Marion Phillips and the Oxford historian, R. C. K. Ensor - took place during 1913.²⁹ Phillips argued along the lines of, what Ensor called in his more precise address, 'cosmopolitanism'. She argued that nationalism and patriotism were absurd, nations unreal, and that capitalism was the cause of war. The only way to avoid the war was through direct action, a general strike. Such direct action was immediately needed in order to awaken the Labour Movement from its current state of apathy and to prevent it

²⁸ Ibid. 135.

²⁹ Like a number of other Fabian Society debates this one took place over several months: Phillips spoke in May, Ensor replied in October. See *ibid.* 135-38.

from being swept along in a tide of war hysteria.

Ensor's position was more conservative. He argued that cosmopolitanism was unsound since it was based on a narrow ideological identification of the institutions of the state with capitalism. These institutions, Ensor claimed, have to be operated regardless of the type of social system pertaining. He advocated a 'wise internationalism'. Nationalism was real and genuine conflicts of national interests existed, war often being a consequence. The 'pugnacious' or the 'sentimental' pursuit of foreign policy was inadvisable. England, for example, should not set out to be aggressive or provocative, and she should not make treaties on the basis of a like or dislike of another nation's social system. Armed crusades were unnecessary and dangerous. Instead, England, and indeed all nations, should blend 'pacifism' with 'official policy'.³⁰ War should not be fought if it could be justly avoided. There should be no 'unnecessary' expenditure on armaments. Arbitration should be utilized whenever possible. Ensor did see some merit in open and democratically controlled diplomacy. However, a note of caution was sounded: the British public were demonstrably capable of both indifference and bellicosity, both of which would hinder rather than help the formulation of sound

³⁰ By 'pacifism' Ensor meant what Ceadel has called 'pacific-ism', i.e. the belief that wars should not be waged except in extreme circumstances. See Martin Ceadel, Thinking About Peace and War (Oxford, 1987), 101-34. By 'official policy' Ensor had in mind respect for other states' sovereignty, the doctrine pacta sunt servanda, and the pursuit of a balance of power.

foreign policy. Ensor's principal recommendation, presciently, was the formation of a House of Commons' foreign relations committee.

Between these contrasting views rested a number of intermediate positions. Shaw, for example, supported 'official policy' though he vehemently condemned the foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey; he advocated a tough minded collective security, but not involving Russia; and he disapproved of such 'ideologically' motivated suggestions as a general strike against war, whilst staunchly believing that England had a right and probably a duty to promote, and if necessary impose, 'higher civilization'.³¹

Enter L. S. Woolf

It was against this background of considerable diversity of opinion that Woolf was commissioned to write International Government. The Fabian Society had produced little, if anything, of theoretical significance that he could use as a starting point for his study. There were fundamental disagreements about imperialism and empire, about free trade and tariff reform, about whether the national interest should come before the 'international interest', about the causes of war, about the legitimacy of war, and about the appropriate response of socialists to the outbreak of war.

The influence of these early debates on Woolf's

³¹ McBriar, Fabian Socialism, 121-2, 138-9.

thought is piecemeal. One might point to: (i) acceptance of the primacy of the Great Powers as an international fact of life, and not necessarily an undesirable one; (ii) belief in the need for greater expertise in foreign policy-making and wider 'democratic' discussion of foreign policy goals; and (iii) recognition of the existence of 'international interests' and an overriding duty on socialists to promote them. But apart from these three assertions, few of the ideas and opinions in previous Fabian discussions are reiterated in International Government. Bernard Porter's claim that International Government was 'built to a great extent on the foundations that had been laid in 1900' and that it is, in essence, an up-dated version of Fabianism and the Empire is, therefore, a large exaggeration.³² It is true that Woolf was critical of the nineteenth century 'principle of nationality'; and he certainly felt that the British Empire provided a good example of the kind of 'international authority' he wanted to see further developed. But, as will be seen, he was not as convinced that the long-term future of mankind lay in 'world government' as Porter implies. Nor did he see the British Empire as something which 'closely approximated' an 'ideal international authority'. For Woolf, it was more of an 'instructive case' of working internationalism than an

³² Porter, 'Fabians, Imperialists and the International Order', 59-60.

'ideal example'.³³ Woolf had far more to say about international relations and government than Porter suggests. As will be seen, International Government covers an astonishingly wide terrain. It is both diverse in the issues it examines and eclectic in the ideas it utilizes. To make a comparison on the basis of just two or three of its aspects, as Porter does, is to distort a highly complex picture.

Although Woolf was not greatly influenced by specifics he was, however, significantly influenced by more general aspects of Fabian doctrine and method. Fabianism is not so much a creed, as an approach or a general disposition towards social affairs. It is notoriously difficult to define. This notwithstanding, a number of for the most part interconnected attributes are commonly ascribed to Fabianism. Many of them find expression in Woolf's work. The following are particularly salient: (i) devotion to detailed empirical investigation; (ii) suspicion of abstract theories and political rhetoric; (iii) strong attachment to sociological as opposed to philosophical modes of enquiry; (iv) belief in permeative and gradualist methods of social change as opposed to militant and revolutionary methods; (v) commitment to

³³ See Woolf, International Government, 230. Note that by 'British Empire' Woolf meant Britain and the white Dominions - something Porter does not point out. Also see Woolf, The Future of Constantinople (London, 1917), 36-80, where Woolf proposes an International Administrative Commission 'modelled upon such [Legislative and Executive] Councils which have existed for many years in India and our Crown Colonies'.

'rational' and 'scientific' as opposed to 'romantic' socialism; (vi) concern with social efficiency as well as social injustice; (vii) belief in 'scientific administration', 'institution-building', and the importance of the highly trained 'expert'; (viii) profound respect for the rule of law; (ix) dedication to public service and the pursuit of collective well-being.³⁴

A Practicable Proposal

Given the absence of a systematic Fabian analysis of international affairs it is not surprising that in Part One of his study Woolf drew not on Fabian writers, or on the work of other radicals, but on the work of diplomatic historians and international lawyers. For Part Two there was very little work of any description to draw on. As Woolf later recalled:

You could not become an authority on international

³⁴ See Gordon K. Lewis, 'Fabian Socialism: Some Aspects of Theory and Practice', Journal of Politics, XIV, 3 (1952), 442-70. This is an important paper. Note Porter's neat description: 'Fabian socialism was fundamentally a statist, interventionist kind. Its main enemy was Liberal individualism ... and its highest ideal was the more efficient organisation of society to everyone's benefit, from above'. Porter, 'Fabians, Imperialists and the International Order', 56. Note also Woolf's summation of the Webbs' social philosophy: 'They were convinced that if the machinery of society was properly constructed and controlled efficiently by intelligent people, if the functions of the various parts of the organisation were scientifically determined and the structure scientifically adapted to the functions, if the round pegs were then fitted into the round holes and the square pegs into the square holes, then we should get an adequately civilised society in which we should all be healthy, wealthy, and wise'. Woolf, 'Political Thought and the Webbs', 263.

government in 1915 by reading books, because the books did not exist³⁵.... I had therefore to read Blue Books and White Books and annual reports dealing with such vast organisations as the Universal Postal Union or the International Institute of Agriculture, and I had many interviews with civil servants and others who attended the conferences or congresses of these unions or associations as national representatives.³⁶

A large part of Woolf's study, then, was original research.

It is important to note that Woolf conceived his work in the most practical terms. The brief given to Woolf by Sidney Webb for the investigation which later became Part One of International Government was as follows:

What is needed is to arrive at a strictly practical suggestion, or rather alternative suggestions, explained and supported by accounts of what has been tried with useful results; and of past experiments and analyses suggestive of any new expedients we can devise ...³⁷

More specifically Woolf's job was to enquire into the evolution of international law, institutions, and agreements and to suggest ways in which these could be developed in order to make war less likely.

Woolf was well aware that plans for radical international reform were often regarded as 'utopian'. Long before Carr's critique he denounced 'this terrifying adjective' as a conservative device for discrediting any new idea or proposal. He also claimed with characteristic

³⁵ At this point Woolf noted two exceptions which he used quite extensively: Paul S. Reinsch, Public International Unions, their Work and Organization: A Study in International Administrative Law (Boston, 1911); and L'Union des Associations Internationales, Annaires se la Vie Internationale (Paris, 1909 and 1911).

³⁶ Woolf, Beginning Again, 187-88.

³⁷ Letter from Webb to Woolf quoted in Wilson, Leonard Woolf, 63. Emphasis in original.

irony that 'everything is utopian until it is tried'. It is important to note that in a sense the dichotomy between 'realism' and 'utopianism' was part of the vocabulary of international relations well before the publication of The Twenty Years' Crisis. Woolf contrasted 'so-called' idealists, utopians, 'amiable cranks', and 'idealistic dreamers', with 'the "plain and practical men" school of writers', and those who upheld 'the dogma of anti-internationalism'.³⁸ His denunciation of the term notwithstanding, Woolf shared the general Fabian fear of being labelled 'utopian' and consequently steered clear of suggestions he felt states would not accept. This is clearly evident in the Fabian plan, drawn up by Woolf and Sidney Webb, for 'A Supernational Authority that will Prevent War'.³⁹ Despite the bold title, the plan does not advocate the merging of independent national units in a 'world state' or the creation of a 'world government' or a 'world parliament'. Woolf maintained that such ideas were impracticable since they did not have the slightest chance of being accepted by the world's statesmen. The carnage of the War had made change a matter of great urgency: the

³⁸ See Woolf's introduction to his edited book, The Framework of a Lasting Peace (London, 1917), 57-8 (sub-titled 'The Bogey of Utopia'). Woolf also had a term for the billiard ball model of international relations: 'the rigid theory of the independence and sovereignty of states'. See Woolf, International Government, 89-91, 96, 216.

³⁹ Published as the second part to the New Statesman Special Supplement, and included in the first two editions but not the third, 1923, edition of International Government.

system could not be left as it currently stood. But new schemes for world political organization would have to take into account the structure and processes of the old. Reform, perhaps radical, was needed, but revolution in its fullest sense, or a 'sudden, large mutation'⁴⁰ was not realistic. Nor did he seek to outlaw war. Rather, he recommended the establishment of machinery and procedures whereby states could settle their differences short of war. Similarly, he did not, at this stage at any rate, advocate disarmament arguing instead that this would come about by itself, 'just as the individual carrying of arms falls silently into desuetude as and when fears of aggression die down before the rule of law'.⁴¹

Woolf's Conception of International Government

For Woolf 'government' was essentially a regulatory activity. Whether local, national, or international, government involved

the regulation of relations according to general rules, which to a greater or less extent are understood vaguely to embody the idea in the community of what the right relations ought to be.⁴²

Or alternatively it was a question of

making rules which will regulate the relations between

⁴⁰ J. A. Hobson, The Nation, August 15, 1915, 639. See also the debate between Hobson and Woolf in The Nation, August 7, 14, 21, 1915; and the debate between Hobson and a reviewer, New Statesman, July 24, August 7, 1915.

⁴¹ Woolf, International Government, 231.

⁴² Woolf, The Framework of a Lasting Peace, 13.

the individuals or the groups, of establishing organisation which will make it easy for them to co-operate for common purposes, and of devising models of settling disputes and differences when they arise.⁴³

These rules included customs, morality, the rules and regulations of voluntary associations, and law.

Woolf defined international government broadly: it meant 'the regulation of relations between states, nations or peoples by international agreement.'⁴⁴ International government was not necessarily, therefore, a centralized activity involving a set of central institutions. Nor was it the exclusive domain of states. Nor was it something completely new. On the contrary it was something that already existed and was evolving. In this respect the nineteenth century had been highly significant:

...a profound change in international relations has taken place since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and ... the people who repeat and repeat again that International Government is Utopian, and international agreement must betray national interests, simply shut their eyes to the fact that in every department of life the beginnings, and more than the beginnings of International Government already exist...⁴⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century, Woolf contended, international interests had been gathering strength at the expense of traditionally conceived national interests. By this he meant that the interests of individuals and groups within the state increasingly corresponded to the interests of similar individuals and groups in other states. The

⁴³ Woolf, The Future of International Government, (London, 1940), 3.

⁴⁴ Woolf, International Government, 90.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 95.

corollary of this was that real national interests, the interests of the mass of people, had become international interests. Indeed, he claimed that '[t]he recognition of international interests, and that national interests are international interests, and vice versa, was the great social discovery of the last 100 years.'⁴⁶

Given such a broad definition of 'international government' the possibility arises that it takes a number of different forms. Two can be inferred from the way Woolf organized his material in International Government. Part I of the book examines the ways in which, from 1815 to 1914, the Great Powers acted in concert. In contrast, Part II is concerned with what Woolf called 'cosmopolitan' (meaning primarily 'non-state') organization. But a third kind of international government, which might be called 'international government through adjudication', can also be discerned sandwiched between them. One of the weaknesses of Woolf's analysis, to be discussed in Chapter 4, is a failure to adequately distinguish between these different forms. Arguably there is a tension between them. Rather than in harness, as Woolf assumed, it might be the case that they pull in different directions.

1. Great Power International Government

Woolf observed that during the nineteenth century the Great Powers had gathered together in concerts, conventions, and congresses in order to discuss and settle matters which

⁴⁶ Ibid. 96.

threatened to disrupt the peace. A 'new, if rudimentary, international system' had come into being, the most significant attribute of which was the tendency of the various congresses and conferences to behave as if they were 'rudimentary international legislative organs'. The central principle of this new system was the negation of the right of any one Power and the assertion of the right of the Powers collectively to make decisions on matters affecting the peace of Europe.⁴⁷

Woolf felt that his interpretation of nineteenth century international relations could be verified by reference to a number of international events, but four in particular. It may be helpful to briefly summarize Woolf's account of these events. The first event was the Greek revolt of 1821. The Great Powers agreed that the revolt posed a serious threat to the peace of Europe. Russia proposed collective intervention and an international conference to resolve the conflict. Turkey protested, not without good reason, that the matter fell within her domestic affairs. Russia, France, and Britain, however, 'under cover of the specious term "mediation" ... formed themselves into a kind of legislative committee'.⁴⁸ Over the next ten years, through a series of conferences, they proceeded to settle the conflict between Turkey and Greece, and they were prepared to enforce their decisions when necessary. The most dramatic example of this was the

⁴⁷ Ibid. 30-33; Framework of a Lasting Peace, 51.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 30.

'pacific blockade' and the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Navarino in 1827. This kind of activity on the part of the Great Powers continued throughout the century. Woolf cites a number of examples in support of the claim that the Great Powers had arrogated to themselves the right to collectively 'arrange' the affairs of Greece.⁴⁹ According to Woolf, 'The relations of Greece and Turkey were ... continually regulated by quasi-legislative conferences'.⁵⁰

The second example concerns the Balkans. In 1876 the insurrection of Bosnia-Herzegovina was supported by Montenegro and Serbia against Turkey. The six Great Powers came forward as 'mediators' and two conferences were held at Constantinople. Various proposals were made with respect to the nature of the administrative system to be applied to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a commitment was made to establish an international force, to be composed of between 3,000 and 6,000 Belgian troops, to police the agreement. But these proposals were rejected by Turkey. Woolf points out that this would have been the end of the matter if the Great Powers were genuinely acting as mediators. But Russia sent a circular to the other Powers asking what measures they were prepared to take 'to enforce the decisions of Europe'. When the other Powers proved reluctant to take action, Russia went to war and attempted to make her own terms with Turkey by the Treaty of San Stefano. This, however, proved unacceptable to the other

⁴⁹ Ibid. 31.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 32.

Great Powers and they subsequently 'insisted upon a European settlement at the international Congress of Berlin'. Woolf asserted that the conference at Constantinople 'clearly ... regarded itself as an international legislative organ' though the Powers lacked the courage of their convictions when it came to enforcing their agreement. Yet, by repudiating the Treaty of San Stefano they once again affirmed the principle that the Eastern question could only be settled by the collective decision of the Powers.⁵¹

The final two examples are dealt with by Woolf much more briefly. In 1867 Holland proposed to sell the strategically important Duchy of Luxembourg to France. There were fears that this may result in war between France and Germany. Even though the transaction would have been perfectly legitimate under international law, the Great Powers intervened and an international conference in London sealed an agreement whereby the eight Powers represented 'collectively guaranteed' Luxembourg's neutrality. Finally, in 1905 the Moroccan Crisis threatened to disturb the peace of Europe. France was determined to settle the matter unilaterally, but under pressure from the other Powers she acceded to Germany's wish that an international conference be charged with resolving the dispute. A conference was subsequently held at Algeciras, and its Final Act once again confirmed the principle of

⁵¹ Ibid. 34-6.

'international regulation'.⁵²

Woolf believed that this new 'quasi-legislative' role the Great Powers had assumed for themselves could be extended and refined. Such a development, he felt, was essential if the dragon of war was to be slain. Two obstacles, however, lay in the path of any such development. The first was the tendency for the concert to be conceive itself in various, not necessarily consistent, ways. This was especially the case during the years of the Congress system, 1815-22. At times it saw itself as a 'Parliament of Nations', or a kind of European confederation. At other times it saw itself as merely a 'hegemony of four great powers, bound by alliance to preserve the status quo'.⁵³ Constant uncertainty as to the nature of the new system in the minds of its participants contributed to the Congress system's premature demise.

The second obstacle was that the Great Powers consistently failed to specify the area of competence of the quasi-legislature. Czar Alexander and his continental Allies were of the opinion that it should be allowed to deal not only with questions pertaining to the relations between states but also their internal affairs. Castlereagh, and later Canning, would have none of this. They were of the view that 'our engagements have reference

⁵² Ibid. 36-7. Interestingly, the Act obliged France and Spain to respect the independence of the Sultan of Morocco but entrusted the policing of the country to France and Spain under the auspices of a Swiss Inspector-General.

⁵³ Ibid. 23-4.

wholly to the state of the territorial possessions settled at the peace; to the state of affairs between nation and nation, not ... to the affairs of any nation within itself'.⁵⁴ Woolf believed that this 'common-sense' method of delineating the competence of the quasi-legislature had merit in a large number of cases. But it lacked merit when it came to 'problems of nationality'. It was extremely difficult to say whether cases such as the Greek rebellion and the Bosnian insurrection were national or international. Consequently there was bound to be disagreement over whether such disputes should be resolved 'nationally' or through an international conference. One of the problems this gave rise to was as follows: if the Greek and Bosnian cases were considered to be international, then logically so should the question of Irish Home Rule, the 'position of India within the British Empire', and 'the position of Finns within the Russian Empire'. There was little prospect, however, of the British or Russian governments accepting a right of collective intervention in these matters. Therefore, the permissive principle advocated by Alexander was not practicable, at least not in a consistent way. If the non-interventionist position of Castlereagh and Canning had been adopted, however, the Powers would have been prohibited from settling Turkey's conflicts with Greek, Bosnian, and other minorities. Yet the Powers had in fact done this, and they had successfully avoided war between

⁵⁴ Canning quoted in *ibid.* 24.

themselves in doing so.

Woolf was undecided on what position to take on this question. On the one hand, the chances of getting agreement between the powers along the lines of the permissive principle were remote. There was no prospect, for example, of Britain giving Russia any say in what she regarded as her domestic affairs, especially given the enormous differences between them with regard to administrative, economic, and political organization. On the other hand, if a strictly non-interventionist position were adopted the Great Powers would be prohibited from dealing collectively with one of the most potent sources of contemporary international tension - nationalism. Woolf eventually settled for what might be called a pragmatic compromise. During the nineteenth century the practice evolved of treating a question as an international question if there was a consensus among the Powers that it posed a threat to the peace of Europe. Anticipating the underlying logic of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, Woolf accepted this as the only satisfactory way of resolving the matter until the domestic constitutions of states had become more uniform in character.⁵⁵

2. International Government through Adjudication

Woolf attached great importance to rules of international

⁵⁵ Ibid. 24-9. Woolf's analysis suggested to him that a 'certain degree of unanimity as to the domestic organisation of states' might be 'an absolutely necessary antecedent to any highly developed international organisation'. Ibid. 28.

law. Although sometimes vague and uncertain and incomprehensive in scope (charges, he pointed out, that equally applied to domestic law) there was no denying the fact that 'a vast body of well-established international law' had been developed 'covering a great extent of international relations, and certainly the fundamental relations upon which international society rests to-day.' The foreign offices of the world were continually engaged in applying such rules. Hundreds of thousands of Britons had laid down their lives in defence of them. Nine-tenths of international intercourse and nine-tenths of international commerce depended on their daily recognition and application.⁵⁶

One of the products of the emerging quasi-legislative role of the Great Powers was the quantitative and qualitative development of international law. International conferences had become involved in making new rules of law; they also became involved in the codification of existing customary rules. As a result, international law was becoming less 'vague and uncertain', and rights and duties were being created that were 'clearly capable of being the subjects of judicial decisions'.⁵⁷ This was significant for Woolf since, in true Webbian fashion, he believed that progress in social affairs depended on transforming 'vague' political relations into 'definite' legal rights and

⁵⁶ Woolf, Framework of a Lasting Peace, 15-22.

⁵⁷ Woolf, International Government, 11-13, 81-82, 17. Emphasis in original.

obligations. In the past international society provided only two methods of settling disputes: negotiation and war. Woolf argued that a third method was essential: international adjudication.

In his wide-ranging discussion of adjudication Woolf essentially makes three points. The first concerns arbitration. During the first two decades of the twentieth century arbitration was widely seen as the solution to the problem of war. The success of arbitration in the Alabama case and the Dogger Bank incident convinced many observers of the need for a general system of arbitration. Woolf, however, felt that the arguments in favour of arbitration were incoherent. In his view, generic use of the term 'arbitration' concealed two kinds of judicial process that needed to be distinguished. With the first kind, the judge or arbiter makes a decision on the basis of law. With the second, a decision is made on the basis of what is considered 'fair and reasonable'. Supporters of arbitration assumed that the cases they enthusiastically cited were examples of the latter form of judicial decision. In fact, Woolf maintained, they were examples of the former. States had only been willing to accept 'arbitration' when the dispute clearly hinged on a question of law. This was true not only of the vast majority of cases but also of the most famous arbitration case of all. The tribunal in the Alabama case made its judgement on the basis of previously agreed rules of international law - not, as many believed, on the basis of what was 'fair and

reasonable'. The main difference between Britain and the U.S. concerned the rights of neutrals during war. It was this question which had brought the two countries to the brink of war. It was resolved, however, contrary to popular belief, not by arbitration but by diplomatic negotiation. 'Arbitration' only occurred with respect to the level of damages due. In fact what had happened was that the disputing parties had sought a judicial settlement not on the primary bone of contention, but on a series of subsidiary questions all of which fell within the remit of existing rules of international law.

Woolf's examination of this and other cases led him to the conclusion that a general system of obligatory arbitration was no panacea for war since states were willing to submit only certain kinds of disputes to a judicial body. This was as true of relations between states as it was of relations between individuals. Not all disputes within states were settled by judicial decisions. The range of disputes settled by such means was, in fact, 'strictly limited'. Political, and what Woolf ambiguously called 'administrative' differences, were 'never within States referred to judicial tribunals'. It was hopeless, for example, to expect the 'Home Rule question' to be resolved by such means. It was similarly hopeless to expect the judicial method to settle all disputes at the international level. The type of disputes that could be resolved by judicial methods were, in Woolf's words, 'legal disputes': that is, those involving the interpretation of

a legal document, the existence of a legal right or obligation, or a question of fact.⁵⁸

In an attempt to define this type of dispute more precisely Woolf challenged the view that judicial settlement is impossible in questions which affect 'national honour and vital interests'. This is the second main point he makes in his discussion of adjudication. According to Woolf the attempts made to devise a system of obligatory adjudication at the Hague conferences had foundered because diplomatists had insisted on ruling out adjudication in disputes involving honour and vital interests. An attempt to draw up a list of disputes which did not impinge on such matters resulted, unremarkably, in a brief list of disputes of no importance. The central problem was that 'honour and vital interests' could not be objectively defined. In principle any question might affect the honour and vital interest of a nation. It followed that giving individual states the right to decide whether or not such matters were involved was not a step forward since adjudication would in effect be optional not obligatory. If they wished to avoid adjudication on a particular question they merely had to deem that it involved a question of honour.⁵⁹

Woolf contended that such an approach, as well as being flawed, was also unnecessary. The historical record showed that in fact states had been prepared to submit

⁵⁸ Ibid. 46-7; Framework of a Lasting Peace, 20-51.

⁵⁹ Woolf, International Government, 48-51.

their differences to a judicial tribunal when honour and vital interests were involved provided that: '(1) A rational and suitable judicial procedure exists; and (2) the question can be put to the tribunal in a legal form'.⁶⁰ The Dogger Bank incident, for instance, had been successfully resolved by an International Commission of Inquiry even though one of the issues at stake was the honour of the Russian Fleet. Other cases resolved by judicial settlement, for instance the Alaskan and Venezuelan Boundary questions, had also involved either national honour or vital interests.⁶¹ These cases demonstrated, in Woolf's view, that there were five categories of disputes that could be put to a tribunal in legal form: (i) disputes that could be reduced to questions of fact; (ii) questions of title to territory and boundaries; (iii) questions as to the interpretation of law; (iv) questions concerning the responsibility of national agents for the results of their actions; and (v) questions concerning certain kinds of pecuniary claims'.⁶²

In Woolf's view it was 'both practicable and reasonable' for states to bind themselves to submit these five categories of questions to judicial decision. He also maintained, however, that 'in the present state of affairs'

⁶⁰ Ibid. 49.

⁶¹ Regrettably Woolf does not examine these cases in any detail but instead relies on the opinion of Sir Thomas Barclay in Problems of International Practice and Diplomacy (London, 1907).

⁶² Woolf, International Government, 52-5.

the prospect of states actually doing so would be increased 'if an additional safeguard to national interests could be introduced'.⁶³ This is Woolf's third point. In effect he proposed two safeguards. Firstly, he proposed that states should not be bound absolutely to submit such disputes to a judicial tribunal. Rather they should be given the option to bring them before an International Conference which would make a decision not only on the basis of law, but also on the basis of equity. This provision was necessary because of the conservative nature of law. Strongly anticipating Carr's analysis of law and peaceful change, Woolf argued that states whose interests were not invested in the status quo would not accept compulsory adjudication. This was the case even with respect to the 'limited' range of questions he had identified since a judicial tribunal, by its nature, inevitably upholds the existing order.⁶⁴ What was required was a method by which the status quo could, in certain circumstances, be upset in an orderly manner. Woolf vested this function in his International Conference.

The second safeguard proposed by Woolf involved giving states some say on the type of tribunal before which their unresolved disputes would ultimately have to be brought. 'The art of administering and interpreting International Law', according to Woolf, 'has only just been born, and we

⁶³ Ibid. 55.

⁶⁴ I go into greater detail on this matter in Chapter 4.

know so little about it that, by trying to confine it to rigid lines, we may easily kill it in infancy'.⁶⁵ Thus although referring 'legal disputes' to a tribunal should be obligatory (notwithstanding the first safeguard), the type of tribunal should be optional. Woolf saw no reason why a number of tribunals, variously constituted, could not exist side by side. The Permanent Court of Arbitration established at the first Hague Conference could thus exist alongside the 'Judicial Arbitration Court' proposed at the second Conference, and alongside other courts, commissions, and tribunals established by specific treaties. In the event of a disagreement between the disputing parties over which tribunal was most suitable, states would be bound to submit the dispute to a Conference or to the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

In summary, Woolf's proposals for compulsory adjudication, firmly based on his interpretation of the recent past, were as follows. It was possible to identify a class of disputes - 'legal disputes' - which could always be settled by the decision of a judicial tribunal. However, because of the uncertainty and incompleteness of certain points of international law, and because deciding matters within the existing framework of law was an inherently conservative method, states would be reluctant to fully subscribe to it. Woolf proposed, therefore, that they be permitted, in certain circumstances, to submit the dispute for decision by an international legislative

⁶⁵ Woolf, International Government, 59.

conference. There was no reason why a plurality of judicial bodies could not co-exist with each other. The need for a single, central, judicial organ had been much exaggerated. Reference to a tribunal should be obligatory but the choice of tribunal voluntary.

3. Cosmopolitan International Government

Woolf's principal analytical contention on this aspect of international government was that during the nineteenth century the economic, social, and to a much lesser extent, political structure of the world had become more cosmopolitan than it had ever been before. His main prescription was that organization along cosmopolitan lines should be extended, especially in the political sphere. Indeed, an extension of such organization was necessary to fill the gap - which had become a breeding-ground for international tension - between the organization of social and economic life of the world and the organization of its political life.

The growth of cosmopolitan organization was a product of the revolution in communications. This led to a massive increase in international intercourse between economic, social, cultural, educational, scientific, and political bodies and groups. Increased intercourse led to increased interdependence and to the 'discovery', referred to above, that true national interests were in fact international interests. The practical manifestation of this discovery was the 'spontaneous creation and evolution' of a new and

multifarious range of international and cosmopolitan bodies and actors.⁶⁶

In Woolf's view this range of new actors consisted of four basic types. Firstly, there were those bodies and associations composed exclusively of states. Primary among these were the public international unions such as the UPU ITU. Unlike the conferences and congresses of Woolf's first conception of international government, these were intended to be permanent bodies which operated on a day to day basis through a bureau or secretariat. They came into being, starting with the Riverian Commissions established at Vienna, as a result of a growing awareness among states that certain important common interests could not be protected in an extemporary fashion.

Woolf's second category of international bodies had grown side by side with the public international unions. These were the 'unofficial' congresses and associations consisting of individuals and groups other than states. Starting with the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840, a plethora of such bodies had come into existence. As with the first category, the impetus for the creation of such bodies was the realization that there was 'an interest to serve or an object to attain which was international rather than national.'⁶⁷ Woolf calculated that by 1914 over 500 international associations of this kind had been created, and over 400 of these had a

⁶⁶ Ibid. 96.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 105.

permanent existence. This meant that

... there is hardly a sphere of life in which a consciousness of international interests has not penetrated, and led to men of every tongue or race joining together in order to promote those interests. Practically every profession, from engineers and architects to nurses and commercial travellers, is represented. Industry and commerce, from Chambers of Commerce to bird-fanciers and cinematographic film makers; labour in some forty separate International Federations; Science, from the powerful Electro-technical Commission to the International Society of Psychical Research; Medicine, with as many as thirty-nine distinct associations; Art, Literature, Learning, and Religion have all entered the field of international organisation.⁶⁸

Along with these were 'innumerable' associations dedicated to the achievement of particular social or political ends such as women's suffrage, temperance, or the eradication of prostitution.⁶⁹

A third, less common, kind of international association were those comprising a heterogeneous membership. The Association Internationale pour la Lutte contra le Chômage, for example, had among its membership, states, provinces, municipalities, employers, trade unions, professional associations, and individual economists. Such bodies came into existence when a number of individuals and groups, often representing different interests, realized that they had a common interest in solving a particular problem. In Woolf's opinion they represented a 'new type

⁶⁸ Ibid. 106.

⁶⁹ To further illustrate the 'catholicism of internationalism' Woolf also alludes to the intriguing 'International Association for the Rational Destruction of Rats', and to a body whose revival is perhaps long overdue, the 'International Association for the Suppression of Useless Noises'. Ibid. 106.

and experiment in human co-operation'.⁷⁰

The fourth and final kind of international association was concerned exclusively with commerce. Producers and suppliers had increasingly gathered together in order to regulate international trade. In its simplest form such regulation consisted of the agreements as to price and market share. More sophisticated forms of regulation included the formation of 'rings', cartels, and international companies.

Woolf not only identified these new international bodies, he also had a lot to say about their broader significance. Their birth was part cause, part effect of three highly important developments. Firstly, administration was being internationalized. During the nineteenth century the functions of the state had gradually expanded to satisfy the needs of a changing society. But with increasing internationalization of society there came a point when national administration was no longer adequate. One of two things had to occur: either the emerging fabric of that society had to break down; or the independence of states had to be compromised. Woolf contended that, in fact, the latter had begun to occur, and administration on international lines had firmly taken root. The UPU, for example, established a single postal territory for the exchange of correspondence. The day to day running of the UPU was entrusted to a permanent

⁷⁰ Ibid. 108. These bodies paved the way for the most striking example of this type of cooperation: the International Labour Organization.

International Bureau which undertook research, supplied information, provided machinery for the resolution of disputes, and acted as a clearing house for the settlement of accounts. Similar administrative functions had been invested in the Bureau of the ITU, the Danube Commission, an International Administration for the suppression of slavery in Africa, and the various international sanitary councils.⁷¹

Secondly, law-making was becoming increasingly cosmopolitan. Social progress not only necessitated the internationalization of administration but also the harmonisation of national laws. Woolf called the process whereby national laws are harmonized 'cosmopolitan law-making', and the most striking example of it could be found in the field of maritime law. An international voluntary association, the International Maritime Committee, had been founded in 1898 for the purpose of putting pressure on states to progressively unify divergent maritime codes. As a result of such pressure a convention was signed unifying laws relating to salvage and collisions at sea. A draft convention had also been drawn up covering safety at sea and the carriage of freight. A similar, though less successful, process had also begun to take root in the area of labour law. The International Association for Labour Legislation, had been set up in 1900. As a result of its efforts a large number of industrial countries agreed to

⁷¹ Ibid. 116-67. These bodies were all established between the years 1865-1900.

adopt laws proscribing night work for women and prohibiting the manufacture, import and sale of matches made from white phosphorus. The Association also had some success in impressing on states the need for wage boards and minimum rates of pay in certain industries.⁷²

Thirdly, standardization was occurring on an increasingly international scale. International scientific associations had taken the lead in the standardization of scientific nomenclature. Before 1880 there existed a plethora of standards with respect to heat, colour, time, electrical current, etc.. In the decades that followed, however, agreement was reached on single international standards for all these phenomena. This pattern of standardization was repeated with respect to, among other things, medical nomenclature, actuarial methods, chemical analysis, food analysis, and the testing of materials. Woolf believed that this process of standardization was immensely important. It signalled not only the 'internationalisation of society', but the growth of an 'international social tissue'. Peculiar national habits and customs were being broken down. And this was highly significant since, in Woolf's words, 'it is where nations represent different levels of "culture" and are yet in intimate and continual relationship, that the difficulties of applying government to their relations are most

⁷² Other examples cited by Woolf include the partial unification of industrial property laws following a convention of 1883; and the partial unification of copyright laws following a convention of 1908. Ibid. 168-95.

formidable'.⁷³

Finally, Woolf contended that commerce and industry were also becoming highly internationalized. Indeed, Woolf claimed that 'In no department of life has International Government been more firmly or widely established'.⁷⁴ He also claimed that '[t]he business man in every country is a confirmed internationalist'. This was demonstrated by resolutions of the International Congress of the Chambers of Commerce. These resolutions were 'almost entirely occupied with pressing the governments to take steps to internationalize administration, legislation, etc.'⁷⁵ Furthermore, capitalists increasingly sought to regulate competition and substitute for it some form of cooperation. An array of trusts, 'kartels', 'combinations', and other arrangements had come into being to maximize economies of scale, divide up markets, and 'regulate' output and prices.⁷⁶ The apparatus of international government had also been erected in the world of labour, although Woolf acknowledged that the international trade union movement was stronger on paper than in practice. Trade unionists had organized themselves into various international federations in order to more effectively combat the forces of international capital. These federations performed a

⁷³ Ibid. 200.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 206.

⁷⁵ This and previous quotation in *ibid.* 155.

⁷⁶ Woolf cites a large number of examples. See *ibid.* 206-11.

variety of functions ranging from dramatic attempts to organize international strikes, to less sensational activities such as research into labour conditions.⁷⁷

International Government in the 1920s and 1930s

The preceding account is based largely on Woolf's wartime writings, International Government in particular. He had little to say about international government as such in the 1920s. He wrote widely on such matters as mandates and international co-operative trade - matters which unquestionably fall within his initial definition of international government. But he did not discuss these matters from what might be called an international government perspective: he did not consider them explicitly in terms of his network of inter-governmental rules and regulations.

The same could be generally said about the 1930s. During this period Woolf had many interesting and prescient things to say about the rise of Fascism and Hitlerism⁷⁸, about Soviet Russia and communism⁷⁹, about the World Disarmament Conference⁸⁰, the Abyssinian crisis⁸¹, the

⁷⁷ Ibid. 211-16.

⁷⁸ See for example, 'Labour's Foreign Policy', Political Quarterly, 4, 4 (October-December 1933), 507, 515; Quack, Quack! (London, 1935), 42-88, 137-45.

⁷⁹ See for example, Quack, Quack!, 22-4, 41-2.

⁸⁰ See for example, 'From Geneva to the Next War', Political Quarterly, 4, 1 (January-March 1933), 35-40.

League⁸², Labour⁸³, the foreign policy of the National government⁸⁴, pacifism⁸⁵ and so on. But he did not add anything substantial to his theory of international government.

It would be unfair, however, to say that he did not add anything at all. Woolf made a number of interesting points and observations about international government during this period, three of which are particularly worthy of mention.

Firstly, he put forward a novel theory about how it was possible, despite the 'quiet growth' of a 'vast system' of international government in the nineteenth century, for war to break out so suddenly and ferociously in 1914. He contended that there were essentially two for the most part conflicting methods of political organization - nationalism and internationalism - which, in turn, were always to some extent the effect or expression of two for the most part

⁸¹ See for example, 'Meditation on Abyssinia', Political Quarterly, 7, 1 (January-March 1936), 16-32; The League and Abyssinia (London, 1936), esp. 22-27.

⁸² See for example, 'From Serajevo to Geneva', Political Quarterly, 1, 2 (April 1930), 186-206; 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 22-23, 28-30; 'The Ideal of the League Remains', Political Quarterly, 7, 3 (July-September, 1936), 331-9; 'Arms and Peace', Political Quarterly, 8, 1 (January-March 1937), 23-4.

⁸³ See for example, 'Labour's Foreign Policy', 509-19; The League and Abyssinia, 31-35.

⁸⁴ See for example, The League and Abyssinia, 12-27; 'The Ideal of the League Remains', 341-45; 'Arms and Peace', 25-27.

⁸⁵ See for example 'From Geneva to the Next War', 41-2; 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 31-2; The League and Abyssinia, 28-31; 'Arms and Peace', 27-31, 34-5.

conflicting currents of 'communal political psychology' - 'communal nationalist psychology' and 'communal internationalist psychology'. The former was rooted in patriotism:

The nationalist thinks of a world of completely independent States or nations, and regards himself as an individual belonging to and owing loyalty to only one unit in that world. He identifies his own interests passionately with those of his own nation, and he is rarely, if ever, conscious of any common bond of interests between nations.⁸⁶

Nationalist psychology reached its peak in Europe during the first decade of the twentieth century. During that time

[e]verything calculated to influence a man's political beliefs or emotions combined to make him think and feel nationally and imperially, the schools, the press, the churches, literature and painting, sculpture in our streets, and the military bands in our parks.⁸⁷

Such was the potency of nationalist psychology that most people believed that government and society was organized entirely on national lines. Few realized that this was no longer the case and that, in fact, international government had either modified or taken the place of national government 'in almost every department of life'.

But unlike organization on national lines international organization 'was not so much the result or reflection of conscious political psychology as the inevitable result of changes in the structure of human society.' The industrial revolution of the eighteenth

⁸⁶ Woolf, 'From Serajevo to Geneva', 187.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 188.

century and the scientific revolution of the nineteenth had knit the world so closely together that the national frontier had rapidly become a social, economic, and political anachronism. Modern commerce, industry, and finance had been internationalized. So too had the post, the telegraph, the railway, and the prevention of disease. In these areas and many others frontiers were being increasingly ignored and 'international government ... silently substituted for national'.⁸⁸

But although the scope of international government had by 1914 become very extensive it 'had behind it little or no international psychology'. Few people 'thought or felt internationally'. In consequence internationalism had made few inroads into the 'strictly political' relations between states. These relations were still determined by 'a fantastic system of diplomacy and war based on the anachronistic myth that every State was a sovereign, independent unit.'

By the turn of the century the world was thus faced with two competing systems and two competing types of communal psychology. A choice had to be made between one and the other. In the Triple Alliance and the Entente and at Sarajevo it chose nationalism and war.

Secondly, he put forward an interesting interpretation of the Versailles settlement. The horror of the war provoked widespread revulsion against nationalism, the glamour of which had for many people 'evaporated ... in the

⁸⁸ Ibid. 188.

mud of Flanders or during a London air raid'. A patriot declared that 'patriotism was not enough' and the speeches of President Wilson began to diffuse a 'thin film of international psychology over hundreds of thousands of people who had also found that patriotism was not enough.'⁸⁹

Yet in some places the temperature of nationalist psychology had been heated as much as in other places it had been cooled, and international psychology, though real, was for the most part 'vague' and 'uneducated'. As a result the framework for the new Europe was arrived at largely as if the international civilization of the nineteenth century 'had never been heard of and we were living in the time of Frederick the Great.' Territorially the Balkanization of Europe was carried to lengths which 'in the milder days before the war, the most optimistic statesman in Sofia or Belgrade or in the mountains of Montenegro and Albania could never have dreamed of.'

But the architects of the settlement were not of one mind. The desire for vengeance jostled with the desire for peace. The nationalists at the conference were forced to listen to the President and 'the masses crying for peace at the door'. Compromise was the result. A building that had begun as an Arc de Triumphe was hastily finished off with 'the stucco cupola of a Temple of Peace': 'The Wilsonian League was superimposed upon the territorial, military, naval, and economic settlement, and Geneva was created as

⁸⁹ Ibid. 189-90.

an antidote to Serajevo and Versailles.'⁹⁰

Thirdly, he provided a suggestive account of the state of the League and international government 'ten years on'. 'The outstanding fact', Woolf asserted, 'is the unexpected strength and position developed by the League in the short time of its existence.' In the every-day international government of commerce, industry, culture, and science, the League had assumed a particularly important role. Geneva had become the nucleus of a new system of international government dealing with a vast array of questions and problems: from the arms trade to the ray treatment of cancer, from the administration of the Saar to the standardization of economic statistics, from the treatment of minorities to the relief of refugees.⁹¹ The architects of the peace had not altogether intended this. But in unloading a string of practical problems from their own shoulders onto those of the League they had enabled it 'at once to become a real entity in the society of nations'.

Yet the importance of the League was both overestimated and underestimated. The nationalist underestimated the importance of the League in not appreciating the 'immense' development of international government that was taking place under its auspices. He viewed the League as a 'foreign body' which on no account should be allowed to meddle with matters of high politics.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 190-91.

⁹¹ Ibid. 190-4. Woolf lists a further 23 activities which according to its Monthly Summary the League dealt with in a single month, April 1929.

The League, on the contrary, should stick to the performance of tasks the unimportance of which was in keeping with its inferior status. But in taking this view the nationalist had unwittingly strengthened not weakened the League. It was through the performance of these 'unimportant', 'every-day', tasks that the League had been able to attain 'a position of importance and stability which it could not possibly have won in ten years if it had merely remained an instrument to be used in emergencies for preventing war and for the pacific settlement of international disputes.'

But the importance of the League was also overestimated. The internationalist, for his part, failed to appreciate that 'nationalist passions' still persisted and that 'nationalist psychology' was still dominant. It was true that if the world were allowed to enjoy a century of unbroken peace, the bonds of common interests might become 'so closely and intricately bound' by the growth of international government that both national psychology and the structure of the society of nations would be 'completely altered' and a second Serajavo made 'impossible'. It was also true that the League had succeeded in training its secretariat in international psychology and had even had some success in encouraging its wider growth. But the danger of nationalist war remained. It was a cold fact international psychology was still for the most part weak, vacillating, uninstructed; and where vital interests were thought to be involved the dominant

psychology was nationalist not internationalist. This was demonstrated inter alia by the 'persistent refusal of the Conservative Government to sign the Optional Clause'; by the outcry in The Times when it eventually was signed; by the prejudice against ^{and} contempt for the Permanent Court of International Justice (whose judges were considered either not learned in law or learned in an inferior, Latin, school of law); and by the attitude of The Times, Lord Salisbury, and Sir Austin Chamberlain and others, who saw the League as merely an 'ideal' or something 'good enough for France and Germany and other foreigners, but ... unnecessary for the British Empire'. This mental condition, Woolf concluded, was a perpetual obstruction to the development of a 'sane and stable system of international politics'.⁹²

Apart from these three points Woolf had little of significance to say about international government in the 1930s. Why?

Stephen Spender once said that 'Leonard and Virginia were among the very few people in England who had a profound understanding of the state of the world in the 1930's'.⁹³ There is something in this. Leonard Woolf began to warn his readers about the growth of 'barbarism' - the growth of hatred, unreason, violence, and intimidation and acceptance of them as normal methods of

⁹² Ibid. 196-203.

⁹³ Stephen Spender, World Within World (London, 1953), 133.

conducting political affairs - even before the rise of Hitler. In a prescient article written in 1932 he argued that unless this savage phenomenon was vigorously resisted it would inevitably land Europe in another world war.⁹⁴

But although often insightful, Woolf's work during this period was far from systematic. One finds observations of genuine insight and prescience buried beneath mountains of turgid political rhetoric. As the tragic years of the 1930s unfolded, and the international political scene progressively darkened, the balance in Woolf's work between careful argument and angry polemic shifted markedly in the direction of the latter. The Woolf we encounter is mostly Woolf the radical pamphleteer not Woolf the Fabian social investigator. This combination of events, temperament, and overriding purpose accounts for his failure to develop the concept he had devoted so much time and energy to a decade or so earlier.

International Government in the 1940s

The same could be said about his quite extensive writings on post-War reconstruction in the 1940s. In these writings the term 'international government' appears more frequently than it did in the 1930s but there is no attempt to further refine the concept or develop the theory. In a pamphlet written for the Labour party containing the term in its

⁹⁴ Woolf, 'From Geneva to the Next War', Political Quarterly, 4, 1 (January-March 1933), 30-43.

title, for example, Woolf covers much the same ground as before. He talks, among other things, of the growth of interdependence, the obsolescence of (and the need to 'drastically limit') sovereignty, the need for rules and 'organs of government' to make, amend, and interpret these rules, the growth of international administration, and the need for 'organisation and procedure for controlling and preventing the use of force or violence'. But all this is done in a highly simplistic manner. He says, for example, that

There is nothing essentially different in the government of a football club, a village, a town, a country, of Europe, or of the world, except that the scale is bigger and the organisation more complicated.

In every case it is a question of making rules which will regulate the relations between the individuals or the groups, of establishing organisation which will make it easy for them to co-operate for common purposes, and of devising methods of settling disputes and differences when they arise.⁹⁵

The problems with this passage are legion. First, even if one accepts the initial premise - which makes no allowance, of course, for ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological, and socio-economic diversity - the qualification is potentially so large as to cast serious doubt on the whole proposition. Questions of scale and complexity are nowhere near as trivial as Woolf rather complacently implies.

⁹⁵ Woolf, Future of International Government, 3. There are plenty more examples in this vein. See esp. *ibid.* 5 ('The problem of international government and organisation is not really a difficult one if people behaved sensibly and stopped talking nonsense about nations, States, governments, nationality, and patriotism...'); and 10 ('International society will never get rid of war until it is firmly based on law and order ...').

Second, the issue is put in the form of an axiom or a conclusion when in fact it is at best no more than a starting point for analysis. Third, the general tone of the passage is acutely at odds with the difficulty of the problem.

But one should perhaps not make too much of this since the point of the pamphlet is not to advance scientific knowledge but to 'educate, agitate, organise'. It is nonetheless important to note that in the process Woolf irons out the complexity and much of the subtlety of his previous work and presents us in effect with a set of assertions based on a simple analogy between individuals and states. The problems with this kind of analogy will be examined in the next chapter.

Other works of the period though less obviously didactic in purpose offer substantially the same fare of repetition,⁹⁶ oversimplification,⁹⁷ platitude,⁹⁸ invective,⁹⁹

⁹⁶ '... throughout the last 100 years there has been continual and spontaneous growth of international administration in all kinds of spheres and places, from post offices to prisons.' Woolf, The International Post-War Settlement (London, 1944), 11. See also 19-21, and 'Britain in the Atomic Age', Political Quarterly, 18, 1 (January-March 1946), 15-16.

⁹⁷ 'It was not lack of force, but the lack of the will to use it to resist aggression, which made the collective security system of the League ineffective.' Ibid. 9. See also 8, 10, and Foreign Policy: The Labour Party's Dilemma (London, 1947), 7.

⁹⁸ 'In the relations between states and governments, cooperation must take the place of competitive hostility as the assumed basis of the relationship...' Ibid. 4. See also 5, 8, 14, 18, and Foreign Policy, 8, 15, 18, 19-20.

and the occasional quite dazzling insight.¹⁰⁰ Woolf's ideas for post-War international economic reconstruction will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Here it is important to note that during this period his ideas turned decidedly - though ~~if~~ not in name - in the direction of world government. He called for 'drastic national disarmament', the 'abolition of national air-forces', and 'real international control of national armament' as requisites for a new system of collective security.¹⁰¹ In response to both federalists and functionalists he asserted the need for a 'central world authority' to 'coordinate the activities of regional or functional international organs and to deal promptly and authoritatively with any action or situation which may threaten the world's peace or prosperity.' Such an authority would have to have 'effective control of international force adequate to meet

⁹⁹ 'Tory capitalism led in the years between the wars to economic bankruptcy and the international anarchy which gave Fascism and Nazism their opportunity to unloose upon defenceless peoples the most horrible war in human history.' Ibid. 3. See also 4, 8.

¹⁰⁰ 'It is a delusion to believe that states or nations or governments (or even individuals) can remain united and act together generally or in the abstract. They can only do so if they consciously co-operate for a particular and defined common purpose. The reason why Russia, the USA, and ourselves have remained united in the war, despite divergent interests and profound differences in our institutions, traditions, and even some of our aims, is that we have had a clearly defined common purpose which transcends all our differences... Unless after the war we have as clear and compelling a common purpose there is little chance of us remaining united.' Ibid. 12. See also 16-17, and Woolf, 'The Future of the Small State', 14, 3 (July-September 1943), 221-2.

¹⁰¹ Woolf, Future of International Government, 12.

the threat of national force' and/or 'control of sufficient armed forces to maintain international law and order under all circumstances'.¹⁰² Though broadly welcoming the foundation of the UN (he particularly welcomed Chapter VII of the Charter and the creation of the ECOSOC) he condemned (as emasculatory) the power of veto granted to the permanent members of the Security Council and called for compulsory settlement of all disputes through adjudication, arbitration, or conciliation.¹⁰³

Most radically of all, he advocated, with the advent of the atomic bomb, centralization of the production of atomic energy under a 'world authority' and the concentration of all armaments other than those required for purely internal police purposes in the hands of the UN. The invention of the atomic bomb, he argued, had turned the balance of international power upside down, and made collective security, and especially the system of collective security as devised at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco, out-of-date. Great Powers were no longer invulnerable to small Powers. Armed with atomic bombs a small Power could 'completely paralyse' a Great Power or at least 'inflict appalling and irreparable damage before

¹⁰² Woolf, 'Future of the Small State', 209-24; International Post-War Settlement, 7-11.

¹⁰³ Woolf, 'The United Nations', Political Quarterly, 14, 1 (January-March 1945), 19-20. In 1947 he described the UN as a 'dangerous farce' as far as law, order, peace, and collective security were concerned (the 'hostile' and 'divisive' Soviet Union being mainly to blame). He continued, however, to insist that 'in the long run there is hardly any chance of preventing war unless the UNO is made to work'. Woolf, 'Foreign Policy', 12-19.

being wiped off the map itself'. The UN placed no restrictions on the acquisition of atomic weapons. It was therefore highly likely that within a comparatively short time a large number of states would own them. The whole collective security system of the UN was thereby undermined. Would-be aggressors were now in a position to threaten their victims and the Security Council as much as they could threaten them. Collective resistance to aggression was now as much of a threat to civilization as aggression itself. It followed that nothing could save civilization as long as the sovereign state was free to manufacture, arm, and use the atomic bomb.

But by what means could this freedom be denied? President Truman and Mr Attlee proposed 'international control of atomic energy to the extent necessary to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes' and 'elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons'. This answer, however, did not, in Woolf's view, amount to much. Military exploitation of atomic energy depended on almost exactly the same methods and processes as those required for industrial uses. This meant that international control as previously envisaged was no longer adequate: international inspection could not possibly ensure that the uses to which atomic energy was being put were always and everywhere purely industrial. Some state somewhere was bound, sooner or later, to give in to temptation and 'the mere fact that there was good ground for fearing this would cause the whole system to break down and lead to general

atomic armament "for defensive purposes".'

It followed that if atomic disaster was to be avoided, and the 'elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons' achieved, production of atomic energy had to be concentrated in the hands of a world authority. It was difficult to say whether this would be permanently, even temporarily, feasible. But more than a ray of hope existed in the fact that the production of atomic energy on any considerable scale was currently a gigantic operation requiring enormous plant, labour force, and expenditure. If the USA, USSR, and Britain could reach agreement it would be possible to restrict such production exclusively to 'plants directly controlled by an international authority under the United Nations'. The authority would then distribute the energy for industrial uses to other countries. This, at least, would provide some breathing space until a more effective system could be devised.

But things could not stop there. It was not possible, in Woolf's view, to prevent by international control the use of atomic weapons unless the same kind of control was applied to other weapons. The alternative was a world in which the production of atomic energy was controlled but states remained perfectly free to arm themselves with every other kind of armament that modern science provided. In such a world the threat of war and the competition to produce more and more destructive weapons would clearly remain and the UN would have no alternative but to

manufacture atomic bombs in order 'to prevent aggression'.¹⁰⁴ But the use of atomic weapons by the UN to 'prevent aggression' and thereby 'keep the peace' was neither feasible nor logical.¹⁰⁵ This meant that the only solution was to put all armaments except for those needed for domestic purposes under the control of 'the world authority of the United Nations'. The implications for national sovereignty were necessarily profound. Such a solution required states not only to surrender control over their armaments but also to partially surrender control over their industrial production. Realists, of course, would condemn this as utopian. But if this were true, Woolf bleakly concluded, the strange pass had been reached at which humanity had to choose between utopia and annihilation.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Woolf's quotes.

¹⁰⁵ Ditto.

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, 'Britain in the Atomic Age', passim.

Chapter Four

International Government: An Analysis and Assessment

In this chapter I assess Woolf's thought on international government in the light of his reputation as a utopian. In doing so I enquire into the stature of Woolf's thought during the interwar period, its practical impact, and its broader significance in the history of thought. I identify some important analytical, conceptual, and methodological weaknesses which, more than any other factor, account for the failure of Woolf's ideas to be taken seriously much beyond 1945. I enquire into the extent to which it is fair to describe Woolf as a pioneer of international functionalism (a doctrine commonly associated with utopianism). I also enquire into the extent to which Woolf's ideas are based on the 'domestic analogy' (a mode of reasoning commonly associated with utopianism). I conclude by offering some reflections on Hedley Bull's damning judgement that International Government is 'not at all profound' and not worth reading now 'except for the light it throws on the preoccupations and presuppositions of its time and place'.

The Stature of Woolf's Thought During the Inter-War Period

There can be little doubt that International Government was one of the most important international relations texts of its time. The prominent Independent Labour Party

intellectual, Henry Noel Brailsford, considered it 'a brilliant book'.¹ An American reviewer described it as 'a remarkable contribution to the literature of constructive internationalism ... that ought to be commended to ... all those statesmen of vision who hope for new international relationships after this war'.² Woolf's research was extensively utilized in one of the first textbooks on international organization.³ Another American writer, C. Howard-Ellis, described International Government as a piece of 'striking analysis' and a 'remarkable study'.⁴

Woolf's work continued to be highly regarded in the 1930s and 1940s. Edmund Mower described International Government as 'suggestive', 'valuable', and 'prophetic'.⁵ According to A. C. F. Beales, International Government and The Framework of a Lasting Peace were the most important contributions to thinking on peace of the 1914-1918 period, and he acknowledged the former book as 'an invaluable source of guidance' for his own work on international peace

¹ Henry Noel Brailsford, A League of Nations (London, 1917), 317.

² Edwin D. Dickinson, 'An International Program', The New Republic, IX, 112, 23 December, 1916, 219.

³ Pitman B. Potter, An Introduction to the Study of International Organization (New York, 1922), esp. Part V.

⁴ C. Howard-Ellis, The Origin, Structure and Working of the League of Nations (London, 1928), 85, 301.

⁵ Edmund C. Mower, International Government (New York, 1931), 3.

and cooperation.⁶ Similarly, Sir Alfred Zimmern described Woolf's analysis as 'masterly' and drew extensively from it in his account of international administration in the 'pre-War system'.⁷ The distinguished international lawyer J. L. Brierly recommended Woolf's account of the evolution of 'quasi-legislation by conference' for its 'admirable combination of scholarship and humour'.⁸ As late as 1945, as mentioned in Chapter One, a team of Oxbridge historians praised Woolf's study in no uncertain terms. In their view it was 'a pioneer work on the problems of building international government and administration' and 'a brilliant examination of the technique of peacemaking'. It was also 'a prophetic book' in that, although called utopian at the time, it made proposals 'of the very kind which were attempted in 1919.'⁹

Even critics of the book acknowledged it as an important contribution to the war and peace debate. A reviewer in the New York Nation decried it as 'aggressively Fabian' but conceded that it was 'suggestive in general framework' and contained 'evidence of careful study'.¹⁰ J.

⁶ A. C. F. Beales, The History of Peace: A Short Account of the Organised Movements for International Peace (London, 1931), 289.

⁷ Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law 1918-1935 (London, 1936), 171-72, 40-60.

⁸ J. L. Brierly, The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace, 3rd edn., (London, 1943), 67.

⁹ Thomson et al., Patterns of Peacemaking, 162-63.

¹⁰ 'The Week', The Nation, 16 August 1917, 182.

A. Hobson criticized Woolf's scheme for putting too much power in the hands of the Great Powers, but nonetheless regarded it as 'very able'.¹¹

Practical Impact

It is impossible to determine precisely the influence of Woolf's ideas on the creation of the League. The Woolf-Webb draft convention for a 'Supernational Authority that will Prevent War', was one among many plans debated both officially and unofficially at the time. No single plan or blue-print proved decisive. Several of them, however, provided the intellectual raw material out of which the Covenant was constructed. One of these was Woolf's book and the Woolf-Webb plan based on it.

It is certainly the case that the Woolf-Webb plan bears a close resemblance to the League Covenant. The similarities are striking, especially with respect to the following: the outlawing of aggression; the notion of making 'common cause' against any state in breach of its fundamental obligations; the emphasis placed on economic and social sanctions; the distinction between justiciable and non-justiciable disputes (and the definition of justiciable disputes); the obligation to submit all justiciable disputes to an international tribunal; the obligation to refer all other unresolved disputes to an

¹¹ J. A. Hobson, A League of Nations (London, 1915), 19.

International Council; the idea of a 'cooling-off period' (twelve months in the Woolf-Webb plan, 3 months in the Covenant); the obligation to submit all treaties to a League Secretariat for registration and publication; and the obligation to promote cooperation in the economic and social spheres. There were some important differences between the two documents - most notably with regard to the composition of the Council and the commitment to disarm - but the similarities are sufficient to suggest that some filtering through of ideas must have occurred.

There is evidence, however, that at least in respect of the technical, social, and economic functions of the League, Woolf's influence was more direct. Late in 1918, Sydney Waterlow, a member of the newly formed League of Nations Section of the Foreign Office, was asked to write a paper on 'International Government under the League of Nations'. Waterlow had recently read Woolf's book on the subject and was greatly impressed. He drew extensively from it when writing his paper and, indeed, 'lifted almost verbatim'¹² the sections dealing with international cooperation on labour conditions, public health, transport, and economic and social policy. The paper was well received by Lord Cecil, the head of the section, and the bulk of it was subsequently incorporated into the British Draft Covenant. This later formed the basis of discussions

¹² Waterlow, quoted in Wilson, Leonard Woolf, 89.

between the British and US delegations at Versailles.¹³

Significance in the History of International Thought

The significance of Woolf's work on international government in the history of international thought is fourfold. Firstly, and most generally, Woolf helped to establish the belief that international organization was both a feasible and an efficacious way of promoting common interests and reducing international friction. This belief is nowadays so firmly entrenched that it is easy to forget that there was a time when such thoughts were considered to be those of an eccentric and rather suspect minority.¹⁴ In the decades immediately prior to World War One, thinking on war and peace, to the extent that it existed, was dominated by two views. Conservatives saw international relations as realm of competition, struggle, and conflict. War was seen as an almost natural phenomenon which inevitably broke out

¹³ Woolf's ideas on these aspects of international cooperation were also included in another important Foreign Office document, the Zimmern Memorandum of November 1918. See Wilson, Leonard Woolf, 82-91; and Philip Noel-Baker's obituary of Woolf, The Times, 21 August, 1969. There are also significant similarities between the Woolf-Webb plan and Jan Smuts' The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion published in 1918. See F. S. Northedge, The League of Nations: Its Life and Times (Leicester, 1986), 33-8.

¹⁴ Note Woolf's comment: 'Nobody is thought to be absurd if he suggests modification in the political institutions of a village or State, giving reasons for believing that the result will react upon the lives of the inhabitants. There is no ground for denying to international political organisation the same kind of power and function'. Woolf, The Framework of a Lasting Peace, 11.

from time to time as nations struggled against each other for power, influence, and prestige. Progressives, on the other hand, whilst not dismissing the conflictual side of international relations, tended to see the world in terms of growing economic, social, and cultural intercourse between individuals and nations. These relations were seen as inherently pacific and the principal method for transmitting civilization and its benefits around the globe. War was far from an intractable problem. Benthamites, for instance, maintained that the achievement of international harmony depended on just three things: arms limitation, arbitration, and a free press.¹⁵ By the late nineteenth century, faith in the healing powers of arbitration had become one of the hallmarks of progressive opinion.¹⁶

Woolf was one of a number of writers who showed that war was not a natural, inevitable, phenomenon, but a human artefact and therefore potentially controllable.¹⁷ He demonstrated that a system of arbitration, though

¹⁵ See John Pinder, 'Federalism and the British Liberal Tradition', in Andrea Bosco (ed.), The Federal Idea: The History of Federalism from the Enlightenment to 1945 (London, 1991), 104.

¹⁶ See Northedge, League of Nations, 12-16, for a useful summary.

¹⁷ 'War is not a "natural" catastrophe like a tidal wave or an earthquake. It is not inevitable; it is preventable in Europe like cannibalism, cholera, or witch-burning, all of which, though once common in this continent, have been abolished by civilisation. War depends upon the human will, upon what goes on inside the heads of human beings, upon how they decide to order their society and to arrange their relations with their fellows.' 'Introduction' to Woolf (ed.), The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War (London, 1933), 9.

desirable, was not in itself sufficient to prevent war. Perhaps most importantly, he demonstrated that international organization was not only viable, but that a good deal of it already existed.¹⁸

Secondly, and allied to this, Woolf was one of the first political analysts to recognize the importance of the nineteenth century concert system from a theoretical point of view. From the standpoint of historical scholarship, Woolf's analysis is in a number of respects unsatisfactory. He underestimated, for example, the extent to which the 'new, rudimentary, system' or 'quasi-legislature' did not replace the old balance of power system, but was grafted on to it. As K. J. Holsti has recently demonstrated, the nineteenth century 'system of governance' was a mixed system where '[b]alance and concert went hand in hand'.¹⁹ The territorial balance of power established at Vienna and intended to be permanent, was a necessary precondition for the creation of the concert. When, due to the growth of nationalism and the increasing infirmity of two of the Great Powers, the permanence of the compact could no longer be guaranteed, the existence of the concert facilitated

¹⁸ International Government was one of the first books the late Professor Joseph Frankel read when he arrived in Britain in the 1930s. He later said that he found it 'astonishing' since he had not previously realised the extent to which government had already been applied to the relations between states. Conversation with author December 1989.

¹⁹ K. J. Holsti, 'Governance without Government: Polyarchy in Nineteenth-Century European International Politics', in James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (eds.), Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics (Cambridge, 1992), 50.

adjustment of the balance short of all-out war. Woolf also, to give a further example, failed to identify the different phases in the operation of the concert system - he speaks of it as if it constituted an undifferentiated whole. To do this is misleading. Robert Jervis has argued, for instance, that the concert system operated from 1815 to 1854, and in its strongest form only from 1815 to 1822. In his view the system cannot be said to have operated in the late nineteenth century because great power pursuit of self-interest was not sufficiently constrained.²⁰ Holsti, by contrast, has identified four relatively distinct periods 1815-22, 1823-56, 1857-75, and 1876-1914. In terms of agreement on common objectives, use of common institutions, and the degree to which decisions had authority, the efficacy of the concert varied considerably from one period to the next, with the concert operating highly effectively on all three counts in the first period, and highly ineffectively on all three counts in the third.²¹

²⁰ Robert Jervis, 'From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation', World Politics, 38, 1, (October 1985), 58-9.

²¹ Holsti, 'Governance without Government', 50-51. Cf. Martin Ceadel's view that the concert was not 'an embryonic form of supranationalism' but 'merely a self-selecting group of major states which took action only when it was their particular interest to do so' (Ceadel, 'Supranationalism in the British Peace Movement during the Early Twentieth Century', in Bosco, The Federal Idea, 170); and also Northedge's view that at least until the first Hague conference, the concert, 'even if dignified with the name "system"', could not be described as a legislative body since its meetings were 'all highly intermittent and ad hoc' (Northedge, League of Nations, 9-10).

But from the standpoint of theory, Woolf's analysis of the concert system is highly significant. His main concern was not the system itself but what could be learned from its experience. He attached great importance to the fact that the peacemakers of 1814-15 had attempted to build a new international system which went beyond eighteenth century 'laissez-faire' balance of power politics. They wanted to put international relations on a more organized footing. Writing during the next great European conflagration, Woolf felt that this was still the most urgent task facing mankind. A large part of his enquiry was an attempt to discern 'where we are now', to discover the strengths and weaknesses, the limits and the potential, of the nineteenth century order, for the explicit purpose of determining 'how we should go forward'. Woolf's importance in this regard resides in his identification of and the weight he attached to the profusion of rules, regulations, procedures, and institutions which had emerged in a world which fell well short of possessing a single, centralized, government. This interest in the nature of ^{and} potential for cooperation or 'governance' within an essentially 'anarchical' setting has come to occupy a central place in international relations' scholarship. Indeed, the kind of enquiry Woolf initiated into the lessons of the concert system is one that has been the subject of considerable recent attention.²²

²² See esp. Holsti, 'Governance without Government', 30-57.

Thirdly, Woolf was an early and far from insignificant contributor to modern interdependence theory - 'modern' because not only did he show, as Cobden and others had done in the nineteenth century, that interdependence between nations was growing, but also that it had profound implications for state sovereignty and therefore for the future organization of international relations. Woolf's view, as we have seen, was that the communications revolution had set in motion a train of events the end result of which was to make the interests of individuals, firms, and other groups, increasingly international in scope. In many areas of life the state has ceased to be independent in any meaningful sense. Sovereignty had been eroded. This process, however, was not an inevitable one. People had a choice before them. Either they could continue to develop their present 'modern' patterns of life, the logic of which was greater international government, or they could revert back to a simpler, more localized, mode of life the logic of which was a greater degree of autarchy, independence, and sovereignty.²³

Woolf was by no means the first person to propound this thesis on interdependence. Others, notably Angell and Hobson, had done so before him. In his account of the growth of official and unofficial international organizations, however, Woolf provided new evidence of the phenomenon, which proved invaluable to later, more

²³ For Woolf's clearest statements on interdependence see International Government, 82-3, 115-6, 140-44, 157-8.

sophisticated, analysts of interdependence like David Mitrany.²⁴

Fourthly, Woolf was a pioneer of international functionalism. All of the standard accounts of functionalist doctrine acknowledge the important role Woolf played in laying the foundations of functional theory.²⁵ Arguably, however, his importance has been only partly recognized. In building his theory of functionalism Mitrany drew on Woolf's ideas on international government perhaps more than he himself realized.²⁶ As a consequence of their close working relationship in such bodies as the League of Nations Society and the Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions, Mitrany had an in-depth knowledge of Woolf's ideas. Many of these ideas were strongly functionalist in flavour. It is perhaps no accident that Mitrany's first attempt to develop a functional theory of international relations was entitled The Progress of International Government. It should also

²⁴ Few post-war scholars have acknowledged Woolf's importance in this respect. Three notable exceptions, two American, one British, are: George Modelski, Principles of World Politics (New York, 1972), 320; Craig Murphy, International Organization, 17, 25, 285; Clive Archer, International Organizations (London, 1983), 83.

²⁵ See Ernst Haas, Beyond the Nation State: Functionalism and International Organization (Stanford, 1964), 8; Paul Taylor, International Co-operation Today (London, 1972), 50-1; Paul Taylor, 'Functionalism: The Theory of David Mitrany', in Paul Taylor and A. J. R. Groom (eds.), International Organization: A Conceptual Approach (London, 1978), 237.

²⁶ In his 'Memoir' Mitrany mentions but does not stress Woolf's contribution to the evolution of his thought. See David Mitrany, The Functional Theory of Politics (London, 1975), 3-82.

be noted that whereas other writers who influenced Mitraný took the domestic scene as their field of study, Woolf took the international scene. Woolf was the first thinker to show how a functionalist-type analysis could be applied to international relations. This is not to say that he put together the coherent and systematic functionalist theory Mitraný was later to do. And it is true that Mitraný became a severe critic of the statism and the legalism which underlie Woolf's first two conceptions of international government. But Woolf did provide the skeleton of a functional theory and some of the flesh in the form of the numerous examples of practical cooperation he furnished.²⁷

The following examples illustrate the functionalist aspect of Woolf's work. First, the pluralism that underpins Mitraný's work²⁸ is strongly present in Woolf's. He contended that

... State government is everywhere ... insufficient for the manifold relations of the manifold groups into which our society divides and subdivides itself. This is well recognised in individual states, where the development and working of voluntary associations, such as churches, trade unions, associations of employers, joint stock companies, clubs, etc., have

²⁷ For example, in many of his writings Mitraný cites the Danubian Commission as a highly significant early case of functionalist cooperation. The importance of the Commission was first highlighted by Woolf in his The Future of Constantinople (London, 1917), 36-80.

²⁸ Analyzed in Cornelia Navari, 'David Mitraný and International Functionalism', in David Long and Peter Wilson (eds.), Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed (Oxford, 1995), 214-46; and David Long, 'International Functionalism and the Politics of Forgetting', International Journal, XLVIII, 2 (1993), 355-79.

been studied and traced. All these bodies are organs of government, and therefore combine with the State organs to regulate the relations of citizens. The whole problem of international government, and therefore of the prevention of war, consists in the elaboration of a similar organised regulation of international relations.²⁹

A large part of International Government is devoted to identifying such 'manifold groups' and 'organs of government' as exist internationally, and analysing them in terms of structure and function. He felt there was no reason why such groups could not be 'combined' with states in a complex governmental framework. Only by such means could 'the organisation of government and the organs of government follow strictly the complication of group interests in the world of facts.'³⁰

Secondly, like Mittrany, Woolf was convinced that the ability of the sovereign state to fulfil the needs of its citizens had been called into question by the developments of the modern world. Complete independence of legislation and administration, for instance, had become 'incompatible' with the 'complex material world' and contemporary 'aims and desires and modes of life'. It was the recognition of this incompatibility which had led to the first tentative advances towards cosmopolitan law-making and international legislation.³¹ More generally, the conception of state as

²⁹ Woolf, International Government, 196.

³⁰ Ibid. 65, 220-4. See also 107-8 where Woolf envisages 'a new type of human association and a new method of human government' based on international associations composed of a variety of different types of member.

³¹ Ibid. 168-9.

'an isolated entity' and 'absolutely independent' did not 'mirror the realities of life and the world'. Much misery resulted from trying to apply 'these obsolete conceptions and beliefs to a world which they no longer fit'.³²

Thirdly, Woolf described the growth of international associations and organs of government in terms which presage the functionalist principle of technical self-determination. These bodies had, Woolf insisted, had not been the invention of political idealists but had grown 'spontaneously' in order to 'meet international needs'. Woolf also spoke of there being 'a natural tendency of the world towards International Government'.³³

Fourthly, Woolf argued, as did Mittrany, that social change had also brought about 'the breakdown of representative political government'.³⁴ The organs of government had failed to keep up with the increased complexity of social life. As a result a 'serious gap' had opened up 'between the organisation of our life and the organisation of our government'.³⁵ In particular, the geographical basis of representation had been called into question. The primary interests of individuals and groups within society no longer coincided with geography:

³² Ibid. 113-5. Woolf later described the state as an 'hopeless anachronism' which had 'broken down as an instrument for regulating the relations of government and people'. See The War for Peace (London, 1940), 70-1.

³³ Ibid. 92, 99. See also 96, 120, 222.

³⁴ Ibid. 221.

³⁵ Ibid. 109.

A man's chief interests are no longer determined by the place he lives in, and group interests, instead of following geographical lines, follow those of capital, labour, professions, etc. But government and organisation of government have not kept pace with this change of social organisation....³⁶

Both domestically and internationally new institutions were needed to provide for 'due representation' of 'vital group interests'. Indeed, the international association had emerged precisely to meet this need.

Finally, Woolf emphasized, as did Mittrany, the effect that international associations could have on the attitudes of individual officials. As well as helping to forge an international public opinion on any given matter, participation in such associations also led to the 'internationalisation of the mind'. The degree to which states had been successful in harmonising their labour laws, for example, was a product not so much of formal international agreements, but the informal influence of the 'internationalised official.'³⁷

Analytical Weaknesses

There are many weaknesses in Woolf's analysis and it is this fact rather than the putative utopianism of his work that accounts for its failure to be taken seriously,

³⁶ Ibid. 221.

³⁷ See Woolf's account of the effect on state representatives of participation in the proceedings of the International Labour Association, *ibid.* 190-2. In true Fabian fashion Woolf also put much emphasis on the role of the 'expert'. See for example, International Co-operative Trade, Fabian Tract No. 201, (London, 1922), 16.

especially by an increasingly professionalized discipline, much beyond 1945. It is important to register, first of all, the sloppiness of which Woolf was sometimes guilty. Etherington, as mentioned in Chapter One, noted this with respect to Woolf's writing on imperialism.³⁸ Evidence of it is plentiful in his writing on international government. Shortly after taking great pains, for example, to distinguish arbitration from other kinds of judicial settlement he inexplicably abandons the distinction and proceeds to use the term 'arbitration' in a generic way. The confusion of the reader is not spared by a footnote explaining: 'By arbitration in this and the following paragraphs I mean the decision of international disputes by a judicial body'.³⁹ Similarly, Woolf asserts that (cosmopolitan) international government began in 1838 with the creation of Conseil Supérieur de Santé in Constantinople. On realising, however, that he had previously stated that it began several decades before with the formation of the Riverian Commissions, he adds a footnote: 'The new Internationalism really began with the Congress of Vienna in 1815.'⁴⁰ Much of this sloppiness is accounted for by the fact that Woolf wrote very quickly and he rarely revised the his first drafts in any substantial way.

But there is another element of clumsiness in Woolf's

³⁸ Etherington, Theories of Imperialism, 182-3.

³⁹ Woolf, International Government, 60.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 104. Emphasis added.

writing. Woolf the serious social investigator was always the servant of Woolf the political publicist. There is a propagandist element in all Woolf's writings on international government: as well as contributing to our understanding of international cooperation Woolf was also seeking to promote an ideology. Not surprisingly, therefore, he tried to discredit the groups and ideologies he was opposed to. Along with Conservatives and conservatism these included, in true dissenting fashion, the Foreign Office, the aristocracy, diplomatists and secret diplomacy, generals, and the balance of power.⁴¹ But in doing so Woolf unwittingly makes a number of clumsy analytical errors.

Woolf's interpretation of the nineteenth century provides an interesting example. As social investigator, and also as Fabian socialist, Woolf argues that the nineteenth century is a century of steady progress towards international government. But Woolf the Labour propagandist and dissenter argues that the nineteenth century is a century of war, reaction, repressiveness, and stupidity. The reason for this is that Woolf the propagandist does not want to give any credit for the progress that was made in that century to his conservative (and to a lesser extent, liberal) enemies who were, of course, by and large running the international show. He also wanted to lay the blame for World War One squarely on

⁴¹ There are numerous purple passages of dissent in Woolf's work. See for example, International Government, 22, 50, 70, 81; and War for Peace, 17-27.

their shoulders without at the same time incriminating the attempt, in part their attempt, to put international society on a more organized footing. This schizophrenic tendency resulted in some astonishing contradictions. For instance, Woolf castigates the world for giving plenty of opportunity to militarists, imperialists, and nationalists whilst 'refusing to give even a trial' to international government. But the bulk of his work up to this point had been dedicated to showing that international government had already become an important part of the fabric of international society.⁴²

Some striking analytical shortcomings of a similar kind can be found in his writings of the 1940s. In response to Clarence Streit's argument for a federation of democracies, for example, Woolf contended that although world federation should be the 'ultimate aim of international organisation', and that there was little doubt that a federation of 'France, the British Empire, the U.S.A., a democratised Germany, a democratised Italy, and the smaller democracies would go a long way to rid the world of the threat and fear of war', it was none the less extremely doubtful whether 'national and international psychology' made such a 'revolution' immediately possible. This was because federation required 'a very high degree of political co-operation and a common attitude towards the

⁴² Woolf, The Future of Constantinople (London, 1917), 82-3. See also International Government, 65; 'Meditation on Abyssinia', Political Quarterly, 7, 1 (January-March 1936), 18-19.

bases of government and perhaps of society'.⁴³ Few would doubt the wisdom of this proposition. It does not, however, sit easily with Woolf's assertions about 'real international control of national armament', nor his call for a 'central world authority' to 'deal promptly and authoritatively with any action or situation which may threaten the world's peace or prosperity', nor his argument for the centralization of the production of atomic energy under a 'world authority', and the concentration of all armaments other than those required for purely internal police purposes in the hands of the UN. If the current state of 'national and international psychology', 'political cooperation', and 'common attitudes towards government and society', made a worldwide federation of democracies infeasible, then surely it made extensive (to say the least!) international control of national armaments infeasible too. While rejecting, on the grounds of feasibility, the limited idea of a limited federation, he for all intents and purposes advocated (without discussing its feasibility) something much more far-reaching - world government.

It is also worth adding that these assertions, along with his strictures about the need to 'drastically limit' national sovereignty, also do not sit easily with such statements as:

Sooner or later, the German state must take its permanent place in the world of states and the German people re-enter the comity of nations, if the world is

⁴³ Woolf, Future of International Government, 9-10.

to have peace and prosperity ... The problem which faces Allied statesmen is to discover what concrete steps can be taken to encourage the rise of a democratic and pacific Germany which can be trusted to cooperate as a free nation with free nations.⁴⁴

Again, the wisdom of extending the hand of friendship and peace to a defeated (or about to be defeated) Germany cannot be doubted. But Woolf's terminology throws his vision of a post-war world order in which national sovereignty is, at a minimum, severely limited, into much confusion.

Before moving on to the conceptual and methodological weaknesses in Woolf's work, another kind of analytical shortcoming should be briefly mentioned: assertions and arguments made by Woolf that subsequent, more rigorous, analysis has shown to be flawed. The following four examples are illustrative. First and foremost, in trying to identify the causes of war, Woolf puts far too much emphasis on 'disputes and differences'. More specifically, he puts far too much emphasis on war being due to lack of machinery for the resolution of disputes. There are various problems with this approach. One is reminded of Carr's distinction between 'underlying and significant' causes and 'immediate and personal' causes.⁴⁵ Woolf often seems only concerned with the latter. He failed to analyze the sources of international tension in any depth, and consequently tended to neglect the role of power, ideology,

⁴⁴ Woolf, The International Post-War Settlement (London, 1944), 17. Emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, ix.

and domestic factors. He also failed to recognise that 'disputes and differences' are sometimes used by statesman merely as pretexts. In such cases 'disputes and differences' are not the real causes of war but simply circumstances which statesmen find it convenient to exploit.⁴⁶

Secondly, Woolf had far too much faith in the possibility of selecting a panel of 'the good and the true' to hear and settle disputes 'fairly and reasonably'. He underestimated the reluctance of states to grant authority to such bodies in advance of any particular dispute breaking out, not only for reasons of 'sovereignty' and 'national interest', but also for ideological and cultural reasons. With respect to the latter Woolf did not take into account the problems that cultural relativism, or belief in cultural relativism, present for such notions as 'fairness' and 'reasonableness'. In his defence, of course, it might be said that he was writing at a time when the world was dominated by seven or eight for the most part European Powers. For men like Woolf the world seemed much more culturally uniform than it actually was. The uncritical way in which he presents his case is,

⁴⁶ On which see Hans Morgenthau's penetrating analysis of 'pure disputes', 'disputes with the substance of a tension', and 'disputes representing a tension', in Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 5th edn., Revised (New York, 1978), 430-39.

nonetheless, a considerable analytical weakness.⁴⁷

Thirdly, Woolf had a tendency to brush aside certain important questions. For example, after delineating the kinds of disputes that would be suitable for compulsory adjudication he asks the question: how is it to be decided whether a particular dispute falls into one of the categories of 'suitable disputes'? Given the generality of each of the categories (e.g. 'questions of fact'), and especially given that all disputes have aspects which fall into one or more of them, this question is obviously a crucial one. However, Woolf casually dismisses it with the following words:

This, of course, is an example of a question as to the competency or jurisdiction of a court which continually arises wherever there is a judiciary. Municipal courts frequently have to decide questions as to their own competency, and there seems no reason why an International Court should not be given the power to do the same.⁴⁸

End of story. The answer is woefully inadequate. Not only does it ignore any difficulties there may be in transplanting a domestic procedure onto the international stage, it also underestimates the complexities involved - with respect to precedent, the right of appeal, and the role of public prosecuting authorities - in making such

⁴⁷ See Framework of a Lasting Peace, 30-40, where Woolf expresses his faith in the ability of the 'sane and sober' arbiter to apply the law in an unprejudiced way, and in the ability of 'honest men' of 'weight and distinction and unimpeachable impartiality' to arrive at an 'unbiased' opinion on any given dispute. See also Woolf's proposal that mandated territories should be governed by disinterested experts and administrators (Imperialism and Civilisation (London, 1928), 115-35).

⁴⁸ Woolf, International Government, 57.

decisions in domestic legal systems.

Woolf similarly brushes aside the vital question of how the various obligations to submit justiciable disputes to an international court are to be enforced. While he shrewdly rejects the idea of a permanent international police force, he does not offer much by way of an alternative. He asserts that '[t]he whole question of sanctions is of theoretical rather than practical interest'; and blandly adds that, 'If the International Authority, the Society of Nations, has the power to compel a member to comply with its obligations, and if it has the will to do so, a way in which to exercise the power will be found.'⁴⁹ There is no discussion of the problems and prospects of collective enforcement in any of its forms. Subsequent practice and theory has, of course, shown that questions as to the collective power and collective will of the society of states are nowhere near as straight-forward as Woolf supposed.⁵⁰

Finally, Woolf's thought on the nature of international law has been wholly superseded by later scholarship. As described in Chapter 3, Woolf took international law very seriously indeed. In writing International Government he made use of a number of books on international law, especially Oppenheim's well known

⁴⁹ Ibid. 75-6.

⁵⁰ For an excellent recent analysis see Andrew Hurrell, 'Collective Security and International Order Revisited', International Relations, XI, 1 (1992), 37-55.

treatise.⁵¹ Not surprisingly therefore Woolf's discussion of international law is often astute. Woolf never quite managed, however, to liberate himself from the view that international law was a primitive form of domestic law; that is, he never quite managed to see international law as a distinct body of law, with its own unique characteristics. For instance, he notes that much international law is 'vague and uncertain', and implies that a more advanced body of law could only be successful in a 'highly organised society of nations'. Woolf tantalisingly suggests, therefore, that the quality of international law is related to the degree of solidarity that pertains in international society. But in the final analysis Woolf abandons this sociological approach to law and insists, limply, that international law is vague and uncertain 'largely due to two facts: there is no recognised international organ for making International Law, and no judicial organ for interpreting it'.⁵² The work of Kelsen and Manning, among others, has subsequently shown this to be a highly superficial answer.⁵³

⁵¹ L. Oppenheim, International Law, 2nd edn., (London, 1912). Oppenheim read the manuscript of International Government and made 'several valuable suggestions'. See Woolf, 'Preface' and 'Select Bibliography', International Government, 3, 256.

⁵² Woolf, International Government, 12-13, 16-17. See also Framework of a Lasting Peace, 20-23.

⁵³ See C. A. W. Manning, 'The Legal Framework in a World of Change', in Porter, Aberystwyth Papers, 301-35; Hedley Bull, 'Hans Kelsen and International Law', in Richard Tur and William Twining (eds.), Essays on Kelsen (Oxford, 1986), 321-36.

Conceptual Weaknesses

Woolf's theory of international government also contains a number of conceptual weaknesses. Conceptual clarity was not one of Woolf's strong suits. It is difficult to pin down, for example, what he means by an 'international authority'. The term suggests the creation of a single actor over and above states which has the right and perhaps the power to determine the shape of at least some of their relations. The fact that the term 'supernational authority' is used in the Webb-Woolf plan, further suggests that Woolf's 'international authority' should be conceived in this way. But sometimes Woolf uses 'international authority' as simply a collective noun for his proposed international conference and judicial tribunals: he speaks, for instance, of an international authority 'consisting of' these bodies.⁵⁴ The picture, however, is far from clear: he occasionally suggests that an international authority is something much more specific and separate from other bodies.⁵⁵

Given this, and given his pluralist rejection of the more far reaching kinds of central control that the term implies, one has to conclude that Woolf's 'international authority' is largely devoid of content. Why then did he use the term? One answer is that it enabled him to hedge his bets. He could answer critics who accused him of

⁵⁴ Woolf, International Government, 64.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.* 74, 91.

advocating a world government by saying that, on the contrary, he advocated something much more modest: international government defined as process (Woolf hardly ever speaks of an international government vis à vis an international authority).⁵⁶ Similarly, he could answer critics who accused him of being too conservative by saying that, on the contrary, he was proposing something very radical: an international authority.

The blame lies as much with Woolf's conception of international government as it does other concepts. The first point to note here is that Woolf's usage of the concept is far from consistent. Although he initially defines it in very broad terms he sometimes unwittingly adopts a more restricted definition. He withheld the title of 'international government' from the Automobile Conference and Convention of 1909, for example, on the grounds that it did not create permanent organs of international government.⁵⁷ The problem with this, of course, is that according to his initial definition - to recapitulate, 'the regulation of relations between States, Nations, or Peoples by international agreement' - conventions and other agreements are acts of international government regardless of whether they provide for the creation of 'permanent organs'.

Woolf's use of the concept in the 1930s provides

⁵⁶ I know of only one instance: International Post-War Settlement, 5.

⁵⁷ Woolf, International Government, 101.

another interesting example. Firstly, although he characterizes the nineteenth century, in line with his original thesis, as a struggle between nationalism and internationalism, he effectively abandons his first two conceptions of international government by restricting the meaning of internationalism to 'cosmopolitan international government' or, as he called it in the 1930s, 'every-day international government'.⁵⁸ When he speaks of the growth of internationalism in the nineteenth century he thus has in mind only 'cosmopolitan'/'every-day' international government. This is a departure from his original thesis according to which all three types of international government are types or aspects of internationalism.

He puts in the place of this thesis a rather crude dichotomy between the 'pre-War system' - of competitive nationalism, patriotism, diplomacy, security through national armaments, hostile alliances, and the balance of power - and the 'system of internationalism' - meaning 'an association of disarmed states, pledged by treaty under no circumstances to resort to war, to settle their differences and disputes by a process of law or international conciliation, and to promote and regulate their common interests by common action.'⁵⁹ Little intimation is given of the fact that in his major work on the subject he

⁵⁸ Woolf, 'From Serajevo to Geneva', Political Quarterly, 1, 2 (April 1930), 188-94.

⁵⁹ Woolf, 'From Geneva to the Next War', Political Quarterly, 4, 1 (January-March 1933), 30-35; 'Meditation on Abyssinia', Political Quarterly, 7, 1 (January-March 1936), 18-19, 22-23, 27.

rejected such a crude dichotomy - in International Government the 'pre-War system' is a 'system of internationalism' - at least in embryo.⁶⁰

Secondly, Woolf's 'system of internationalism' of the 1930s clearly contains elements of what, in the 1910s, he had termed 'international government'. But he now uses 'international government' exclusively to mean the 'every-day', 'semi-public and private' international government of commerce, finance, agriculture, navigation, the telegraph, science, public health, the drugs traffic, and so on. It becomes, in other words, a descriptive term for, to paraphrase his original definition, 'the regulation of the relations of States, Nations, and Peoples by organs of international administration' - international associations, international bureaux, permanent international commissions, and the like. And it is worth briefly adding that these rather muddy conceptual waters are not clarified by Woolf's habit of using a number of other terms as synonyms for his 'system of internationalism'. Examples include 'pacific international system', 'system of international co-operation and pacific settlement', 'system of pacific internationalism', and in one instance 'international government and peace'!⁶¹

One can only conclude that the descriptive and

⁶⁰ Woolf drops the occasional hint (for example, 'From Serajevo to Geneva', 189; 'The Resurrection of the League', Political Quarterly, 8, 3 (July-September 1937), 340, fn. 1).

⁶¹ Woolf, 'From Geneva to the Next War', passim.

analytical value of the concept he deemed so important is significantly diminished by his inconsistent, indeed quite reckless, use of it. It would not be unfair to say that ultimately it becomes a hindrance to understanding rather than a help.

Doubts about the term's descriptive and analytical value are paralleled by doubts about its prescriptive value. International government in the broad sense is an amalgam of not necessarily compatible things - from arbitration treaties to the growth of organized international crime,⁶² from economic combination to gatherings of scientists. It may be questioned whether the emergence and growth of these phenomena were part of the same sociological process, though Woolf was correct to highlight the precipitative role of the communications' revolution. To describe these things, however, as acts of international government is to conflate several international developments, different not only in character, but also in their respective ramifications. To be an advocate of international government may not at the end of the day amount to much. The capitalist can be an advocate as much as the socialist, the conservative as much as the radical, the feminist as much as the white slave trafficker. An undifferentiated concept of international

⁶² Woolf sees no problem in regarding crime organised across boundaries as a form of international government, though there is more than a hint of irony in the way he discusses the issue. See his account of a 'congress' of white slave traffickers held in Warsaw in 1913, in International Government, 166-7.

government becomes as useful as, say, an undifferentiated concept of 'justice'. Virtually everyone can safely become a true believer. What we need to know is what kind of international government being advocated. There is, after all, a major difference between an 'international capitalist system of government'⁶³ and a system of international government run along socialist lines.

Woolf appears to have been unaware of the pitfalls of defining his key concept in such a broad way. Confusion and contradiction inevitably follow. Indeed, one such contradiction can be found at the very heart of Woolf's thesis. It might be argued that two of his strands of international government - great power concert and cosmopolitan organization - pull in opposite directions. Law-making in international conferences and collective enforcement of law pulls the world in a statist direction, whereas unofficial, cosmopolitan, organization pulls the world in a non-statist direction. The implication of the former is that states tighten their grip on the world, whereas the implication of the latter is that their grip is weakened. It follows that while it makes sense to prescribe one or the other, it does not make sense to prescribe both.

When one moves from the prescriptive level, however, to the analytical level, Woolf's ground may be firmer. After all, this contradiction may be one that exists in the real world. There is much evidence to suggest that the

⁶³ The term is Woolf's. See *ibid.* 207.

power and authority of the state, vis à vis other actors, may be increasing in some respects though diminishing in others. One manifestation of this is that although sovereignty is as popular as ever, the ability to maximise the benefits of possessing it is constantly diminishing.

It also might be said in Woolf's defence that the reason why he advanced such a broad conception of international government is understandable. Woolf's introduction to politics came not only from the Fabian Society but also from the Co-operative Movement. He inherited Robert Owen's vision of a new society 'in which all would work together in a rational manner for the common good, without need of violent revolution'.⁶⁴ He also inherited, from Graham Wallas, the belief that the way to achieve this end was to substitute co-operation for competition as the fundamental principle of social organization.⁶⁵ Nineteenth century laissez-faire liberalism was moribund: the task for the future was to replace it with regulation, coordination, and organization. Woolf's International Government was an attempt to apply this belief to the field of international relations. Its flaws can be attributed not only to the way in which he went about his task, but also to the belief itself. It is,

⁶⁴ Margaret Cole's 'Preface' to Beatrice Potter, The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain (Aldershot, 1987), xxxiii.

⁶⁵ M. J. Weiner, 'Graham Wallas (1858-1932): Fabian Socialist and Political Psychologist', in J. M. Bellamy and J. Saville (eds.), Dictionary of Labour Biography (London, 1979), 227.

however, not unreasonable that Woolf sought to build his theory out of materials which were familiar and, as far as he knew, reliable.

Methodological Inconsistency?

It might be contended that Woolf's analysis of international government is methodologically inconsistent. His work contains a mixture of Fabian empiricism, interpretivism, and structural analysis, and he tended to shift 'mid-analysis' from one to another.

The methodological problems in Woolf's work are clearly apparent in his account of 'great power international government'. The question may be asked: how do we know whether or not the system of conferences and concerts of the nineteenth century constituted a rudimentary international legislature? Originally, Woolf claims, the Congress of Vienna was 'conceived' (though he does not tell us by whom) as 'in a sense, a Parliament of Nations settling the Constitution of Europe'. The Congress System was 'considered' to be either 'a kind of European Confederation' or 'a hegemony of the four great powers'.⁶⁶ When the Greek coast was blockaded in 1827 Woolf tells us that the Great Powers were 'half-conscious' of acting as a European police.⁶⁷ He also says with respect to the Conference of Constantinople of 1878 that '[c]learly the

⁶⁶ Woolf, International Government, 23-4.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 31.

Conference ... regarded itself as an international legislative organ'.⁶⁸

But Woolf also says that the Great Powers 'unconsciously' regarded their conferences as legislative bodies; and he further contends that they were anxious to be seen as 'mediators' rather than 'legislators' in order to conceal their real intentions ⁶⁹.

Finally, he claims that 'clearly ... there was the spirit of a new system' if one looks 'beneath the verbiage of protocols and treaties'; and that the international conferences 'in fact' formed a rudimentary legislature.⁷⁰ Here Woolf seems to abandon interpretivism and boldly asserts what is the case regardless of the intentions and perceptions of the relevant actors. What was actually, in fact, happening had not yet 'penetrated the consciousness' of 'naturally conservative' statesmen and diplomatists.⁷¹

From this it can be seen that Woolf employs three methods of analysis: empiricism ('the facts tell us that ...'); interpretivism (what do the actors themselves think they are doing?); and a kind of structural mode of analysis ('what the Powers were really doing ...). To return to the opening contention: does such eclecticism amount to methodological inconsistency? Not necessarily. In social science it might be said that we need all the evidence we

⁶⁸ Ibid. 34.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 30.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 32.

⁷¹ Ibid. 33.

can get. There is no a priori reason why these three methods cannot be combined. The problem with Woolf's use of them is that he does so in an unsystematic way. This creates the impression that the method adopted is the one most convenient for conclusions already reached.

Utopianism

Having set the scene historically, historiographically, conceptually, and methodologically it is now possible to tackle head-on the central concern of this chapter.

Although not specifically targeted in The Twenty Years' Crisis, it is important to note that Woolf viewed the book as an attack on his own position. He took particular objection to what he felt was Carr's arbitrary and irresponsible use of the word utopian, and he attempted, with mixed results, to refute some of his assertions in an article, 'Utopian and Reality', published in Political Quarterly and in a book, The War for Peace, published shortly afterwards. Woolf's response to Carr is examined in detail in Chapter 8.

The question whether Woolf, or indeed any of the other 'thinkers of the twenty years' crisis', deserves to be labelled 'utopian' is an extremely complex one. This is because the term, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, has no settled meaning. If by 'utopian' is meant the belief that radical reform of the international system is both desirable and possible, then Woolf's ideas about

international government are without doubt a utopian. There is, however, a problem here: if this definition is accepted Carr himself becomes a utopian given his endorsement of functionalism and certain forms of international collectivism.⁷² If, on the other hand, it is taken to mean a complete rejection of the existing system in favour of some blue-print for an entirely new world order, Woolf is not a utopian. He did not completely reject the existing order, and although he was never reticent in putting forward quite radical proposals for change, he rarely engaged in the drawing up of blue-prints - not, that is, if we mean by 'blue-print' a comprehensive and detailed plan of what a new world would look like and how it would work. The only example of such a scheme is the Woolf-Webb plan.⁷³ Similarly, if by 'utopian' we mean the refusal to acknowledge the existence of, or tendency to understate, the unseemly aspects of international politics, then Woolf is not a utopian since his estimation of the quality of international life was just as grim as later 'realists'. Indeed, that is precisely the reason why he so

⁷² The more radical aspects of Carr's thought on international relations are discussed in Hidemi Suganami, The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals (Cambridge, 1989), 101-5; and Peter Wilson, 'The New Europe Debate in Wartime Britain', in Philomena Murray and Paul Rich (eds.) Visions of European Unity (Boulder, CO, 1996).

⁷³ Woolf's wartime International Post-War Settlement made a number of more or less detailed proposals for a new international order, but it is no more of a blue-print than Carr's Conditions of Peace. Woolf explicitly rejects the drawing up of blue-prints in his proposals for the expansion of Co-operative trade. See International Co-operative Trade, 5, 21.

much wanted to change it.

With respect to the three broad charges against utopianism identified as 'key' in Chapter 2, the following points can be made.

Charge 1: Facts and Analysis of Cause and Effect

Much of Woolf's work is polemical in purpose, rhetorical in style, and lacking in detailed empirical analysis. He had a tendency to see the world in sweeping, Manichean terms such as 'civilization' and 'barbarism'. This tendency is particularly pronounced in his articles and books of the 1930s. His controversial tract published by the Left Book Club in 1939, Barbarians at the Gate, provides a good example.⁷⁴ In this book Woolf analyzed the intensifying European crisis in terms of the forces on the side of 'civilization' and the forces of 'barbarism'. A keen supporter of the Popular Front, Woolf managed to squeeze Stalin's Russia into the former camp, but not without difficulty. The result is a contorted, procrustean, and ultimately simplistic account which fails to convey any of the complexities that characterized the diplomatic scene of the 1930s. Woolf condemned the ruthless suppression of personal and intellectual freedom in Soviet Russia but nonetheless argued that she would sooner or later align herself with Britain against the fascists not for power

⁷⁴ Other striking examples include his introduction to Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War, and Quack, Quack! (London, 1935), 108-17 (and 22-7, where he conceives history, equally sweepingly, as a struggle between 'minorities' and 'majorities').

political reasons but because their 'ultimate social aims' were those of 'freedom and civilization'. The book came out shortly after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.⁷⁵

Woolf's writings of the 1930s are especially propagandist and exhibit few traces of the kind of factual analysis called for by Carr. It will be recalled from Chapter 2 that Carr denounced collective security, general disarmament, and other such schemes as 'product[s] of pure theory divorced from practical experience'. It will also be recalled that he denounced many of the writers of the time for their ignorance of strategy. The solutions they proposed were 'neat and accurate on the abstract plane' but were obtained only 'by leaving out of account the vital

⁷⁵ An extended footnote is perhaps justified here. Victor Gollancz and his fellow directors of the Club, John Strachey and Harold Laski, whose sentiments were much more pro-Soviet than Woolf's, refused initially to publish the book. Although it reads today like a Soviet apologia, to them it was disturbingly anti-Soviet and they feared it would be used as propaganda by 'reactionaries and fascists'. They also feared it would prompt the resignation of 10,000 Club members and jeopardise the Anglo-Soviet negotiations then under way. Woolf replied that to prohibit all criticism of the Soviet Union was in itself a more pernicious, if unconscious, form of anti-Sovietism; that it was a wild exaggeration to suggest that publication would result in mass resignations (as it turned out, it wasn't); and that it was fanciful to think that the book would have any effect whatsoever on the Anglo-Soviet negotiations (as it turned out, it was). See Luedeking and Edmonds, Leonard Woolf, 49-51; Wilson, Leonard Woolf, 197-8; Woolf, Letters, 415-22 [and my review in Millennium, 20, 3 (1991)]. Throughout his political career Woolf was bitterly critical of but not entirely unsympathetic to the Soviet experiment. He felt, for example, that the Soviet Union had had much success in building 'economic democracy' but that its record on 'political democracy' was nothing short of disastrous. See Woolf, 'Democracy in the Soviet Union - II', Anglo Soviet Public Relations Association, Leaflet 3 (n.d. 1942?), 5-8; and also Foreign Policy: The Labour Party's Dilemma (London, 1947), 10-16.

strategic factor'. He concluded with the damning words: 'If every prospective writer on international affairs in the last twenty years had taken a compulsory course in elementary strategy, reams of nonsense would have remained unwritten.'

There can be no doubt that Woolf's ignorance of strategy was lamentable. He was a staunch believer in a system of collective or 'pooled' security. This required states to renounce their right to use force as an instrument of national policy and to entrust their security instead 'to the machinery of pacific settlement and a common obligation to resist an aggressor'. But such a system of pacific internationalism (as he also called it) could not possibly work in a world of heavily armed Great Powers. A precondition of collective security or pacific internationalism was, therefore, national disarmament.⁷⁶ But although he castigated pacifists for refusing to accept the full implications of the 'common obligation to resist an aggressor',⁷⁷ he never himself explained how such an obligation would be met in a disarmed world. If by 'disarmament' he did not have in mind what has since become known as 'general and complete disarmament', it is similarly unclear what he considered to be the optimum level of disarmament: that is, the lowest level of national armament consistent with the effective performance of

⁷⁶ Woolf, 'From Geneva to the Next War', 32-40.

⁷⁷ See for example *ibid*, 42; Woolf, The League and Abyssinia (London, 1936), 28-31.

common obligations.⁷⁸

In this connection it is a curious fact that by 1937 Woolf was suggesting that 'collective' as opposed to 'national' defence necessitated 'a very high measure of rearmament' (emphasis mine). It would not be unfair to say that in Woolf's outlook 'things collective' seem to possess certain magical qualities. It does not seem to have occurred to him that collective rearmament might upset the balance of power and trigger a pre-emptive war, or a lethal arms race, in exactly the same way as national rearmament tended, so he believed, to do.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ This is a matter Woolf never got to grips with. In his outline for an 'independent' and 'impartial' foreign policy for Britain of 1947, for example, he boldly asserts that '[w]e should reduce our military commitments to a minimum consistent with any obligations which might become necessary for real collective security if UNO should become an effective instrument of peace.' But he makes no attempt to spell out what these obligations might be nor specify the nature and level of the armaments that would be needed to fulfil them. The drastic reductions in armaments he recommends as an interim measure suggests that he did not expect the requisite level to be high. This expectation is so dubious that one wonders whether Woolf ever gave the matter serious attention. One also wonders whether he ever considered the possibility that a high level of armaments might be needed to transform the UN into an 'effective instrument of peace' in the first place. Woolf, Foreign Policy, 16-25.

⁷⁹ Woolf, 'Arms and Peace', Political Quarterly, 8, 1 (January-March 1937), 22-3, 26-7, 33. Again this feature is also apparent in Woolf's 1940s writings. Although he repeatedly dismissed the possibility of deterring aggression through 'power political' methods he maintained complete confidence in the efficacy of 'collective' methods. Not once does he question whether the shortcomings attributed to the former (the generation of a climate of fear and hostility leading to an arms race and a 'preventive' war) might also apply to the latter. Indeed there is a sense in which Woolf's argument is tautological: 'real' collective security through a 'real' international authority would, it seems, present a front so united, so powerful, and so imbued with moral authority, that it could

It is also a curious but important fact that the allegations of muddle-headedness and pusillanimity that Woolf levelled at the pacifists might equally be levelled at Woolf himself. Woolf was adamant in the early part of the decade that the 'central object' of British foreign policy should be to 'prevent the outbreak of a European war'.⁸⁰ But he also wanted the British government to pursue a 'more militant policy' of using the League as an 'instrument against Fascist militarism'. The League, he argued, should be used to 'force' Fascist states like Italy and Germany to 'show their hand'. If they were not prepared to comply with their obligations under the Covenant they should be made 'openly to repudiate them' and, in light of this, 'forced out of the League'. 'A League,' he continued, 'purged of militarist and Fascist states, composed of democratic and socialist governments, determined by every means in their power to prevent war, would be a much stronger instrument for peace and civilisation than the half-sham League which we have today.'⁸¹

not possibly fail. Anything falling short of such a front could not, in Woolf's confusing scheme of things, be considered a 'real' system of collective security. Woolf, International Post-War Settlement, 2-3, 8-10; and Foreign Policy, 7, 10, 15, 18.

⁸⁰ A position that he also adopted, despite his formal denunciations of 'Tory appeasement', in the late 1940s ('At the present moment in framing a foreign policy everything should be subordinated to an attempt to secure peace.') Woolf, Foreign Policy, 15.

⁸¹ Woolf, 'Labour's Foreign Policy', Political Quarterly, 4, 4 (October-December 1933), 510-12, 523-4.

Yet Woolf stopped short of calling this new League an alliance, a notion which, in typical dissenting fashion, he continued to denounce.⁸² He also stopped short of admitting that such a 'militant policy' could result in, or bring nearer, the very thing it was designed to avoid - war. The anodyne, some would say evasive, phraseology of the following sentence is illustrative:

What exactly that common action [against aggression] should be may be a subject of argument, but that an alternative to armed nationalism requires that every state should assume some obligations to stand by the side of the victim of aggression and to resist the aggressor is indisputable.⁸³

The employment of euphemisms such as 'stand by the side of' (or 'support' or 'come to the assistance of' or 'fulfil its obligations to'⁸⁴) is almost exactly the kind of weak-mindedness for which he arraigned the pacifists. Woolf rarely admits that 'sanctions' might involve 'military

⁸² At least until 1937. At this point, for the first time in his career, Woolf began to cautiously lend his support to the idea of a 'peace front' of non-fascist states to 'resist' (he was short on specifics) fascist aggression. Although such a 'front' ran the risk of precipitating war - by tempting Germany and Italy to strike their first blow before the balance of power ~~would~~ turned against them - he none the less saw it as the best out of a set of undesirable alternatives - aimless rearmament, imperial isolation, pacific isolation, defensive/non-offensive isolation, appeasement - none of which offered any real hope of peace. See 'Arms and Peace', passim; 'The Resurrection of the League', 342-52. For denunciations of alliances see 'Labour's Foreign Policy', 510, 521-2; 'From Serajevo to Geneva', 203-4.

⁸³ Woolf, 'From Geneva to the Next War', 42. See also 'The Resurrection of the League' (342-3, 348-9) where Woolf talks toughly about 'actively resisting' fascist 'bullying and violence' and 'asserting rights to order and peace' but avoids the key question: How?

⁸⁴ Woolf, 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 19, 23, 26.

sanctions' and that 'military sanctions' meant war. Indeed, in characterising the 'pre-War' or 'Balance of Power' system as a 'system of war' and the 'League system' as a 'system of peace' he occasionally implies that collective security, though involving 'sanctions', did not involve war.⁸⁵

There are in fact two dimensions to this problem in Woolf's thought. The first is the one stated in the previous paragraph: Woolf is at least partly guilty of the weak-mindedness of which he accused the pacifists, because, like them, he shies away from a full and frank disclosure of the implications of collective security. The second is more complicated. On the few occasions he does come close to a full and frank disclosure, he purposefully stops short of using the word 'war'. He talks quite stoically of the 'risks' of collective security.⁸⁶ He strongly implies on one occasion that 'the application of sanctions' necessarily entails 'the use of force'.⁸⁷ He even suggests that collective security could, in principle, produce more violence than it prevents.⁸⁸ None the less he refuses to call this 'violence' 'war'.

The reason for this is, I think, at root psychological. Woolf was so badly scarred by the horrors

⁸⁵ Ibid. 29-32.

⁸⁶ Woolf, 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 26; League and Abyssinia, 18, 26.

⁸⁷ Woolf, 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 31.

⁸⁸ Woolf, League and Abyssinia, 30.

of the Great War - a war in which one of his younger brothers, Cecil, was killed and another, Philip, was seriously wounded by the same shell - that he could not see war in anything but the blackest terms. One of the ramifications of this was that he could not accept that the new system of international relations built around the League might ultimately depend on such an 'evil', 'vile', 'bestial', 'barbarous', 'stupid', and 'senseless' thing as war for its survival.⁸⁹ He consequently called it something else. He maintained that '[t]he use of force to resist aggression by states organized in a League to eliminate war is not war unless the use of force to resist violence by a state organized to eliminate crime is crime.'⁹⁰ Some of the pitfalls of this form of analogical reasoning will be discussed in the next section. At this stage the important point to note is that such reasoning simply obscures even further the price that may ultimately have to be paid by law-abiding states to 'maintain' peace and 'preserve' collective security. War is a grave word. But collective security may require grave action. In choosing words the gravity of which did not correspond to the gravity of the action, Woolf is, I think, guilty of being less than sincere and ipso facto of undermining, albeit unwittingly, the very foundations - resolve and preparedness - upon which the success of such action almost

⁸⁹ Ibid. 29-31; Woolf, 'The Ideal of the League Remains', Political Quarterly, 7, 3 (July-September 1936), 333-4.

⁹⁰ Woolf, League and Abyssinia, 30.

by definition depends.⁹¹

A further puzzling and ultimately deficient feature of Woolf's position on collective security concerns his conception of the League. He insisted that the League was not a 'foreign body in the comity of nations and endowed ... with a personality transcending or even outside the States of which it was ... composed.' It could not 'act by itself or ... be a force for good or evil in international affairs apart from the Governments which are represented upon its organs'. On the contrary it was simply a 'political organisation' or 'pacific machinery' the efficacy of which contingent on the sincerity and determination of its members.⁹² When discussing this matter in the abstract, therefore, Woolf's position could hardly be clearer.

But the logic of his rather sketchy thoughts on the practical dimensions of 'pooled security through the League' suggest a quite different conclusion. Woolf was against 'armed nationalism' and in favour of 'disarmed internationalism'. Collective security meant 'collective, not national defence, by collective instead of national armament'. Security would be provided not by national

⁹¹ It should be noted here that Woolf sometimes speaks as if resolve alone would be enough to deter aggression, thereby rendering graver action unnecessary. He is silent, however, on how such resolve can be continually demonstrated in the absence of such action. See *ibid.* 16, 19; 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 27.

⁹² 'From Serajevo to Geneva', 195; 'From Geneva to the Next War', 40-2; 'Meditation on Abyssinia', 17-19, 22-3.

armies and navies but 'collectively' by 'the League'.⁹³ Is the implication of such statements that the League could or should have armed forces of 'its own'? Or is it the case that Woolf had in mind the secondment of national forces, as part of the process of national disarmament, to the League? In either case, who is in control of these 'no longer national' forces? And if they are no longer national doesn't this mean that the League has, inevitably, acquired a personality of its own?

While worrying in themselves, such disregard of key practical and conceptual strategic considerations also gave rise to some highly superficial judgements on contemporary events. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria, to give one example, occurred, quite simply, because Japan rightly calculated that France and Britain would not comply with their obligations under the Covenant. This was a product partly of 'muddled ignorance' on the part of the French and British governments, and partly of their manifest lack of the 'will to peace'. Woolf does not stop and ask why Japan felt that the League Powers would not comply with their obligations, nor why, except for these two sweeping assertions, the League Powers, meaning of course Britain and France, steered clear of any action that might get them involved in the conflict. The complex strategic equation in Asia and its potential impact on the strategic equation

⁹³ Woolf, 'The Ideal of the League Remains', 335; 'From Geneva to the Next War', 39; 'Arms and Peace', 23.

in Europe is not even considered.⁹⁴

Strategy, armaments, and collective security is undoubtedly an issue-area within which Woolf's 'attention to facts and analysis of cause and effect' is far from adequate. I have spent some dealing with it precisely because it is one area in which Carr's pronouncements are, I believe, accurate and fair (as well as provocative and scintillating).⁹⁵

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that Woolf's inattentiveness to the 'facts' and 'cause and effect' with regard to collective security is representative of the normal pattern. A good deal of Woolf's work was written for the heavily empiricist Fabian Research Department. His statement of purpose in International Government is typically Fabian empiricist: 'The object of this inquiry is to give data which may, if possible, enable people to

⁹⁴ Woolf, 'From Geneva to the Next War', 35-43. He later argued that it was 'not true that the League of Nations or the Allied nations had not adequate armed forces ... to resist the preparations for aggression and the actual aggressions by Japan, Mussolini, and Hitler.' He went on to provide some justification for this contention with respect to Mussolini and Hitler but remained ominously silent on Japan. Woolf, International Post-War Settlement, 9.

⁹⁵ Indeed, Woolf's argument for a working system of collective security in 'The Ideal of the League Remains' (the title is ironic) is a model example of one of Carr's 'abstractly neat and accurate solutions obtained by leaving out of account the vital strategic factor'. Woolf's argument is lucid and logical but no account is taken of British or French preparedness for war either in the Far East, the Mediterranean, Africa, or in Europe (nor, indeed, of the tremendous financial difficulties which constrained them). His radical proposals for British foreign policy in Foreign Policy: The Labour Party's Dilemma provide another good example.

transform the vague "some sort of [international organization]" into a more definite object of their hopes.'⁹⁶ Throughout his career he was deeply wedded to the Webbian belief that the truth of socialism, and by extension internationalism, could be rationally demonstrated by 'the facts'. The task of the investigator was to gather enough facts to prove these Fabian truths both in their positive and normative aspect. It is not surprising therefore that several of Woolf's works contain a wealth of empirical data⁹⁷ - though not necessarily the kind of data considered important by later 'realists'. Indeed, as mentioned, the importance of Woolf's work to a large degree resides in the mass of information he collected on official and unofficial international associations.

Charge 2: Power in International Politics

Woolf generally viewed power, or at least its unilateral exercise, as a defect of the international system. He was consequently more inclined to censure it than to analyze it. He frequently asserted that the opposite of power was law and did not investigate in any detail the degree to which law is underpinned by a particular distribution or pattern of power.

But although Woolf failed to give the role of power

⁹⁶ Woolf, International Government, 7.

⁹⁷ Especially International Government, Empire and Commerce in Africa, International Co-operative Trade, and his articles for the Contemporary Review, 1922.

the attention it deserves, he did not entirely ignore it. This is evident, for example, in his acknowledgement that nationalism, patriotism, and the sovereign state could not be wished away and that any proposal for a new international order had to take account of them.⁹⁸ It is evident in his rejection of 'any such revolution as world-parliaments and world federation'.⁹⁹ It is evident in his rejection of the idea of a world state:

For however attractive a world-State may be to our imaginations, a little reflection, aided by the sobering study of protocols, blue-books, and white papers, will show that in the world of actual facts there is no ground prepared for the reception of so strange a plant.¹⁰⁰

It is evident in the special position he granted to the Great Powers in his proposal for an International Council, and in his recognition of the probable permanence international inequality:

If ... the world is ever to organise itself for the peaceful regulation of international affairs, that organisation must provide for the essential inequality of States. If such inequality is not reflected in the pacific machinery, it will make itself felt in war, while the machinery will be left to rust unused.¹⁰¹

To the extent that Woolf saw the growth of international government as an inexorable process, there is an implicit endorsement of the positive role of power - social power -

⁹⁸ Woolf, International Government, 219.

⁹⁹ Woolf, Framework of a Lasting Peace, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, International Government, 68-9.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 78. See also 61-2, 236-45.

at the heart of his thesis.¹⁰² And in common with other supporters of the League, Woolf believed that power also had a positive role to play in providing collective security and upholding the international rule of law.

Finally, it would be incorrect to assume that Woolf was entirely dismissive of the 'power of power politics'. He often utilized the conceptual and explanatory tools of power politics in analysing particular episodes and events. His analysis of the early Cold War international context, for example, focuses on such impeccably 'power political' factors as: the relative power position - economic, political, and military - of the three former allies; the dangers of widespread misperception ('erroneous beliefs') of this power position for Russian and American policy; the fear and suspicion among the Russian leadership of Anglo-American collusion; the fear and suspicion in America and Britain of the spread of Communism and Russian territorial ambitions; the self-fulfilling nature of policies based on such fears and suspicions; the growing tendency in the policies of the US and the USSR to treat issues not on their merits but in terms of their effect upon their relative economic and military power; the deleterious effect of wide economic and ideological differences; the dangers inherent in exclusive US possession of the atomic bomb; and the impact of Britain's disengagement from empire on her power and status and on the relative power position

¹⁰² He often implies that the growth of 'cosmopolitan' international government has a momentum of all its own. See *ibid.* 92, 229, 120.

of the US and the USSR.¹⁰³

The point to be emphasized here, however, is that although Woolf sometimes analyzed particular events in terms of power politics he did not believe that such a undesirable state of affairs was endemic or immutable. He never abandoned faith in the possibility that power politics could be transcended through international government and a 'real' system of collective security. To continue with the same example, although Woolf's estimation of the Cold War international situation was bleak (due to inter alia the 'hostility and power politics of the USA and USSR', the 'consistent hostility' of Russia towards Britain, the abuse by Russia of its power and status within the UN, the opportunistic nature of Soviet foreign policy and the unscrupulous methods employed in its efforts to spread communism and totalitarianism abroad, the dangers of domination by 'the powerful and militant capitalism of the USA', and 'the terrible vulnerability of ... [Britain's] geographic and economic position in a war fought with ... [atomic] weapons'), he did not concede any ground to the realist view on how to deal with it. He continued to condemn national deterrence, armed alliances, and the balance of power. He continued to argue for collective security through the UN ('... a socialist government must make the UNO the keystone of its long-term policy... For in the long-run there will be hardly any chance of peace unless UNO is made to work'). And he continued to call for

¹⁰³ Woolf, Foreign Policy, 8-10.

an end to and immediate dissociation from power politics ('... we cannot afford to take part in any way, either on one side or on the other, in the preliminary game of power politics which assumes and creates the probability of another war ... [we should] refuse absolutely to take part in the wrangles and recriminations of the Security Council and the Assembly ... our policy should be complete impartiality and dissociation from all strategic manoeuvres of the USA and USSR').¹⁰⁴

Charge 3: Universal Interests and the Status Quo

Woolf uncritically assumed that peace was a universal interest, justice a universal value, and that both of them could be determined, if needs be, by a majority vote in a conference of Powers. Following Cobden and Angell, he felt that war benefitted no one except perhaps a small and exploitative clique. War was a barbaric act parallel to cannibalism and slavery. It was also an act that, because of the increasing destructiveness of modern weaponry, threatened not only this or that nation, but civilization itself.

But Woolf's convictions about war and his single-minded pursuit of peace did not blind him to the fact that the preservation of peace might have as its corollary the solidification of a particular, and perhaps unjust, status quo. His radical liberal belief in the need to uphold the rule of international law, for instance, was tempered by

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 8-26.

his socialist understanding of law as an instrument for maintaining the existing order of things. The following passage on the question of compulsory adjudication succinctly sums up Woolf's view on what he called 'the problem of the status quo'. It is worth quoting at length not only because it reveals the extent to which Woolf was aware of the hypocrisy and the 'inner falsehood and cant'¹⁰⁵ that often accompanies uncompromising belief in the sanctity of international law, but also because it anticipates in important respects the argument that Carr was to make more than two decades later. According to Woolf, it was not advisable for any state to bind itself absolutely to refer disputes to a judicial tribunal because such a tribunal

... would be compelled to decide every issue strictly in accordance with the existing law.... It would be essentially that conservative element ... necessary in every society and which maintains the existing order of things. Nor must we forget that it so happens that it is always our particular interest as a nation to preserve the existing order of things. In the international system Great Britain is naturally in the position which the rich capitalist employer holds in the industrial system. She has usually nothing to gain by a change She is always conservative and therefore in favour of arbitration and a rigid adherence to existing treaties. But ... it may be in the interests of other nations and of the world generally that changes should take place, and that, if an arrangement which maintains the existing order of things is essential, an arrangement which makes it possible to upset it in an orderly manner is no less essential.

At the present moment there are only two methods by which the existing order of things can be upset - negotiation and war. It is only obtuseness and lack of imagination on our part if we do not see that no nation, whose interests are not in preserving the

¹⁰⁵ Meinecke quoted by Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 111-12.

status quo, will give up the power of going to war ... unless some other possible method of varying the status quo is assured to it. The fact that Germany opposed and Britain supported obligatory arbitration at the Hague Conference does not prove the wickedness of Germany and the pureness of Britain, any more than the refusal of wage-earners to accept the employers' proposals - namely, to give up their weapon, the strike, and bind themselves to arbitrate - proves a moral superiority of the employing over the employed class.¹⁰⁶

There are of course considerable differences between Woolf and Carr on the question of compulsory adjudication. Carr rejected as illusory the distinction between justiciable and non-justiciable disputes.¹⁰⁷ He condemned as fallacious Woolf's notion that political relations could be converted into legal relations.¹⁰⁸ He also had grave doubts about the thrust of Woolf's argument, namely, that what was required was a 'rational' non-coercive method of peaceful change.¹⁰⁹ The quotation is significant, however, because it shows that Woolf was not 'utopian' in the sense of being

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, International Government, 55-6. See also 14-15 where Woolf criticises treaties 'designed to be eternal' and calls for a procedure whereby they can be altered 'in accordance with altering circumstances'; 26-7 where Woolf trenchantly observes the different perspectives of challengers and defenders of the status quo with respect to questions of 'nationality' (i.e. self-determination); and Framework of a Lasting Peace, 48-51, where he argues that 'government by existing rules' with no means of changing them would amount to 'over the living a tyranny of the dead'.

¹⁰⁷ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 247-54.

¹⁰⁸ In Carr's words 'dissolving politics into law'. Ibid. 260-61.

¹⁰⁹ Compare Woolf's international conference, deciding disputes in accordance with 'equity' (International Government, 56-7), with Carr's process of 'give and take' in which both morality and power are indispensable components (Twenty Years' Crisis, 264-84).

an unthinking defender of the status quo. It also shows that Woolf's thought is considerably more complex and sophisticated than certain critics have contended.

The Domestic Analogy

It could be argued that one of the main weaknesses of Woolf's thought on international government is his reliance on the 'domestic analogy'. In his incisive study of the role that the domestic analogy has played in proposals about world order, Hidemi Suganami defines it as a form of

presumptive reasoning which holds there are certain similarities between domestic and international phenomena; that, in particular, the conditions of order within states are similar to those of order between them; and that therefore those institutions which sustain order domestically should be reproduced at the international level.¹¹⁰

Suganami proceeds to show that the domestic analogy manifests itself in a range of ways and takes a number of different forms. These forms differ according to the similarities that are held by users of the domestic analogy to be significant (for example, between treaties and contracts, or between conferences and legislatures); the domestic institutions which are held to be relevant (for example, police forces or the welfare state); and the prescriptions for change that logically follow (for example, reform of the society of states or the creation of a single world state). Not surprisingly given this variety, some forms of the domestic analogy are more cogent

¹¹⁰ Suganami, Domestic Analogy, 1.

than others. Suganami, to some extent justifiably, cites Woolf as an example of someone who uses the analogy in a straightforward, highly problematical, way.¹¹¹ 'Straightforward' in the sense that the state is personified and it is presumed that the bases of order between states in international society are essentially the same (and not merely 'similar') as the bases of order between individuals within the state. 'Problematical' because, inter alia, this approach assumes that enforcement of law against miscreant individuals is the central task of government when in fact it is the management and conciliation of conflict between large and powerful groups.¹¹²

Reliance on this type of domestic analogy is particularly evident in Woolf's later writings. He contended, as mentioned in Chapter 3, that

There is nothing essentially different in the government of a football club, a village, a town, a country, of Europe, or of the world, except that the scale is bigger and the organisation more complicated.¹¹³

Similarly,

To prevent war is a problem of politics and government, not essentially different from the problem of preventing duelling or cock-fighting or of regulating the relations between the inhabitants of Middlesex and those of Surrey. It may be easier to prevent cock-fighting than war or to regulate the relations between Middlesex and Surrey or England and Scotland than those between France and Germany. But

¹¹¹ Ibid. 95-6, 179-81.

¹¹² Ibid. 165-96.

¹¹³ Woolf, The Future of International Government (London, 1940), 3.

there is nothing in the last problem which suggests it is essentially different from the others.¹¹⁴

Thus Woolf did not see the problem of war and the maintenance of peace as sui generis. The experiences of domestic societies in dealing with ills such as robbery and murder were directly relevant for thinking about how to deal with international ills such as war. The common answer to such ills was government. All civilized life, Woolf claimed, depended on the effective functioning of six 'essentials of government': the existence of 'recognised and accepted' rules; a legislative body for making and modifying these rules; judicial bodies for interpreting them; organs and procedures through which changes could be made to the constitution or principles of the society; administrative bodies to promote common interests; and some means of controlling or preventing the unilateral use of force. These essentials of government applied no less to international society than they did to domestic society.¹¹⁵

Evidence of this straight-forward reliance on the domestic analogy can also be found in Woolf's more sophisticated earlier work. He criticized what he felt was an imbalance in the laws of war in favour of ius en bello by asking: 'What should we think of a State in which there were no laws to prevent riot and murder and violence, and no police to enforce the law, but yet there were very detailed and complicated laws governing the conduct of

¹¹⁴ Woolf, The War for Peace, 79-80. See also 105, 156-7; and The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War, 11-12.

¹¹⁵ Woolf, Future of International Government, 5-6.

persons engaged in riots, murder, and violence?' And he maintained that the difference between 'a nation enforcing its own will by violence' and 'a nation enforcing the will of an international authority by violence' was 'the difference between a hooligan and a policeman'.¹¹⁶

Although illuminating there is, however, no need to reproduce further specific examples. This is because the very form and structure of much of what Woolf has to say is based on an uncomplicated domestic analogy. By advocating judicial settlement, the further development of an international legislature, the founding of a stable international constitution, and, of course, the importance of international government, Woolf was clearly suggesting that hopes for a more orderly international society resided in making it more like domestic society.

There are, however, several aspects of Woolf's work which suggest that the overall picture is not as clear-cut as it at first seems. This can be illustrated by following four examples.

Firstly, in earlier writings Woolf rejected the idea of an international police force as 'hardly practical in the present condition of the world'. His position on this question was far more ambivalent in later writings.¹¹⁷ Secondly, he explicitly rejected the straightforward

¹¹⁶ Woolf, International Government, 22, 31. See also 25, 40, 100, 232.

¹¹⁷ Compare International Government, 75-6, with The Future of International Government, 6, 12, and The International Post-War Settlement, 10.

analogy between individuals and states in his analysis of arbitration and judicial settlement. As we have seen, Woolf rejected general obligatory arbitration as neither practicable nor reasonable. Those who advocated this assumed that since judicial decisions had been substituted for private war between individuals, international judicial decisions could be substituted for war between states. Woolf pointed out, however, that only a limited range of disputes within states were in fact settled by judicial decisions. It was ridiculous, for example, to suppose that the Irish Home Rule question could be solved in this way. The reason for this was that this kind of dispute concerned what the law ought to be, not its interpretation. To suggest that it could be settled by judicial means was to confuse two different processes: the judicial and the legislative. Significantly, Woolf added that disputes like the Irish Question were the kind of disputes that most closely resembled international disputes. This was because they involved groups of individuals and not individuals per se.¹¹⁸

Thus Woolf was aware of some of the problems inherent in a direct analogy between states and individuals. This awareness led him to incorporate the aforementioned measure of flexibility in his proposals for judicial settlement. Although still reliant on the domestic analogy in the sense that his proposals for international order are informed by a reading of domestic experience, the type of analogy he

¹¹⁸ Woolf, International Government, 46-8.

employs is, in this instance, more subtle than the one often found in later writings.

Thirdly, Woolf sometimes employed a more subtle version of the analogy by virtue of his pluralistic understanding of domestic society. Accordingly, government did not only consist of the 'Houses of Parliament, the Courts of Justice, the policeman, and the Borough Council', but also the church, the guild, professional associations, joint stock companies, clubs, associations of workers, consumers, employers, scientists, sportsmen, and the like. Woolf argued that the prevalence of the 'narrow vision of government and the functions of government as limited to State or Municipal organisation' led to 'much misunderstanding of the history and the future of International Government'.¹¹⁹ As has been seen, Woolf advocated not only the reproduction of 'State or Municipal organisations' at the international level, but also the elaboration and development internationally of non-state organizations. Thus, his pluralistic conception of international government was at least in part informed by his pluralistic conception of domestic government.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 98. See also 196-200.

¹²⁰ In this respect Woolf adopted, in Suganami's terms, the 'cosmopolitanist' version of the domestic analogy and argued on very similar lines to 'welfare internationalists'. See Suganami, Domestic Analogy, 35-9, 100-11, 191-4. For two further examples of Woolf's more subtle and cogent use of the analogy see The Framework of a Lasting Peace, 30-38, in which he compares industrial with international disputes; and International Co-operative Trade, 17, in which he conceives a non-statist, non-capitalist trading order based on an analogy with domestic Co-operative organization.

Finally there are two senses in which Woolf's theory of international government rests only to a small degree, if at all, on the domestic analogy. Firstly, he claimed, and not without reason, that his proposals for international reform were based, at least partly, on international processes and institutions that were already firmly rooted in the international system. His recommendations for the development of 'cosmopolitanist' international government in particular were based on a reading of recent international experience as much as they were on a reading of domestic experience. Secondly, and following on from this, to the extent that law-making had been cosmopolitanized, administration internationalized, sovereignty eroded, and an international social tissue created, the distinction between the 'domestic' and the 'international' in Woolf's view been blurred. A single society was emerging out of the collectivity of societies. To the extent that this had occurred there was, strictly speaking, no 'domestic' or 'international' upon which analogies could be drawn.

These examples indicate that although Woolf often employed the domestic analogy in a straightforward and highly simplistic way, he also used it in a more subtle way, and in some respects he hardly used it at all. Again, the picture of Woolf's thought that emerges is a complex one. The crude publicist was also in some respects a subtle and prescient analyst. Once again this suggests that the prevalent image of interwar 'idealists' as

simplistic, one-dimensional, wishful-thinkers is in need of revision.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by offering a few thoughts on Bull's contention that Woolf's work on international government is 'not at all profound' and not worth reading now 'except for the light it throws on the preoccupations and presuppositions of its time and place'. It should first be noted that this contention rests, for good or for ill, on a conservative premise. Bull held the view that the international system was characterized by certain enduring features: anarchy (meaning 'absence of government'); society (meaning at least some agreement on common norms, rules, and institutions); war; alliances; the balance of power; and the primacy of the sovereign state.¹²¹ Profundity for Bull meant recognition of the central role these enduring features played in international life. This is the conservative premise: continuity is assumed to be more fundamental than change. Writers like Woolf, in Bull's view, had little of significance to say about the elements of continuity in international politics, and this meant that their relevance

¹²¹ See especially Hedley Bull, 'Society and Anarchy in International Relations' in H. Butterfield and M. Wight (eds.), Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics (London, 1966), 35-50; The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics (London, 1977); and 'The State's Positive Role in World Affairs', Daedalus, 108, 4 (1979), 111-23.

to their own age was limited let alone their relevance to ours. Hence his damning judgement.

In some respects it is a fair one. Many of Woolf's presuppositions and preoccupations are outmoded in that they have subsequently been shown to be either naive, spurious, inaccurate, or inconsequential. Some of the most striking examples have been commented on: his belief that conflict was largely due to 'lack of machinery'; his belief in the possibility of identifying an objective category of 'legal disputes' by their nature capable of judicial resolution; his assumption of extensive cultural homogeneity - an assumption symptomatic of the imperial mind-set shared at the time by even some of the most anti-imperialist thinkers; his habit of thinking in terms of a simplistic domestic analogy; and his tendency to underestimate the problems involved in the collective enforcement of international law. To these may be added Woolf's unswerving belief in the efficacy of reason. Reason, as one critic once suggested, was Woolf's panacea. 'A little more reason would have saved us all' was his leitmotif.¹²² More than anything else it is his undiluted rationalism that separates Woolf from modern analysts of the subject. It never occurred to him that there is a tragic element in international politics which reason alone is powerless to resolve.

However, although Woolf may not have been a profound

¹²² 'W. H. F.', review of Woolf's Principia Politica: A Study of Communal Psychology, in International Affairs, XXX, 2 (1954), 196-7.

thinker according to Bull's criteria, it would be wrong to conclude that his thought is entirely bound by time and place. Many of Woolf's ideas and observations, especially those concerning the processes of and prospects for change, continue to have relevance in the contemporary world. His view that technological change not only has major implications for the economic and social structure of the world, but also for its political structure, is one that is now widely accepted. His analysis of the 'internationalisation of administration' and the growth of an 'international social tissue' is one that continues to find expression in modernization theory and analyses of 'globalization'. His observation that when the 'national question' is involved it is often extremely difficult to determine whether the scope of a dispute is 'national' or 'international', is one which has acquired new relevance with the end of the Cold War and the re-emergence of ethnic conflict. The same can be said of his misgivings about relaxing the rules on non-intervention in the absence of a much wider consensus on domestic political values and organization. Finally, Woolf's starting point for thinking about world affairs is one which continues to offer a provocative alternative to the one advanced by 'realists'. Woolf did not see the world as an unmitigated anarchy. On the contrary, he believed the world was characterized not by the absence of government but by its gradual evolution. There is room for debate about the usefulness of Woolf's broad conception of 'government'. It is, however,

interesting to observe the recent resuscitation of the notion, under the slightly different designation, 'governance'. The revival of interest by scholars and statesmen alike in the complex network of international rules, organizations, and regimes which lie at the heart of the process of governance, suggest that Leonard Woolf's vision of international order is one that is still very much alive.

Chapter Five

Imperialism: An Exposition

Imperialism - its nature, cause, and cure - ranks alongside international government as one of Leonard Woolf's chief political concerns. In his autobiography he wrote:

There were in fact two vast, oecumenical problems which threatened and still threaten, mankind and are interrelated: first, the prevention of war and the development of international government; secondly, the dissolution of the empires of European states in Asia and Africa which seemed to me inevitable and which would cause as much misery to the world as war unless the Governments of the great imperial powers recognised the inevitability, and deliberately worked for an orderly transference of power to their native populations, educated for self-government by their rulers.¹

As this passage indicates, by imperialism Woolf primarily had in mind the formal control by 'advanced' nations of 'backward' and 'less advanced' areas of the globe and the type of relationships between the rulers and the ruled that ensued.

In this chapter I explicate Woolf's thought on this large and complex subject. First of all I outline the nature and significance of his work. I then give an account of the four principal areas into which his thought can be divided: the theory of economic imperialism; mandates; the problem of white settlers; and the education and political advancement of 'backward peoples'. This sets the scene for the next chapter where I estimate the extent to which it is accurate to characterize Woolf's thought on

¹ Woolf, Downhill All The Way (London, 1967), 195-6.

imperialism as 'utopian'.

Woolf on Imperialism: An Outline

In the 1920s Woolf became one of the foremost British critics of imperialism. Like J. A. Hobson, he wrote about the subject in broad theoretical terms combining the detailed empirical analysis of the Fabian social investigator with the causticity and moral passion of the radical pamphleteer. Woolf's importance lies largely in his continuation of the Hobsonian tradition. In many ways he assumed Hobson's mantle as Britain's foremost anti-imperialist theorist.²

Many of his ideas developed pari passu with his work as secretary of the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions and his work, in various capacities, for the New Fabian Research Bureau (founded in 1931), and the influential Fabian Colonial Bureau (founded in 1940). In the 1920s Woolf was the Labour Movement's leading anti-imperialist thinker, and the authority of his opinions continued well into the 1930s.³ His work influenced many

² See Lewis S. Feuer, Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind (New Brunswick, 1989), 154. Feuer describes Woolf as 'the author of a series of thoughtful, critical books on imperialism' and an 'unrelenting and sophisticated critic of British imperialism'. See also L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, Burden of Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara (London, 1968), 76.

³ Feuer, Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind, 157; Etherington, Theories of Imperialism, 177; Richard Koebner, 'The Concept of Economic Imperialism', Economic History Review, 2nd Series, 2, 1 (1949), 4.

other prominent radical anti-imperialist thinkers including Sydney (later Lord) Olivier, Norman Leys, Leonard Barnes, George Padmore, and Rita Hinden.⁴ In 1920 he drafted, with E. D. Morel, the first policy document committing the Labour party to the 'ultimate aim' of a 'political system of self-government' in Africa.⁵

Woolf was one of several prominent men - Olivier and George Orwell among them - whose anti-imperial ideas were informed by direct experience of empire. His experiences as a colonial administrator in Ceylon had a profound effect on his thought on the subject. Indeed, he later claimed that it was Ceylon that had turned him into a 'political animal'. His first published work was a novel based on these experiences, The Village in the Jungle.⁶ In this work Woolf explores the complex relationship between traditional village society (charming but brutal), its natural jungle environment (beautiful but cruel), and British colonial rule (necessary but perverse). One imperial historian has described it as

... one of the finest pieces of social analysis which British Ceylon produced. Its understanding of

⁴ See Francis Lee, Fabianism and Colonialism: The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier (London, 1988).

⁵ The Labour Party, The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy (London, 1920). The document was not adopted until 1926 when it was republished with minor revisions (by Woolf and Norman Leys) as Labour and the Empire: Africa (London, 1926). See Penelope Hetherington, British Paternalism and Africa, 1920-1940 (London, 1978), 16; Luedeking and Edmonds, Leonard Woolf, 73, 76.

⁶ Woolf, The Village in the Jungle (Oxford, 1981; first pub. 1913).

traditional peasant society is astonishing, its delineation of the process whereby that society succumbs to economic pressure, masterly. All subsequent historical research on the problem in Ceylon has merely endorsed what Woolf asserts.⁷

Though its praises go largely unsung, The Village in the Jungle ranks alongside Heart of Darkness and Burmese Days as one of the great fictional explorations of the impact of the West upon the non-Western world. Unlike these works, however, The Village of the Jungle looks at its subject from the inside, out rather than the outside, in. In this respect it is a unique work.

The publication of The Village in the Jungle was followed a decade later by the publication of a collection of shorter fictional works in which the same themes are further explored.⁸ During the intervening period Woolf wrote his major work on imperialism, Empire and Commerce in Africa, the more popular orientated Economic Imperialism, and a number of articles along similar lines.⁹

Above all it was Woolf's voluminous Empire and Commerce in Africa, written for the newly formed Labour Research Department, that established his reputation as a leading anti-imperialist theorist. The book, which stretches, according to Woolf's own calculation, to 166,604

⁷ T. J. Barron, 'Before the Deluge: Leonard Woolf in Ceylon', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, vi (1977), 57-8.

⁸ Woolf, Stories from the East (London, 1924), later reprinted in his Diaries in Ceylon (London, 1962).

⁹ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study of Economic Imperialism (London, 1920); Economic Imperialism (London, 1920).

words¹⁰, started out its life, in the Autumn of 1916, as a study of international commerce parallel to International Government. Over the next twelve months, however, he narrowed it down, on the advice of Sidney Webb, to a study of 'imperial trade and exploitation' in Africa.

The incorporation of a vast amount of statistical data - gathered largely from the library of the London School of Economics and Political Science - made the book an invaluable work of reference for anti-colonial publicists and campaigners. It soon joined Hobson's forceful but empirically-thin study as a standard work on the subject.¹¹

Shortly after the publication of Empire and Commerce in Africa, Woolf turned his attention away from economic imperialism towards the question of mandates under the League of Nations. This change in focus was accompanied by certain modifications in outlook. The predominantly mono-causal thesis of Empire and Commerce in Africa gave way to the more pluralistic perspective of Economic Imperialism and Imperialism and Civilization. The latter book is Woolf's most considered and mature work on the subject. Its central theme, in contrast to earlier works, is that imperialism can be most accurately viewed as a 'clash of civilizations': as a tremendous conflict between disparate

¹⁰ Woolf meticulously recorded his daily literary output. He began Empire and Commerce in Africa on 23 November 1917 and finished it on 26 February 1919. He wrote between 300 and 500 words every day except on exceptionally good or bad days. Leonard Woolf Papers, IL6.

¹¹ Luedeking and Edwards, Leonard Woolf, 22-3; Etherington, Theories of Imperialism, 182.

and contending values, ideas, and beliefs. In the kind of questions it asks it can be seen as a forerunner, albeit in a more populist and radical vein, of Bull and Watson's Expansion of International Society.¹²

It was in the 1920s that Woolf also began to view the white settler rather than the European state as the chief villain of economic imperialism. Far from being too imperialistic, Woolf now began to attack the state for not being imperialistic enough. He strongly urged European governments to resist the selfish and duplicitous demands of the white settlers for self-government. The real reason behind these demands was not 'freedom' or 'democracy' but the desire of a small self-selecting white clique to further extend their autocratic power. The logic of such demands was not only the further enslavement of native peoples but bloodshed and war as the white minority applied evermore desperate measures to curb their growing political awareness and appetite for self-rule. The answer lay in enlightened colonial administration from the centre involving a genuine commitment to prepare 'backward peoples' for self-government.

Woolf wrote little on imperialism in the 1930s despite being in close contact, through his Labour and Fabian activities, with many leading African and Asian nationalists. The rise of Nazism, the failure of collective security, and the terrifying prospect of another

¹² Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization (London, 1928); Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), The Expansion of International Society (Oxford, 1984).

world war, dominated his thoughts during this period. But Woolf returned to imperial and colonial questions in the 1940s, and wrote several articles on colonial responsibilities and the preparation of African peoples for self-government. Woolf's interest in these more practical aspects of imperialism reflects the fact that by the mid-1940s the anti-imperialists had by and large won the day. The key political agendum was now not the ends of colonial rule but the most appropriate means of bringing its end about.

Woolf continued to write on imperialism and colonialism well into old age. The detailed diaries he kept as Assistant Government Agent in the Hambantota district of Ceylon, 1909-11, were published in 1962; he continued to review books on the subject (which, he claimed, repeatedly confirmed his views of the 1920s); and he gave in his autobiography a fascinating account of the development of the anti-imperialism in Britain.

For the student of imperialism Woolf is, therefore, an important figure. His involvement with the subject spanned over half a century; he wrote extensively; he was concerned with both theory and practice; he had a considerable impact on progressive opinion; and he was one of the few critics of empire who was at one stage actually involved in running one. He was, moreover, the only major critic of Western imperialism of the early twentieth century - among whom I include Hobson, Brailsford, Luxemburg, Morel, Olivier, and Lenin - who lived to taste the fruits of victory with the

dissolution of the British and French colonial empires in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Theory of Economic Imperialism

Woolf's analysis of economic imperialism is divided into two parts. The first is an enquiry into the nature and causes of late nineteenth century imperialism. The second is an examination of its effects.

(i) Nature and Causes

Woolf's thesis was that the imperialism of the late nineteenth century, unlike previous imperialisms, was motivated purely by economic factors. The cause of this was the profound change that had occurred in the 'structure and sphere of the State', the most immediate symptom of which was the 'immense and almost overwhelming importance' that the state had assumed in economic affairs. This development was of relatively recent origin: 'The state, as we know it to-day, is a growth of very recent years: in its present form and with its present attributes it did not exist even in 1820'.¹³ But the pace of change had been rapid: by the first decade of the twentieth century there was hardly a single department of 'individual life and activity' which had not been 'subjected to State control or interference'.¹⁴

¹³ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 4-5.

¹⁴ Ibid. 8-9.

Woolf attributed this change in the structure and sphere of the state to three phenomena which had begun to emerge in the late eighteenth century: democracy, nationalism, and industrialism. Democracy and nationalism ensured that the state conceived as the personal property and preserve of kings, was replaced by the nation-state organized for the pursuit of national interests conceived as 'the greatest good of the greatest number', 'the realization of the best life', or 'the materialization of the mysterious and sacred general will'. 'Interacting' with democracy and nationalism, the growth of industrialism ensured that the state became increasingly preoccupied with economic efficiency and commercial well-being. 'Nobody in the eighteenth century thought of asking whether the state was efficient, for the main functions of the state were not economic: to-day, despite the enormous increase of patriotic nationalism, we instinctively regard the state as a kind of super-joint-stock-company.'¹⁵

The changing role of the state was part and parcel of a general shift in ideas and beliefs. Industrialism and commercialism had begun to permeate every walk of life. In this respect the Manchester capitalists were no different to the Mercantilists of an earlier era or the imperialists of a later: all assumed that material profit was the main standard of value and that the chief duty of the state was to promote, or at least not impede, its maximization. During the mid-Victorian era the policies of free-trade,

¹⁵ Ibid. 6.

non-interference, and anti-imperialism were held to be the best means of attaining this end. But with the 'intensive growth of industrial and commercial organization' in the late nineteenth century things began to change. 'Vast and complicated organizations' - the big factory, the trust, the cartel, the syndicate, and the multiple shop - came into being and were increasingly seen as essential for industrial and commercial efficiency. The possibility of using the power and organization of the state for economic ends was not for long overlooked:

If trade and industry were the ultimate goals of national policy, the golden goal might surely be attained more effectively by an active and aggressive use of national power and organization than by a policy of passivism and pacificism.¹⁶

This chain of cause and effect - from the emergence of nationalism, democracy, and industrialism, through the change in the state, to the 'active and aggressive' use of the 'power and organization of the state' for the economic purposes of its citizens - culminated, around the year 1880, in economic imperialism.

Woolf's definition of economic imperialism was clear:

Under this term I include the international economic policy of the European States, of the U.S.A., and latterly of Japan, in the unexploited and non-Europeanized territories of the world. The policy of Economic Imperialism includes colonial policy and the acquisition by the Europeanized State of exploitable territory, the policy of spheres of influence, and the policy of obtaining economic control through other political means. These various kinds of policy are all distinguished by one important characteristic; they all aim at using the power and organisation of the European form of State in the economic interests of its inhabitants in lands where the European form of

¹⁶ Ibid. 15.

state has not developed. I call it imperialism because the policy always implies either the extension of the state's territory by conquest or occupation, or the application of its dominion or some form of political control to people who are not its citizens. I qualify it with the word economic because the motives of this imperialism are not defence or prestige nor conquest nor the 'spread of civilization', but the profit of the citizens, or of some citizens, of the European state.¹⁷

The method adopted by Woolf was verstehen.¹⁸ He sought to prove his thesis by examining the writings and speeches of those statesmen, soldiers, and businessmen to whom the formulation of state policy and the control of state action was entrusted.

The following quotations and passages are indicative of the kind of evidence Woolf brought to bear.

Lord Rosebery famously stated in the 1890s that imperialism meant 'pegging out claims for posterity'.¹⁹

M. Etienne, the French colonial under-secretary, 1887-92, declared in 1898 that:

We have built up and we intend to preserve and develop a colonial empire in order to assure the future of our country in the new continents, in order to reserve there an outlet for our products and to find there raw material for our industries.²⁰

Earlier, in what were for Woolf the formative years of economic imperialism, Clemenceau defended the use of French troops in Tunis on the ground that Tunis was necessary as

¹⁷ Ibid. 19.

¹⁸ Max Weber's term, of course, for what he held to be the characteristic method of social science: interpretive understanding of actor behaviour. I have not come across any evidence suggesting that Woolf ever read Weber.

¹⁹ Ibid. 25.

²⁰ Woolf, Economic Imperialism, 44.

'an outlet for our manufactures' and 'a lucrative means of investing capital'.²¹ Bismarck emphasized the economic factor when he told the Reichstag in 1884, at the point of his 'conversion' to the imperialist cause, that beyond Europe Germany wanted 'not provinces, but commercial enterprises'.²²

Woolf places most store by the statements of two British spokesmen: Joseph Chamberlain and Captain, later Sir Frederick, later Lord, Lugard. In the theoretical part of his study he repeatedly refers to the claims of these men and it is therefore desirable to reproduce Woolf's key quotations from them more fully. Chamberlain claimed in 1894 that it was the government's job to ensure that 'new markets shall be created and old markets ... effectively developed'. There consequently existed 'a necessity as well as a duty for us to uphold the dominion and empire which we now possess' and 'a necessity for using every legitimate opportunity to extend our influence and control in that African continent which is now being opened up to civilization and commerce'.²³

Chamberlain explicated this view in more detail in a speech to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in 1896:

Our most important duty ...[is] not the party legislation which occupies probably the largest part of our public discussions, but the development and maintenance of that vast agricultural, manufacturing,

²¹ Ibid. 43. The speech was made in the Chamber of Deputies in 1881. Clemenceau was at that time a Deputy.

²² Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 36.

²³ Ibid. 18.

and commercial enterprise upon which the welfare and even the existence of our great population depends.... All the great offices of state are occupied with commercial affairs. The Foreign Office and the Colonial Office are chiefly engaged in finding new markets and defending old ones. The War Office and the Admiralty are mostly occupied in preparation for the defence of those markets and for the protection of our commerce ... Commerce is the greatest of all political interests.²⁴

Speaking about his recent expedition to Uganda for the British East Africa Company, Woolf's second 'key' imperialist, Sir Frederick Lugard, claimed that:

The scramble for Africa ... was due to the growing commercial rivalry, which brought home to civilized nations the vital necessity of securing the only remaining fields for industrial enterprise and expansion. It is well to realise that it is for our advantage - and not alone at the dictates of duty - that we have undertaken responsibilities in East Africa. It is in order to foster the growth of the trade of this country, and to find an outlet for our manufactures and our surplus energy, that our far-seeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion ... I do not believe that in these days our national policy is based on motives of philanthropy only.²⁵

Through such statements Woolf was able to show that economic considerations were of considerable importance in motivating the nineteenth century imperialism. He was also able to show that these considerations assumed greater and greater importance as the century unfolded.²⁶ The era of Ferry, Rhodes, and Chamberlain differed markedly from the

²⁴ Ibid. 7.

²⁵ Ibid. 26.

²⁶ Woolf cites the Opium War and the subsequent Treaty of Nanking of 1842 as evidence of the fact that by the middle of the nineteenth century economics had already become very important. Ibid. 22-24.

era of Metternich, Wellington, and Talleyrand.²⁷ For the latter group, imperialism was primarily about the balance of power, alliances, the Eastern Question, and maintaining or disturbing the status quo. Even Disraeli's conception of empire was in the main 'sentimental': 'pomp and circumstance and titles, dominion and war, ships and men and money too': 'a policy conceived in terms of Power and Prestige rather than of money-making and markets'. But 'in the ninth decade of the nineteenth century' economic imperialism 'fully and finally established itself'. 'In the great States of Europe, now completely industrialized, political power passed from the hands of birth into the hands of wealth, and the political ideals of rule and power and prestige gave way to those of commerce, industry, and finance.' European policy became 'dominated by rival imperialisms, colonial policies, spheres of influence, commercial treaties, markets, and tariffs.'²⁸

Woolf's evidence, however, is not entirely consistent. He is unable to sustain his initial contention that imperialism was motivated purely by economic factors. Bismarck may have become more interested in economics in the 1880s, and he may have been much influenced, as Woolf claimed, by 'traders, shippers and financiers' - men like Godeffroy, Woermann, Luderitz, and Hansing. But, as his own account shows, questions of strategy and great power competition were never far from the front of his mind, and

²⁷ Ibid. 57-8.

²⁸ Ibid. 24.

although Bismarck eventually complied with the wishes of German trading and financial interests and thus initiated Germany's imperial policy, Woolf does not prove that he did so for their reasons. The German chancellor was clearly perturbed by the expansion of British power in Africa and was eager to check it - as revealed by his involvement in the Congo controversy of the early 1880s culminating in his convening of the 1884 Congo Conference at Berlin.²⁹ But why exactly did he abandon his earlier indifference to colonialism? The arguments of those representing economic interests may have been an important factor but they were not the only nor necessarily the most important one. The quotations Woolf selects from Bismarck's speeches do not clinch the matter in quite the decisive way that he supposes. The following statement taken from Bismarck's public announcement of his new policy could be interpreted as testimony to his concern for 'Power and Prestige' as much as his desire for 'money-making and markets':

It is not possible to conquer oversea territories by men of war or to take possession of them without further ceremony. Nevertheless the German trader wherever he has settled will be protected, and wherever he has assumed possession of territory there the Administration will follow him, as England has continually done.³⁰

This statement contains a tacit acknowledgement of both Britain's naval mastery and, arguably, the importance Bismarck attached to great power rivalry.

²⁹ He sought, successfully, to get Britain to abandon the proposed Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. See *ibid.* 38-45.

³⁰ *ibid.* 36.

Similarly, although the statements of Etienne and Clemenceau suggest the dominance of economics, a lengthy statement by Jules Ferry, also quoted by Woolf, interjects a degree of uncertainty. Jules Ferry, it should be noted, was one of the principal architects of French colonial policy during the crucial first decade of the era of economic imperialism in the 1880s. Ferry claimed that empire was necessary in order to secure outlets for French exports and capital. But he also gave other reasons: the need for an outlet for emigration; the need for strategic ports; and the need to maintain the power and prestige of France.³¹

It is also significant that Woolf makes a distinction between North and Tropical Africa. After 1880 European statesmen began to 'deal' with the latter in terms of the new policy of economic imperialism. But with respect to the former, the 'older policy of Wellington and de Polignac' never entirely lost its hold:

The statesmen who played for and won and lost Egypt, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco all believed that commerce was the greatest of all political interests, and on the Niger, the Congo, and the Zambezi they put their beliefs into practice: but in Egypt, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco their economic imperialism was never pure; it was always mixed with considerations of European strategy and alliances and the balance of power.³²

Even more evocatively

... although economic forces played strongly upon the chief actors at Algeciras and in the Agadir incident, the spirit of the dead statesmanship of Metternich Wellington, and de Polignac seemed to haunt and

³¹ Ibid. Appendix to ch.3, 46-7.

³² Ibid. 58.

'possess' Prince Bülow and Declassé, Herr Kiderlen-Wächter and Sir Edward Grey.³³

If not the spirit of Metternich et al, the spirit of the church missionary societies of Victorian Britain might be said to have haunted the statesmanship of Chamberlain and Lugard. Lugard's references to the 'dictates of duty' and to 'motives of philanthropy' indicate that the idea of the 'civilizing mission' was not entirely absent in his explanation of empire. The same could be said of Chamberlain's references to 'duty' and 'civilization'. In addition, although it may have been correct to say that 'all the great offices of state are occupied with commercial affairs' this does not mean that the promotion of commerce was their sole function.

Along with these specific problems with Woolf's analysis, there are problems of a more general nature. When using public statements in order to confirm or refute an argument it is usually necessary to take into account the context of the statement. Chamberlain in his speech to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce was probably exaggerating for his own political purposes rather than giving an 'objective' account of what he felt to be the raison d'etre of empire. Such statements, of course, often contain as much 'ought' as 'is'. Similarly, the fact that Lugard was writing in defence of a much criticized campaign cannot be ignored. He was at pains to point out to reluctant British ministers the considerable material

³³ Ibid. 58.

rewards that could be reaped in East Africa. He wanted to convince them that official British involvement would not become the financial albatross that many feared. In a sense Lugard was not only seeking to explain and justify past acts of imperialism but to make a case for its extension and reinvigoration.

Another general problem concerns selection of evidence. Woolf does supply a large number of quotations, but he tends to attach most weight to those that most clearly corroborate his thesis. Significantly, Woolf does not cite or attempt to account for evidence contrary to his thesis, nor does he address or respond to differing interpretations. It also might be said that relative to all the speeches, declarations, and statements made at the time, those cited by Woolf are, at the end of the day, rather few in number.

There is no evidence to suggest that Woolf was aware of these shortcomings except for the fact that as Empire and Commerce in Africa unfolds, Woolf's determination to uphold his mono-causal thesis becomes progressively weaker. Claims to the effect that late nineteenth century imperialism was notable for 'the singleness and purity of [economic] motive' become less frequent, and claims to the effect that economic factors were the 'main' motive or 'impulse' or the 'ultimate' end of policy, more so.³⁴

A distinct trend away from mono-causalism is clearly evident in later writings. In Economic Imperialism Woolf

³⁴ Ibid. 18, 22, 44, 58, 323-4.

explicitly says that there was no single and simple cause of the 'complex' phenomenon of imperialism, and he proceeds to examine some of the explanations commonly advanced. The 'moral' explanation that colonial expansion was motivated by the 'white man's burden' - the duty to spread Christianity, law and order, and other 'blessings' of Western civilization³⁵ - is dismissed by Woolf as a secondary cause. This view was frequently used as an argument against withdrawing from a conquest once it had been made, or abandoning control once it had been acquired. Thus in Woolf's view:

...the connection between imperialism and moral ideas appears to be this: Europeans have acquired their Empires for selfish motives; they, or many of them, believe that they retain and maintain their Empires for altruistic motives. The white man's burden becomes a duty only after ... he has placed it upon his own shoulders.³⁶

The same could be said of 'sentimental' reasons i.e. the belief that 'the acquisition and retention of imperial possessions and dependencies outside Europe reflects great glory on the European State'. This explanation, according to Woolf, may have been valid as far as the retention of empire went, but belief in the glory of empire had done

³⁵ A term frequently and ironically used by Woolf to characterize the false professions of the European Powers. It is a reference to the Final Act of the Congress of Berlin, 1884-85, in which the Powers pledged to 'watch over the preservation of the native tribes ... care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being ... instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization'. The subsequent history of imperialism was the history of how the pledge was broken. Ibid. 43-5; Imperialism and Civilization, 78-9 [check quote].

³⁶ Woolf, Economic Imperialism, 18.

little to set the policy in motion.³⁷

Military and strategic reasons had more weight, especially with regard to French and Italian imperialism in North Africa. There was also a sense in which imperialism had a strategic logic of its own. Britain sought to control Egypt not because such control afforded any strategic value for Britain itself, but in order to protect India. Accordingly, 'Military reasons are ... not to any great extent a cause of imperialism, but they are a reason for making an empire large, and a large empire larger'.³⁸

In a pamphlet published in the same year as Economic Imperialism Woolf dropped the 'economic' from 'imperialism' altogether:

By imperialism is meant that world movement which led in 20 years to the partition of practically the whole of Africa and large areas of Asia and all the islands of the Pacific among the four Great Powers, Britain, France, Russia, and Germany, and the smaller Powers, Italy and Belgium. This partition did not mean simply that the territory was conquered and the government of the territories subjected to the direct or indirect control of the imperial Powers; it meant, too, that Europe imposed upon the Asiatic and African peoples the ideal and institutions of Western civilization, her military, legal, administrative, and economic system.³⁹

A reader unacquainted with Woolf's writings could be forgiven for not realising that the author of this definition was one of the principal architects of the radical theory of the 'new' imperialism. It contains few traces of his earlier radicalism. Indeed, but for the

³⁷ Ibid. 20-23.

³⁸ Ibid. 24.

³⁹ Woolf, Mandates and Empire (London, 1920), 5.

slightly pejorative verb 'impose' and the structural connotations of 'world movement', the definition is a rather conservative one.

Woolf's radicalism returned with Imperialism and Civilization. He began the book by pointing out that the relations between civilizations prior to the nineteenth century were largely tolerant and indifferent. 'But the new European civilization of the nineteenth century changed all that. It was a belligerent, crusading, conquering, exploiting, proselytizing civilization.' Vastly superior technology made this aggressive expansion of Western civilization possible. The need for new markets and new sources of raw materials made it necessary. The picture was as follows:

Behind the capitalist, the trader, the manufacturer, and the financier, who had emerged from the industrial revolution and were now led by blind economic forces to stretch out their hands to the markets and produce of Asia and Africa, stood the highly organised, efficient, powerfully armed, acutely nationalist modern State which had emerged from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Sometimes deliberately and sometimes haphazardly and unconsciously, the power of this terrific engine of force and government was invoked by the capitalist to aid him in developing or exploiting the other continents. The effect was stupendous.⁴⁰

This return after a brief absence of Woolf's radicalism was not matched, however, by a restoration of his earlier mono-causalism. Thus the 'inevitability' of the 'stretching out' and 'imposition' of European civilization on the rest of the world was 'especially' due to economic impulses. Though these impulses were a primary cause of imperialism,

⁴⁰ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 9-11.

strategic impulses were a 'secondary' cause.⁴¹ The conquests of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance were about glory and domination. In contrast nineteenth century imperialism was 'primarily' about economic exploitation.⁴² The forceful control of the economic life of China by the imperial Powers of Europe, the United States, and later Japan was 'exercised primarily in the interests of the commercial, industrial, and financial classes of the controlling Power.'⁴³ Similarly, the evils caused by imperialism were 'mainly due to the habit of European civilization of subordinating everything to economic ends.'⁴⁴

The phrasing of these arguments amounts to a significant modification of Woolf's initial hypothesis. It is important to stress, however, that although he abandoned the notion that late nineteenth century imperialism was motivated purely by economic factors, he continued to insist on their primacy. His label 'economic imperialism' remains therefore a valid one.

⁴¹ Ibid. 32-8.

⁴² Ibid. 40-7.

⁴³ Ibid. 63. Emphasis added.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 71. Emphasis added.

(ii) Effects

Woolf contended that the effects of late nineteenth century imperialism were 'almost wholly evil'.⁴⁵ Economic imperialism was not only bad for the colonized, it was also bad for the colonizers - except for a small band of traders, financiers, mine owners, and planters who in many cases accumulated considerable wealth.

The proponents of economic imperialism genuinely believed that great riches were to be won in the 'opening up' of Asia and Africa. For Woolf this was pure delusion. The colonial parties in France and Germany, for example, held 'vague and erroneous ideas' about the nature of the empire they wished to conquer:

This was particularly true of Africa, the mystery of whose forests and lakes and rivers was only just been revealed to Europeans. Undoubtedly a vision of 'many goodly states and kingdoms' swam before the eyes of the patriots, who dreamed dreams of German or French Australias and Canadas rising by the side of great rivers, or in the tropical forests of Asia and Africa.⁴⁶

The Congo, to give a one example, was seen as an 'Eldorado' of rubber, precious metals, and - contradicting Woolf's original thesis - 'savage souls'.⁴⁷

Such views were delusory because the historical record showed that the benefits of economic imperialism had been derisory. Woolf provided a wealth of data to substantiate

⁴⁵ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 352. Except where otherwise stated the following account is abstracted from ibid. 315-51 and Economic Imperialism, 40-73, 92-99.

⁴⁶ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 30.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 38.

this claim. In 1913, for instance, all of Britain's tropical possessions in Africa accounted for only 1.04% of UK imports and 1.4% of UK exports. This meant that tropical Africa was of no more importance economically to the UK than Chile. In terms of UK exports Argentina was three times more important and six times more important in terms of imports. The average value of food and raw materials imported from British East Africa between 1909 and 1913 amounted to 0.15% of the UK's total imports of these commodities, and British East Africa imported only 0.19% of total UK exports. It had been claimed in the early 1890s, by Chamberlain, Lugard, MacKinnon, The Times, and others that Britain should colonize Uganda because it would provide a vital market for British exports and vital jobs for British workers. In classic dissenting fashion Woolf's responded as follows:

Uganda, that country which was to secure the British workman from unemployment, actually takes no more than .006% of the total exports of British industries. It is clear that the incorporation of Uganda in the British Empire has had no more and no less effect upon British trade, industry, and employment, than if it had been sunk in the Indian Ocean and blotted off the map of the world.⁴⁸

Woolf also pointed out that imperialists assumed that colonial markets would be closed to foreign competition. But this was not the case. For the period 1898-1913, for example, the increase in value of raw materials imported by British industries from German East Africa was far greater than the increase of value of those imported from British

⁴⁸ The figure is an annual average for the period 1909-13. Ibid. 334.

East Africa. Similarly, the rate of increase of British exports to German East Africa was far greater than the rate of increase of British exports to British East Africa.

Woolf continued:

The significance of this fact is obvious when it is remembered that Mr. Chamberlain and the economic imperialists of the British East Africa Company argued that the main reason why Britain should seize and retain Uganda and British East Africa was in order to keep the Germans out and prevent them from closing these territories to the products of British industry.⁴⁹

Woolf concluded that even at the height of the Empire the importance of Britain's tropical possessions in Africa to the British economy was at best marginal. The belief that they provided an important market for British manufactures was a delusion. 'The few score inhabitants of Park Lane', he exclaimed, 'have a far higher purchasing power and are a far better market for British industries than the millions of Africans in these British possessions.'⁵⁰

The importance of British Africa as a source of raw materials was similarly delusory. British imports from East Africa were negligible. Her imports from West Africa were greater but still relatively modest: palm oil, the major export of the region, was a commodity of minor importance when set against cotton, wool, copper, and iron

⁴⁹ Ibid. 333. Woolf failed to mention in his text that the absolute value of trade between Britain and British East Africa was much greater than that between Britain and German East Africa [the relevant figures are recorded in one of his Tables (p.322)]. Between the years 1909-13, British imports from the former were 8.8 times greater than from the latter. British exports were 7.9 times greater.

⁵⁰ Woolf, Economic Imperialism, 59.

ore; so too was Nigerian tin when set against the much greater amounts of tin taken from Bolivia.

Although not identical, what was true of British possessions was also generally true of French and German. The trade between France and her Algerian and Tunisian colonies was not insignificant, these colonies accounting for 5.5% of French exports in 1912. However, this figure was only marginally greater after France established a system of colonial preference, in 1885, than before. Colonization had thus resulted in only a marginal increase in trade. Moreover, the value of French exports to Algeria and Tunisia was two and a half times greater than the value of the exports to all other French colonial possessions. In 1910 the French Empire accounted for 8% of French exports and 7% of imports. This meant that, as trading partners, Germany and especially Britain were far more important to France than her colonies: British imports of French goods were twice the value of French goods bought by the entire French colonial empire, and Germany imported 15% more. Together Britain and Germany exported to France three times the total exports of the whole French Empire. 'Nothing could show more clearly', Woolf concluded, 'that the economic beliefs behind economic imperialism are dreams and delusions.'⁵¹

The German experience stood even more roundly condemned. In 1909 Germany's entire colonial empire took just 0.5% of German exports and accounted for just 0.4% of

⁵¹ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 330.

German imports. In terms of German imports, British West Africa was nine times more important to Germany than German East Africa (figures from 1912), and as a market for German exports German East Africa was only marginally more important (figures from 1910). These figures led Woolf to conclude:

It is a curious commentary upon the doctrines and policy which we have been examining in these pages, and in which the Germans were the most fervent believers, that in 1909 the trade of Germany with her colonies was just equal to her trade with the British possession of the Malay States: it was one twelfth of her trade with British India!⁵²

If the European side of the colonial balance sheet was a bleak picture the African side was even more so. The so called 'blessings' of European colonialism amounted to very little. 'Law and order' had to some extent been established but only in the wake of 'persistent and ruthless slaughter of the inhabitants in wars and through "punitive expeditions".'⁵³ Brutal systems of administration existed in many colonies and especially in the Belgian Congo, the French Congo, and German South West Africa. Christianity had been spread to some extent but its adoption was more apparent than real. Many of the nine million Africans (out of a total population of 170 million) who had been converted by 1920 were Christian only nominally. The spread of education had fared little

⁵² Ibid. 336-7.

⁵³ Woolf, Economic Imperialism, 65.

better. Even in British colonies, which tended to have a better record on education than the others, the provision of education in any of its forms was dismal. Local taxation far outstripped expenditure. In 1917, for example, the expenditure on schools in Nigeria amounted to only 1.7% of taxation raised. In British East Africa the total expenditure on education for the year 1909-10 was a meagre £1,835 while the expenditure on the post office, which served only the interests of white settlers, was £26,700 i.e. 1400% more. The colonial authorities, indeed, spent little of the revenue they raised on schemes designed to benefit 'the native':

Though the native is heavily taxed, the revenue derived from such taxation is devoted by Government not to native requirements, but mainly to European interests, e.g., the Chief Native Commissioner of Kenya stated that the Kitui Akamba tribe paid £207,749 in taxes in ten years, and that the only Government expenditure in the Kitui Reserve during this time had been on collecting the taxes.⁵⁴

Similarly, the attempt to establish the 'Europeans' economic system' and the 'principle of economic efficiency' had produced few benefits for Africans. The colonial record in East Africa was particularly appalling. Local economic systems had been ruthlessly destroyed rather than adapted. No attempt had been made to improve traditional agricultural techniques. The best land had been expropriated to white settlers and local populations forced into inadequate 'native reserves'. By various means, some direct others indirect, the native had been compelled to

⁵⁴ Labour Party, Labour and the Empire, 15.

work for poor wages. In many cases the exploitation of African labour by white capitalists was indistinguishable from slavery.⁵⁵

In Asia, although the pattern of economic imperialism had been different the results were equally grave. Economic imperialism brought corruption, civil war, indebtedness, and foreign intervention in its wake. China, for example, had been reduced to 'anarchy and economic chaos'.

Thus the phenomenon of economic imperialism stood indicted on all sides: neither Africans, Asians, nor Europeans benefited from it except for a tiny minority of exploitative European financiers, traders, and planters.

Mandates

Woolf believed that the mandates system 'honestly applied' held out the best hope for resolving the immense problems caused by economic imperialism. From the outset he maintained that complete independence must be the ultimate goal, though movement towards it, especially with regard to 'tropical Africa', would have to be gradual. Woolf's position on this will be described in a moment.

⁵⁵ Woolf, 'The League and the Tropics', The Covenant, 1/1 (1919), 28-32; Mandates and Empire, 8-11; Labour Party, Labour and the Empire, 12-16.

Early Doubts

In his first work on the subject Woolf's faith in the efficacy of mandates was far from absolute. It is worth spending some time spelling out the reasons for this.

Those committed to the 'honest' application of the mandates principle, especially in Africa, were confronted with a serious dilemma. The modern European state was an instrument of exploitation, and would remain so as long as the 'ideas and beliefs of economic imperialism' prevailed. More specifically, as long as it was considered the 'first duty' of the European state to promote the economic development of Africa in the interests its own citizens, colonial offices and governments, regardless of their nobler professions, would be subject to the 'irresistible pressure of the handful of white men who have economic interests in Africa'.⁵⁶ If these interests dictated that the native should not be educated, he would not be. If they dictated that he work for the white man for a penny a day, 'taxation or starvation' would 'furnish the necessary inducement'. If they dictated that his land should be sold to Europeans, then it would be, and the native forced into reserves. And so on. Any attempt by the government to strengthen the position of the native through education was bound to fail since 'any real education' would 'unfit the native to take his place as a docile labourer on a penny a day in the scheme of economic imperialism'.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 356.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 357.

It was in this somewhat vague, semi-structural sense that the European state was 'necessarily an instrument of exploitation'. Woolf seemed to be suggesting that the ideas and beliefs of economic imperialism were so compelling that the state had no choice but to comply with the dictates of the its white standard-bearers in Africa.

But the immediate withdrawal of the European state from Africa would not necessarily make things better. Withdrawal, in effect, would mean handing over of the fate of the native from the exploitative European state to 'the more cruel exploitation of irresponsible white men.'⁵⁸ Moreover, economic imperialism was itself responsible, paradoxically, for creating conditions which made some form of continued control by Europeans inevitable. 'Primitive peoples' had suddenly been confronted with a 'highly complex, alien civilisation' and there had been little attempt to equip the native with the knowledge and skills necessary to 'control' this civilization. They were unable, as a consequence, of managing their own affairs and, in the language of the League Covenant, 'standing by themselves in the strenuous conditions of the modern world'.⁵⁹

This was the dilemma. Economic imperialism had created the conditions which made an immediate transfer of power in Africa impossible. A period of transition was

⁵⁸ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 358.

⁵⁹ A favourite phrase of Woolf's, from Article 22 of the Covenant.

needed during which the European state would have to honestly carry out its professions. But how could an instrument of exploitation be transformed into 'an instrument of good government and progress, not for a few hundred white men, but for the millions of Africans'?⁶⁰ This was the key question.

Those who provided answers to it, Woolf suggested, fell into two camps. On the one hand there were those whose diagnosis of the problem was political. Imperialism was a disease of the inter-state system. The competition of state against state caused 'international hostility in Europe' and 'the expropriation, exploitation, and extermination of the natives in Africa.' The answer lay in substituting cooperation for hostility through a League of Nations. States would renounce the right to use Africa as a means to their selfish ends and accept President Wilson's principle of 'the removal ... of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all nations.' The 'ultimate vision' in this line of thought was the substitution of 'some form of international control and administration' for 'national possession, ownership, or exploitation'.⁶¹

On the other hand there were those whose diagnosis of the problem was social and economic. 'The imperialist policies of Germany, France, and Britain, the hostility and competition of these States, the seizure of territory, the

⁶⁰ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 358.

⁶¹ Ibid. 358.

ruthless conquest and massacres of natives' were for these thinkers 'merely symptoms'. The relations between Europe and Africa were not political or moral but social and economic. Africa was viewed 'only in the light of a potentially profitable estate'. There was therefore little value in a political remedy such as international administration. This was because social behaviour, from this more 'scientific' perspective, was not a product of conscious reason, but an automatic and instinctual by-product of 'that system ... which we call for short the capitalist system'. The answer to the problem thus took the form not of 'a change from imperialism to internationalism, but of a change of the social and economic relations between the African and the European.' The doctrine that all men, regardless of race or colour, possessed equal human dignity and were entitled to rights to life, land, and education, would have to replace the doctrine that the 'native' was merely 'live-stock' on 'Europe's African estate', a source of 'cheap labour', and 'the market for the shoddy of our factories and our cheap gin'.⁶²

'Burning his boats' and 'laying himself open to attack, on both flanks from the rear, by friend and foe alike', Woolf confessed to belonging to both camps. Many of the criticisms of the international solution were, he felt, justified. The 'ultimate beliefs and desires' which created the problem were part of the capitalist system. In

⁶² Ibid. 359.

this system economic ideals dominated. Its essence was the profit motive: 'the passion of buying cheap and selling dear'. As long as Africa was seen simply as something to make profits out of, the economic struggle, the hostility, the exploitation, would continue. International control could be substituted for national imperialism, but if the ideas and beliefs of the European remained the same, the result would merely be the substitution of exploitation by international groups for the exploitation by national groups.⁶³

Woolf was thus 'forced to the conclusion that if the European State is to become an instrument of good rather than of evil in Africa, the economic beliefs and desires of Europeans must suffer a change.' But he did not hold out much hope of such change taking place. A revolution would be required. The state would have to abandon the practice of using its power in the interests of Europeans and accept in its place the role of a trustee whose only duty would be to promote the interests of Africans. In practice this would entail a 'definite political programme' involving such measures as: reservation of the land for the natives; 'systematic education' to enable the natives to use it effectively; 'deliberate discouragement of the European wage- and labour-system in Africa and of the exploitation of the country [sic] by private planters, capitalists, and joint-stock companies'; 'gradual expropriation of all

⁶³ Ibid. 360-1. Woolf's 'international imperialism' closely resembles Kautsky's notion of 'ultra imperialism' and Hobson's 'inter-imperialism'.

Europeans and their capitalist enterprises'; '[a]bsolute prohibition of alcohol' (!); the 'application of all revenue raised in Africa to the development of the country and the education, health, etc., of the native inhabitants'; and a 'return to the ['natural and native'] communal system, developed, improved, and organized by the European States'.⁶⁴

Where did this leave 'internationalism' (or 'internationalization')? Writing at the very time the Paris Peace Conference was discussing the issue of mandates, Woolf's answer was bleak. By itself it was no solution to the 'African problem'. Yet the 'substitution of the idea of trusteeship for that of ownership and exploitation' was an essential part of that solution. Economic imperialism, Woolf seemed to be suggesting, could only be destroyed by a social revolution i.e., 'a revolution in men's beliefs and desires'. But the revolution itself required for its success rejection of the absolute right of ownership and acceptance of the idea of international trusteeship.⁶⁵

This idea had always been the basis of internationalist proposals. But the most effective method by which it could be implemented - 'administration by the League itself' - was commonly dismissed as 'impossible and Utopian'. Woolf repeated the claim made in International

⁶⁴ The 'real test of whether Africa is going to be administered in the interests of its own peoples or in the interests of Europeans'. Ibid. 362-3. See also Lee, Fabianism and Colonialism, 184-5.

⁶⁵ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 364.

Government that the supposed failure of international government was deduced from examples - 'the New Hebrides and Samoa' - not of international government but of its opposite. International government, Woolf asserted, had never been tried in Africa, 'partly because people do not wish to try it - for it might succeed - and partly because those who do not wish it to be tried or to succeed, have induced the rest of the world to believe that it had been tried and has failed.' Genuine international government would involve vesting the sovereignty over Africa in the League 'which would delegate its powers of administration under a written constitution [embodying the 'definite political programme' outlined above] to International Commissions in precisely the same way as the European Powers, with marked success, delegated their powers of administration over the Danube and its navigation to the Danube Commission'. Such a system, Woolf believed, would work; but it would not, he despaired, be tried: not because it was a failure, or impossible, or utopian, but because 'the Western world has no belief in or desire for ... trusteeship.'⁶⁶

There remained one other method. The League could 'formally declare its trusteeship of non-adult races' and then hand over the administration 'to particular States as its mandatories'. Woolf was deeply suspicious of this idea. 'The great advantage of this proposal', he mockingly declared, 'lies in the fact that it will enable the world

⁶⁶ Ibid. 365-6.

to introduce a new and noble system, and in reality to leave everything exactly as it was before.' The Times, in a leader on the proposals emanating from Paris, had recommended that

the system ought to mean nothing more hampering than the imposition upon the trustee of an obligation to give the beneficiary good government. It should bind them to the civilized world to administer subject peoples in the interests of the governed; in fact, it should bind them in formal fashion to do exactly what, of their own accord, just nations do already.⁶⁷

Woolf feared that, given the facts about economic imperialism, such a conception of the mandates system might easily be used to 'throw a cloak of pseudo-internationalism' over the unjust acts of so called 'just nations'. It would be one more method of 'soothing to sleep the unquiet conscience of just nations and just men.'⁶⁸

For these reasons Woolf found it 'difficult to feel any great enthusiasm for this new mandatory system of the League of Nations'. But it was arguable that it might at least be an improvement on the old system. Much depended on the League becoming 'an effective force', and this, in turn, depended on: (i) precise definition of the obligations of the mandatory in a treaty; (ii) the creation of a permanent commission with 'very considerable powers of enquiry and inspection'; (iii) the guarantee of 'absolute equality of commercial opportunity, by means of free trade and the open door'; and (iv) the ability of the League to

⁶⁷ Ibid. 366.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 366-7.

revoke a mandate if the mandatory was found to be in breach of its obligations. Fine sentiments, as the Final Act of the Congo Conference all too clearly demonstrated, were easily embodied in international declarations. The real test of the world's sincerity was whether or not it was willing to provide the means whereby these fine sentiments could be translated into actual deeds.

Later Confidence

This uncharacteristic equivocation on Woolf's part soon gave way to a more confident position. In the steady stream of writings which followed, Woolf firmly pins himself to the mast of 'internationalism'. The other, vaguely Marxist, camp hardly receives a mention. Soul-searching about the efficacy of internationalism in general, gives way to concern over the details of particular mandates - though his concern about the trustworthiness of the mandatory Powers persisted.

Within eighteen months of the completion of Empire and Commerce in Africa, Woolf was boldly claiming that the mandates system was the 'antithesis' of imperialism.⁶⁹ The core issue was sovereignty. According to Woolf:

The whole system of imperialism is based on the claim of the imperial powers that, when they seized territory in Asia and Africa, they acquired sovereign rights over the territory and its inhabitants.

And this meant that they had

... absolute power to do what they pleased with the

⁶⁹ See Woolf, Mandates and Empire, 7; Imperialism and Civilization, 115-34.

lives and property of millions of the 'subject races'.⁷⁰

Both Western civilization and international law, much to their discredit, upheld this claim. Consequently there was no right of interference, either by a national or an international agency, even in the face of persecution and repression.

Woolf argued that those who had devised the League's mandate system deliberately denied sovereign rights to the mandatory power. This was the clear implication of the principle underlying the whole system: that the 'well-being and development' of subject peoples formed a 'sacred trust of civilisation'. Sovereignty ultimately rested with the League. Any authority the mandatory Powers possessed they possessed by virtue of the League and were always subject to conditions laid down by the League. In contrast to the doctrine of economic imperialism, therefore, the mandatory Powers had no right to exploit, only a duty to ensure the well-being and development of indigenous peoples.⁷¹

Woolf reiterated some of his earlier proposals for making the system effective. The League Council, he insisted, should have: (i) 'full and adequate powers' of 'control, inspection, and supervision'; (ii) the power to determine the form of government and type of constitution to be applied in each mandated territory; and (iii) the power to 'revoke' as well as amend a mandate. The scope of

⁷⁰ Woolf, Mandates and Empire, 15.

⁷¹ Woolf, Scope of the Mandates under the League of Nations (London, 1921), 5-16.

the Permanent Mandates Commission needed to be widened to carry out these functions. Perhaps most importantly, Woolf advocated the extension of the mandates system to all subject peoples regardless of whether their colonial overlords happened to be the vanquished or the victors in 1918. The current arrangements were 'illogical and morally indefensible' since some territories were to be administered in the interests of its inhabitants while adjoining territories were 'administered autocratically in the interest of imperialist European Powers'.⁷²

It should be noted at this point that Woolf accepted the distinction made in Article 22 between those peoples ready for self-government and those not. He agreed with the Covenant that African peoples fell into the latter camp. He felt, however, that as a step towards the eventual realization of this goal, local self-government should be everywhere immediately established. Woolf generally accepted prevailing assumptions about 'the African' being 'backward', 'savage', and 'primitive'. Such things as war, slavery, mysticism, and cannibalism were, for Woolf, evidence, of this. But he firmly rejected the view that the 'backwardness' of African peoples had anything to do with race or colour. Indeed, Europeans were partly responsible for their condition since they had failed to introduce a proper system of education.

⁷² Woolf, Mandates and Empire, 15-17 (where Woolf also repeats his call for the prohibition of the alienation of native land to Europeans and the compulsory repurchase of land already alienated).

Nevertheless, 'backwardness' was a social fact and consequently full independence was not yet possible.

According to Article 22, the independence of 'communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire' could be 'provisionally recognised' subject to 'advice and assistance from the more advanced nations'. It further decreed that 'the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory'. Woolf not only approved of this article but gave it a bold interpretation. In Woolf's opinion it granted an immediate right of self-government to the various peoples of the Middle East. The European Powers had no rights, only an obligation to provide, if requested, 'advice and assistance'. It is also the case, however, that Woolf felt such 'advice and assistance' was vital if independence was to have real meaning. This was necessary because these peoples had been long subject to 'the paralysing government of the Turk' and faced the prospect of fierce religious and racial dissent. They were also vulnerable to political the disruption and economic destruction caused by the war and needed, like African peoples, time to 'adjust their Eastern to our Western civilisation'.⁷³ It is a curious fact that Woolf completely ignored the word 'provisionally'. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

Since the vanquished Powers did not possess an empire in Asia, the Covenant lay silent on the stage of

⁷³ Ibid. 5-10; 'Article XXII', The New Statesman, 1 May 1920, 94-5.

development and therefore readiness for self-government of Asian peoples. Woolf categorized them alongside the 'communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire'. This is an additional aspect of his bold interpretation of Article 22 - the extension the logic of paragraphs 3 and 4 to Asia. Woolf held that the ancient civilizations of India, China, Persia, and Japan possessed their own elaborate social, economic, and political systems which differed from but were not necessarily inferior to those of the West. It was because of this that resistance to European penetration had been far more robust in Asia than in Africa. The development of various and increasingly powerful Asian nationalisms further reinforced the respect in the West for the civilizations of the Orient. Writing in 1928 Woolf asserted that it was unlikely that the European Powers would be able to hang onto their Asian colonies for much longer. The price of trying to do so would be violent confrontation, the intensity of which would grow as independence was postponed further and further into the future.⁷⁴

These two factors meant that, as with the Middle East, complete independence should immediately be granted to the Asian colonies. But, as with the Middle East and Africa, Asia still had the problem of adapting to Western civilization and the 'modern world' of technology, industry, commerce, and finance. China especially would have to do this in the face of 'economic chaos' caused by

⁷⁴ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 66-70.

economic imperialism and foreign intervention. It was in this respect that the mandates system could help by providing expert advice and assistance. Given the history of Western subterfuge and exploitation, no 'independent' Asian state would accept an individual or even a consortium of European states as a mandatory. But this role could be performed by 'the League itself'. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it represents a departure from his earlier gloominess about the prospects for international administration. Secondly, it demonstrates that Woolf conceived the League as more than merely a 'consortium of states', having, perhaps, a life of its own independent from its member states. The League could provide its 'own' experts, administrators, advisers, and advisory commissions. These would be 'disinterested' and therefore 'free from the suspicion which naturally attached to similar "advisers" provided by the great imperialist Powers'.⁷⁵

Norman Etherington has claimed that Woolf advocated either complete independence for colonial peoples or the transfer of power to 'a truly international body which could look after their interests until they were "ready for independence"'.⁷⁶ This is misleading in two ways. It is true that Woolf's overriding goal was complete independence for all subject peoples. But only in respect of Asia did Woolf unequivocally advocate direct international

⁷⁵ Ibid. 121-6.

⁷⁶ Etherington, Theories of Imperialism, 183.

administration. His recipe for Africa was 'the mandates system honestly applied'. Secondly, the Oriental dependencies, according to Woolf's interpretation of the Covenant, were already 'independent', and the provision of administrative assistance was a right to be claimed rather than an duty imposed.

The Problem of White Settlers

When Woolf warned that in Africa immediate independence meant handing power from one exploitative group to one even more exploitative, the group he principally had in mind were the white settlers. In his earliest writings Woolf identified white settlers in Southern and East Africa as, collectively, one of the foremost villains of economic imperialism. He gave increasing emphasis to their treachery, vis-à-vis the treachery of joint-stock companies and/or the European state, as his work progressed. Indeed as early as 1922 Woolf was attacking the government for 'abandoning the path of a sound and moral colonial policy'. This is a curious claim since the strong implication of his earlier writings is that such a policy had never existed, and perhaps could never exist given the nature of the imperialism and the European state.⁷⁷ Increasingly Woolf called on the European state, the British state in particular, to thwart the dangerous ambitions of white

⁷⁷ See 'Lenin and Kenya', The New Statesman, 10 September 1922, 615-6.

settlers.

White settlers created a problem in four interrelated ways. Firstly, they deceived and exploited indigenous peoples with no regard for their welfare. Native land had been seized by various methods, none of them legitimate, and taxes imposed in order to force 'native labour' to work it.⁷⁸ Wages barely reached subsistence level and attempts were consistently made to reduce them even further.⁷⁹

Secondly, white settlers regularly managed to enlist the support of the British colonial administration in pursuit of their selfish ends. By exaggerating certain traditional festivals and ceremonies, for instance, settlers had been able to create the general impression that certain tribes were brutish and morally degenerate. This greatly assisted their campaign to induce the government to alienate the best native land to them. The alliance between the white settlers and certain colonial administrators was sometimes so close that the latter relied exclusively on information provided by the former in forming their conception of 'native interests'. For example, a British Commissioner in East Africa, Sir Charles

⁷⁸ See Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 340-3; Economic Imperialism, 71; 'Native Labour in Africa', The New Statesman, 10 April 1920, 7-8; Imperialism and Civilization, 90-91.

⁷⁹ Currency manipulation, for example, in Kenya Colony: 'Surely there cannot be a more contemptible episode in all the history of the rule of subject races by white men. And the disquieting feature of the incident is that it is only part of the persistent campaign in East Africa for the white settler to obtain cheap black labour with the help of the Administration'. Woolf, 'Sacred Trust', 151.

Eliot, recorded in his dispatches:

The Masai and many other tribes must go under. It is a prospect which I view with equanimity and a clear conscience... Maisdom ... is a beastly, bloody system, founded on raiding and immorality.

According to Woolf this view was largely a product of exaggerated reports drawn up by white settlers.⁸⁰

Thirdly, during the inter-war period white settlers in East and Central Africa intensified their efforts to win self-government. This claim was based on the belief that such territories were 'white man's country', and that consequently self-government should be granted just as it had been in Australia, Canada, and South Africa. Given that the non-white population far outnumbered the white population, such a claim, according to Woolf, was utterly absurd. The white settlers, as Woolf unambiguously put it,

are a menace not only to themselves but to the whole Empire. The notion is fantastic that a few thousand white men, possessed of the crude and narrow ideas which they openly display at what their papers call their 'People's Parliament', can govern autocratically and exploit economically an African population which outnumbers them by hundreds to one, and also an Indian population which outnumbers them by four to one.⁸¹

The demands of this 'gallant band of white democrats' must, Woolf insisted, be seen for what they really were: part of an attempt to gain complete control of the territories they inhabited in order to obtain absolute freedom to exploit

⁸⁰ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 340, 347-9.

⁸¹ Woolf, 'Lenin and Kenya', 615-16. The intriguing title of this article refers to the propaganda efforts of white groups campaigning for greater autonomy in Kenya Colony. They maintained that Indian opposition to their plans, and growing unrest generally, was instigated from Moscow.

the land and the native as they saw fit.

Finally, and from the perspective of international relations most importantly, the foundations had been laid for an immense conflagration. In his earliest writings on the subject Woolf suggested that continued white exploitation and intransigence would exacerbate the already tense relations between the white overlords and their non-white vassals. This would inevitably lead to unrest and civil strife. A 'tremendous catastrophe' involving a revolt of the 'beneficiaries against their guardians and benefactors' was in the making.⁸² In the late 1920s, noting the growth of African political consciousness, Woolf argued that although minority rule may continue for a short while due to superior power, 'it is certain to end in a terrible catastrophe. The revolt against the European's political domination and economic exploitation, which we have already seen in Asia, will inevitably be repeated in Africa'.⁸³

Writing in 1952, Woolf applied the same logic to South Africa. Apartheid was a policy of 'suicide', 'despair' and 'political nonsense'. 'Separate development' was an absurdity when the white economy depended so heavily on black labour. Moreover, the type of labour increasingly demanded was skilled, industrial labour, which presupposed a certain degree educational attainment. Economic forces were creating a 'an economic class of African' which would

⁸² Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 367; 'Lenin and Africa', 615.

⁸³ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 90-2.

inevitably claim political and social rights. The National policy of white South Africa thus contained within it the seeds of its own violent destruction.

In East and Central Africa these treacherous conditions had not yet been fully established. Such an eventuality, however, was certain unless the British Government took firm action to thwart white ambitions. In particular, white demands for the creation of a Central African Federation, so bitterly opposed by all African groups, needed to be unequivocally rejected.⁸⁴

Although it is true that Woolf gave greater emphasis to metropolitan than to peripheral developments, this synopsis shows that it is not entirely true to say that '[i]n an era before the emergence of radical black nationalism, Woolf envisaged the transformation of imperialism solely through political action in the European heartland and failed to imagine this occurring through initiatives within the colonies themselves'.⁸⁵

The Education and Political Advance of 'Backward Peoples'

Woolf, as mentioned, argued that education had a vital role to play in preparing colonial peoples for self-government. In its absence these peoples would be unable to understand and deal effectively with the forces of the modern world.

⁸⁴ Woolf, 'Something New Out of Africa', Political Quarterly, 23, 4 (October-December 1952), 322-31.

⁸⁵ Paul Rich, Race and Empire in British Politics (Cambridge, 1986), 77-8.

This was particularly the case with the 'non-adult', 'primitive', or 'backward' peoples of Africa.

From the early 1920s through to the 1940s Woolf's view on education hardly changed. He envisaged education on Western lines - primary, secondary, and higher; academic and vocational - and unswervingly maintained that colonial governments had a duty to provide it. The implementation of a 'deliberate and detailed educational scheme' was, indeed, their 'first duty', though it was one which they had nowhere been adequately fulfilled.⁸⁶ Some facts regarding the 'dismal' and inequitable record of the colonial authorities on native education have been cited in the section 'Economic Imperialism: Consequences'. It may be added that in 1926 Woolf claimed that in many cases Europeans had

... deliberately kept the natives uneducated and ignorant in the hope that they may be more docile under economic exploitation. In Nigeria the revenue for 1923-24 was £6,260,561, the expenditure on education was £135,866 [i.e. 2.17%]. In Kenya the revenue was £1,839,447, and the expenditure on education £44,946 [i.e. 2.44%]⁸⁷

In 1943 he pointed to the 'extraordinary position' in Kenya where, after fifty years of British rule, only two out of eighteen members of the Legislative Council represented African interests, and these were Europeans nominated by the Governor. The reason given for this was that there were no Africans sufficiently educated to speak for their people. This in a country where the native population

⁸⁶ Labour Party, Labour and the Empire, 26.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 25.

measured three million compared with twenty thousand Europeans (electing eleven members to the Council) and thirty thousand Asians (electing five). Woolf condemned this as an appalling state of affairs.⁸⁸ For many years he had been advocating, in classic Fabian style, periodic reform of administration 'so that as the natives are educated, they may progressively be given a larger and larger share in the government of their country'.⁸⁹ In the 1940s he added a sense of urgency:

I suggest that after the war we must change our whole policy with regard to self-government in our African colonies. We must insist that the colonial administrations go all out deliberately to develop self-government and to train the Africans in it. This will require an enormous extension of elementary and secondary education. But side by side with ordinary education there should be a continuous extension of self-government and self-governing institutions.⁹⁰

The goal, both locally and at the centre, should be the introduction of democratic self-government 'at the earliest possible moment'.⁹¹

Though Woolf's position on these matters did not significantly change over the years he did, later on, become more aware of the objections to his 'Western' approach to education and political advancement, and sought

⁸⁸ Woolf, 'A Challenge to All of Us: Two Views on the Responsibilities of Colonial Empire', Part I, The Listener, 12 August 1943, 180; Woolf, 'The Political Advance of Backward Peoples', in Rita Hinden (ed.), Fabian Colonial Essays (London, 1945), 94-5.

⁸⁹ Woolf, Mandates and Empire, 14.

⁹⁰ Woolf, 'Challenge to All of Us', 180.

⁹¹ Woolf, 'Political Advance of Backward Peoples', 94-8.

to address them. To the modern-day reader these objections could be classified under the broad heading of 'cultural relativism'. Woolf's chosen nomenclature was the 'anthropological view', the 'scientific view', or the 'Africanizing attitude'.

According to Woolf this view challenged the central liberal assumption about colonial policy: that 'the African' was 'ultimately ... as capable as the European ...[in] managing his own affairs and of enjoying the blessings of freedom and democracy' and that, consequently, African peoples 'no matter how primitive' should be prepared, stage by stage, for eventual self-government.⁹² The anthropological view held that it was a mistake to try to turn Africans, or Asians, into Europeans. Rather, native culture and ways of life should be preserved and 'progress' encouraged 'only so far as it is compatible with the social customs and institutions' of the particular 'tribe, people or race'.⁹³

Woolf regarded this approach as impractical. The preservation of such customs and institutions 'in tact like a museum piece' was bound to fail given the 'disturbing and disintegrating influences of western or European civilization'. The following passage accurately sums up Woolf's position, and it is worth quoting at length:

⁹² Ibid. 87-8.

⁹³ Ibid. 89-90. The inverted commas around the word 'progress' are Woolf's, indicating that he did not share the misgivings of proponents of the anthropological view towards Western conceptions of progress.

It is extremely doubtful whether such an attempt to isolate and mummify African society in the closely integrated and explosive world of the twentieth century can possibly be successful; it might have been possible to keep savage Africa virgin and savage - if that be a reasonable object of government - if the governments had not let in the copper mining companies, the soap makers, the gold diggers, the cocoa buyers, and the white planters, but those who think that in an Africa which has already been moulded for half a century by the apostles of civilization that Africans can be forced or cajoled into leading the life of noble savages - in the eighteenth century sense - are making the same mistake as those well-meaning medievalist enthusiasts who think that by exhorting English villagers to use spinning wheels and do poker work an oasis of arts and crafts can be preserved in the desert of the machine age.⁹⁴

Moreover, not only would such a policy fail in its objects, it would also, to the horror of its well-meaning proponents, produce results much the same as those desired by the white supremacists. In the sphere of education policy the advocates of the Africanizing approach maintained that education on Western lines was unsuitable for Africans. They favoured a policy which gave primacy to elementary education, made vernacular rather than English the main language of instruction, and concentrated on vocational rather than academic training. Higher education would be strictly limited. In Woolf's view such a policy would inevitably condemn the African to an 'inferior' and 'subordinate' economic, social, and political status - precisely the object of the self-proclaimed white 'Herrenvolk' of Kenya, Rhodesia, and South Africa.

Similar dangers awaited the application of a new, highly fashionable, approach to indirect rule. The habit

⁹⁴ Ibid. 90.

of using native institutions as organs of government had been an important feature of British colonial policy for many years. But in the past this policy had been opportunistic rather than systematic. The new approach was informed by the latest findings in the scientific field of Anthropology. It involved not only the use, if it was sensible to do so, of existing native institutions, but also the 'deliberate preservation' of such institutions and the creation of new ones. Woolf had grave reservations about this approach. As with the Africanizing policy in education it could 'very easily become a powerful instrument of policy for those who hold that the African is incapable of democratic self-government of the western type and must be content indefinitely with an inferior political and economic status'. Under the guise of an 'advanced', 'up-to-date', and 'scientific' theory, such a policy could be easily used by Europeans to permanently frustrate African aspirations for self-rule. Whether indirect rule was used as an 'instrument of progress' or 'social fossilization and mummification' depended on the satisfaction of a number of conditions. The native authorities, for example, needed to be accountable to the people and fully integrated with the main organs of government at the centre. If these conditions were not met the result would not be self-government but pseudo-self-government.⁹⁵

At this point it should be noted that Woolf's position

⁹⁵ Ibid. 91-2, 97-8.

was not entirely free of ambiguity. As well as advocating education on Western lines he also asserted that 'our object in Africa should be to produce good Africans, not tenth rate imitations of fifth-rate Europeans'. Similarly he maintained that the purpose of self-government should be to enable Africans 'to manage their own affairs in their own way'.⁹⁶ 'Good Africans'? 'Own affairs'? 'Own way'? Woolf gave no indication as to what he understood by these terms. He also asserted that the universal value of political freedom could not be realized except by 'some form' of democratic government. Yet he later insists that African political institutions 'must be fundamentally democratic in the western sense'.⁹⁷

It seems that Woolf's rejection of relativism was practical rather than principled. He did not claim that the Africanizing attitude or the anthropological view was illogical or intrinsically unethical, but rather that its implementation would be either impossible or harmful. That Woolf refrained from challenging the relativist position on theoretical grounds is perhaps indicative of the fact that he had some sympathy for it. A subtle appreciation of and admiration for the naturalistic qualities of 'traditional societies' is certainly a hallmark of his fictional works The Village in the Jungle and Stories of the East. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that his dislike of imperialism was, at root, aesthetic rather than political.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 92-3.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 93-4, 97. Emphasis added.

This is a complex question which, because it concerns Woolf the man - his character, temperament, psyche, and the effect of his experiences upon these things - rather than Woolf the political writer, I do not propose to examine in detail.⁹⁸ But in his diaries and letters, and especially in his autobiography, there are strong indications that an aesthetic distaste for imperialism began to emerge and take form long before he began to work out his moral and political objections. His starkly contrasting descriptions of Sinhalese society and the society kept by the 'white ruling caste' are particularly revealing. Woolf saw in the Kandian villages, for example, 'a satisfying depth, harmony, beauty' which he felt the Western world 'was losing or had lost'.⁹⁹ He described his dealings with the Europeans in Kandy as 'dull and irritating'. By way of contrast

... everything to do with the Sinhalese seemed to me enchanting. The Kandyans, both the Ratemahatmayas, the feudal chiefs and headmen, and the villagers, were the most charming people I have ever come across. They were typically mountain people, independent, fine mannered, lively, laughing, in their enchanting villages hidden away in the mountains, and isolated, unchanged and unchanging.¹⁰⁰

This enchantment extended to their religion. Woolf was not a religious man. His characteristic attitude towards it was one of hostility and contempt. But he found in

⁹⁸ The beginnings of such an examination can be found in Barron's helpful and provocative 'Before the Deluge', 52-4.

⁹⁹ Woolf, Growing, 158.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 156-7.

Buddhism a lot to admire: simplicity, gentleness, quietude, tolerance, reverence for solitude and contemplation. Like all religions it was ultimately a dream. But it was, none the less, 'a civilized and humane dream of considerable beauty'.¹⁰¹

The beauty of the Sinhalese stemmed from their closeness to nature:

The people on the verandah of the Jaffna and Hambantota kachcheries ... are - or at least were in 1905 - nearer than we are to primitive man and there are many nasty things about primitive man. It is not their primitiveness that appeals to me. It is partly their earthiness, their strange mixture of tortuousness and directness, of cunning and stupidity, of cruelty and kindness. They live so close to the jungle ... that they retain something of the liveness and beauty of jungle animals. The Sinhalese especially have subtle and supple minds ... [and] when you get to know them, you find beneath the surface in almost everyone a profound melancholy and fatalism which I find beautiful and sympathetic - just as something like it pervades the scenery and characters of a Hardy novel.¹⁰²

Nothing provided more of a contrast than the life of the of the 'white sahibs' whose assumed grandeur and constant refrain of 'shop, sport, or gossip' Woolf found 'strange and disconcerting'. Whereas the Sinhalese lived in harmony with their natural environment, the Europeans in Ceylon lived in a social climate that was 'unreal' and 'theatrical'.¹⁰³ It was his growing appreciation of the qualities of Sinhalese society allied to an awareness of the disruptive effects of European society, and a disdain

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 159-63.

¹⁰² Ibid. 54.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 24-5.

for the form that that society took in Ceylon, that first made Woolf suspect that the 'Europeanizing of the non-Europeans' might be 'a mistake'.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 157.

Chapter Six

Imperialism: An Analysis and Assessment

In this chapter I enquire into the ways and extent to which Leonard Woolf's thought on imperialism can be described as utopian. I propose, first of all, to briefly examine how Woolf's work was viewed by contemporary opinion.

Woolf's Thought in Contemporary Opinion

Woolf's books on imperialism were published to widespread critical acclaim. A reviewer of Empire and Commerce in Africa opined that

... the labours Mr Woolf has undertaken ... put all students of politics and economics under a great debt. His analysis is thorough, impartial and convincing, and if his book is painful reading - the record of all the Great Powers in Africa is a shameful and a terrible one - the pain is of the kind that moves not to hopelessness but to action.¹

A further review in a later issue of the journal came to an even more favourable conclusion: 'A clearer exposition of the relations between imperialism and finance has never been penned, and the whole book rests on a masterly marshalling of indisputable fact.'² In the same vein, a reviewer in the Commonwealth remarked: 'Great credit is due to the Labour Research Department and Mr Woolf for the

¹ Common Sense (the official journal of the Union of Democratic Control), 31 January 1920.

² Common Sense, 27 March 1920.

issue of such a well-balanced and exhaustive work'.³ The founder of the Union of Democratic Control and fellow anti-imperialist, E. D. Morel, described the book as 'a piece of historical research of great value ... [which should] be widely read and deeply pondered.'⁴

One might expect such enthusiasm from such eminently Left or Left-leaning publications. But Empire and Commerce in Africa was also enthusiastically greeted by publications without any obvious Left or radical bent. A Canadian academic journal described it as 'a contribution to the literature of international relations of cardinal importance ... [one] which all students should familiarize themselves and which statesmen must reckon.'⁵ The Nation considered it 'masterly', 'thorough', 'painstaking', 'powerful', 'courageous', and 'conspicuously honest in the handling of facts'.⁶ The Glasgow Herald declared:

Whatever one may think of the political standpoint of Mr Woolf, there is no doubt that he has given us a most fascinating book, packed full of information, brilliantly written, and sound alike in statistics and judgement ... we question whether the whole field has ever been surveyed more boldly or with more advantage to the reader.⁷

Even the staunchly imperialist Daily Mail described it as 'a penetrating study which no student of politics or

³ Commonwealth, August 1921.

⁴ Daily Herald, 4 February 1920.

⁵ H. E. Barnes in Journal of International Relations, July 1921.

⁶ Nation, 6 March 1920.

⁷ Glasgow Herald, 3 February 1920.

history can afford to leave unread.'⁸

No doubt because of their nature - Economic Imperialism is essentially a popular condensation of Empire and Commerce in Africa, and Imperialism and Civilization is a 'bringing together' of a number of related themes within a single, easily accessible, conceptual framework - Woolf's subsequent works met with less critical attention. Such attention that they did receive, however, was generally favourable. A reviewer in the New Statesman described Economic Imperialism as an 'extremely useful little book ... admirably written ... [and one which] ought to be in the hands of everyone who wants to understand the underlying causes of the foreign policy of the Great Powers.'⁹ A German reviewer similarly concluded: 'Any person who wishes to have in a brief compass the facts about imperialism should consult this cheap and masterly summary.'¹⁰ Of Imperialism and Civilization the weekly newspaper of the Independent Labour Party, the New Leader, said: 'Few wiser or more thoughtful books have been written on this problem'; a view echoed by an American reviewer who declared: 'I know no clearer analysis of the nature of nineteenth century imperialism and its difference from

⁸ Daily Mail, 16 January 1920. For further favourable reviews see Cambridge Magazine, 17 January 1920; Co-operative News, 24 January 1920; Freeman's Journal (Dublin), 14 February 1920; Saturday Westminster Gazette, 14 February 1920; Ceylon Daily News, 21 July 1920; W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, 'Eternal Africa', Nation (New York), 111, 2882, 25 September 1920; Challenge, 2 November 1920.

⁹ New Statesman, 15 January 1921.

¹⁰ European Press (Breman), 16 December 1920.

previous movements of conquest than is contained in this little book.'¹¹

But the judgement of contemporary critics was not uniformly favourable. Morel, in the review cited above, criticized Woolf for accepting at face value the explanations given by capitalists and imperialists of their own actions. In Morel's view 'sheer individual will-to-power' as much as greed for gain accounted for a good deal of what went on in modern Africa. The Economist congratulated Woolf for 'brilliantly exposing' the mistakes and iniquities of empire, but questioned his method of quotation without reference to context. In the Economist's view Chamberlain, his clever rationalizations notwithstanding, was essentially no different to Disraeli: both regarded commerce not as an end in itself but as a means to national greatness, power, and prestige.¹² The Manchester Guardian, while considering the work 'really valuable', nonetheless felt that its author had been arbitrary in his choice of cases - little had been said on Nigeria, Liberia, Nyasaland, and South Africa, but a great deal, inexplicably, on Abyssinia - and selective in his choice of quotations - those emphasizing the motivating force of new investment opportunities were clearly significant, but passages of equal significance could be

¹¹ New Leader, 16 May 1928; Lewis S. Gannett, 'Analysis and Mush', Nation (New York), 25 April 1928. See also Japanese Weekly Chronicle, 5 April 1928; Economist, 21 April 1928; New Statesman, 21 April 1928; Oxford Magazine, 7 June 1928; Natsopa Journal, July 1933.

¹² Economist, 31 January 1920.

found emphasizing native welfare.¹³ A reviewer for the TLS reached the same verdict. The book clearly contained evidence of much research, but it was

... always on one side and directed to proving what the author wants to prove The facts and figures may be accurate, as far as they go, but only one side is given or emphasized Authorities are regarded only so far as they square with preconceived opinions.¹⁴

Even the New Statesman had some critical words to say about the volume. In a lengthy review it praised Woolf for having produced a 'very remarkable', 'detailed', 'thoroughly documented', and 'fascinatingly readable' book. It also praised him for his 'intense intellectual honesty' which not only prevented him [pace the TLS] 'from distorting the facts to suit his thesis', but saved him 'even from any suspicion of having overlooked facts which might be inconvenient'. It concluded that it was 'far the ablest and most stimulating book that has been written about the subject from the democratic point of view.'

But it also criticized the book for being 'too black'. This was not because the facts were 'wrongly or unfairly presented', but because the standpoint from which they were presented was 'impossibly Utopian'. It was impossible to question on general principles Woolf's moral indictment of European imperialism. But a 'purely ethical judgement' of so great an episode seemed 'curiously irrelevant': it was 'as if one were to write a book showing that Julius Caesar

¹³ Manchester Guardian, 27 January 1920.

¹⁴ Times Literary Supplement, 9 February 1920.

had no moral right to invade Gaul or Britain.'

Superior civilizations, the New Statesman claimed, would always dominate inferior ones when they came into contact with them. It was wrong therefore to put the new imperialism down to economic motives. Such motives were 'for the most part merely camouflage'. The key factor was 'the development of transport which brought Europe in close contact with great areas over which an immensely lower civilisation prevailed'.¹⁵

Finally, along with criticism of his method and his moral standpoint, more than one sceptical eyebrow was raised at Woolf's prescriptions. The Nation questioned his call for a change in men's beliefs and desires, from economic imperialism to humanitarianism. Such a change - 'so simple, so reasonable, so commonplace' - was difficult enough for an individual to accomplish let alone a nation. To ask for such a change was to ask for nothing short of a miracle. Indeed, Woolf was in effect requesting 'the old change of heart of the evangelist': to be saved the world had to 'find salvation'.¹⁶

The Manchester Guardian found Woolf's proposals for reform of the mandate system 'suggestive' and 'valid' but cautiously concluded that the system envisaged was a long

¹⁵ 'The Ethics of Imperialism', New Statesman, 19 June 1920.

¹⁶ Review of Economic Imperialism, Nation, 1 January 1921.

way removed from current reality.¹⁷

Far less cautiously, Lewis S. Gannett, in the review cited above, condemned Woolf's suggestions for extending the role of the League as 'sheer mush'. It was true that Article XXII had publicly recognized that the welfare of the backward peoples was a sacred trust of the stronger powers. But so had the Treaty of Berlin forty years before. Woolf, of course, was aware of the fact that the Allies had begun to break their pledges no sooner had they made them. But he concluded that to expect anything else, 'to paint a sweet vista of a League of Nations, led by France and Great Britain, resolutely fighting imperialism,' was 'arrant romanticizing'.

From this analysis two conclusions can be reached. First, the acclaim which Woolf's work on imperialism received was considerable but far from universal. Second, few of Woolf's critics felt that his shortcomings amounted to some kind of 'utopianism', and those that did, levelled this charge not at his analysis but at his 'purely moral standpoint' and his prescriptions.

I will now analyze Woolf's thought on imperialism in terms of the three key characteristics of utopianism identified in Chapter 2. I will proceed on the basis of the four divisions identified in Chapter 5. Without wishing to anticipate the argument it will be seen, in line with some

¹⁷ Review of Imperialism and Civilization, Manchester Guardian, 30 May 1928.

of Woolf's early critics, that the aspect of his thought most vulnerable to the charge of utopianism is his overtly 'moral' prescription that the mandates system be 'honestly' applied.

The Theory of Economic Imperialism

The enduring value of a number of aspects of Woolf's theory - his clear definition, his interpretive method, his empirical analysis of certain events, his analysis of the 'benefits' of empire - has been reaffirmed by a number of writers in the post-war historical literature.¹⁸ But the cumulative effect of this literature has been to cast doubt on rather than corroborate the validity of Woolf's theory as a whole.

At the most general level, numerous detailed historical studies, based on documentary evidence not available until the 1940s, have demonstrated that what Woolf and others called the 'new imperialism' was in fact an immensely complicated historical phenomenon - perhaps more accurately, set of phenomena - which cannot be reduced to a single set of factors whether 'economic', 'political', 'strategic', or 'technological'. The issue is still highly controversial. The weight of opinion suggests, however,

¹⁸ See D. K. Fieldhouse, Economics and Empire 1830-1914 (London, 1984), 30-2, 63-76, 365 ff; R. J. Hammond, 'Economic Imperialism: Sidelights on a Stereotype', Journal of Economic History, 22, 4 (1961), 582-98; Anver Offer, 'The British Empire, 1870-1914: A Waste of Money?', Economic History Review, 46, 2 (1993), 215-38.

that the causal matrix of late nineteenth century imperialism differed from one colonial Power to another and from one part of the world to another.¹⁹

The weight of historical opinion also suggests that both 'peripheral' and 'Eurocentric' explanations have their place in any general theory of why the pace and temper of colonial acquisition changed so suddenly in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The absolute superiority of one approach over the other, on which debate raged in the 1960s and 1970s, is now generally rejected in favour of a hybrid approach which postulates that crises erupting on the outer reaches of empire, requiring some kind of metropolitan response, interacted in various complex ways with internal socio-economic and political changes that were simultaneously occurring in the metropolitan heartlands. Woolf's explanation - like Hobson's, Lenin's, and all the classical theorists' - was exclusively Eurocentric. To that extent, in the eyes of modern scholars, it is flawed.²⁰

Along with these general points a number of more specific points can be made. Woolf contended that the

¹⁹ See D. K. Fieldhouse (ed.), The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism; Fieldhouse, Economics and Empire 1830-1914, esp. Part III; C. C. Eldridge (ed.), British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1984).

²⁰ See R. E. Robinson and J. A. Gallagher, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', Economic History Review, 2nd Series, 6, 1 (1953), 1-15; R. E. Robinson and J. A. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (London, 1961); D. K. Fieldhouse, '"Imperialism": An Historiographical Revision', Economic History Review, 2nd Series, 14, 2 (1961), 187-209; Fieldhouse, Economics and Empire, 3-84.

growth of monopoly - the big factory, the trust, the cartel, the syndicate, the multiple shop - was an important factor in generating, 'around the year 1880', the new, 'economic' imperialism. It has been shown, however, that this could only have been an important factor in two countries - Germany and the United States - and even in these countries the industrial and financial combines which were undoubtedly rising at this time did not reach the level of dominance suggested by Woolf until the final decade of the century i.e., at least ten years after the events which they allegedly caused had begun to occur. The countries with the largest empires - Britain and France - were the countries where the growth of monopoly was least advanced.²¹

Secondly, it has been shown that references to the commercial benefits of the extension of empire - especially into the tropical zones - in the speeches of leading statesmen and politicians, only became pronounced in the final years of the century. Fieldhouse has shown that references to these benefits by Ferry and Chamberlain in particular were rationalizations of events that had already taken place or justifications for keeping hold of territories that were already under imperial control and had been acquired for quite different reasons. The issue at stake here was escalating administrative costs, and the feeling that newly acquired colonies were placing an intolerable strain on the public finances. If they were to

²¹ Fieldhouse, Economics and Empire, 3-38.

be retained they must, it was felt, be made to pay. Hence the appeal by imperialists to their untapped economic potential.²²

Thirdly, as Etherington has shown, Woolf played fast and loose with chronology. What is flagged as a more or less discreet historical phenomenon - the new imperialism - soon becomes indistinguishable, as Woolf's analysis unfolds, from European colonizing activity in the nineteenth century as a whole. Woolf gives at least five dates for the beginning of the new imperialism ranging from 1839 to 1890.²³ Ironically, this implicit recognition that the so called 'new' imperialism perhaps did not represent such a sharp break with the past as many at the time believed - Woolf included - is one that finds confirmation

²² Ibid. 3-87, 459-77.

²³ See Empire and Commerce in Africa, 21, 24, 27, 37, 55; Etherington, Theories of Imperialism, 180; and Chapter 1 above. Although it is not strictly relevant to the argument, I should perhaps briefly note here that I do not agree with Etherington's claim, mentioned in Chapter 1, that Woolf set in motion a 'monumental misunderstanding' of the meaning and significance of imperialism as a socio-political phenomenon. Etherington is clearly right to argue that Hobson, Lenin, and other classical theorists were looking to the future rather than trying to explain the past, and that therefore to test their theories of imperialism exclusively against the colonial experience of the late nineteenth century is to commit an error of anachronism. But he underestimates the extent to which these writers employed 'imperialism' as a convenient term of rhetoric which enabled them to castigate all sorts of things - protectionism, monopoly, capitalism, militarism, war, as well as colonialism - which they disliked. In other words I do not think it is as gross a misreading as Etherington suggests to assume that by 'imperialism' Hobson, Lenin, et al. by and large meant the acquisition of colonial territories. In any event it is dogmatic of Etherington to imply that Woolf's narrow definition was somehow an 'incorrect' or misleading one. It at least has the merit of clarity.

in one of the most important academic papers in the post-war literature.²⁴

There are of course other problems with Woolf's, and similar theories of 'economic' or 'capitalist' imperialism, which professional historians have unearthed in what has been one of the most intensely excavated fields of historical scholarship of the post-war period. The problems outlined above and in the last chapter are some of the more salient.

One of the striking things from the point of view of this thesis, however, is that none of these problems - perhaps with one exception - have any bearing on the accusation of utopianism. Of all the sins Woolf can be accused of regarding this aspect of his thought, utopianism is not one of them. He cannot be accused of ignoring facts: Woolf's contribution to theorizing about late nineteenth century imperialism largely resides in the vast amount of statistical data he marshalled to the cause. He cannot be accused of ignoring analysis of cause and effect: though his theory has clear normative underpinnings (the desire to discredit both commercialism and imperialism by linking them inextricably together), and though Woolf drew strong moral conclusions from it (that imperialism was an unqualified evil for both the colonized and the colonizers), the theory is a causal theory par excellence: it stands or falls not on its normative underpinnings, its

²⁴ Robinson and Gallagher, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', 1-15.

normative implications, or its practical usefulness, but on its empirical accuracy, its conceptual clarity, and its internal coherence. Nor can it be said that Woolf was guilty, in Carr's quasi-Marxist sense, of peddling some kind of bourgeois ideology, the hidden but real purpose of which was to promote and defend a particular status quo: the whole thrust of Woolf's analysis was that the status quo was corrupt and dangerous and needed to be replaced as a matter of the first importance.

The only sense in which the charge of utopianism might be applied is that in exaggerating the importance of economic factors he underestimated the role of power: 'power', that is, in the 'realist' sense of political and military power. The problem with this assertion is that it comes close to suggesting that Woolf was utopian simply because he was not realist. It should also be pointed out that Woolf did not ignore realpolitik and the strategic factor: he emphasized, for example, that it continued to exercise a powerful influence in North Africa long after economic factors had become the dominant motive elsewhere on the continent. In sum therefore, although it is probably true - and key works by Langer and Fieldhouse certainly suggest it is²⁵ - that the power-political/strategic factor was more important in determining the European division of the African continent in the late nineteenth century than Woolf conceded, it

²⁵ W. L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism (New York, 1935); Fieldhouse, Economics and Empire, 63-9, 459-77.

would be unreasonable to cite this as evidence of utopianism: Woolf did not ignore the power factor in general; nor did he entirely ignore the influence of the power factor conceived in this particular way.

Mandates

The charge has greater weight, however, when we come to Woolf's thought on mandates. In his bold interpretation of Article 22 can be seen: (i) a tendency to 'ignore facts and pay little attention to analysis of cause and effect'; and (ii) a tendency to 'grossly underestimate the role of power and overestimate the role of law, morality, and public opinion in international politics'. Woolf speaks of Article 22 as if President Wilson's views had been shared by the other delegates of the Allied and Associated Powers at Paris. But Article 22 was a product not of gentlemanly discussion, but of hard diplomatic bargaining - as was the actual distribution of the mandated territories. The following points are salient:

- (a) President Wilson wanted the peace conference to reject the practice of annexation in principle. A number of delegations - Australia, New Zealand, Italy, and South Africa - strongly opposed this having already staked out claims for various territories of the German empire in Africa and the Pacific. The Smuts Plan, on which a large part of President Wilson's important

second draft of the Covenant was based, did not include what later became known as the 'B' and 'C' mandates in its proposals for a mandates system. It recommended instead that these territories be dealt with in accordance with the fifth of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which called for an 'open, fair-minded and just settlement of colonial claims'. It was only through the insistence of the President that these territories were eventually included in the system. Article 22 was thus a compromise - a 'residual alternative' in the words of one authority - the main elements of which clearly reflected these substantial differences of opinion.²⁶ The approach to colonialism embodied in the mandates system was, in the words of another authority, 'determined by compromises among statesmen of the continental and extra-continental European world, including those who had troubled consciences or troublesome constituents with troubled consciences, those who had unsatisfied colonial ambitions, and those who had peace preserving aspirations.'²⁷

- (b) Another important fact is that those Powers desirous of adding to their stock of colonies became, unwittingly, the prisoners of their own rhetoric. In

²⁶ Northedge, League of Nations, 37-8.

²⁷ Inis L. Claude, Jr., Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization, 3rd edn. (London, 1964), 329.

their wartime propaganda the Allies continually contrasted the cruel and exploitative colonial record of the Central Powers with their more humane and altruistic record. They pledged not to engage, at the end of the war, in old-style annexation and made promises about self-government which turned out to be less than entirely sincere. William Rappard, the first secretary of the mandates system, commented that '[i]t was impossible ... once the peace was signed to return to the status quo ante. Such a solution could not be adopted for practical reasons, while annexation pure and simple would have been in contradiction with the principles which secured the victory of the Allies'.²⁸

- (c) The compromises made during the negotiations are clearly reflected in the ambiguous language of Article 22 (4) which stipulates that the independence of 'A' mandates 'can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance'. Such phrasing enabled all sides to claim at least partial victory for their particular vision of the colonial future. In particular, it enabled the mandatory Powers to justify holding on to their possessions, which, of course, they for the most part did until the 1940s. Woolf was strangely blind to the euphemistic character of these phrases. He nowhere

²⁸ Quoted in Northedge, League of Nations, 193.

concedes that they were expressly designed to enable the Powers to retain their spheres of influence and continue to assert their hegemonic rights if they wished to do so.²⁹

- (d) The distribution of the mandates was conducted not by the League but by the Supreme Allied Council. Some of the most important territories - Palestine, Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, - were shared out along the lines of the unashamedly imperialist Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. The stipulation that 'the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory' was not respected. In substance what took place was a division of the spoils of war in the interests of the victorious European and extra-European colonial Powers.³⁰

It might be said that Woolf's recommendations made in 1920 for extending the scope of the system were utopian in the same senses. The mandatory Powers showed no willingness for granting a right of 'control and inspection' to the PMC. Even petitions could only be considered by the PMC with the approval of the relevant governing authorities. A proposal that petitioners should be granted a hearing

²⁹ Although, as we saw in Chapter 5, he was deeply suspicious of the Allies' intentions before the article was coined.

³⁰ Northedge, League of Nations, 64; Claude, Swords into Plowshares, 328-9.

before the PMC de jure was balked at an early stage of its proceedings.³¹ The principle established was accountability not control.³² More generally, the mandatory Powers showed no inclination to give any outside bodies or Powers a say in the form of government or type of constitution to be applied in the mandataries. They did not express any desire for all colonial possessions to be brought within the remit of the system. Nor did they indicate any willingness to give the League Council the power to 'revoke' a mandate.

Yet the picture is not entirely clear-cut. The principle of international accountability was conceded with: (i) acceptance of the 'sacred trust' idea (para. 1); (ii) the commitment to guarantee certain freedoms and erect safeguards against certain abuses (para. 5); (iii) the obligation to furnish annual reports (para. 7); (iv) the creation of the PMC to examine these reports and advise the Council (para. 9); and (v) the inclusion of the, admittedly vague, 'just treatment' clause (Article 23 (c)). In addition, the mandates system, and the sensitive way in which the PMC discharged its duties in particular, contributed to the general climate of opinion which enabled a much wider-ranging regime to be created under Chapters XI-XIII of the UN Charter. This new regime contained many

³¹ In 1926. See Northedge, League of Nations, 201.

³² Woolf frequently, and emphatically, claimed it was the latter. See for example 'The League and the Tropics', 29; The Scope of Mandates, 6. Claude uses the word 'influence' (Swords into Plowshares, 328). 'Accountability' seems more precise.

of the ideas championed by Woolf twenty-five years earlier. The Trusteeship Council, unlike its predecessor, was given powers of inspection (Article 87). The system was extended to cover potentially all colonial territories (Article 75). Provision was made, in certain circumstances, for direct international administration (Article 81). The 'positive' duty to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of colonial peoples was grafted onto the 'negative' duty to guarantee certain freedoms (conscience, religion) and prevent certain abuses (the slave trade, the arms and liquor traffic) (cf. Articles 73 and 76 of the Charter, Article 22 (5) of the Covenant). The obligation was established that all trust territories, not merely 'A' mandates, must be prepared, by their respective 'administering authorities' (see Article 81), for self-government (Article 76 (b)). In addition, the weaker obligation to 'develop self-government' was established for all dependent territories whether trust territories or not (Article 73 (b)).

Significantly, however, the Trusteeship Council was not given the right to revoke a Trusteeship, nor powers of 'control' (Woolf never stipulated what he meant by this), nor the right to determine the form of government within a trust territory or its type of constitution.³³ 'The

³³ Perhaps with the exception of the Trusteeship Agreement for Italian Somaliland which, as well as appointing an International Advisory Council to assist in its administration, also required the administering authority, Italy, to adhere to a Declaration of Constitutional Principles. See Claude, Swords into Plowshares, 340-1.

Trusteeship System represent[ed], as did its predecessor, the very limited willingness of the colonial Powers to superimpose a formal trusteeship structure upon their administration of dependent areas.'³⁴

The evidence suggests that although some of Woolf's ideas were in some respects 'utopian', others were astute and prescient. In general, his belief that absolute sovereignty over colonial territories was no longer tolerable was one that soon became widely accepted. But he vastly overestimated the degree to which the imperial Powers would be prepared to set aside the principle of non-intervention in their colonial relations. For a number of complex reasons the imperial Powers created, for the first time, two international organs, the League Council and the PMC, charged with the responsibility of supervising a carefully and narrowly circumscribed sphere of colonial activity. But, the United States apart, they did not do so with any great enthusiasm. The structures erected had their foundations in a complex configuration of power between, within, and across states, which Woolf signally failed to analyze. Moreover, the nature and purpose of these structures was always highly contested.³⁵ The revolution in the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized would have to await further shifts in the configuration of power before its scope would become fully realized.

³⁴ Ibid. 327.

³⁵ See *ibid.* 322-3.

Two further points throw light on the degree to which Woolf's ideas on mandates were utopian. Firstly, it is important to note that the bulk of Woolf's extensive, though repetitive, work on mandates is exhortatory in tone and purpose. His overriding concern was to get the colonial Powers, especially Britain, to take their obligations under Article 22 seriously. He frequently stated that until 'translated into hard and unpleasant facts', inevitably involving self-sacrifice, these obligations would remain but 'pious aspirations' and 'noble gestures'.

But Woolf was under no illusions as to the likelihood of success. He recognized from the outset that the behaviour of the mandatory Powers was far from consistent with a literal interpretation of their obligations. In 1920 he castigated the British and French governments for behaving as if the 'imperialist' Sykes-Picot agreement had greater authority than the League Covenant. A year later he reported on how the British were increasingly acting contrary to the spirit of the Covenant in Kenya Colony. By 1928 he felt compelled to accept that the application of the system had been accompanied by 'subterfuge' and 'hypocrisy'. In effect, the mandates system had become merely a cloak to conceal the 'nakedness of the older imperialism'.³⁶

But the fact that he spent so much time and energy

³⁶ Woolf, 'Article XXII', 94-95; 'A Sacred Trust', The New Statesman, 14 May 1921, 151-2; Scope of Mandates, 9-10; Imperialism and Civilization, 115-35.

trying to cajole the mandatory Powers into acting 'honestly' suggests that he genuinely felt that this goal was practicable. Indeed, Woolf's increasing cynicism did not lead to a corresponding decline in his enthusiasm for the mandates system, but rather to further restatements of its core principles and additional proposals for strengthening the executive power of the League Council and the PMC.

Woolf's verdict twenty years later is illuminating:

The mandate system was very far from perfect, but it did for the first time establish some very important principles of colonial policy regarding the rights and interests of African peoples. Though governments and statesmen did a good deal to nullify the principles in practice, they did not succeed entirely and I think it is incontestable that the administration of the mandate territories was on the whole better than that of non-mandated territories (from the African's point of view) in colonial policy and government. It also established the important and to many people inconvenient principle that the exploitation of African territories and peoples by imperial Powers was a matter of interest to the other nations of the world and might even be subjected to international supervision.³⁷

This is a fair verdict and one broadly in line with current historical opinion.³⁸ It also shows that Woolf's exhortatory and propagandist efforts to promote the principle of international accountability were far from unrealistic. This is especially so if the radical shift in attitudes that occurred during the inter-war period is taken into account. In the 1920s the view that the primary

³⁷ Woolf in Lord Perth et al, 'The Future of the Mandates: A Symposium', African Affairs, 43 (October 1944), 168.

³⁸ See Northedge, League of Nations, 65, 219-20; Claude, Swords into Plowshares, 341-3.

objective of British colonial policy should be to systematically promote the social, economic, and political development of dependent peoples, and prepare them for self-government, was one held by only a small minority. By the late 1930s this view had become widely accepted. In an address on changing attitudes to empire to the Royal African Society in 1939, Lord Hailey, distinguished Indian civil servant and successor to Lord Lugard as the British member of the PMC, declared:

I think we no longer look on overseas possessions in the light of their material advantages to us. We are fully prepared to accept all the humanitarian principles that are embodied in the mandatory system...

It needed men like Lord Hailey to distil the radical ideas of the 1920s into respectable form. But these ideas were pioneered by men like Woolf, Barnes, Morel, and Leys, and the change in attitudes which led to the opening of a new, more enlightened, chapter in British colonial history in the 1940s, was in large part brought about through their efforts.³⁹

Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest that Woolf's view on the question of the status of the mandated territories was not entirely incorrect. Even as sober an observer as F. S. Northedge does not refute the claim that the so called 'A' mandates were, by virtue of Article 22, already sovereign. Moreover, although Woolf's claim that

³⁹ Penelope Hetherington, British Paternalism and Africa, 1920-1940 (London, 1978), 19-20, 90-104, 154-8; Ronald Robinson, 'The Moral Disarmament of African Empire, 1919-1947', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 8, 1 (1979), 86-104.

sovereignty for 'B' and 'C' mandates resided with the League can be doubted - after all, it was not the League which had distributed the mandates but the Supreme Allied Council, and the League was, to a large extent, the mandatory Powers - it can also be doubted whether sovereignty resided unambiguously with the mandatory Powers. The juridical status of the mandates was highly uncertain - a fact largely due to the revolutionary nature of the system the Allied and Associated Powers had created. Certain states, notably South Africa, argued that they 'possessed' sovereignty over their mandates. The PMC in response argued that they 'exercised' but did not 'possess' 'sovereign powers'.⁴⁰ Woolf, of course, did not clear up this matter. But he did play a decisive role in nudging public opinion in the direction of the latter. In this, as in his wider goal of de-legitimising colonial rule in toto, he achieved much.⁴¹

White Settlers

The charge of utopianism carries little weight with respect to this aspect of Woolf's thought. Much of Woolf's analysis of the white settler problem was both accurate and prescient. He was one of the first commentators to point

⁴⁰ Northedge, League of Nations, 196-8, 217-8.

⁴¹ Claude lists 'gnawing doubts about the legitimacy of colonialism' within the colonial powers themselves as a key reason for the crucial innovations of the Charter. Claude, Swords into Plowshares, 329.

out that Government policy in British East Africa, under pressure from the white minority, was leading, however unintentionally, to even greater exploitation of the indigenous population. He skilfully and unequivocally exposed the democratic pretensions of the white minorities in Kenya, the Rhodesias, and Nyasaland. The 'illusion' that these territories were 'white man's country' was still widely entertained in Britain up until the Hola Camp incidents in Kenya and Harold Macmillan's subsequent 'winds of change' speech. In the 1920s the dream, to use Ronald Robinson's words, of a great white commonwealth in tropical Africa stretching from Salisbury (and perhaps the Cape) to Nairobi, was one entertained not only by 'unofficial' colonial opinion but by colonial governors and even some colonial secretaries.⁴² Woolf demonstrated on simple demographic lines that it was absurd to regard these colonies as comparable to Australia, Canada, or New Zealand.⁴³ It was an absurdity that unless checked was bound to lead to violent conflict. In vigorously putting forward these views Woolf contributed to what Robinson has described as the 'spectacular advance of the new moral order' in African colonial relations. For complex reasons

⁴² Notably Kenya Colony governor, Edward Grigg, the governor of Northern Rhodesia, Herbert Stanley, and colonial secretaries, Churchill and Amery. See Robinson, 'Moral Disarmament', 92-7.

⁴³ Though it should be noted that the numbers which qualified Natal and Southern Rhodesia for self-government in 1894 and 1923 (23,000 and 30,000) were not that much greater than the ever rising number of white settlers in Kenya (17,000 by the late 1920s). Ibid. 92-3.

of practical politics - bureaucratic, parliamentary, and international - this new order - summed up by the notion of 'native paramountcy' - brought few immediate, practical benefits to the indigenous population. It did, however, play a vital role in 'holding the front' against white separatism until the time came, two decades later, when African (and immigrant Indian) political consciousness was sufficiently well developed to hold these separatist ambitions in check. In doing so it prevented the emergence in east-central Africa of another Southern Rhodesia or even another Congo.⁴⁴

It is true that Woolf was prone to exaggeration. In the 1920s, for instance, he argued that a storm of nationalism and conflict was gathering in Africa by comparison with which the Great War was 'the mildest of evils'.⁴⁵ This is undoubtedly Woolf the propagandist getting the better of Woolf the political analyst. But rhetoric aside, it is clearly the case that much of what Woolf predicted with regard to Kenya and Rhodesia did subsequently happen, and what he predicted with regard to South Africa was only narrowly avoided. As Noel Annan has observed, Woolf had been making the winds of change speech since the 1920s.⁴⁶

Far from underestimating power, the role of power in

⁴⁴ Ibid. 98-102.

⁴⁵ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 70.

⁴⁶ Noel Annan, Our Age: The Generation that made Post-War Britain (London, 1991), 482.

his analysis of the white settler problem was central. But Woolf's conception of power was a broad one encompassing 'ideational' as well as material and instrumental conceptions. He was impressed by the strength which a group attains when it is convinced of its own legitimacy. Such strength could not be reduced to power over public opinion, to cite Carr's formulation, since the power resided in the ideas themselves rather than the skilful way in which they could be utilized or manipulated. Ideas like liberty and equality possessed a contagious quality which made them immune to control. They always transformed the political consciousness of those infected, with profound consequences for the prevailing configuration of social power and the structure of communal political organization based upon it. As early as the 1920s Woolf noted the rapidity with which African political consciousness was growing. He drew the conclusion that imperialism, at least as it was known in the nineteenth century, was dead. The only question that remained was whether it would be 'buried peacefully' or in 'blood and ruins'.⁴⁷

In Woolf's view the notion that a small band of white men could rule autocratically in countries where the African and even the immigrant Asian population far outnumbered them, was one that simply went against the grain of the modern world: it was one, to use a favourite notion of his, that contradicted 'the logic of modern ideas

⁴⁷ Ibid. 17. See also Woolf, 'Something New Out of Africa', 322-26.

and beliefs'.⁴⁸ Only through the use of force could true self-determination be resisted and then only temporarily.

This was clearly a prescient observation and one rooted not only in his belief in the power of ideas but also in his empirical observation that the new imperialism contained within it the seeds of its own destruction:

European civilisation, with its ideas of economic competition, energy, practical efficiency, exploitation, patriotism, power and nationalism descended upon Asia and Africa. But with it also carried, involuntarily perhaps, another set of ideas which it had inherited from the French Revolution and the eighteenth-century forerunners of the French Revolution. These were the ideas of democracy, liberty, fraternity, equality, humanitarianism. They have had a profound effect upon the later history of Imperialism, for they have led to the revolt of the subject peoples against it.⁴⁹

This was one of the central conclusions of Woolf's analysis of imperialism. It is true that he failed to point out that the influence was not entirely one way.⁵⁰ It is also true that he tended to give the impression that Africans and Asians were passive recipients rather than active seekers of Western ideas.⁵¹ But this does not diminish the

⁴⁸ Woolf maintained in Empire and Commerce in Africa (p.8) that 'in history there is no logic of events and no logic of facts, there is only a logic of men's beliefs and ideals.'

⁴⁹ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 34-5.

⁵⁰ As pointed out by James Joll, Europe Since 1870 (London, 1973), 78-9.

⁵¹ Though not always. Amanullah Khan and Kemal Attaturk, for instance, 'deliberately westernized the organization and framework' of their governments and societies. 'They ... used Western civilization in order to be strong enough to throw off the economic and political domination of Western civilization.' Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 67.

clarity and precision with which he expressed what is now an almost axiomatic proposition: that the Asian and African revolt against Western imperialism was itself largely a product of the impact of Western imperialism.

Education and Political Advance of 'Backward Peoples'

As the tide of war began to turn in 1942-43, and attention began to turn to what the post-war world might look like, the BBC Home Service invited Woolf to give a talk on the future of colonial empire.⁵² The talk elicited a highly critical response from Elspeth Huxley who accused him of being harsh, especially on the system of indirect rule, and 'rather out of date.'⁵³ She disputed Woolf's assessment of the record of the colonial administrations in the field of education and training for self-government. Far from being dismal, the record was a creditable one. In some provinces, Northern Nigeria for example, training in self-government was far advanced. The native authorities were now responsible for the performance of all but a few of the essential functions of government. Even in Kenya, pace Woolf, much had been achieved. When the British government took over in East Africa 'they saw nothing but wilderness'. There were no roads, or railways, or communications of any sort. Economic conditions were primitive. There was no money and no trade but the slave trade. The indigenous

⁵² Woolf, 'Challenge to All of Us', Part I, 179-80.

⁵³ Huxley, 'Challenge to All of Us', Part II, 180-1.

peoples were ravaged by disease. Warfare between them was endemic. It would have been impossible to set up schools in these conditions. First of all the 'bare bones of civilization' had to be created: law and order established; the slave trade abolished; disease combatted; railways, roads, and bridges built. Only then was it possible to think of education - and before teaching could take place in earnest all the different native languages and dialects had to be 'put down on paper', schools had to be built, teachers trained, and so on. Given these facts, and the fact that the war put things back ten years, the record of the British government was far from the disgrace that Leonard Woolf made it out to be.

Huxley made two further points. First, she criticized Woolf for speaking of 'Africans' as if they were part of an undifferentiated whole. This widely held but erroneous assumption failed to take into account the vast differences in language, custom, and religion between the many races and countless tribes of Africa. It was as accurate to assume that Africans constituted an undifferentiated whole as it was to assume that Europeans did. Second, such vast differences meant that one tribe would not necessarily agree to be represented politically by a member of another. It followed that 'a very high degree of national unity and like-mindedness' needed to be attained before self-government had any chance of succeeding. But in the colonies lack of unity was rife. In Ceylon, for example, the key question was not, as Woolf supposed, whether or not

the indigenous people were to be granted self-government, but 'whether the Sinhalese majority are going to govern the very big minority of alien Tamils - or rather, how the very different ideas and customs of the Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils are going to be reconciled.' The key problem was to devise a democratic system that had some chance of working in a country divided on racial and religious lines. In Huxley's view, the striking thing was not so much that these problems had not been solved but that 'often a solution barely seems in sight.'

Huxley did not call Woolf utopian. It might be contended, however, that an implication of the first and third criticisms is that certain aspects of his thought in this area are utopian in the sense that they pay 'insufficient attention to existing facts and to analysis of cause and effect'. More precisely, it might be contended that in his desire to accelerate the pace of change he conveniently overlooked some important facts and failed to analyze with sufficient rigour the conditions under which meaningful self-government could be achieved.

These contentions are valid up to a point. Woolf was not an imperial historian. Nor was he a social anthropologist. He did not contribute to the detailed empirical work on African societies and the impact of the European world upon them that began in the 1920s and 1930s. He was, however, one of the first analysts to investigate the general nature of this impact and he kept abreast, through his work as a reviewer, of the latest developments

in these new, highly specialized academic fields.

It is probably true that Woolf underestimated the difficulties involved in providing education and establishing the conditions for self-government in many parts of Britain's colonial empire. This is a curious fact given his radical conviction that the history of European penetration in Africa, particularly of private capital, was one of cruelty, exploitation, ruthlessness, and destruction. One would have expected someone with such a bleak view of the colonial past to have had a pessimistic rather than optimistic view of the tasks facing the reform-minded colonial administrator.

Yet Woolf's view of the colonial past was not an entirely negative one. Along with other radical thinkers he frequently held up West Africa as a model of what could be achieved. In one article, indeed, he speaks of the 'relative excellence' of British policy and administration in the region.⁵⁴ In a later article he speaks of the conclusive evidence West Africa furnished of the ability of 'the African' to 'understand' Western civilization and 'master the arts of government'.⁵⁵ Huxley seems to have overlooked the sharp distinction Woolf made between colonial practice in East vis à vis West Africa. Her claim that Woolf's account was out of date is based on a skewed reading which equates his position on East Africa with his

⁵⁴ Labour Party, Labour and the Empire, 8.

⁵⁵ 'Challenge to All of Us', 180. See also Imperialism and Civilization, 85; 'Political Advance of Backward Peoples', 93-5.

position on Africa as a whole. Woolf did not believe that the colonial record was uniformly discreditable and, pace Huxley, he too felt that big strides had been made in extending self-rule in the West Coast colonies. Similarly, Huxley failed to appreciate that Woolf's reservations about indirect rule were not directed at the idea per se but the particular form it had taken in practice.

But Woolf did overlook some important facts which one would have expected a man of his knowledge and experience to have recognized. He did not discuss at any length the lack of social cohesion and the lack of a sense of nationhood in the colonies. He did not seriously consider the possibility of post-independence inter-ethnic violence. Such facts, as Huxley demonstrated, were of critical importance. The only kind of communal violence he predicted was inter-racial violence resulting from white minority rule. Other comments of a prognostic kind were limited to warnings about the dangers of premature independence: Africans, he repeatedly warned, would be at the mercy of exploitative white men until they had been educated to understand and control the economic and political forces that had been unleashed upon them by the Western world.

Woolf's failure to consider these facts is perhaps one of the things Huxley had in mind when she described him as 'rather out of date'. By 1943, the year of his BBC talk, the belief that the primary objective of British colonial policy should be to systematically promote the social,

economic, and political development of dependent peoples, and prepare them for self-government was, as mentioned, widely accepted. Indeed, this belief had already received official sanction, at least partially, with the passing of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940. Under this act a substantial sum of public money was, for the first time, made available for colonial development. Although it did not formally commit the British government to complete self-government, the passage of the act clearly signalled the readiness of the official classes to contemplate an end to colonial rule.⁵⁶

In certain respects, therefore, the debate had moved on. Concern had shifted away from principles and objectives towards procedures, programmes, and schedules. But even as late as 1945 Woolf was asking questions such as: 'What is to be the political future of these [African] peoples? Is it our intention to keep them permanently in a state of complete tutelage or eventually to give them self-government?'⁵⁷ He was, in other words, asking questions which, in the opinion of Huxley and others, had long since been answered.

Yet there is another side to the story. Firstly, Woolf was not exclusively concerned with questions of this kind. Most of what he had to say in the 1940s concerned means rather than ends, though his analysis, it is true, tended to be rather general in nature. Secondly,

⁵⁶ Hetherington, British Paternalism and Africa, 104.

⁵⁷ Woolf, 'Political Advance of Backward Peoples', 85.

Woolf was perhaps right in thinking that the battle over objectives had not been completely won. Notwithstanding the arrival on the statute-books of a second Colonial Development Act in 1945, and the handing back to its people of the jewel in the imperial crown a few years later, the absence of a clear position on the future of the Empire remained for some time a conspicuous feature of British colonial policy. No official 'considered long-term assessment' was ever made of the likely course of decolonization.⁵⁸ Winston Churchill, among others, remained steadfastly committed to the continuance of 'Britain's heritage'.⁵⁹ The political and strategic expediency of acquiescing to the demands of the white colonists in east-central Africa continued hold appeal for Colonial Office ministers and even some secretaries of state.⁶⁰ Many men in and around the centres of power - not all of them 'Tory diehards, aged Milnerites, or eccentric press lords' - remained firmly attached to the integrity of the Empire: though they were prepared to accept on balance the wisdom of granting independence to India, they found it less easy to accept that Uganda or Borneo or Cyprus should

⁵⁸ Paul Kennedy, The Realities Behind Diplomacy (London, 1981), 333.

⁵⁹ Though his position was considerably more pragmatic and less romantic and than the received wisdom suggests. See Ronald Hyam, 'Churchill and the British Empire', in Robert Blake and Wm. Roger Louis, Churchill (Oxford, 1993), 167-85.

⁶⁰ At least until the Creech Jones era, and not, interestingly, for their officials, who by this time had firmly embraced the 'new morality'. Robinson, 'Moral Disarmament', 100-101.

go the same way.⁶¹ As late as 1959, Lionel Robbins, hardly a reactionary figure, wrote in a letter to The Times:

The predominance of the white man ... must continue for at least another generation. Few black Africans of the central African tribes have yet developed the qualities of leadership or the education and experience to act without control.⁶²

Even such a progressively-minded observer as David Mitrany did not feel that the days of Empire were so firmly numbered as they now, with hindsight, appear to have been. Reflecting on his failure to consider nationalist pressures in the first edition of A Working Peace System, he wrote:

... no one felt that 'decolonization' was smouldering so near below the surface, least of all in tribal Africa, the Africa which now asserts the liveliest temper and presents the most awkward problems for the international system.⁶³

Clearly, Mitrany had not read Woolf on the subject.

These statements illustrate that for well over a decade after the War unconditional acceptance of self-government as the immediate and primary goal of colonial policy was far from a foregone conclusion.

But there is a sense in which Woolf did fail to keep pace with the debate in the 1940s, and some of his views, once radical and progressive, did begin to look rather dated. P. S. Gupta has noted that Woolf's paternalism towards 'backward peoples' long outlived its usefulness and

⁶¹ Kennedy, Realities, 332-3.

⁶² Quoted in Annan, Our Age, 482.

⁶³ David Mitrany, A Working Peace System, 2nd edn., (Chicago, 1966; first edn. pub. 1943), 13.

never entirely lost a certain racial tinge.⁶⁴ This is a complex issue, especially given that Woolf, along with Barnes, Leys, and others, often went to great lengths to dispel the idea of racial superiority.⁶⁵ But it is true that Woolf never entirely kicked the habit of thinking in racial categories - a habit deeply engrained in men of his class and time and an intrinsic part of the imperial bureaucratic outlook that a product of St. Paul's, Trinity, and Colonial Ceylon would find it difficult not to share.⁶⁶

This habit was both cause and effect of Woolf's tendency to stereotype 'the African'. This, it will be remembered, was the brunt of Huxley's second criticism. Simplistic beliefs about African society were widely shared in Britain during the period. The dichotomy between 'civilized' Europe and 'primitive' Africa, and the concomitant assumption that African societies were all more or less alike, enjoyed almost universal acceptance. Woolf was no exception. He made no attempt to examine in detail the social structures, habits, myths, and customs of specific African communities - a remarkable fact given his sophisticated understanding of Ceylonese society. He tended, instead, to see them as uniformly undeveloped and

⁶⁴ Gupta, Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 126, 276-8.

⁶⁵ See Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 104-5; Woolf, 'Challenge to All of Us', 180; 'Political Advance of Backward Peoples', 89-94; Hetherington, British Paternalism and Africa, 76-89.

⁶⁶ The essence of which - a strict dichotomy between a superior 'us' and an inferior 'them' - is discussed by Baron, 'Before the Deluge', 49.

'backward'. This amounts to nothing less than acceptance of the easy nineteenth century assumption that African societies occupied an earlier stage in a simple, linear process of social evolution. The robust rejection of this assumption as conjectural and biased by the new, functionalist school of Social Anthropology seems to have entirely passed Woolf by.⁶⁷

The evolution of Woolf's nomenclature regarding African peoples and societies provides an interesting footnote to this question. Throughout his writings Woolf unblushingly speaks of 'the native' and 'the African', although, significantly, the terms are rarely used in his last work, his autobiography, published in the 1960s. Here Woolf generally opts for the less condescending 'Africans' and 'African peoples'. In his earliest works written around 1920, Woolf used the terms 'non-adult races', 'primitive peoples', even 'African savages'.⁶⁸ Later in the 1920s his preferred term was 'backward peoples' and, significantly, he sometimes enclosed it in inverted commas

⁶⁷ The leading lights in the functionalist school were Bronislaw Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Browne, and Lucy Mair. They stressed the importance of detailed field-work and replaced the heavily teleological search for universally valid 'stages' of development with a search for universal characteristics of all societies regardless of their geographical or historical location. See Hetherington, British Paternalism and Africa, 62-75.

⁶⁸ See for example, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 337, 352, 354, 356-7, 360, 365-7.

or qualified it with 'so called'.⁶⁹ When he returned to the subject in the 1940s his preferred term was 'backward peoples' (with 'primitive peoples' coming a close second) but, contrary to what one would expect, it is rarely used in inverted commas or in qualified form, though 'the African' is softened in places to 'the Africans'.⁷⁰ I have no explanation for this curious linguistic pattern.

Conclusion: Radical Dissent and Fabian Paternalism

The above assessment shows that there are certain aspects of Woolf's thought on imperialism that can not unfairly be described as utopian in the senses identified as 'key' in Chapter 2. But on the whole the term is strangely inappropriate. Subsequent research has shown that Woolf's theory of economic imperialism greatly exaggerates the role of the economic factor and in the process oversimplifies an complex phenomenon. But he could not be accused of 'ignoring facts and analysis of cause and effect' nor 'underestimating the role of power and overestimating the role of law, morality, and public opinion' nor 'espousing universal interests that amount to promotion and defence of a particular status quo'. The same could be said of his

⁶⁹ See 'Empire, Subject Peoples', in H. B. Lees-Smith (ed.), The Encyclopedia of the Labour Movement, Vol. I, (London, 1928), 258, 261; Imperialism and Civilization, 72. In 'Scope of the Mandates' he uses the term 'less "advanced" peoples' (p.16).

⁷⁰ 'Challenge to All of Us', 179-80; 'Political Advance of Backward Peoples', passim.

analysis of the white settler problem though this was, in relation to economic imperialism, a subsidiary concern and one, consequently, where one finds little empirical analysis of a highly detailed kind.

His work on mandates and the political education of backward peoples is more contentious in this regard. But even here one finds that the label utopian can be applied only at a high Procrustean price.

Woolf's work on mandates was for the most part exhortatory and admonitory but it was not bereft of factual analysis nor did it entirely discount the factor of power. Woolf may have underestimated the extent to which the Article 22 was a product of raison d'état, and also the extent to which the colonial Powers were prepared to set aside the principle of non-intervention in their colonial relations. As a consequence his exhortations to the mandatory powers that they act 'honestly' do seem utopian in the sense implied by the New Statesman cited above. The statesmen of Paris did not have the slightest intention of complying with their vague and ambiguous professions. That is precisely the reason why they were vague and ambiguous. In not appreciating this fact Woolf was at least to some extent guilty of mistaking rhetoric for reality. After saying this, however, it should be emphasized that Woolf's assertions about the far reaching implications of the mandates system with respect to sovereignty and international accountability were in the main both accurate and prescient.

The same is broadly true of Woolf's work on the political education of backward peoples. He may have underestimated the difficulties involved in providing such education and establishing the conditions for meaningful self-government in many parts of Britain's colonial empire. He also may have held some simplistic beliefs about 'the African' which he clung on to long after they had been refuted. But his assessment of the current position of native education in the colonies and their unpreparedness for self-government was supported by extensive empirical evidence; his constant warnings of the need for such education and preparation if colonial peoples were to have any chance of 'standing by themselves' was informed by a highly pessimistic account of the motives of the white man in Africa and an acute appreciation of the extent of his power; and he was probably right to assume in the mid-1940s, pace Huxley, that the battle over the ultimate objectives of colonial policy had not yet been completely won.

Rather than the unhelpful and largely inaccurate 'utopian', Woolf's thought is perhaps best seen in terms of two categories rarely seen in the IR literature: 'radical dissent' and 'Fabian paternalism'. The tone and purpose as well as the substance of Woolf's thought on imperialism is largely a product of these two strands of political thought.

1. Radical Dissent

By 'radical dissent' I have in mind that body of British opinion described by A. J. P. Taylor in his outstanding The Troublemakers.⁷¹ It is united by what it is against more than what it is for. Dissenters are vehemently critical of British foreign policy orthodoxy. They oppose the use of force, intervention, and power politics. They are deeply sceptical of the balance of power. They argue that war is little more than the sport of kings in which the vast majority of people have everything to lose but nothing to gain. They see diplomacy and the Foreign Office as elitist, undemocratic, and distant to the needs and interests of ordinary people. They deplore the unprincipled conduct of international affairs and demand greater attention to morality. They view the military as militaristic and advocate either complete (or very substantial) disarmament or the concentration of armaments in the hands of a world authority.

The term 'dissent' must be qualified by the term 'radical' for three interrelated reasons. Firstly, orthodox foreign policy is not only rejected but rejected root and branch. Secondly, the cause of international ills is located not at the international level but at the domestic level. War and other forms of 'dysfunctional' political behaviour are seen, at root, as products of corrupt or unjust or obsolete or irrational domestic

⁷¹ A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939 (Harmondsworth, 1985 [first pub. 1957]).

political structures. Thirdly, the alternative policies prescribed by dissenters represent a fundamental challenge to the status quo. Cobden, for example, advocated a policy of pure non-intervention; Morel recommended open diplomacy and the democratization of the foreign policy; Wells proposed the abolition of the wasteful system of inter-state competition and its replacement by a world society based on rational scientific organization.

Taylor rightly cites Woolf as a prominent dissenting voice in early twentieth century British history. The purpose of much of Woolf's work was to discredit orthodox or conservative policies, principles, ideas, and prescriptions. Throughout his career he arraigned them as variously irrational, myopic, immoral, stupid, deceitful, and impracticable. His tone was sometimes cool and sceptical but more often impassioned, indignant, rancorous, and sarcastic.

These facets are clearly visible in Woolf's thought on economic imperialism and the problem of white settlers. The following examples are illustrative.

Woolf compared the open and explicit acquisition of colonies in Africa with the complex and shadowy exercise of imperialism in Asia. Imperialism in Asia was characterized by 'tortuous subterfuges of diplomacy':

We have sovereign States which are no longer States or sovereign, independent rulers who are neither rulers nor independent, a network of 'protectorates,' 'spheres of influence,' 'perpetual leases,' 'peaceful penetration,' 'concessions,' 'diplomatic pressure' or 'advice,' all of which are designed to conceal the powerful but often clumsy, movements of that Leviathan, the European State, in its encroachments on

Asia.⁷²

In similar style:

The European went into Africa ... desiring to exploit it and its inhabitants for his own economic advantage, and he rapidly acquired the belief that the power of his State should be used in Africa for his own economic interests. Once this belief was accepted, it destroyed the idea of individual moral responsibility. The State, enthroned in its impersonality and a glamour of patriotism, can always make a wilderness and call it peace, or make a conquest and call it civilization. The right of Europe to civilize became synonymous with the right of Europe to rob or exploit the uncivilized.⁷³

Woolf was at his most mischievous when commenting upon the astonishing arrogance of the Victorian imperialists. The following is a typical parody of their views:

Until very nearly the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans ... regarded ... [their colonial conquests] with complacent pride as one of the chief blessings and glories of Western civilization. The white race of Europe, they held, was physically, mentally, and morally superior to all other races, and God, with infinite wisdom and goodness, had created it and developed it so it might be ready, during the reign of Queen Victoria of England, to take over and manage the affairs of all other peoples on the earth and teach them to be, in so far as that was possible for natives and heathens, good Europeans and good Christians.⁷⁴

Woolf saved most of his dissenting venom, however, for the white settlers. The following is a particularly striking example. In 1912 the complaints of European farmers in British East Africa about shortages of labour prompted the Colonial Government to set up a Native Labour Commission. The farmers demanded inter alia that native taxation should be increased in order to force the natives to work on their

⁷² Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 53-4.

⁷³ Ibid. 352-3.

⁷⁴ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 12-13.

farms. The Commission declared that increasing taxation for the purpose of forcing the natives to work was not justifiable. It then went on, however, to recommend an increase in taxation in order to meet the various other expenses of its recommendations (e.g. the re-organization of native reserves). According to Woolf this amounted to sophistry and cant par excellence:

The casuistry of the Jesuit is famous, but, surely, it was never equalled by this casuistry of imperialism. For the recommendations of the Commission are not intended to promote the interests of the natives; the re-demarcation of the Reserves, etc., are recommended as a means of increasing the labour supply, of promoting the economic interests of the white settler. The Commission admits that increased taxation will 'bring natives into the labour market', it holds that increased taxation in order to bring natives into the labour market is unjustifiable; and then it finally recommends increased taxation (which will bring natives into the labour market) not in order to bring them into the market, but in order to pay for other recommendations the whole object of which is to bring natives into the labour market.⁷⁵

2. Fabian Paternalism

By 'Fabian paternalism' I have in mind that approach to political change, central to early Fabianism, which assigned a special role to the scientifically trained, technically advanced 'expert'. In this respect social progress was analogous to technical progress. Through scientific investigation experts were able to objectively explain social events and rationally determine the most effective means by which they could be controlled and improved for the greater good of the community. Only the

⁷⁵ Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 349.

expert possessed the specialized knowledge necessary to do this. Hence paternalism: the communal good should be entrusted to the specially trained expert since he, by definition, knew best.

An example of Fabian paternalism is the 'paternal imperialism' of George Bernard Shaw described in Chapter 3. Shaw did not see imperialism as iniquitous per se. Imperialism could be either iniquitous or 'sound'. If it brought the ideas, values, habits, and institutions of 'higher' civilizations to those parts of the world dominated by 'lower' civilizations, it was perfectly justified. Indeed it was a duty.

Another hallmark of Fabian paternalism was belief in gradual change. This had both a positive and a normative dimension. On the one hand, gradual change would inevitably occur if society chose to be governed by reason and 'the facts' rather than prejudice and opinion. Hence the Fabian motto, coined by Sidney Webb, 'the inevitability of gradualness'. On the other hand, change was best - more permanent, more just, more beneficial - when gradual. Only through gradual change could the evils of social turmoil, social injustice, and political reaction be avoided.

Fabian paternalism, in substance and in tone, is particularly evident in Woolf's thought on mandates and the political education of backward peoples. For the most part, as we have seen, Woolf wrote about African peoples as if they occupied a much lower level of civilization and were helpless in the face of the superior civilization of

the West. He fully subscribed to the presumption of Article 22 that, unassisted, they would not be able to 'stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. The native was 'no match' for the European and was unable to cope with the economic and political system that had been imposed upon him. It was consequently the job of the colonial authorities to 'educate the people so that they may gradually take their place as free men both in the economic system and in the government of their country.'⁷⁶ Accordingly:

The end in view is an African population, with its own institutions and civilization, capable of making the most economic use of its land, able to understand Western civilization and control the forces it has let loose on the world, governing itself through organs of government appropriate to its traditions and environment.

The paternalism of all this is clear: it was the job and indeed the duty of Europeans - perhaps with the aid of expert bodies such as League Committee for Intellectual Co-operation - to work out the general lines of economic and political development in Africa.⁷⁷

The paternalism of the following passage, written as late as 1943, is particularly striking. Responding to the 'extreme left' opinion that full independence should be granted immediately, Woolf stated:

In my opinion to do that would be disastrous - disastrous for the Africans. Most of them are ignorant and uneducated, terribly poor, ravaged by tropical diseases. To think that they are capable of suddenly taking over the government of

⁷⁶Woolf, Mandates and Empire, 12.

⁷⁷ Woolf, Imperialism and Civilization, 131.

their countries under the political and economic conditions of the modern world is just nonsense. They would fall victims to the first private profiteers and exploiters and the first imperialist government who crossed their path.

No, the right way to deal with our African colonies ... is to begin at once to educate the Africans to govern themselves.⁷⁸

African peoples needed the paternal guidance of enlightened Europeans if they were to achieve real independence. They needed to be 'gradually trained' in democracy and 'the art of self-government'. Only with such guidance would they ever be capable of 'standing by themselves'.

⁷⁸ Woolf, 'Challenge to All of Us', 180.

Chapter Seven

International Economic Policy

In this chapter I examine Woolf's thought on the international economy and what he called 'international economic policy'. Unlike a number of other progressive writers of the time, most prominently G. D. H. Cole, J. A. Hobson, and Maynard Keynes, Woolf did not have a grounding in economics. At Trinity he read the Classical Tripos and there is no evidence to suggest that he ever turned his mind to economic questions. The Apostles, the focal point of Woolf's intellectual life at Cambridge, rarely discussed social and economic issues - at least not directly. Aesthetics, morality, and conduct were their line of country, and they tended to discuss these matters in the abstract with little reference to social context. G. E. Moore, for example, preached the aesthetic doctrine of intrinsic beauty, a doctrine which his gifted protégés - Keynes, Strachey, Foster, and Woolf - fully absorbed and, indeed, never completely abandoned.¹

Woolf's introduction to economics, as with other social subjects, was practical. The task he set himself as Assistant Government Agent in the Hambantota district of

¹ See J. M. Keynes, 'My Early Beliefs' in Essays in Biography (Cambridge, 1972), 433-50; Bertrand Russell, Leonard Woolf, Morton White, and John Wisdom, 'The Influence and Thought of G. E. Moore: A Symposium', The Listener, 30 April 1959, 755-62. Papers read by Woolf to meetings of the Apostles included: 'What is Style?', 'Othello or Lord Byron?', 'The dead man answered thus: "What good thing shall God give us?"', and 'Embryos or abortions?'. Leonard Woolf Papers, II, O, 2.

Ceylon was essentially economic: to raise the welfare of the peasant farmers of the district, nearly all of whom relied on the unproductive and economically and environmentally short-sighted 'chena' method of slash and burn; to greatly increase the efficiency of the (Government owned) salt industry; and to improve the safety of the seasonal activity of pearl diving and insure that the pearl trade was regulated as fairly and efficiently as possible. In brief, he set out to make Hambantota District the most efficient and best administered in Ceylon, a task which in his own estimation he achieved.²

On leaving Ceylon, Woolf's education in practical economics continued with his work in the London East End district of Hoxton for the Women's Co-operative Guild, and by way of contrast, in his stewardship of the newly-founded Hogarth Press. Woolf originally conceived the Press not as a business venture but as a hobby for his wife. In 1915 Virginia suffered her first mental breakdown. Immersion in a practical activity like printing and publishing, Woolf thought, would have therapeutic value and would put her more firmly on the road to recovery than the simple rest prescribed by her physicians. In spite of his avowed amateurism, and the stringent criteria he and Virginia applied in drawing up their lists, the press soon became a considerable commercial success - testimony both to Woolf's

² See his fascinating account in Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904-11 (London, 1961), 172-245.

artistic judgement and his business acumen.³

Woolf's induction to the discipline of Economics came with his research work on the Co-operative movement and in particular on the relationship between consumer Co-operation and the structure of industry.⁴ But it is doubtful whether he spent much time mugging up on economic theory. He was, indeed, rather sceptical of what he called 'Theoretic Economics'. This and other 'academic' subjects, for example, were excluded from his syllabus for a 'Co-operative College' in preference for practical topics such as 'Decasualisation', 'The Minimum Wage', 'Management in Industry', and 'Trade Unionism'.⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that Woolf seriously studied Smith, Ricardo, Mill or Marshall. Most of Woolf's academic training in Economics came from the writings of fellow Fabians and radicals - the Webbs, Angell, Cole, Hobson, and Keynes.

If one includes Woolf's writings on economic imperialism - which one must even though his interpretive economics would not find favour with most professional economists⁶ - his work on economic issues is extensive. As

³ Virginia took little part in the business side of the press.

⁴ In this chapter I use 'Co-operation' to distinguish the Co-operative movement and the co-operative system of economic organization from cooperation in general.

⁵ Woolf, Education and the Co-operative Movement (London, 1914), 13.

⁶ I say 'interpretive economics' because, as will be remembered from Chapter 5, Woolf did not in the main try to explain an objective economic realm but rather to identify prevalently held economic ideas and beliefs and explain their effects.

well as four books, he wrote more than a dozen pamphlets and many articles. To these must be added a number of works not specifically concerned with economics but in which the economic factor, in true Fabian fashion, is never far from the surface. In his three volume study of 'communal psychology', for example, Woolf gave a great deal of weight to the influence of economic factors in the development of communal ideas about democracy, liberty, and the state. As was seen in Chapter 3, economic and technological factors were fundamental to Woolf's theory of international government.

Along with his two books on economic imperialism Woolf's main writings on economic issues are: Co-operation and the Future of Industry, first published in 1919; Socialism and Co-operation, published in 1921; his only single-authored Fabian Tract (though he edited and/or wrote introductions for many others) International Co-operative Trade, published in 1922; the Labour party pamphlet International Economic Organization, published in 1923; and his long essay on the relationship between Co-operation and peace, 'The Way of Peace', published in 1928.⁷

The 1920s was, therefore, a period of considerable activity on the economic front particularly on the issue of Co-operation. Indeed, despite the 'massive inattention',

⁷ Woolf, Co-operation and the Future of Industry (London, 1919); Socialism and Co-operation (London, 1921); International Co-operative Trade, Fabian Tract No.201, (London, 1922); International Economic Policy (London, 1923); 'The Way of Peace' in Percy Redfern (ed.), Self and Society: Social and Economic Problems from the Hitherto Neglected Point of View of the Consumer (Manchester, 1930).

in Margaret Cole's words, which greeted his books on Co-operation, Woolf acquired a reputation as one of its leading theorists.⁸ But it is precisely this inattention which explains why Woolf wrote so little on the subject after this initial period of activity. Even the economic crisis of 1929 failed to reinvigorate Woolf's enthusiasm for things economic, and by the time the crisis had abated Woolf's attention had become firmly locked on a set of problems even more pressing in nature.

In this chapter I shall address the following questions. First, what did Woolf say about economics and the international economy? In particular what were Woolf's views on protectionism, free trade, and international planning? Second, how cogent is Woolf's analysis and how coherent his prescriptions for change? Third, and following on from this, to what extent and in what ways can Woolf's thought about the international economy be described as utopian?

Co-operation, Democracy, and Peace

Woolf's basic thesis was that capitalism was based on 'the psychology of competition' which induced and intensified hostility among nations and generated a zero-sum view of the world. The prevalence of imperialism and protectionism

⁸ Margaret Cole, 'Woolf, Leonard Sidney (1880-1969): Author, Publisher and Socialist', in J. M. Bellamy and J. Saville (eds.), Dictionary of Labour Biography (London, 1979).

was evidence of this. Its logical conclusion was war.

Woolf rejected, however, most of the radical solutions put forward by liberals and socialists alike. He rejected the orthodox liberal solution, free trade, in much the same terms that Carr was later to do. Free trade engendered a form of social Darwinism where the strong prospered and the weak went to the wall. It was also an impracticable doctrine given the tendency of modern capitalism towards monopoly and the instrumentalist way in which capitalists viewed and used the state. Under such conditions trade could never be truly free.

He rejected socialist solutions as embodied in syndicalism and guild socialism. In the final analysis, Woolf claimed, these solutions amounted to nothing more than the substitution of one kind of producer control for another. There was no reason to think that an oligopoly of socialist producers would not be just as inclined to fleece the consumer as an oligopoly of capitalist producers. Producer control of the economy would inevitably lead to the exploitation of the consumer since producer control in any of its forms was ultimately based on the psychology of competition or, as he frequently called it, the 'psychology of capitalism'. Producers would always seek to maximize their own interests, both against other producers, and against the community of consumers. They had no interest in the welfare of the whole.

But Woolf also rejected the increasingly fashionable state socialist solution, and along with it the municipal

socialist solution as championed by his mentor Sydney Webb. For Woolf, the state both at the national and at the municipal level was essentially a political institution and not one necessarily in tune with the economic interests of the people. Periodic elections ensured a degree of popular control. But in elections many issues were at stake, not just the economic needs and desires of the people. There was always a danger, as a result, that these needs and desires could be ignored.⁹

In this connection it is also significant that even as early as the early 1920s Woolf feared the rising power of the state, whether in its capitalist or its socialist form. He argued that the all-powerful modern state could easily succumb to tyranny. At the time Woolf was a lonely voice in opposing the growing power of the state. Many socialists saw it as a social and economic panacea.

The Legacy of Liberal Internationalism

Woolf's thought on international economic organization was largely a product of two distinct bodies of thought: liberal internationalism and consumers' Co-operation (though, as will be seen later, Fabianism and functionalism were influential, too). One of the most important points to note about this is that whereas the former is a doctrine primarily concerned with the international context, especially the questions of international peace and

⁹ Woolf, 'The Co-operative Movement and Socialism: Better Than the State or Municipality?', The New Leader, 7 February 1927.

prosperity, the latter was a doctrine almost exclusively concerned with the domestic context, especially the British context though the model was later widely exported. In a sense Woolf was bringing together two bodies of thought in order to build a democratic and pacific alternative to power politics.

On the surface, however, the two bodies of thought seem diametrically opposed. Was it not the instability and inequity of free trade and laissez faire that the Co-operative movement sought to supplant? Didn't Co-operation involve the regulation and control of the very forces that liberal internationalists saw as the surest guarantee of liberty and peace?

By liberal internationalism I mean that body of thought, developed by Cobden and the Manchester School, which maintained that free trade was the key to a prosperous and peaceful world. G. W. Shepherd has described the central tenets of liberal internationalism succinctly:

The free traders always regarded the world as a unity bound together by the mutual interdependence of national economies. They shunned the burden of armaments and sought to settle international disputes by arbitration and conciliation, and they believed peace would be the natural result of ever increasing prosperity arising from the mutual advantage accruing from increasing trade and intercourse.¹⁰

Woolf shared these tenets but gave them negative rather than positive expression. He did not so much argue in

¹⁰ G. W. Shepherd, The Theory and Practice of Internationalism in the British Labour Party with Special Reference to the Inter-War Period, University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1952, 371.

favour of free trade as against its opposite, protection. This is explained partly by his socialist convictions, and partly by the economic and political context of the time: Europe was still struggling to recover from the destruction and economic dislocation of the First World War and many countries were still suffering from extreme economic hardship. The working class bore the brunt of this hardship through unemployment. Import protection was called for in many countries in order to get domestic production going again. Woolf, however, was strongly opposed to such a move because he felt that protection never benefited the working class in any lasting and substantial way.¹¹

But protectionism not only conflicted with the interests of Labour but also its general social and international aims.¹² The general social aim was the maintenance and improvement of the standard of life of the 'non-capitalist classes'. This entailed a redistribution of national income, an increase in wage rates, a decrease in the working week, protection against unemployment, and 'increased efficiency in the organization and management of

¹¹ See Woolf, Taxation (London, 1916), 29.

¹² Woolf defined protectionism broadly as 'the use of fiscal and other administrative measures which directly or indirectly affect the commerce, industry, or finance of the citizens of two or more states' (Empire and Commerce in Africa, 19). Such a definition is clumsy since according to it most actions of government could be described as protection. However, Woolf's examples of protection - tariffs, prohibitions, embargoes, differential railway and shipping rates, and administrative methods of various kinds designed to raise the price of foreign goods - are sound. See Woolf, International Economic Policy, 1-5.

industry'. The general international aim was 'peace and co-operation between nations', involving 'the development of international co-operation in the League of Nations'.¹³

A policy of protection, Woolf claimed, had the following effects: an increase in the profits of the protected industry; a rise in price of the protected good or commodity on the home market; and the encouragement of 'capitalist rings, combinations, and trusts'.¹⁴ All these things, he claimed, were contrary to the interests of Labour and, indeed, all consumers (of which Labour constituted the majority). Increased wages would not inevitably spring from increased profits even in cases where workers were well organized: experience proved that 'the major part of the tribute levied upon the consumer goes to the small group of capitalists in the protected industry'.¹⁵ A rise in prices or scarcity always hit the poorest classes hardest. In addition, selective protection tended to give way to generalized protection since governments found it difficult to deny to one sector of the economy that which it had granted to another. Powerful interests, according to Woolf, would inevitably compel the government to extend its policy, leading to the weakening of the worker vis á vis the capitalist, and a general increase in income inequality.

In accordance with the teachings of classical

¹³ Woolf, International Economic Policy, 1-2.

¹⁴ Ibid. 2.

¹⁵ Woolf, 'Way of Peace', 12-13.

political economy, Woolf also contended that protection would lead to general impoverishment. This was so because even in the event of increased profits, wages, and employment, such increases would not be 'equivalent to the quantity of goods kept out'.¹⁶ Higher prices would depress demand and eventually lead to unemployment. In addition, higher prices in one sector would raise costs and thus prices in another, this effect multiplying in cases where protection was the norm. The outcome would be a general reduction in purchasing power and thus a general fall in the standard of living.

The only thing that Labour should do with regard to foreign competition was to make sure that the cheapness of foreign goods was not due to sweating. If it was, the correct course of action would be to get international agreement on labour legislation aimed at its abolition. The 'indiscriminate' way in which states usually dealt with the problem almost always lead to 'indiscriminate' retaliation.

The effect of protection on the international aims of Labour were similarly dire. According to Woolf, protection was both a product and a cause of international hostility. It was based on the assumption that international trade was a zero-sum game, an assumption which the practice of protection merely confirmed:

The policy of Protection is ... based upon a theory of the divergence of interests among nations and upon international hostility; it actually, by a vicious

¹⁶ Ibid. 3.

circle, creates this divergence of interests and hostility.¹⁷

Protectionism resulted in a kind of economic warfare which, under modern conditions, had become 'one of the most powerful engines of international enmity'. In parallel with Cobden's contentions about the landed aristocracy, and Hobson's about financiers, Woolf further contended that the problem was fuelled by a small but powerful group of capitalists who alone stood to profit.

Hostility was particularly fierce when protection was discriminatory:

For such 'hostile discrimination' naturally channels the hostility bred by tariffs into a particular hostility between two nations, and the tariff becomes an economic weapon to be used in and to embitter and sometimes even to create political differences and disputes. Bad as a tariff is, its evil is greatly increased if it allows of differential duties and discrimination between different nations.¹⁸

Nor was the need to safeguard 'key industries' a credible defence. According to this view, industries producing goods essential to the war-fighting potential of the nation needed to be protected during peacetime in order to avoid reliance on foreign sources of supply during war. In Woolf's view the relevance of this argument, like the doctrine of contraband in war, had long been lost. Its central assumption, that it was possible to distinguish between 'strategic' and 'non-strategic' goods prior to any particular conflict breaking out, was no longer tenable. It was no longer possible to say with any confidence which

¹⁷ Ibid. 3.

¹⁸ Ibid. 4.

items would be essential and which non-essential to the waging of war. In principle practically all items were 'essential'. Hence practically all industries were 'key industries'. The logic of the key industries argument was, therefore, the logic of self-sufficiency and self-containment. Such a policy undermined rather than improved national safety since it generated a psychological environment of constant fear and preparation for war.

In any event such a policy was impracticable given the wide range of goods that could under no circumstances be produced at home. Bearing these factors in mind, the best policy was diversification of supply.¹⁹ The only justification for impeding the flow or raising the price of foreign goods was in order to safeguard against accidents and prevent the spread of diseases.²⁰

The arguments against domestic protection also applied to imperial preference - in fact even more so:

... even in the limited area of the home territory anything like a general tariff must prove disastrous to the interests of Labour. Still more disastrous would be an attempt to draw up a tariff to satisfy all the different interests of the Empire which includes not only the highly industrialised home territory but Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, and immense tropical possessions.²¹

Furthermore, due to the links between protectionism and imperialism, and the role of imperialism in causing war,

¹⁹ As recommended by the Royal Commission on Supply of Food and Raw Materials in Time of War. Cited by Woolf, *ibid.* 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 4-5.

²¹ *Ibid.* 5.

the international implications of imperial preference were even more fearful than the domestic implications. The imperial rivalry of the late nineteenth century was largely fomented by the mutual fear that colonial possessions would be used as exclusive fields of economic exploitation. Every player in the colonial game feared being dealt a mortal economic blow. This fear was a major cause of the War. In light of these facts Woolf concluded that imperial preference was 'completely incompatible with any kind of lasting peace'. He recommended that all states adopt without hesitation the policy of the Open Door.²²

Nowhere does Woolf advocate free trade in name. But in his rejection of protectionism, notwithstanding the working class spin he put on it, the imprint of liberal internationalism is clear. He rejected the inherently conflictual, zero-sum, world of the protectionists, and implicit in his argument is the notion that the world, or at least a large part of it²³, is in some sense unified by being 'bound together by the mutual interdependence of national economies'. Protection increased not the wealth of any nation but brought conflict upon them. In places Woolf even suggests that international trade is in fact a

²² Ibid. 6-8.

²³ Excluding the small band of capitalists who gain from international hostility. Woolf's repeated references to this small group of capitalists suggests that not all capitalists were implicated. This further confirms the influence of liberal internationalism on his thought since the liberals consistently sought to make a distinction between good and bad capitalists. See Shepherd, Theory and Practice of Internationalism, 40-4.

positive-sum game:

The form of society developed from the industrial revolution requires for its continued existence, both politically and economically, an international framework. Nations and peoples are so intimately knit together, one part of the world is so seriously dependent upon all other parts, that, in actual fact, one nation's loss is practically always every other nation's loss, and one nation's gain every other nation's gain.²⁴

As well as looking back to Cobden, Woolf here looks forward to Brandt. He opposed the exploitation of colonial labour not only on moral grounds but on economic grounds. Exploitation was not only bad for the exploited but also bad for the exploiters. He rejected what Lenin called the 'labour aristocracy'. Cheap colonial labour, he asserted, was 'directly contrary to the interests of Labour, of industry, and of the world'. He continued:

It is to Labour's interest in Europe that the standard of living in Africa and Asia should be raised to the highest possible point in order that increased demand and consumption in those parts may encourage an exchange of commodities between Europe and Asia and Africa. The low wages of the African negro and the system by which he is forced to work for them make the fortune of the individual exploiter; they strike a blow at Labour in Europe by consolidating the power of capital and by restricting the possible market for European manufacturers and the free exchange of commodities throughout the world.²⁵

Anti-Capitalism

At this point, however, Woolf parted company with Cobden and his twentieth century brethren since by 'free exchange

²⁴ Woolf, 'Way of Peace', 28.

²⁵ Woolf, International Economic Policy, 8. See also Empire and Commerce in Africa, 355-6; International Co-operative Trade, 13-15.

of commodities' he did not have in mind free exchange between private enterprises but simply the absence of state interference. Woolf was unbending in his rejection of all capitalist methods and institutions - indeed he both shared and helped to consolidate the anti-capitalist assumptions that until recently have dominated the twentieth century British Left.

Woolf's understanding of capitalism was unorthodox. In some respects he drew from the Marxist tradition in seeing capitalism as inherently exploitative. But he did not adopt Marx's definition of capitalism as a system of generalized commodity production in which labour itself is a commodity. Nor did he see capitalism in terms of the perfect competition model of classical economics - though he did share with Adam Smith the view that the interests of the consumer were paramount. Like Smith, Woolf was highly critical of economic systems which put the interest of the producer above the interest of the consumer. He endorsed Smith's claim that 'consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production'.²⁶ He would, however, have qualified the word 'production' with the word 'industrial'. By 'industrial production' Woolf meant efficient, mass, factory production of the basic commodities of life. The things that made life worth living - art, literature, science, learning, drama, recreations - ought not, Woolf believed, be produced by 'industry' since the value of

²⁶ See Robert Heilbroner, The Worldly Philosophers, (London, 1980), 53.

these things derived from their production as well as their consumption. Industry was necessary because it was efficient but the good things in life tended to be corrupted once mass-produced and/or commercialized.²⁷

Woolf did not systematically set out his understanding of capitalism. It is possible, however, to identify four important features in his work:

(i) In sharp contrast to the classical model of perfect competition, Woolf understood capitalism in terms of monopoly, oligopoly, combination, and price-rigging. Through these methods the capitalist, whether a financier, manufacturer, wholesaler, or a retailer, sought to drive up prices the burden of which always fell on the consumer.²⁸

(ii) Following Robert Owen, capitalism meant production for profit rather than production for use. Under capitalism things were produced because the producer felt he could make a profit out of them rather than because they were individually or socially useful:

Capitalist industry does not ... produce things because they are beautiful, good, or useful, but because someone thinks that he will be able to induce other people to buy them and that thereby he will make a profit for himself.²⁹

²⁷ See Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 44-55, 76-87.

²⁸ Woolf, Education and the Co-operative Movement, 3; Co-operation and the War II: Co-operative Action in National Crises (London, 1915), 2-4.

²⁹ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 47. See also Robert Owen, A New View of Society and Other Writings (London, 1991).

Profit was not the vital ingredient in the efficient working of an economy, as the classical economists maintained, but a 'toll upon society'.³⁰ Underlying this view is the assumption that the market is an inadequate mechanism for balancing supply and demand. According to Woolf, the question the capitalist asked was not 'How can I best make things that people want to buy?' but 'How can I best induce people to buy the things I produce at the highest price?' Contrary to the assumption of perfect competition that all participants had complete knowledge of the price, quality, and quantity of goods for sale, Woolf contended that under capitalism it was in the interests of all participants to keep all other participants as much in the dark as possible.³¹

(iii) According to Woolf capitalism was an oligarchical system. Under capitalism sovereignty resided in the producer not the consumer and, therefore, with the few not the many. Over the last hundred years various aspects of social life had been democratized, but industry remained untouched. The producer still decided 'what is to be made; how, where, and when' and consumers and workers had little if any influence on their decisions.³²

³⁰ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 40.

³¹ Woolf, The Control of Industry by the People (London, 1915), 5-6; Co-operation and the War, 5-6.

³² Woolf, Control of Industry by the People, 3; Co-operation and the Future of Industry, 10-11.

(iv) As well as a system, capitalism, for Woolf, was a way of thinking, a set of ideas and beliefs consciously or unconsciously held, a 'psychology'. Accordingly, 'capitalist psychology' meant the attitude that one should pursue one's own interest regardless of the interest of the community. This pursuit of self-interest was most obviously manifested in the pursuit of profit but it was also evident in the struggle for wages:

The capitalist, in pursuit of his own profits, will defraud the State, ruin his fellow capitalist, and join with his fellow capitalist to exploit the worker and the consumer, while the worker, in his struggle for wages, again and again finds that in order to protect his own interests he has to sacrifice those of his fellow workers or of the whole community.³³

Indeed it affected (or 'contaminated' as Woolf sometimes put it) many aspects of society from art and literature to the professions to trade unionism and even socialism itself. Essentially it might be said that by 'capitalist psychology' Woolf meant egotism.

Woolf's critique of capitalism was wide-ranging. Firstly, capitalism was exploitative. Workers were exploited as capitalists constantly strove to drive down wages in order to increase profits. They were assisted in this task by the fact that the supply of labour almost always exceeded demand.³⁴ The consumer was exploited through the commonplace practices of deception - misleading the

³³ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 11.

³⁴ Woolf, The Control of Industry by Co-operators and Trade Unionists (London, 1914), 4.

consumer being a perfectly legitimate way of making a profit - and price-rigging. Laissez faire meant merely the liberty to 'snatch according to the rules of the game from the community of fellow men'.³⁵ The art of the capitalist was buying cheap and selling dear, something he showed no compunction in doing even in times of hardship, often taking advantage of scarcity and consumer ignorance of market conditions in the process. In this he was greatly assisted by modern advertising which enabled him to further hoodwink consumers into buying things they did not need.³⁶

Secondly, capitalism was undemocratic. Capitalists wielded enormous power in the political system. As well as controlling production, capitalists and 'a small group of property owners' effectively controlled the state - a control strengthened by the near-monopoly capitalists had over the media and by the readiness of the law, the army, and the police to defend property rights and the

³⁵ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 9.

³⁶ Ibid. 47, 81-2; Co-operation and the War, 3-4. An extended footnote is perhaps justified here. The war, and the shortages it generated - particularly the food shortages resulting from the German submarine campaign - gave rise to the notion of the 'profiteer'. It became widely believed that the war was being kept going by a small number of people who were making enormous profits from it. Allied with the success of government in controlling virtually all aspects of the economy, the equation of profit-making with 'profiteering' did much to undermine the legitimacy of the dominant free market conception of economic organization. Individualism, competition, and the pursuit of profit, came to be seen, especially among working men, as iniquitous and intolerable. This helps to explain Woolf's (far from unique) contempt for private capital and profit-making. See Paddy Maguire, 'Co-operation and Crisis: Government, Co-operation, and Politics, 1917-1922', in Stephen Yeo (ed.), New Views of Co-operation (London, 1988), 192-6.

'capitalist weapon of starvation' against the worker.³⁷ Here Woolf's analysis is decidedly Leninist except for the fact he believed that socialists, too, were capable of capturing the state. They too, he believed, were capable of ruling the state in the special interest of the few rather than the general interest of the many. Already by 1921 he had reached this conclusion with respect to the Soviet Union.³⁸

Thirdly, capitalism was inefficient. This was confirmed by the existence of 'chronic unemployment in one part of the world and acute shortage elsewhere of the commodities for which the unemployed cannot find purchasers'.³⁹ Capitalist psychology led to the failure to differentiate between what was socially valuable and what was not: whether sewers or champagne were produced was of no great moment to the capitalist since all that mattered was profit. Capitalist psychology also begot the ca'canny worker who did as little as he could get away with knowing that the fruits of his labour went not to himself but to his boss.⁴⁰

A further aspect of the inefficiency of capitalism was its constant output of 'shoddy, ugly, and useless' goods. There is a strong aesthetic dimension to Woolf's analysis. Like Ruskin he was appalled by the 'unintelligent

³⁷ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 9-10, 26-30.

³⁸ Ibid. 32-4.

³⁹ Woolf, 'Way of Peace', 11.

⁴⁰ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 43, 47-8.

repetition' and 'ceaseless mechanical or laborious operations' that characterized life in the modern factory. Like Morris he felt that capitalism had 'debauched and debased our taste for material commodities'. One of the central tasks of socialism, Woolf held, was to rid society of its materialism and crass commercialism. Nowhere does he unambiguously state, however, that these evils are exclusively the product of capitalism. The fact that he felt socialism could produce like evils suggests that his target was not capitalism but industrialism. The problem is much complicated, however, by Woolf's eccentric definition of capitalism and, in particular, his insistence that socialists too were not immune to capitalist psychology.⁴¹

Finally, in addition to being exploitative, undemocratic, and inefficient, capitalism was bellicose. The egotism of capitalist psychology produced a combative perception of international economic relations. Trade became 'a struggle for existence or profits'. This struggle 'gave a new depth and colour to men's fear of other countries and the love of their own'. Capitalist psychology thus both intensified international rivalry and was reinforced by contact with it.⁴²

There are a number of problems with Woolf's understanding of capitalism and his critique of it. These can perhaps

⁴¹ Ibid. 12-13, 51, 55, 74.

⁴² Woolf, 'Way of Peace', 6-7.

best be analyzed by looking at the label 'anti-capitalist' which suggests an element of dogmatism on Woolf's part.

Woolf can be described as an anti-capitalist for two reasons. First, he makes no attempt to consider sympathetically the liberal case for capitalism. He focuses his attention entirely on its weaknesses without any consideration of its strengths. In saying that capitalists think only of profits and shareholders, for example, he dismisses too casually the mechanism by which the market enables demand to be balanced with supply. He does in fact admit that capitalists may occasionally have to think of consumers and workers since they need to produce things that the former will buy and offer wages that the latter will work for. But he then says 'But that is all'. For the classical economist, however, this is a fact of immense importance. In automatically requiring the producer to think of all these things the market enables resources to be allocated efficiently without having to employ a large and expensive body of experts to do the job administratively.⁴³

Woolf also too readily accepts that the dynamism generated by capitalism is wasted in the mass production of shoddy, useless goods. There may be something in this - it has been a consistent line of critique since the time of Morris and Ruskin - but in not considering the ostensible benefits of capitalist dynamism - constant process and product innovation, the extension of consumer choice, the

⁴³ See Woolf, Control of Industry by the People, 5-6.

maximization of factor output and aggregate incomes - Woolf is at best providing only a partial picture. Similarly, he sometimes too readily assumes that economic change has generally been for the worse - for example in his request that

the civilised capitalist ought somehow to explain the undoubted fact that all the great scientific discoveries of the last 100 years have contributed more to the sum of human misery than to the sum of human happiness.

Or in his assertion that

If without sentimentality or prejudice we were to estimate in terms of human happiness and social progress the chief results of all industrial inventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we should be compelled to say that they are summed up in the difference between the slums of Manchester and the slums of Constantinople and in the difference between the battle fields of the Somme or Flanders and the battlefield of Waterloo.⁴⁴

Again, there may be something in this, but it is, at best, only a partial picture.

In addition, Woolf uncritically assumes that monopoly and oligopoly are unavoidable features of capitalism. As well as not being entirely consistent with his assertions about 'unfettered capitalism' and capitalism being a 'competitive system',⁴⁵ such an assumption fails to take account of the ability of the state to dismantle monopolies as had already been powerfully demonstrated in the U.S.

Secondly, by defining capitalism in such a broad way -

⁴⁴ Woolf, Socialism and Co-operation, 14, 59. Capitalist psychology responsible for the bad direction industrial production had taken (ibid. 56-9).

⁴⁵ See Woolf, The Control of Industry by Co-operators and Trade Unionists, 2; 'Way of Peace', 5.

in terms of a 'competitive psychology' as well as in terms of monopoly, private profit, and oligarchy - Woolf was able to associate capitalism with a wide range of domestic and international ills. This suited his propagandist purpose. It enabled him to blame capitalism for bellicosity and even some of the defects of socialism as well as for the standard ills of social injustice and working class poverty. His conception of capitalism was, therefore, a weapon at least in part fashioned to bring capitalism down. But in equating capitalism in effect with egotism, Woolf was blaming it for evils which, even according to the most extreme interpretations, considerably pre-date the emergence of capitalism as a distinct mode of economic organization. One can only conclude that Woolf's capitalism is something of a scapegoat.⁴⁶

Co-operation and Democracy

Much of what Woolf wrote on Co-operation concerned the democratic control of industry. For our purposes it is important to note his central argument, and also the aspects of it which may be regarded as undemocratic. These are important because they help to explain why Woolf's ideas about international economic organization took little

⁴⁶ One which, incidentally, he was unable to sustain. He suggests in one place that the impulse of self-interest is 'part of human nature'. He suggests in another that 'the motive of profit-making has probably always existed in human beings' (with industry transforming it into 'the most universal and perhaps the strongest of all the streams of individual and social psychology'). Woolf, The Control of Industry by Co-operators and Trade Unionists, 11; Socialism and Co-operation, 90.

account of the liberty of states to define and pursue their own economic interests. They also help to explain why even such a democratically minded socialist as Woolf could sometimes suggest things of a highly authoritarian nature.

Woolf conceived democracy in terms of government for the whole people by the whole people, and he felt, at least up until the late 1920s, that the only way of achieving this was through consumers' Co-operation. Woolf was critical of certain types of socialism because he felt they would lead to government for part of the people by part of the people: that is, government for and by a special interest. This special interest might comprise the majority of the population, but it was still, in Woolf's view, a special interest since large numbers of people would be excluded.⁴⁷ It was this conception of democracy that prompted Woolf's doubts about the Soviet Union: government by Soviets was, regardless of the elaborate mechanisms and institutions designed to make them democratically accountable, government by the Party, and the Party was only a small minority of the whole population. Similarly, syndicalism, guild socialism, and other types of 'producer socialism' could not be considered democratic since producers constituted only one part, albeit a large one, of the whole population. Calculated in straight-forward utilitarian terms, the substitution of producer socialism for capitalism would, no doubt, be a

⁴⁷ Most notably, women, who were far out-numbered by men in industrial production. See The Control of Industry by the People, passim.

great improvement. But it would not necessarily result in real democracy since government by producers would inevitably mean government for producers. In this regard Woolf's observations were highly prescient, at least as far as the British industrial scene is concerned, in that he accurately predicted what would happen if producers gained political power. The trade union syndicalism of the 1970s, as Noel Annan has recently described it, would have not surprised Woolf in the least.⁴⁸

The answer to the problem of the democratic control of industry and the economy lay not in the Soviet, the guild, the state, or the municipality, but in the consumer. And the beauty of the consumer was that everyone was one:

The owners of capital will always be only a small minority of the whole community, and industrial workers can never be more than a large majority. But every one, man, woman and child, is in the nature of things a consumer. In a sense therefore the co-operator consumers represent the whole community in a way in which the capitalists or the workers could never represent it.⁴⁹

Through the dividend on purchase and quarterly and annual meetings of the whole society, Co-operation, Woolf claimed, was the optimum, most democratic form of industrial organization. Unlike capitalism and producer socialism, Co-operation gave consumers control of what was to be produced, in what quantities, to what standards, and at what price. Co-operators also had control over investment decisions by being able, at the annual meetings of their

⁴⁸ See Noel Annan, Our Age: The Generation that Made Post-War Britain (London, 1991), 453-85, esp. 469.

⁴⁹ Woolf, Co-operation and the Future of Industry, 36.

respective societies, to set the level of dividend. Co-operators decided who they wanted as managers; they also chose their delegates to the CWS.

In characteristic Fabian style Woolf argued that one of the advantages the Co-operation over other forms of socialism was that it was already a real and living thing which had already proven its abilities. By the 1920s the Co-operative Society had a membership of over 4 million and was in the process of becoming the country's largest commercial concern. Woolf ardently believed that socialism could be best achieved by the progressive development of Co-operative organization until it became conterminous with society as a whole - at which point all citizens would be members and all production Co-operative production.

Woolf enthusiastically welcomed the growth of international Co-operative trade - trade between the Co-operative movements of several countries - which had begun to take root in the early years after the War. He saw this as a means by which gains to trade could be maximized and natural endowments exploited without the need to enter the international struggle for markets and profits. Each national society would become a member of each other national society with whom it did business. Each would be entitled to receive, as with domestic Co-operative organization, a dividend on purchase. The welfare of each would thereby be intermeshed with the welfare of all.

In Woolf's view, consumers' co-operation in Britain, Germany, and several other countries had reached the stage

at which its 'ordinary business of supplying its members' demands and its normal development' would be hampered unless 'the co-operative system and co-operative control' could be extended to 'the international exchange of manufactured or partly manufactured goods and to the import and export of food stuffs and the raw materials of industry.' This was a fact of 'immediate and practical importance' but also one of 'wider significance'. There were many Co-operators who saw Co-operation as an alternative to the capitalist system. But, Woolf asserted, it was obvious that Co-operation could only take the place of capitalism in a very limited field if it did not adapt itself to international trade:

Industry, commerce, and finance tend to become ever more and more international, and the basis of the capitalist's strength is more often than not to be found in his control of foreign markets, the foreign supplies of raw materials, and the channels of foreign trade. The co-operator will never oust capitalism and its evils unless it can oust the capitalist from foreign trade.⁵⁰

Three interrelated problems with Woolf's thesis on the relationship between Co-operation and democracy merit emphasis. The first has to do with Woolf's conception of democracy; the second with his notion of the 'spirit of democracy'; the third with the relationship between coercion and democracy.

Woolf's rejection of producer socialism was based on the assumption that democracy meant 'rule by all the

⁵⁰ Woolf, International Co-operative Trade, 4-5.

people'. Since producers formed a group which fell well short of all the people, producer control of industry could not be described as democratic.

There is a problem with this conception of democracy which Woolf recognized but never fully addressed. Even if Co-operation became conterminous with society as a whole, decisions would inevitably be made by a group smaller than society as a whole, and even if this group constituted a majority, control of industry would still be 'in the hands, not of all the people, but of the majority of the people'.⁵¹ Woolf recommended the setting up of committees in order to protect the rights of minorities and suggested that clearly identifiable minorities within the movement, such as employees, should have permanent representation on such committees. But he never managed to convincingly square democracy with the need for executive action - though it might be said that this is a flaw in the notion of direct democracy per se, certainly as applied to large and complex societies, as much as it is a flaw in the particular brand of it that Woolf was advocating. One solution, of course, would be to define democracy in terms of universal suffrage and representation rather than to rely, as Woolf does, on a literal definition. This would satisfy his criterion of universality (government by the whole people) without having to concede that failure of all the people to participate in all important decisions meant that democracy was to that extent deficient. Yet for some

⁵¹ Woolf, The Control of Industry by the People, 12.

reason Woolf was reluctant to go down the 'representative democracy' (viv á vis 'direct democracy') road. In one of his most substantial and, indeed, highly sophisticated treatments of the subject, he defines democracy in terms of 'politically equal rights and socially equal opportunities' involving 'equal rights to happiness' and the treatment 'politically' of everyone as an individual rather than as a member of a particular class or social group.⁵² This is a remarkably broad definition. It is also eccentric in making no reference to the process of government or the basis of representation in government. Perhaps one reason for this is that he could not stomach the idea that if a majority chose capitalism, fascism, or communism, that decision would, by virtue of that fact, be democratic.⁵³

Secondly, Woolf contended that democracy could not be achieved by democratic machinery alone: democratic machinery had to be accompanied by 'democratic spirit'. By this Woolf had in mind a cluster of things such as a sense of responsibility, 'a wide and real interest in the machinery of government and administration', a willingness to actively participate, and a sense of the good of the whole.⁵⁴ With respect to Co-operation, Woolf argues that 'half the good of democratic control of industry' would be

⁵² Woolf, 'Can Democracy Survive?' in Mary Adams (ed.), The Modern State (London, 1933), 42, 24-25.

⁵³ In the same volume Lord Eustace Percy accuses Woolf of confusing what democracy is with what he would like it to do.

⁵⁴ Woolf, 'Can Democracy Survive?', 7-12; Co-operation and the Future of Industry, 50-55.

lost if the level of dividend became the main object:

Co-operators ought always to remember that they are controlling industry for the people, and that they are in a society not in order to make a profit, but in order to supply themselves with goods.⁵⁵

While one can sympathise with certain elements of this view, it can be objected that it rests on a particular conception of the purposes of Co-operation and leaves little room for Co-operators to define these purposes themselves. What if the majority of Co-operators in any given Society decide that their sole objective should be to maximize the dividend? For Woolf this would suggest a lack of democratic spirit. But the implication of this is that whether or not this spirit exists depends on whether or not Woolf's conception of the good of the whole is being pursued: a dogmatic and undemocratic position.

Thirdly, Woolf's conception of democracy is not entirely coercion-free. There are two striking illustrations of this. While the first, concerning Co-operative education, might be described as a form of paternalism; the second, concerning the organization of industrial production, is almost certainly a form of authoritarianism. Woolf believed that education was central to the proper working of democracy. In particular he believed, as mentioned, that 'a wide and real interest in the machinery of government and administration' was a major ingredient of the democratic spirit. The implication of this for Co-operation was that members inter alia would

⁵⁵ Woolf, The Control of Industry by the People, 8.

have to study and understand the business of the Society, study and understand its balance sheets, and regularly attend its meetings. But what if they didn't? What if they were happy to leave all this to their managers and delegates?

Woolf argued that lack of interest was 'the most serious danger to all democracies ... it is certainly the most serious danger to the Co-operative movement'. If a citizen or member did not feel responsible for the actions of the institutions that governed him, 'real democratic control' was absent. His solution was, however, somewhat alarming:

I often think that one of the most urgent needs in the movement is an organisation which will take this matter in hand. For instance, in every society there might be a democracy committee possibly of the Women's and Men's Guilds. This committee should see that every new member of the society is visited personally by someone who would explain the democratic nature of the movement, and impress upon him or her the importance of attending meetings and understanding the business of the society. The committee should have pamphlets explaining these things and also the meaning of balance sheets, and the visitor should leave these pamphlets with every new member. Further, the committee should watch the attendance at meetings, and note the names of those members who do not attend, and they should then call personally upon such member [sic] and try to persuade them to take an active share in the control and affairs of the society.⁵⁶

While Woolf's intentions - his desire to create an 'active democracy' - are admirable, his methods, witnessed from a post-1984 and post-Darkness at Noon world, seem rather like the Fabian equivalent of 'sending the boys round'.

But Woolf's somewhat sinister paternalism is sometimes

⁵⁶ Ibid. 11-12.

accompanied by overt authoritarianism. This is best exemplified by his scheme for 'national service in industrial production'.⁵⁷ The way he arrives at this scheme is impeccably logical but the outcome is, to say the least, disturbing. He contended that capitalism combined with industrialism produced shoddy, useless goods that consumers were cajoled into buying. He also contended that industrial production was a miserable activity which delivered not a shred of job satisfaction. Given these facts he argued that industry should concentrate on producing a smaller range of basic, but well-made goods. More elaborate and luxurious goods should be produced in a traditional, non-commercial way. He also argued that no one should be forced to spend their entire working life in 'industrial slavery'. A return to a medieval system of arts and crafts was not, however, feasible. Industrial production was by far the most efficient way of producing goods with mass demand.⁵⁸ It was in this sense it was 'necessary'. Since, however, industry would in future only be devoted to provision of the basics, less manpower would be needed to work it. Consequently the most appropriate way of organizing industry would be to introduce a scheme whereby every able-bodied citizen would be required for three months of the year to make themselves available for

⁵⁷ Woolf, Co-operation and the Future of Industry, 122-38; Socialism and Co-operation, 65-110.

⁵⁸ Woolf also contended that industrial production held such a grip on communal psychology that it would be impossible to abandon.

industrial work. For the remainder of the year their time would be free to concentrate on producing more intrinsically valuable goods. Such a system would be egalitarian in that everyone would spend an equal amount of time engaged in the horrible but necessary job of industrial production; it would be efficient in that the best means available for producing the necessities of life would be utilized; it would better provide the 'good life' since no one would be forced to consume the shoddy products of capitalism and everyone would be free for most of the year to engage in more satisfying work.⁵⁹

The problems with such a system are legion and space does not permit full consideration of them here. Suffice it to say that even to be minimally effective it would require almost complete acceptance by all sections of society and, most probably, either the organization of the economies of other countries on similar lines, or the closing down of frontiers to foreign trade. The latter, of course, would not be acceptable to Woolf for the 'liberal internationalist' reasons outlined above. The international problem is, however, fundamental since the system advocated by Woolf would be vulnerable to cheaper, mass-produced imports, which if not artificially kept at bay could seriously undermine domestic economic stability.

But what is also striking about the system is its

⁵⁹ The parallels with Holyoake's view of consumers' association as 'a moral art as well as a new form of economy' are considerable. See Peter Guernsey, 'George Jacob Holyoake: Socialism, Association, and Co-operation in Nineteenth Century England', in Yeo New Views, 52-72.

reliance on compulsion. What would be done with those who refused to perform their democratic duties? Isn't dissent inevitable in the absence of severe, perhaps Draconian, measures to prevent it? Given his persistent and trenchant criticisms of the Soviet model, Woolf's endorsement of such a system is surprising to say the least.⁶⁰

Co-operation and Peace

Woolf contended that the best way of creating a peaceful and prosperous international economic system was through the expansion of intentional Co-operative trade.⁶¹ What was it about Co-operation that Woolf believed led to peace?

Despite the boldness of his claims Woolf's explanation was brief. Essentially he put forward three related arguments. First, he maintained that in contrast to the producer, and especially the capitalist producer, '[t]he psychology of the consumer is economically and internationally pacific'.⁶² The need for the capitalist to make a profit meant that he was in constant competition with other capitalists, and given the prevalence of nationalism, patriotism, and social Darwinism, international trade almost always degenerated into

⁶⁰ Woolf was not unaware of the problem. In Socialism and Co-operation (98-100) he accepts that compulsion is an 'evil' but argues that it is impossible to conceive of an economic system which entirely does away with the need for it.

⁶¹ Or 'inter-co-operative trade'. See Woolf, International Economic Policy, 10.

⁶² Woolf, 'Way of Peace', 18.

international economic conflict. Even though trade was undertaken by firms and businesses rather than states it came to be regarded as a measure of national profit and loss. For example:

The sale of Lyons silk to a German purchaser in Dresden ... naturally came to be regarded as a gain of France at the expense of Germany, and in this crude economic psychology the statistics of a nation's imports became the measure of its international economic loss.⁶³

Co-operation, by contrast, did not involve the pursuit of profit since its purpose was to satisfy the needs of its members. Consequently, there was no need to compete (though Woolf did recognize that until the Co-operative transformation of the economy was complete, Co-operatives would have no choice but to compete with capitalists⁶⁴) and the dangers of such competition degenerating into open hostility would therefore be avoided.

Secondly, Woolf maintained that '[t]he consumer is your only real internationalist and true citizen of the world'.⁶⁵ Consumers, he felt, were essentially indifferent to the country of origin of the goods they bought. What mattered to them was the satisfaction of their needs in the most effective way possible. Thus, for consumers, international trade was not a zero-sum game but 'a vast and intricate co-operative enterprise, the sole object of which

⁶³ Ibid. 7.

⁶⁴ See Woolf, The Control of Industry by Co-operators and Trade Unionists, passim; 'The Co-operative Movement and Socialism', passim.

⁶⁵ Woolf, 'Way of Peace', 14.

is to supply the world's needs'.⁶⁶ The consumer was not, in consequence, prey to the patriotism and nationalism that so accentuated competition among producers. In the interests of a peace trade should therefore be organized from the point of view of the consumer rather than the producer.

Thirdly, Woolf argued that the world was becoming more interdependent and that Co-operative organization was more in tune with this world than capitalist competition. One of the reasons why capitalism, and the economic nationalism that went with it, led to international hostility and war was that it attempted to force the actual growth of international society into a mould that could no longer contain it. Consumer co-operation, by contrast, was a type of economic organization in keeping with this growth. Essentially Woolf was saying was that the development of what I called in Chapter 3 the 'cosmopolitan international government' meant that economic organization, to be effective, needed to be increasingly inclusive and transnational rather than exclusive and national.

The Shift to Non-Co-operative International Economic Organization

In Woolf's post-Second World War proposals for international economic reconstruction, the Co-operative movement does not get a mention. This is striking because,

⁶⁶ Ibid. 14.

as described above, Woolf was utterly convinced that 'inter-co-operative trade' (and not only trade, but eventually finance too), would be the most effective way of organizing the world economy in the interests of peace and prosperity. Woolf's relegation of Co-operation is in a sense evidence of his realism. His proposals of the 1920s were largely ignored by the Labour movement. The extensive development of inter-co-operative trade he recommended had not materialized. In recognition of these facts Woolf shifted his attention to more orthodox ideas about international economic reform.

An Economic Council of the League

Yet it should be noted that this was more a stepping-back than an about-turn since from the outset there had been more than one strand to his thought on the subject. In International Government Woolf advanced a highly eclectic vision of international economic co-operation.⁶⁷ As early as 1919 he had advocated an 'International Commission of the League' for Africa to protect the natives from white exploitation and 'guarantee' free trade and the Open Door in Africa.⁶⁸ In 1923 he proposed the formation of an 'Economic Council of the League' with functions remarkably similar to what later became ECOSOC, the IMF, and the

⁶⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 5; and Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 365-68.

IBRD.⁶⁹ This kind of prescription for the treatment of international economic ills - the setting up of international institutions with research, regulatory, supervisory, and sometimes re-distributive functions - was a consistent strand in Woolf's thought.

In his important 1923 pamphlet Woolf argued that a 'negative' international policy of opposing protectionism should be accompanied by a 'positive' or 'constructive' international policy of co-operation to settle economic differences and develop common interests. This could be achieved by developing the existing Allied Supreme Economic Council into a World Economic Council of the League. This would have a seven permanent functions. First, the maintenance of credit to ensure the supply and 'fair allocation' of important materials and to provide against 'unnecessary disturbance of world conditions through a breakdown of purchasing power in a particular country owing to preventable causes.' Second, the 'development of international lines and means of communication either where the interests of two or more nations are concerned, e.g., Baghdad Railway, or where a supply of raw materials or a market of world importance could be opened up by the co-operation of nations in providing credit or labour or technical skill or other resources.' Third, the 'regulation of loans and concessions in undeveloped countries' and 'the safeguarding of such countries from unfair exploitation or monopolisation by particular

⁶⁹ Woolf, International Economic Policy, 8-10.

interests of nations'. Fourth, the 'co-ordination and development of the work of public international unions' and cooperation with them in 'schemes having as their object world economic interests' (e.g. the 'international organisation of agriculture', the 'international insurance of crops', and the collection and publication of 'accurate international, economic statistics'). Fifth, the 'promotion of international economic conventions based on the widest measure of international co-operation, e.g. commercial treaties, Labour conventions, traffic agreements'. Sixth, the '[s]upervision and enforcement of international economic conventions' and the 'prevention of exploitation by trusts ... operating in the world market'. Seventh, the 'promotion and creation of international conferences or councils in various industries and economic groups, in order to secure the greatest possible measure of co-operation in each group'.⁷⁰

Although novel, indeed revolutionary, at the time, the idea that responsibility for the performance of such functions should be entrusted to international institutions is now a part of the epistemic fabric of international relations. Many of these functions, though not by a single overarching body, and not always in the decisive way envisaged by Woolf, are now performed by such institutions as ECOSOC, the IMF, the IBRD, the FAO, the ILO, the OECD, UNCTAD, and the WTO - to name only a few of the more illustrious bodies in the field. Although this may not be

⁷⁰ Ibid. 9-10.

testimony to Woolf's direct influence on the creation of the post-War economic order, it is undoubtedly testimony to the influence of a group of left-leaning, progressive thinkers who consistently argued for this kind of 'welfare' or 'constructive' internationalism. Here I have in mind, along with Woolf, such thinkers as Angell, Cole, Hobson, Keynes, Mitrany, Arthur Salter and, indeed, in his reformist mode, E. H. Carr.⁷¹

Although most of the reforms Woolf proposed at this time were reformist in nature, not all of them were. In places Woolf goes beyond constructive internationalism and explicitly advocates central international planning. In Wight's terms this is a form of revolutionism.⁷² Whereas constructive internationalism leaves the society of states more or less intact, central international planning presupposes or implies something which goes beyond it - a community of all mankind perhaps with a single world government. To illustrate, as well as recommending the maintenance of credit to ensure the supply of important commodities, Woolf also advocates the allocation of 'supplies and credit according to need'. He advocates not

⁷¹ See Suganami, The Domestic Analogy, 100-111; David Long, Towards a New Liberal Internationalism: The International Theory of J. A. Hobson, University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1991; Craig Murphy, International Organization and Industrial Change (Oxford, 1994), 153-87; Peter Wilson, 'The New Europe Debate in Wartime Britain', in Philomema Murray and Paul Rich (Eds.), Visions of European Unity (Boulder, CO, 1996).

⁷² See Martin Wight, International Theory: The Three Traditions, eds. Brian Porter and Gabrielle Wight, (Leicester, 1991).

only the 'co-ordination and development' of public international unions such as the Institute for Agriculture, but also 'the international organisation of agriculture and the distribution of agricultural products'. He speaks not only of the 'supervision' of international economic conventions, but also of their 'enforcement'. He talks not only of 'preventing exploitation' by trusts, international firms, and combines, but also of 'controlling their operations'.⁷³

These ideas assume a degree of central control (though Woolf left open the composition and decision-making procedures of his World Economic Council) which according to some definitions would spell the end of state sovereignty.⁷⁴ They also assume a degree of human solidarity and cohesion which greatly exceeds that which pertains in the society of states.

A Central World Authority

It was Woolf's revolutionism rather than his reformism which informed his proposals for international economic organization in the 1940s. He argued that the primary

⁷³ Woolf, International Economic Policy, 9-10. Woolf's frequent use of the word 'control' with respect to commerce and industry arguably implies a static conception of these activities. He never talks of 'encouraging' efficiency or 'stimulating' innovation or 'attracting' investment.

⁷⁴ See for example Alan James, Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society (London, 1986). It could be argued that given the universal importance of economics to the modern state, distribution of 'supplies and credit' by a central body would alone severely compromise states' 'constitutional independence'.

post-War task was to 'establish an economic and political authority as the nucleus of international government' adding that this would not be possible in the absence of 'a radical change in the attitude to and form of what is known as national state sovereignty'. He contended that the world had become 'so closely integrated' that the claim of states to 'economic sovereignty' - 'unregulated and irresponsible control of their economic relations and power' - must inevitably lead to economic chaos. Sovereignty had become an 'unworkable anachronism': 'a dead fossil which must give place to a living organism adapted to the new conditions'. This meant that the state 'must enter and subject itself to a wider order and organisation'.⁷⁵

But this organization would not take the form of a superstate or a federation. It did, however, involve the renunciation by states of their right to make decisions irrespective of their impact on the rest of the world. The scope of the authority would be worldwide, though regional organizations would have an important role to play, particularly in the fields of economic development and transport. So too would functional organizations. Woolf applauded the creation of UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and the FAO, and called for 'bold experiment' along the lines of the Tennessee Valley Authority and, somewhat paradoxically, the trans-Europe

⁷⁵ Woolf, The International Post-War Settlement (London, 1944), 6-7.

system of heavy industry developed by the Nazis. The latter, if controlled by an international commission, would 'solve the difficult problem of preventing the great German monopolists, if they again controlled the heavy industries, from once more providing the weapons for aggressive war.'

In typical functionalist style Woolf contended that:

It is, perhaps, through such cooperation for economic purposes that Europe may learn most easily to forget some of its fatal obsessions with national frontiers and learn to cooperate politically.⁷⁶

But this said he firmly maintained that regional and functional organizations could not work effectively without a 'central world authority'. Such an authority was needed

... both to co-ordinate the activities of regional or functional international organs and to deal promptly and authoritatively with any action or situation which may threaten the world's peace or prosperity.⁷⁷

Woolf did not spell out what he meant by 'deal promptly and authoritatively with' but it would not be unreasonable to conclude that he had something far-reaching in mind: the 'first political task' of the authority would be establishment of a 'general system of law and order' and the creation of an 'effective system of collective security'. This in turn would entail 'effective control of international force adequate to meet the threat of national force' and the establishment of the necessary procedures and machinery to ensure 'prompt decisions and decisive action'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid. 7.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 7.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 8-9.

The economic aim of the authority was no less far-reaching: 'to enable eventually production, trade, distribution, and consumption to be organized and controlled internationally in the common interests of nations and peoples.' Although vague, this statement is significant in two respects. First, it shows that Woolf did not contemplate much of a role for market forces. This is confirmed by his belief that 'the economic and international principles of Socialism are the only sound ones and that unless European society is rebuilt on them, there can be no prosperity and peace' and that 'Labour's policy for the international post-war settlement must be founded uncompromisingly on Socialist principles.' It is further confirmed by his belief that the move from 'economic anarchy' to a 'system of international government of the world's production and consumption' could not be fully achieved until all states were socialist.⁷⁹ Secondly, it shows that Woolf did not expect the implementation of his scheme to be immediate.⁸⁰ Indeed because of the shortage of socialist states, immediate implementation was 'improbable', perhaps even 'impossible'. To this extent his revolutionism is qualified.

The vagueness of Woolf's proposals is highlighted by

⁷⁹ Ibid. 3, 7.

⁸⁰ Though by the same token he did not say it would be gradual. This ambiguity is partly explained by the fact that he did not want to give the impression to his largely socialist readership that they would have to wait an indefinite amount of time before their international socialist commonwealth could be created. Ibid. 6-8.

his estimation of what the authority would be capable of doing immediately. He specifies three things: most radically, the 'encouragement' and 'direction' of 'production and consumption on a world scale'; less radically, the removal of 'uneconomic barriers against international trade' (thus permitting 'economic' barriers such as the protection of infant industries, and 'emergency' protection to deal with balance of payments crises?); and less radically still, the making of rules and regulations to 'promote international economic cooperation and prevent economic aggression by, e.g., the restriction of supplies, the depreciation of exchange rates, or the abuse of monopoly powers'.

There are a number of problems with Woolf's proposals for non-Co-operative economic organization. Firstly, the institutional character and mode of operation of his 'central world authority' is unclear, as is the source of the considerable power he apportioned to it. Secondly, Woolf made no attempt to define or clarify such key terms as 'organize', 'control', 'direct', and, indeed, 'plan'. The exact nature and scope of his scheme remains therefore uncertain - although all the evidence points in the direction very substantial collective planning on a worldwide scale. For some, of course, this was the road to serfdom. Thirdly, many of his proposals presuppose the existence or immanence of a world community of mankind, a presupposition which Woolf makes no attempt to lay bare or

empirically demonstrate. Finally, in parallel with his vision of a 'Co-operative Commonwealth', Woolf strongly implied that some degree of compulsion would be needed in order to achieve the common good, but he failed to examine in any detail whether the compulsion of the new system would in any way be an improvement on the compulsion of the old.

Yet some of these weaknesses may also be strengths. It might be argued in particular that his ambiguity is largely due to reluctance to indulge in the business of drawing up constitutions or detailed blue-prints for future world orders. Woolf, like Carr, believed this to be a rather futile exercise. He saw great virtue in the 'trial and error' approach to institution-building.⁸¹ Having clear goals was important. So too was some idea as to how these goals might be accomplished. But elaborate theories did not always work in practice. Flexibility and a willingness to experiment was needed. So too was a willingness to accept progress in increments. The important point was to begin the move away from the political and economic laissez faire of the old nationalist, competitive, conflictual order, towards a new order based on cooperation, organization, and rational planning.

⁸¹ Most explicitly stated in International Co-operative Trade, 5, 21, 24.

The Question of Utopianism

The degree to which Woolf's thought on international economic organization can be regarded as utopian is no small matter. A comprehensive analysis would have to consider not only his proposals for a 'World Economic Council of the League', the expansion of 'inter-co-operative trade', and a post-War 'central world authority', but also his anti-capitalism, his anti-protectionism, his analysis of the relationship between Co-operation, democracy, and peace, and his (highly positive) evaluation of Co-operation as a mode of economic organization. To do this properly would require the skills not only of the international relations theorist but also of the economic and social historian - perhaps those of the economist and the political theorist, too.

This being said, there are several aspects of Woolf's thought in this area which are prime candidates for the epithet 'utopian' and which the international relations theorist is in a good position to assess.

Firstly, it might be said that Woolf is a utopian to the extent that ^{he} did not openly repudiate free trade. In Carr's view, free trade was an 'imaginary condition that has never existed'. The doctrine of free trade was based on the erroneous belief in a natural harmony of interests. Most damning of all, as highlighted in Chapter 2, free trade was not an absolute or universal principle but merely 'the unconscious reflection of national policy based on a

particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time.'

The simple equation, free trade = liberalism = utopianism, however, glosses over the fact that the centrality of free trade in liberal internationalism shifted as the tradition evolved. The Cobdenite association of free trade with civilization, prosperity, and peace, was not something that later thinkers uncritically accepted. Woolf is interesting from this viewpoint because he accepted many of the assumptions of nineteenth century 'free trade' liberalism but in a negative form - as a bastion against the evils of nationalism and mercantilism and as a stage in the transition to a more stable and peaceful international order based on Co-operation, regulation, and planning. If some of his assumptions were liberal, his vision was essentially Owenian and Fabian. He shared Owen's goal of 'the complete elimination of profit and the profit-maker'.⁸² He also shared Owen's 'New Vision of Society in which all would work together in a rational manner for the common good, without need of a violent revolution'.⁸³ He joined the Fabians in viewing free markets - even if preferable to capitalist 'controlled' markets - as

⁸² Beatrice Potter, The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain (Aldershot, Gower in association with the London School of Economics, 1987 [1891]), p.xxxiii. (See also Woolf's own account of Owenism in Co-operation and the Future of Industry, 17-35).

⁸³ Margaret Cole, 'Preface', in Potter, The Co-operative Movement, xxiii.

essentially the freedom to exploit. In connection with all these things he shared Wallas's hope that co-operation could be substituted for competition as the fundamental principle of social organization.⁸⁴

So, while Woolf borrowed from liberalism in his repudiation of mercantilism, his constructive policy derives from the British socialist tradition. Indeed, Woolf was one of the first thinkers to apply some of the doctrines of mainstream British socialist thought to international questions. And it is striking that despite Woolf's reputation as a utopian and Carr's as a realist both men attempted to do this - as will be seen in the next chapter - in their proposals for post-War international economic organization.

Secondly, it might be said that Woolf's proposals for non-co-operative international economic organization were utopian in the sense that they ignored certain facts - such as the limited degree of solidarity in international society - and they failed to take proper account of the role of national power. Here a distinction needs to be made between Woolf's reformist and revolutionist proposals. The former proposals - those pertaining to international bodies with research, regulatory, supervisory, and limited re-distributive functions - are not so vulnerable to the charge of utopianism since, despite jealously guarding their sovereignty, states have shown themselves to be

⁸⁴ M. J. Weiner, 'Wallas, Graham (1858-1932): Fabian Socialist and Political Psychologist', in Bellamy and Saville, Dictionary of Labour Biography, 227.

consistently willing to set up such bodies in order to manage common interests. Woolf's reformist proposals are only utopian to the extent that the FAO, the ILO, and the IBRD are utopian. Woolf's revolutionist proposals - those involving central 'direction', 'distribution', 'enforcement', and 'control' - are more vulnerable to the charge. In the main, states have been unwilling to invest international bodies with such powers - the Court and Commission of the European Union being notable exceptions. This is basically due to insufficient solidarity between the members of international society with respect to core economic interests, values, and goals. While states have seen advantages, for example, in setting up and funding international financial bodies to help countries in balance of payments difficulties, or with short-term liquidity, or longer-term structural problems, they have not seen advantages in setting up bodies with far-reaching powers to 'direct' or 'control' production and distribution. This is partly due to the hegemonic status of 'embedded' or 'managed' liberalism in international economic relations which, in turn, is largely due to the reluctance of the major economic Powers to relinquish to 'outsiders' formal control over those areas of their economic lives they deem central to their economic, social, and political well-being. To the extent, therefore, that Woolf overestimated the degree of solidarity between states on these core matters, or the prospects for achieving such solidarity in the near future, his proposals are utopian - though no more

utopian than Carr's proposal for a European Planning Authority with ultimate responsibility for 'vital decisions on European economic policies'.⁸⁵

Carr claimed that during the utopian stage of the political sciences 'investigators ... pay little attention to existing "facts" or to the analysis of cause and effect, but ... devote themselves whole-heartedly to the elaboration of visionary projects for the attainment of ends which they have in view'. It might be said, finally, that Woolf's plans for the expansion of international Co-operative trade constitute such a 'visionary project'. Woolf conceived international Co-operative trade as a genuine alternative to the faltering 'capitalist system of foreign trade'.⁸⁶ He asserted that the potential for developing international Co-operative trade was 'almost unlimited'.⁸⁷ Yet capitalism has not only survived but has arguably gone from strength to strength. By contrast, international Co-operative trade never really got off the ground and Co-operation itself has all but vanished as an alternative mode of economic organization.

But the failure of Co-operation does not prove that Woolf's ideas at that time and in this respect were

⁸⁵ See E. H. Carr, Conditions of Peace (London, 1942), 236-75; Chapter 8, below. On the solidarity of international society see Hedley Bull's still unsurpassed, 'The Grotian Conception of International Society', in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds.), Diplomatic Investigations (London, 1966), 51-73.

⁸⁶ Woolf, 'The Development of the C.W.S.', 441.

⁸⁷ Woolf, International Co-operative Trade, 24.

utopian. This is a complex matter but the following facts about Co-operation during the inter-war period seem pertinent.

Firstly, the Co-operative system experienced rapid growth both vertically and horizontally. The CWS built or acquired factories in a range of industries including shoemaking, pottery, textiles, furniture, cutlery, building, bread-making, and fish-curing. It became a major dairy producer and arable farmer. In 1914 it owned less than 3,000 acres of agricultural land. By 1921 it owned nearly 35,000 acres. It became one of Britain's biggest wheat-growers and its biggest flour-miller. It had since before the war been her largest grocer. Due to its growing involvement in the building trade, it soon became one of her largest timber importers. Also by 1921, 5,550 trade union organizations and friendly societies were banking with the Co-operative. This was all part of an ambitious strategy to radically reduce the dependence of the Co-operative movement on capitalist manufactures, finance, and sources of supply.⁸⁸

Secondly, the CWS rapidly extended its operations overseas. In 1920 alone it acquired an additional 30,142 acres of tea plantations in India and 1,769 in Ceylon. New palm oil depots were opened in West Africa. In Canada

⁸⁸ Woolf, 'The Development of the C.W.S.', 440-1; Paddy Maguire, 'Co-operation and Crisis: Government, Co-operation, and Politics, 1917-1922', in Yeo, New Visions, 194.

10,000 acres of wheat fields were acquired.⁸⁹

Thirdly, the CWS traded with national Co-operative wholesale societies in 19 European countries. In addition trade took place between the CWS and local Co-operative societies in Australia, Canada, South Africa, India, Egypt, Palestine, Brazil, China, and Soviet Russia.⁹⁰

Fourthly, an international meeting of wholesale societies in 1919 agreed on various measures to expand international Co-operative trade including the establishment, in Manchester, of an International Central Bureau for the gathering of statistics and the dissemination of information.⁹¹

Fifthly, membership of Co-operative societies in Britain reached 1 million in 1905, 3 million in 1914, 4.5 million in 1920, and 6.5 million in 1938.⁹²

Sixthly, if the Co-operative movement itself did not appreciate its strength and potential, capital and the state certainly did. Small businesses and their spokesmen in Parliament had expressed concern about the growth of the movement as early as 1900. During the war the government kept the movement, as well as other actual or potential oppositional bodies, under surveillance, as did a number of

⁸⁹ Woolf, 'The Development of the C.W.S.', 440-1.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 440-1.

⁹¹ Ibid. 440-1; International Co-operative Trade, 8.

⁹² Stephen Yeo, 'Rival Clusters of Potential: Ways of Seeing Co-operation', in Yeo, New Views, 5; Maguire, 'Co-operation and Crisis', 192; Neil Killingback, 'Limits to Mutuality: Economic and Political Attacks on Co-operation During the 1920s and 1930s', in Yeo, New Views, 213, 216.

semi-official and private bodies such as the Engineering Employers' Federation and the Economic Study Club.⁹³ With the onset of the Depression, small shopkeepers in the industrial North began a political campaign to thwart the growth of the Co-operative movement. By 1932 they had the support not only of the multiple-shop companies and department stores, but big business and the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press. They saw the ability of Co-operatives to trade without profit as a major threat to their livelihoods which, since the war, had come to depend on the control of free competition through a system of price-fixing and boycotts. (According to one study, 3% of consumer-spending went on price-fixed goods in 1900. By 1938 the figure had reached 30%).⁹⁴ Bodies such as the National Chamber of Commerce, the National Traders' Defence League, and the explicitly anti-Co-operative National Organizations Co-ordinated Committee, vigorously lobbied the government to tax the 'dividend' and the 'trading surplus' of Co-operative societies and introduce other measures to curb their growth. The Treasury's Ritchie Committee had looked at this question in 1905, as had the Royal Commission on Income Tax in 1919, and a further Treasury investigation of 1927. All these bodies concluded that the dividend on purchase was not 'profit' or 'unearned income' but a 'rebate' or 'discount'. Co-operative societies were

⁹³ Maguire, 'Co-operation and Crisis', 191-2.

⁹⁴ J. B. Jeffreys, Retail Trading in Britain 1850-1950 (Cambridge, 1954), quoted in Killingback, 'Limits to Mutuality', 211.

not therefore benefitting from the 'special treatment' alleged by the shopkeepers. By the early 1930s, however, and despite a counter-campaign by the movement, opinion in the Treasury and among Conservative MPs had hardened. The shopkeepers largely achieved their legislative objective in 1933 when the Government adopted the report of a further specially established committee - the 1932 Raeburn Committee - which recommended that for tax purposes mutual societies should be treated as joint-stock companies (though much to the consternation of the shopkeepers it also recommended that the dividend should be treated as a (non-taxable) trading expense). This 'weakening of mutuality', according to one author, did much to thwart the development of the Co-operative movement.⁹⁵

Seventhly, two government enquiries into restrictive trade practices were conducted. By comparison with the repeated investigations into the tax position of the Co-operative movement they were half-hearted affairs. No action was taken. The status quo was effectively vindicated.⁹⁶

Though this is a big subject these facts go some way towards showing that the utopianism of this branch of Woolf's thought is far from total. Co-operation did not decline spontaneously because it was inherently less efficient than capitalism. Rather it was deliberately and

⁹⁵ See Neil Killingback's excellent, 'Limits to Mutuality', passim.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 211, 217.

successfully attacked and its progress was deliberately and successfully thwarted. Woolf provided numerous facts from a variety of primary and secondary sources to demonstrate the strength of Co-operation and the potential of international co-operative trade. He was not indulging in wishful thinking. His basic position, indeed, was a sober one. He did not maintain that international co-operative trade would definitely expand or definitely achieve its potential, but rather that a 'peculiarly favourable' moment existed for such expansion since 'the failure of the capitalist system to right itself' left the field open to Co-operators in so many markets.⁹⁷

He added, however, that 'it is characteristic of moments, and particularly favourable ones, that they pass.' The possibilities were 'not theoretical or utopian, but extremely practical and immediately attainable'. Everything depended, however, on whether the movement had the desire, knowledge, energy, and confidence to actively pursue them.⁹⁸

Nor was Woolf indulging in 'the elaboration of visionary projects for the attainment of ends which he had in view'. His main work is not 'visionary' in the sense of a 'blue-print' or a 'grand plan' but a an empirical and theoretical analysis of the various forms of international Co-operative trade and the ways in which they might be

⁹⁷ Woolf, International Co-operative Trade, 4, 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 9, 24. Co-operators were frequently condemned as utopian. See Killingback, 'Limits to Mutuality', 218-9.

developed. His principal recommendation was not the creation of new institutions such as a 'vast' International CWS with 'vague and general powers', but wider and more effective use of the methods and machinery - the 'depot system', joint international purchase, the 'agency system', the new Central Bureau - already in existence.

Chapter Eight

The Challenge of Carr

This chapter examines Leonard Woolf's response to E. H. Carr's critique of utopianism in The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-39. After giving an account of Woolf's response, I will assess its validity, particularly in terms of its accuracy and cogency. I will then compare the Carr-Woolf 'debate'¹ with our conventional understanding of the idealist-realist debate, the so-called 'first great debate' of IR. In particular I will ask whether, in the light of a renewed awareness of the former, our understanding of the latter should be in any way modified.

Woolf's Response to Carr

The Twenty Years' Crisis is widely regarded as a comprehensive attack on 'utopian' thought. In one sense this is true. It was aimed not only at the League but at all those 'devoted and energetic intellectuals' who supported it², at all those who believed peace and free trade to be universal interests, at the Union of Democratic Control, at proponents of a United States of Europe, and much else besides. But the attack is not comprehensive in

¹ I use inverted commas because, as far as I am aware, Carr did not reply to Woolf's rebuttal. Nor did Carr respond to his other critics - though arguably Conditions of Peace and, indeed, the second edition of Twenty Years' Crisis, constitutes such a response.

² Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 21-2.

the sense of being a detailed and systematic analysis and critique of the principal standard-bearers of utopian thought. Indeed, of all the figures Carr might have chosen to examine only four - Norman Angell, Arnold Toynbee, Alfred Zimmern, and Woodrow Wilson - are examined in any detail. Carr does not refer to Woolf. But given that Woolf was not only a staunch supporter of the League, but in an indirect way one of its architects, and also given that he shared many, though not all, of the ideas and aspirations Carr condemned as utopian, it is not surprising that he viewed the book, at least in part, as an attack on his own position. Indeed, as the following pages will show, Woolf was incensed by the book and wrote two stinging replies to it.³

Interestingly enough, only a few years before the publication of The Twenty Years' Crisis, Woolf had reviewed Carr's study of the nineteenth century anarchist Michael Bakunin. He praised the book in the highest terms. It was, he extolled, 'a model biography', written with 'remarkable impartiality'.⁴ By contrast Woolf regarded The Twenty Years' Crisis as anything but impartial and condemned it for being, among other things, a rationalization of violence. With more than a hint of Bloomsburyian condescension he even described it as

³ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', Political Quarterly, 11, 2 (April-June 1940); The War for Peace (London, 1940).

⁴ Woolf, 'Unheard of Adventures', Review of Michael Bakunin by E. H. Carr, and History of Anarchism in Russia by E. Yaroslavsky, New Statesman and Nation, 2 December 1937.

'superficial', 'vulgar', and 'absurd'.⁵ Such polemical language injured rather than aided Woolf's case. In the interests of intellectual sobriety, it is largely omitted from the following account.

Before moving on, it is important to note the general direction of Woolf's response. Carr's objections to collective security and the judicial settlement of international disputes were not countered by Woolf, despite the fact that he was a staunch advocate of both. Similarly, Woolf did not, directly at any rate, challenge Carr's conception of international morality - despite the fact that Carr claimed that the utopians completely misunderstood the nature of this morality.⁶ It is also significant that although Woolf recognized the duality of 'reality' and 'utopia' in Carr's analysis, he failed to appreciate that Carr conceived them dialectically.⁷ Instead, Woolf gave most of his attention to Carr's

⁵ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 172; War for Peace, 117, 178.

⁶ Of the many marginal comments expressing puzzlement, disbelief, and consternation in Woolf's review copy of Twenty Years' Crisis, only one expresses approval: on p.279 where Carr discusses the role of morality in peaceful change and argues that a procedure of peaceful negotiation requires 'not merely an acute perception on both sides of the strength and weakness of their respective positions at any given time, but also a certain measure of common feeling as to what is just and reasonable in their mutual relations, a spirit of give-and-take and even of potential self-sacrifice, so that a basis, however imperfect, exists for discussing demands on grounds of justice recognised by both.'

⁷ For a striking interpretation of this aspect of Carr's thought see R. H. S. Crossman, 'Illusions of Power - E. H. Carr', in R. H. S. Crossman, The Charm of Politics and other essays in political criticism (London, 1958), 93.

construction of realism and his realist critique of utopianism.

His underlying objection to Carr's thesis was its determinism. Like many other writers of the period, Woolf believed in the power of reason properly, intelligently, applied. He was a voluntarist. He believed that change, perhaps fundamental, was possible if enough people believed in it. Woolf found Carr's thesis, especially as stated in Parts I and II, particularly disturbing because it suggested, and not without a certain diabolical relish, that good intentions mean nothing, that everything that happens happens inevitably, and that nothing can be done to make a miserable world less so.

The Meaning of 'Utopian'

Carr claimed that his analysis laid the foundations for a 'science' of international relations. Woolf rejected this claim on the grounds that Carr's principal concepts were ambiguous, and no enquiry could claim to be scientific if it rested on insecure conceptual foundations. In particular, the concept of 'utopia' was used to mean two very different things. On the one hand, it was used to mean 'false beliefs' or 'falsehoods'. On the other hand, it was used to mean 'impossibility of attainment'. One could not, in consequence, be sure of what Carr meant when he described the doctrines of nineteenth century liberals, and the ideas of League supporters, as 'utopian'. Did he mean that their ideas and arguments were false? Or did he

mean that their objectives and policies could not be attained? According to Woolf, Carr said a good deal about the falseness of their beliefs, 'but he never clearly demonstrates to us why their objectives and policies were impossible of attainment'.⁸ This failure to distinguish between the two meanings of the term 'utopian' led, in Woolf's view, to considerable confusion.

The Utopianism of Realism

Woolf argued that there were two senses in which realism was utopian. First, Carr asserted that whereas realism was concerned with 'facts', 'realities', and 'cause and effect', utopianism was concerned with 'principles', 'ideals', and 'ends'. Unlike realists, utopians did not analyze political problems, they merely proposed solutions to them believing they would work simply because they had to.⁹ Woolf refuted the claim that so-called utopians pay no attention to 'facts'. He referred, for example, to his own analysis of the facts of the nineteenth century (in International Government), which demonstrated that the organization of human society was becoming increasingly international rather than national. It was also a fact, Woolf maintained, that national self-determination - the logical conclusion of nationalism - was incompatible with an international system based on power politics: if power

⁸ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 172.

⁹ Woolf, War for Peace, 114. Note also, on the same page, Woolf's depiction of Carr's view of utopianism as 'a kind of dream world of wishful thinking'.

and force were to remain the principal determinants of international relations the independence of small states could never be more than temporary.¹⁰ He also referred to another set of facts which Carr ignored: the massive swell of opinion at the end of the war calling for 'no more war' and demanding 'never again'. During this time there was a deeper and more widespread hatred of war among European peoples than ever before. According to Woolf,

Their aspiration may or may not have been utopian ... but their convictions, the state of their minds were a political reality which was having profound effects all over Europe and which not even the most realist statesman, general, or historian could afford to neglect.¹¹

And the achievement of this aspiration was not without precedent. There had, after all, been a similar swell of opinion immediately after the previous great war. Just as public opinion had declared war intolerable in 1918, so it had declared slavery intolerable in 1815 - and to considerable effect. In Woolf's words:

Their [the common people's] demand was so insistent that, although many practical men and professors proved that it was utopian to attempt to abolish slavery, it was in the face of considerable opposition and with some difficulty abolished.¹²

Carr was mistaken, therefore, to assert that 'utopians' ignored facts.

Carr was also mistaken to claim that only so-called

¹⁰ Ibid. 77. This is a good example of the utopian propensity to 'couch optative propositions in the indicative mood'. See Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 17.

¹¹ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 168.

¹² Woolf, War for Peace, 59.

utopians were concerned with principles, ideals, and ends. In Woolf's view all statesmen pursue ends and even base their actions on principles. Bismarck, for example, pursued the end (perhaps even the 'ideal') of German unification. Hitler pursued the ideal of a New Europe based on German supremacy. Both these statesmen pursued 'ends' which were probably 'ideals', yet neither of them were deemed utopian as logic required. On the contrary they were deemed realist.

In addition, realism itself might become a 'principle' if statesmen believe it with sufficient conviction, particularly so if realism was equated with 'the ends justify the means'. In Woolf's view, Carr's realism could be interpreted in this way. Even if the validity of the assertion that utopianism is concerned with 'principles' whereas realism is concerned with 'facts' was accepted, there remained the problem that Carr sometimes implied that the terms 'morality' and 'power' could be substituted, respectively, for 'principles' and 'facts'.¹³ This, Woolf argued, came very close to saying that whereas utopians took morality into account in the enactment of policy, realists did not. This, in turn, was tantamount to suggesting that ends justify means. The problem here was that, in Woolf's words: 'If this is realism, it is itself a 'principle' and based upon morality, for the judgement that the ends [state power, national interest] justify the

¹³ For example, Carr's comment that 'Every political situation contains mutually incompatible elements of Utopia and Reality, of morality and power'. Quoted in *ibid.* 118.

means is itself an ethical judgement'.¹⁴

Carr's claim that realism was not concerned with 'ends', 'ideals', 'principles', or indeed, 'morality', did not, therefore, stand up. Moreover, this way of looking at things led to some very odd conclusions:

According to Professor Carr, we should have to say that Hitler is utopian in so far as he has ethical ends and a realist in so far as he uses power to attain them, and that the means, even though they attain the ends, are incompatible with the ends. There must be something very wrong with a theory and a definition which lead to such conclusions.¹⁵

The second sense in which Woolf considered realism to be utopian was its inability to achieve its goals. In Woolf's view

... nothing is more 'utopian' than the idea that you can create a stable and permanent society by power and the pursuit of conflicting interests; the ideal is unattainable because it involves an attempt to use two of the most unstable and disintegrating of all social forces, violence in the service of cupidity, as the primary ingredients in the cement which is to hold society together.¹⁶

Indeed, realism could not even achieve its own goals with any degree of permanence. The Great Powers who had provoked war in 1790, 1815, 1870, 1914, and 1939 had not gained from their actions; they had not gained from their 'ruthless pursuit of conflicting interests'.¹⁷ The realpolitik of Germany towards Czechoslovakia, for

¹⁴ Ibid. 120.

¹⁵ Ibid. 119.

¹⁶ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 177.

¹⁷ Ibid. 176.

instance, could only, at best, achieve temporary gains. If the hallmark of realism was success, then what was to be made, Woolf asked, of the 'realism' of Napoleon I, Napoleon III, Bismarck, Wilhelm II, the Russian Czars, and the British imperialists? If success was the criterion, these 'realists' were, in fact, 'utopians'. As Woolf contended in typically acerbic style:

Five hundred years of European history have proved that the 'realist' system of power politics, war, and the conflict of interests is grotesquely utopian. Its purpose is to ensure stability of national power, glory, prosperity, and peace; its result has been a kaleidoscope of loud voiced jingoism and national glory alternating with war, defeat, misery, and impoverishment.¹⁸

Immutable Interests

According to Woolf, Carr argued that there was something intrinsic to states and their relations that gave their power and conflicting interests a peculiar reality over and above cooperation and common interests, and made a harmony of interests impossible.¹⁹ 'Interests', Woolf contended, had become the political and social shibboleth of the

¹⁸ Ibid. 178-9. Woolf's view of power politics was not at the time an uncommon one, nor indeed one confined to radical intellectuals. On the creation of the United Nations, President Roosevelt declared: 'It spells - and it should spell - the end of the system of unilateral action, exclusive alliances, and spheres of influence, and balances of power, and all other expedients which have been tried for centuries and always failed'. Quoted in Michael Howard, 'The United Nations and International Security', in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury (eds.), United Nations, Divided World: The United Nations' Roles in International Relations (Oxford, 1988), 31.

¹⁹ Woolf, War for Peace, 124-6.

twentieth century, just as 'utility' had been in the nineteenth century, and 'rights' in the eighteenth. The doctrine that certain national interests possessed a peculiar reality was one among several twentieth century doctrines in which

interests are treated just as natural rights were regarded in the eighteenth century, as fixed and immutable 'natural' elements in society, hard facts or realities, like climate or navigable rivers or the sun and planets, and therefore causes whose effects upon history are naturally inevitable and outside human control.²⁰

But in Woolf's view interests in general were not natural and immutable. On the contrary, they were unstable and fluid.²¹ They could change, for example, as a consequence of broader changes in society. He illustrated this point with several cases. Carr maintained that

To internationalise government in any real sense means to internationalise power; and since independent power is the basis of the nation-state, the internationalisation of power is really a contradiction in terms.

Exactly the same argument had been deployed in the mid-nineteenth century against socialism when many philosophers later sympathetic towards the doctrine, notably J. S. Mill, viewed it as an 'ideal standard' but distant from 'reality'. Socialism was utopian, so the argument ran, because society was based on the institution of private

²⁰ Ibid. 129.

²¹ Woolf refers to the 'chameleon character of interests', especially so called 'vital national interests' which in theory were concerned with the continued existence of the state, but in practice meant 'any interest which the government of a state considers important'. Ibid. 98.

property; in abolishing private property, socialism would only succeed in undermining society and thereby itself. Socialism and society were therefore incompatible: the interests of private property were immutable: the idea that society could be based on socialism was a contradiction in terms.

Woolf noted that such beliefs eroded as the nineteenth century progressed. By the first decade of the twentieth century many ideas and projects previously regarded as utopian were widely accepted as sensible and correct. Woolf cited, inter alia, the public provision of primary and secondary education, municipal control of certain utilities, the extension of the franchise to non-property owners, and state provision of old age pensions. Private property had not been abolished, but the view that the state had an essential role to play in these and other sectors of society had become widely accepted. This inevitably entailed the limitation if not the abolition of property rights.

This example, Woolf felt, clearly demonstrated that interests were not natural and unchanging, and he concluded that

one must hesitate to accept sweeping statements about interests, conflicts of interests, and power being such immutable social or political 'realities' that they inevitably determine the structure of society and make any attempt to alter it ... utopian.²²

While it would be an overstatement to suggest that Woolf

²² Ibid. 142.

was putting forward a philosophically idealist conception of interests - note his frequent references to 'the facts' - it is certainly true that in places his notion of interests resembles the type of interpretive analysis characteristic of C. A. W. Manning. He compared, for example, the case of the conflict in the Balkans during the years 1900-13, and the conflict in Scandinavia, over the desire of Norway to secede from Sweden, which occurred at the same time. The former conflict resulted in violence and war, whereas the latter was settled peaceably. Woolf insisted that it would be wrong to suppose that the Balkan states only had conflicting interests, whereas the Scandinavian states had only common interests. The states involved in both conflicts had common and conflicting interests. The key difference was that the Balkan states 'believed that they had irreconcilable interests which could only be settled by power. And because that was the way in which they regarded their interests, their interests were, in fact, irreconcilable'.²³

In support of this point he gave the further example of Anglo-French relations, 1890-1904. This is a curious example since it is often cited as evidence of the realist claim that interests are defined in terms of the configuration of power. The Entente Cordiale, so the realist (and conventional) wisdom goes, was made possible by the rising power of Germany, and British and French fear of it. Woolf offered a fascinating account of how it

²³ Ibid. 161.

became almost axiomatic in the Britain of the 1890s that France was the 'natural enemy'.²⁴ The enmity between the two countries was seen as immutable. Then, quite dramatically, they began to foster closer relations and their mutual enmity began to subside. In Woolf's view this was entirely due to the sudden realization that Anglo-French differences, though considerable, could be settled by cooperation and compromise instead of competition and conflict:

Lansdowne and Delcassé did not suddenly see that the conflicting interests had suddenly become 'unreal' and the common interests 'real'; they came to the conclusion that in general and in the long run the two countries would gain more by pursuing common interests and attempting to compose conflicting interests by compromise than by continuing the pursuit by each of its own interests at the expense of the other.²⁵

Thus it was a 'psychological' change that had occurred, not a realization that certain interests previously considered 'real' had suddenly become 'unreal'.

The realist response that mutual fear of the rising power of Imperial Germany was the major factor was rather cavalierly dismissed by Woolf in the following way. If one held that fear was the key, one was in effect admitting that psychology, not material reality, determined international relations. If this was true, the notion that states could gather together in an association for the purpose of eliminating war was not utopian, as the realists claimed, but realistic. Fear of mutual destruction would

²⁴ Ibid. 164-75; 'Utopia and Reality', 180-1.

²⁵ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 180.

provide the necessary incentive. If fear of Germany could induce Britain and France to settle their 'immutable' interests, then why could fear of mutual destruction not induce all states to follow the same path?

However, although Woolf refuted the existence of immutable interests, and asserted that interests are fluid and changeable, he also strongly implied that real, permanent, interests do, in fact, exist. He asserted that the previous one hundred years had demonstrated that not a single nation had gained anything from war and that the vast majority of individuals lost out in war. Indeed, the history of Europe since 1815 showed that all nations had a common interest in peace and preventing war.²⁶ He clarified this point by making a distinction between immediate and long-term interests. The conventional view that conflicting interests are 'more real' than common interests sprang from the fact that most people are more conscious of their own, immediate, interests than their common interests, since the latter always involve the sacrifice, usually painful, of some immediate individual interests. Both conflicting and common interests therefore exist but whereas the former are immediate and superficial, the latter are long-term and substantial. Thus, Woolf suggested, 'even the potential murderer is better off in the end if he refrains from cutting the rich man's throat'. Similarly, 'a class which ruthlessly pursues what it considers its own interest at the expense of other classes

²⁶ Woolf, War for Peace, 200-201.

nine times out of ten digs its own economic grave'.²⁷ And, taking an example from international relations, it was not the case that the interest of Germany in 'cutting the throat' of Czechoslovakia was 'more real' than the interest of both in living peacefully and composing their differences by compromise and conciliation.²⁸

At root Woolf was saying that there is a long term objective interest in peace. But for whom? Clearly he did not believe that this objective interest applied only to some states but not others. The key to a clear understanding of Woolf's thought on interests, and to understanding his dispute with Carr over them, lies in his notion of the state. In common with many of his contemporaries, Woolf did not have a sophisticated notion of the state. He commonly used the term 'state' interchangeably with 'nation' and conceived it as largely synonymous with its people.²⁹ Thus in his discussion of state interests in peace and war, Woolf often had in mind the people or society of the state rather than the 'coercive/institutional' state.³⁰ When Woolf said that it

²⁷ Ibid. 176. This assumption also underlies Carr's view of 'peaceful change', i.e. self-sacrifice by the 'haves' in order to appease the 'have-nots'. See Twenty Years' Crisis, ch.13, 264-84.

²⁸ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 176.

²⁹ For a clear example of this ('unsophisticated realism' in Manning's terms) see War for Peace, 147-9.

³⁰ See Fred Halliday, 'State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 16, 2, (1987); and Hidemi Suganami, 'Halliday's Two Concepts of State', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 17, 1, (1988).

was not in the interests of Germany to 'cut the throat of Czechoslovakia', he had in mind the interests of the German people rather than the interests, as defined by those in power, of the 'notional entity' 'Germany'. Two points must be made in this connection. First, when Woolf and Carr referred to state interests they were referring to different things. Carr, at least in his 'realist critique', was referring to an abstracted state, reified, but, in effect, personless. Woolf, by contrast, was for the most part referring to the people who constitute the society of the state. Secondly, Woolf was ultimately making what many would consider the rather banal point that human beings are better off when they are living in peace than when they are fighting wars.

The Rationalization of Violence

According to Woolf, Carr's theory amounts to a rationalization of conflict and violence. It was one among several theories ('ex post facto consolatory explanations'³¹), then commonplace, which sought to prove that the increasing frequency and intensity of violence in inter-war domestic and international politics was inevitable. It amounted, more generally, to the worrying view that nothing could possibly happen except in the way that it did. This view was particularly evident in Carr's treatment of the League. Carr asserted that 'The first and most obvious tragedy of [the] ... utopia [of the League]

³¹ Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', 170.

was its ignominious collapse'. Woolf retorted that failure was not ipso facto ignominious and, moreover, it was not the case that just because the League failed, it was bound to fail. There was a striking inconsistency, Woolf felt, in Carr's logic: after all, appeasement had failed but this did not lead Carr to the conclusion that this policy was utopian - nor indeed that its failure was 'ignominious'. Similarly, Hitler's policy of creating a new European order based on German supremacy would in all probability fail but neither did Carr reject this as utopian.

Implicit in Woolf's discussion here is the assumption that the whole matter turned on the question of 'attainability'. It was true that the League had aimed at the unattained objective of preventing war. But the policies of Hitler and Chamberlain had aimed at the unattained objectives of, respectively, German hegemony and 'peace in our time'. If the criterion of utopia was unattainability, Carr should have reached the conclusion that 'the policies of Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain [were] no less utopian than the League policy'.³² But, aided by highly selective use of evidence, he had come to the opposite conclusion.

All this led Woolf to conclude that the central problems of contemporary international politics could not be understood or solved through a reliance on the distinction between 'utopias' (or 'illusions', or 'shams') and 'realities'. Whether the question was the survival of

³² Ibid. 174.

democracy, the veracity of liberalism, the relevance of internationalism, or the efficacy of the League, this fashionable distinction was of no value. The Twenty Years' Crisis may have been the most sophisticated analysis to be framed in these terms but, Carr's brilliance notwithstanding, it failed to specify with any degree of precision the criteria by which the 'utopianism' or 'realism' of any given idea or project could be gauged. In particular, Carr failed to demonstrate why the League of Nations was 'utopian' except for the fact that it failed.³³

Woolf's Critique: An Evaluation

How valid are Woolf's objections to Carr's arguments? Before addressing this question, a brief qualification should be made. Woolf touched on a number of fundamental questions in his response, e.g. the nature of interests, the meaning of 'utopianism' and 'realism', and the intellectual and moral value of realism as a doctrine of international relations. It is not my purpose here to confront these questions directly, and certainly not to

³³ Ibid. 170-171, 181-182. Several of Carr's critics willingly conceded his brilliance. Toynbee described Carr as 'a man of very great ability, with a powerful and trenchant mind.' His book, however, left one 'in a moral vacuum and at a political dead point.' Zimmern described him as 'very knowledgeable' but 'a victim of his own facility'. His book would 'not have a good influence' due to its 'moral nihilism'. Angell was less charitable. Carr's book, he proclaimed, was 'completely mischievous, a piece of sophisticated moral nihilism'. Toynbee to Angell, 23.1.40; Zimmern to Angell, 20.1.40; Angell to Noel-Baker, 12.12.39; Sir Norman Angell Papers, Correspondence.

give answers to them. Instead I will examine Woolf's response with the aim of identifying the most important respects in which his assertions are either accurate or fallacious.

Objection 1: The Meaning of 'Utopian'

Woolf was correct to contend that a major shortcoming of Carr's analysis was his failure to clearly define the term 'utopia'. To demonstrate this point it may be helpful to draw a distinction between Carr's general elaboration of the concept of utopia, as explicated in Chapter 2 of The Twenty Years' Crisis, and the specific examples of utopian doctrine that he cites at various points in the text. The essence of Woolf's contention is that Carr's concept of utopia is highly ambiguous. This judgement is not without merit with respect to Carr's general elaboration of the concept. But it is not the most apposite criticism that can be made. It is certainly the case that ambiguities exist, not least in Carr's failure to be explicit as to his understanding of the meaning of 'theory'. It is far from certain whether by 'theory' he has in mind explanatory or normative theory, though it seems to be the case that he usually has in mind the latter. A more incisive criticism, however, would be that Carr's exposition was simplistic. In his efforts to clarify what he considered to be the fundamental antithesis in political thought - between utopia and reality - Carr makes a number of sweeping generalizations which would, in his own terms, be worthy of

the most utopian of utopians.

These generalizations are highlighted by what Hedley Bull has called Carr's 'breathtaking equation' that utopia:reality = free will:determinism = theory:practice = the intellectual:the bureaucrat = Left:Right.³⁴ The boldness of the characterization is only matched by its artificiality. Marx, for example, is interpreted as a seminal modern realist. It is difficult, to say the least, to square this with the assertion that 'The radical is necessarily utopian, and the conservative realist.' Indeed, Carr's reading of Marx, the most cited figure in The Twenty Years' Crisis along with Hitler, is an interesting case in point. Marx was a realist because of the importance he attached to historical cause and effect, to materialism, and to the 'relativity of thought to the interests and circumstances of the thinker'. But he was also a utopian: (i) because he assumed 'just as firmly as did the laissez-faire liberal' that 'economics and politics were separate domains, one subordinate to the other'; (ii) because of his moral condemnation of the bourgeoisie; and (iii) because of his belief in the immanence of proletarian revolution and the culmination of the historical process in the creation of a worldwide classless society. In Carr's view, therefore, Marx was, in a number of respects, both realist and utopian. But this was not unusual. According to Carr, all realists are to some extent utopian since

³⁴ To which one could add 'generalization:observation = universal:relative = morality:power'. Bull, 'The Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years On', 627-8.

consistent realism is psychologically unsustainable. By positing a finite goal, engaging in moral judgement, assuming a normative ground for action, and appealing to human emotions, realists necessarily dilute their realism with utopianism. Therefore, Woolf's claim that Carr's realists and utopians are, to say the least, somewhat curious political animals which do not exist and probably never have, contains more than a few grains of truth.³⁵

Woolf's charge of ambiguity has more pertinence when directed at Carr's specific examples of utopian doctrine. In a sense this is not surprising since it is this aspect of Carr's analysis that Woolf had in mind when he claimed that Carr used the term 'utopian' in at least two different senses. This can be shown by looking at one or two examples.

One of Carr's primary examples of utopian doctrine is classical political economy and, in particular, free trade. Carr makes three observations: (i) that classical political economy was founded upon the 'negation' of existing, mercantilist, reality; (ii) that it was predicated on 'certain artificial and unverified assumptions about the behaviour of a hypothetical economic man'; and (iii) that universal free trade - 'the normal postulate of economic science' - was an 'imaginary condition which has never existed'. Just as no one had ever lived in Plato's republic or in a Fourierian phalanstery, no one had ever

³⁵ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 26, 88, 113-19, 148-9, 289-92.

lived in a world of universal free trade.³⁶

It is clear that Carr's three observations correspond to three different meanings of the term utopian. A utopian doctrine may be one: (i) that rejects an existing state of affairs in preference for a more desirable, but not yet existent, other; (ii) that is based on unverified and perhaps false assumptions; and (iii) that postulates as an economic, political, or moral benchmark a condition that has no historical precedent. Whether or not Carr was aware of the fact that he had not one but several concepts of utopia, and that he was thus guilty of good deal of conceptual slippage, is a moot point. The example confirms, however, that Woolf was right to contend that his use of the term is at best ambiguous.

Woolf was also right to contend that while Carr had much to say about utopianism in the sense of 'falseness of beliefs', he had little to say about it in the sense of 'impossibility of attainment'. Carr argued that classical political economy was based on certain false or at least unproven assumptions. But did this mean that its prescriptions were necessarily unattainable? In Woolf's view, the doctrine of free trade as conceived by the classical economists may have contained certain falsehoods, but this did not mean that the goal of free trade was a logical impossibility. Much more needed to be said in

³⁶ Ibid. 8-11.

order to prove such a claim.³⁷

A second example Carr gave of utopian doctrine is Benthamite liberalism, in particular the Benthamite doctrine of 'salvation by public opinion'.³⁸ According to Carr,

The belief that public opinion can be relied upon to judge rightly on any question rationally presented to it, combined with the assumption that it will act in accordance with this judgement is an essential foundation of the liberal creed.³⁹

The pursuit of the good was a matter of 'right reasoning', and 'right reasoning' would come within everybody's reach with the spread of education. Although it was true that this doctrine had been a brilliant success in a limited number of countries, its advocates committed the fundamental error of assuming that it was an a priori principle of universal validity. In fact, its validity was strictly relative. Its success derived not from 'certain a priori rational principles' but from 'a balance of forces peculiar to the economic development of the period and the countries concerned'. To assume otherwise was 'essentially utopian'.⁴⁰

³⁷ For a brief discussion of this point, in the main confirming Woolf's argument, see Ieuan John, Moorhead Wright and John Garnett, 'International Politics at Aberystwyth 1919-69', in Brian Porter (ed.), The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919-69 (London, 1972), 93-4.

³⁸ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 33.

³⁹ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 34. Carr held Benthamism and 'nineteenth century liberalism' to be largely synonymous.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 37.

Even before the the end of the nineteenth century, serious doubts had been cast on the assumptions of 'Benthamite rationalism'.

Yet [Carr continues], by one of the ironies of history, these half-discarded nineteenth century assumptions reappeared, in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, in the special field of international politics, and there became one of the foundation-stones of a new utopian edifice.⁴¹

Through The Great Illusion and other books, for example, Sir Norman Angell sought to end war by convincing the world that war never brought profit to anyone. War was simply a failure of understanding which could be rectified by the correct application of reason:

Reason could demonstrate the absurdity of international anarchy; and with increased knowledge enough people would be rationally convinced of its absurdity to put an end to it.⁴²

But despite its easy appeal, this assumption was not well founded. It was not long before even the most optimistic utopian thinkers were forced to recognize that rather than being right and compelling, international public opinion was 'almost as often wrong-headed as it was impotent'.⁴³

Again, two possible meanings of 'utopia' can be discerned in this example which broadly correspond to the two senses of the term identified by Woolf. On the one hand, Carr casts doubt on the Benthamite faith in public opinion by suggesting that its underlying principles were not only inapplicable to the international sphere but

⁴¹ Ibid. 36.

⁴² Ibid. 35-6.

⁴³ Ibid. 50-3.

'false' or 'untenable' per se. On the other hand, Carr criticizes Benthamite rationalism for imputing universal validity to principles strictly limited in their application. The success these principles generated in the nineteenth century was due to a special set of circumstances - Victorian prosperity, technological progress, British hegemony - which could not easily be replicated elsewhere. Benthamism, contrary to the assumptions of the inter-war utopians, could not be transplanted.

Thus the doctrine was utopian: (i) in the sense that its assumptions were false or untenable; and (ii) in the sense that its principles were only applicable within a particular social context.

Free trade and Benthamism are Carr's prime utopian suspects. He does, of course, similarly berate a number of other things, chief among them being (i) the assumption that peace is indivisible; (ii) the assumption that disarmament is a universal interest; (iii) the assertion that war can be abolished through legal prohibition; (iv) the idea of collective security; (v) the idea of an international police force; and (vi) the idea of a United States of Europe.⁴⁴ In none of these cases are the grounds on which they should be considered utopian absolutely clear.

One may conclude, therefore, that although Woolf's analysis was incomplete, his argument was broadly speaking

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2 above for the full list.

correct. Utopianism, rather than a precisely defined scientific concept, is a protean term used by Carr to cast in a bad light a range of ideas which he happened to find disagreeable.

Objection 2: The Utopianism of Realism

Like other radicals of the period Woolf was concerned to show that his outlook on international relations was both accurate and practicable. In the second line of response identified here, Woolf took this concern to extremes. He sought to demonstrate that it was not 'utopianism' that was utopian but, on the contrary, realism.

Although not without merit, the arguments made by Woolf in this connection are somewhat suspect. The most cogent among them turn out to be levelled at the weaker aspects of Carr's thesis. Woolf's characterization of realism is at best unsophisticated - though one, it should be added, that continues to find expression in the IR literature⁴⁵ - and at worst seriously flawed. Here, once more, the propagandist element is uppermost. He was not addressing a highly specialized IR audience on a rarefied theme in academic discourse but a general audience, comprised mainly of 'the intelligent reader', on a theme of tremendous practical importance. He was eager to win narrowly defined political points as well as to uphold his

⁴⁵ See Graham Evans, 'E. H. Carr and International Relations', British Journal of International Studies, 1, 2 (1975), 87-8; Michael Joseph Smith, Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger (Baton Rouge, La., 1986).

conception of the political truth. In consequence, he was not averse to oversimplifying or even misrepresenting certain arguments if it suited his propagandist purpose to do so.

Taking the merits first, Woolf was correct to question Carr's distinction between realism defined in terms of a concern with 'facts', 'realities', and 'cause and effect', and utopianism defined in terms of a concern with 'principles', 'ideals', and 'ends'. Such a distinction gives a crude impression of the ideal-type realist vis à vis the ideal-type utopian. But it grossly exaggerates the differences between actual, flesh and blood, realists and utopians - or more precisely those who have been described as realists and utopians. Clearly, as Woolf pointed out, it is nonsense to claim that utopians are unconcerned with 'facts' and 'realities', though it is true that those so labelled emphasized different kinds of facts. Indeed, as we have seen, Woolf is a good example of a thinker conventionally labelled utopian who engaged in a good deal of factual analysis, though not of the kind necessarily appreciated by realists. Similarly, it is nonsense to claim that realists are unconcerned with principles and ends. After all, the notion that a statesman should act in accordance with the national interest is a principle - though not necessarily a helpful one - and even the most pragmatic statesmen pursue ends in the sense that they have some sort of image of a desirable world - albeit one limited in ambition and heavily contingent. Indeed,

'turning the weapons of realism on realism itself',⁴⁶ it might be argued that pragmatism is the principle of action of the satisfied Powers. Wishing things to remain more or less the same is as much of an 'end' as the wish to radically alter them.

This, of course, receives some recognition by Carr. He rejects the sharp separation of fact and value that a 'consistent and thorough-going realism' presupposes. He says, for example, that 'the distinction between the analysis of what is from the aspiration of what should be can never be absolute' and that 'political scientists can never wholly emancipate themselves from utopianism'. In this sense pure realists and utopians do not actually exist - all political thought, perhaps action too, contains elements of both realism and utopia, with some thinkers and practitioners giving more emphasis to one and others to the other.⁴⁷

Woolf was the first of Carr's critics to point out that lack of precision in this respect constitutes a serious theoretical flaw.⁴⁸ Indeed, it leads to some heroic inconsistencies. Carr asserts, for instance, that a 'pure' utopian or realist cannot exist. But this does

⁴⁶ See Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 113.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 13-15, 113-19, 282-84, 287-307.

⁴⁸ This has since become firmly established in the secondary literature on Carr. See L. Susan Stebbing, Ideals and Illusions (London, 1941), 6-26; Hans Morgenthau, 'The Political Science of E. H. Carr', World Politics, 1 (1948-49), 134; Bull, 'Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years On', 637-8.

not prevent him from presenting certain figures as unequivocally utopian (Wilson, Angell, Toynbee), and others as unequivocally realist (Hobbes, Machiavelli, Marx). He contends that all policies contain the 'mutually antagonistic' elements of reality and utopia. But he also asserts that certain ideas (democratic control of foreign policy, an international police force, a United States of Europe) are 'purely utopian'. He strongly implies that the antagonism between utopianism and realism is rooted in human nature (an unverifiable proposition and therefore utopian?). But he also insists that all knowledge is socially constructed.⁴⁹

Woolf's second and more polemical claim was that realism is utopian not only in the sense that ideals and goals, pace Carr, are pursued by 'realist' as well as 'utopian' statesmen, but also in the sense that these goals cannot be achieved by realist means. According to Woolf, the goals of realism are stability of national power, glory, prosperity, peace, and a 'stable and permanent society'. The methods of realism are violence, war, power politics, and 'pursuit of conflicting interests'. The failure of these methods to achieve these goals was, in Woolf's view, amply demonstrated by the historical record. The historical evidence actually provided by Woolf is, however, rather thin. Not only does he give few examples, but the examples he does give are undeveloped and leave considerable room for interpretation. For instance, though

⁴⁹ Ibid. 16-19, 24-5, 39, 87, 110-11, 123-30.

we may be comfortable with the proposition that Napoleon I and Wilhelm II failed to achieve their objectives, the proposition that Bismarck and 'the British imperialists' failed to achieve theirs can be doubted. So too can the proposition that the 'Great Powers who provoked war' in 1790 and 1870 did not gain by their actions. As for the 1914 War, the question who provoked it and who is to blame - not of course the same question - is still a highly contentious matter.

Woolf's line of attack here is too general to be of value. The postulated goals of realism are so broad that it is impossible to assess, in the absence of further clarification, whether they had been achieved or not (or, perhaps more pertinently, to what extent). After all, what is to count as 'prosperity', 'glory', 'stability of national power' and indeed 'peace'? Further clarification of these notions is needed before anything like an accurate appraisal can be made.

Woolf's depiction of the instruments of realism is similarly broad. He strongly implies that realism has a monopoly on the methods of 'violence' and 'war'. But this is a fallacy. Woolf himself believed that the use of these methods was necessary and justifiable in certain circumstances, even though, as we saw in Chapter 4, he tended to give them different names. 'Power politics' and the 'pursuit of conflicting interests' are notions generally associated with realism but again Woolf fails to indicate precisely what he means by them. 'Pursuit of

conflicting interests' is, to say the least, tendentious.

One must conclude, therefore, that although Woolf clearly demonstrates his prejudices against realism he fails to enhance our understanding of it, or throw much light on its shortcomings. Woolf's realist is a straw-like man. He did not seriously confront Carr's more intellectually robust realist claims regarding the self-interested character of thought and the relativity of ethics.

Objection 3: Immutable Interests

Woolf claimed that Carr attached a peculiar reality to power and conflicting interests over and above cooperation and common interests. The clash of interests, in the world according to Carr, was immutable and a harmony of interests impossible.

This is a valid interpretation of Carr's argument - at least, that is, the argument contained within his 'realist critique'. Carr asserts that

realism tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to, these forces and tendencies.

Moreover,

the outstanding achievement of modern realism ... has been to reveal, not merely the determinist aspects of the historical process, but the relative and pragmatic character of thought.

The intellectual assumed that his theories were objective and universal. Realism demonstrated, however, that they were in fact historically conditioned, 'being both products

of circumstances and weapons framed for the furtherance of interests'. This was the sense in which all thought was 'pragmatic': it was not only relative to the circumstances of the thinker, but also consciously or unconsciously directed at the fulfilment of his purposes.⁵⁰

Those thinkers who postulated a harmony of international interests, Carr continued, were in reality merely the unthinking proponents of a particular conception of national interest at a particular time. The doctrine of a harmony of interest in free trade and peace was merely the doctrine of the economic and political top dog. Walewski's maxim that 'it is the business of a diplomat to clothe the interests of the state in the language of universal justice' was amply confirmed by utopian intellectuals who clothed their own interests in the guise of universality for the purpose of imposing them on the rest of the world.⁵¹ At disarmament talks Britain and the US condemned the submarine and submarine warfare as 'uncivilized' and sought to secure a worldwide ban. It so happened, however, that they were speaking from a position of naval supremacy, and the invocation of 'civilization' failed to resonate with Italy, France, and Japan who viewed the submarine as a valuable weapon which they could use to challenge such supremacy. Similarly, throughout most of the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century until

⁵⁰ Ibid. 14-15, 87-91.

⁵¹ Ibid. 91-6. Count Walewski was French foreign minister 1855-1860.

1931, tariffs and other protectionist measures were generally regarded in Britain as immoral. But this attitude dramatically changed as Britain's economic fortunes took a turn for the worse. As with the submarine, the tariff revealed itself as the weapon of the weaker Power. When Britain resorted to a range of protectionist measures with the onset of the Depression in the 1930s, the moral response was curiously muted.

This summary of Carr's 'realist critique' certainly suggests that his rejection of international or universal interests was absolute. In reality, such interests were nothing more than cleverly disguised national interests. Indeed given the rigid determinism of realism this was inevitably so. All thought was consciously or unconsciously self-interested.⁵²

In Woolf's objection to the 'peculiar reality' that Carr attaches to conflicting interests over and above common interests, one can detect, therefore, the beginnings of a critique of what is arguably the central plank of Carr's thesis: that the 'supposedly absolute and universal principles [of the utopian] were not principles at all, but the unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time.'⁵³

It could be countered, however, that the validity of Woolf's argument is limited to the extent that it is

⁵² Ibid. 16-19, 87-112.

⁵³ Ibid. 110-11.

directed only at Carr's 'realist critique'. After all, Carr was setting up realism as one of the two essential elements of political thought and action, and although he maintained that realism was a 'necessary corrective to the exuberance of utopianism', and essential for 'counteracting' the dangerous neglect of the factor of power in utopian thought, he did not embrace the doctrine in its entirety. Indeed, he argued that realism could be 'carried to a point where it results in the sterilisation of thought and the negation of action'.⁵⁴ He devoted a whole chapter to 'The Limitations of Realism' arguing that it lacked four essential ingredients for effective political thinking: a finite goal; an emotional appeal; a right of moral judgement; and a ground for action. It could be argued, therefore, that Carr was not so much presenting a manifesto for political realism as re-stating and re-defining the case for one of the two elements of politics irreconcilably locked together in a dialectical relationship - though it would be fair to say that he failed to provide anything more than a brief outline of that relationship.

Although he recognised that The Twenty Years' Crisis was more than just an explication of realism, Woolf did not fully appreciate the dialectical nature of Carr's approach. However, his view that Carr assumed that there was a peculiar reality in conflicting interests finds confirmation elsewhere in the book and does not depend

⁵⁴ Ibid. 14-15.

exclusively on his 'realist critique'. There is a problem in Carr's approach which has been the source of much confusion over the years. Although Carr may not have been aware of it, it might well have been a fully conscious sleight of theoretical hand. The problem can be simply stated: Carr does not always distinguish his own view from the realist view which, although integral to his analysis, was not one, as Chapter 6 and Parts III and IV of the book make plain, that he himself necessarily held. This is why Woolf and many others since have wrongly interpreted The Twenty Years' Crisis as an unambiguous realist tract.⁵⁵

It is not at all clear, for example, whether Carr's account of 'The Harmony of Interests' is the 'realist' account or his own. It could easily be assumed that the two are synonymous. This can be illustrated by way of a few examples. Carr challenges the notion, frequently espoused at the time, that war was irrational or immoral and that all states had a common interest in peace. According to Carr, this notion 'in reality' was a reflection of the special interests of the status quo Powers, particularly Britain and the US. He asserts that:

The common interest in peace masks the fact that

⁵⁵ See for example, Trevor Taylor, 'Power Politics' in Trevor Taylor (ed.), Approaches and Theory in International Relations (Harlow, 1978), 122-31; Robert Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', International Organization, 30, 2 (1984); Gene M. Lyons, 'The Study of International Relations in Great Britain: Further Connections', World Politics, 38, 4 (1986), 627-8; Steve Smith, 'Paradigm Dominance in International Relations: The Development of International Relations as a Social Science', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 16, 2 (1987), 193.

some nations desire to maintain the status quo without having to fight for it, and others to change the status quo without having to fight in order to do so.⁵⁶

There was a 'fundamental divergence of interests' between the status quo Powers and the revisionist Powers. The world interest in peace was a 'utopian assumption' based on 'a peculiar combination of platitude and falseness'. 'The fact of divergent interests was disguised and falsified by the platitude of a general desire to avoid conflict'.⁵⁷

Similarly, Carr refutes the laissez faire belief, manifest in numerous official pronouncements during the period, that international economic conflict was unnecessary and illusory. He asserts, on the contrary, that a policy of economic nationalism may not be detrimental to the states that pursue it. The presumption of a world economic interest disguised the 'true nature' of the problem. The harmony of economic interests was the doctrine of the economically strong; protectionism the defensive doctrine of the economically weak. 'The clash of interests', he concluded, 'is real and inevitable; and the whole nature of the problem is distorted by an attempt to disguise it'.⁵⁸

Evidence for Woolf's claim that Carr attached a peculiar reality to conflicting interests over and above common interests can be found, therefore, not only in his

⁵⁶ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 68.

⁵⁷ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 2nd. edn., (London, 1946), 53. Present tense in first edition (p.69).

⁵⁸ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 69-77.

'realist critique' but also elsewhere in the book where the distinction between Carr's depiction of 'realism' and his personal view is similarly unclear. Since his personal view is extraordinarily difficult to pin down, Woolf was not being entirely disingenuous in associating Carr's voice with the realist voice. The moral philosopher Susan Stebbing drew similar conclusions. Writing the year after Woolf, she expressed a number of doubts about the coherence of Carr's thought on conflicting and common interests:

He usually speaks as if he thought that power and conflicting interests of nations were the sole realities. In the latter part of the book he seems to admit that there really are some common, international, interests. It is very confusing.⁵⁹

Stebbing interpreted Carr's antonyms (to which she added 'conscience:coercion = goodwill:enmity = self subordination:self assertion') in the same way as Woolf. Not only were these antonyms confounding and misleading but they also helped Carr to believe that 'conflicting interests are significantly "real" and goodwill and common interests importantly "unreal".'⁶⁰

Objection 4: Rationalization of Violence

Carr's assertions about real interests and cause and effect led Woolf to conclude that The Twenty Years' Crisis

⁵⁹ Stebbing, Ideals and Illusions, 9. A point echoed by Woolf, War for Peace, 60 (Carr 'contradicts in the latter part of his book almost everything that he says in the first part'); and Zimmern in his letter to Angell cited above ('The result is a confusion beneath a surface of fausse clarté').

⁶⁰ Stebbing, Ideals and Illusions, 13-14.

amounted ultimately to little more than a rationalization of violence. He took particular exception to Carr's assertion - as he saw it - that the League was utopian as proved by its failure. The logic of this kind of argument was that success was the sole arbiter of practicability. To Woolf and other critics this was grossly deterministic. As Stebbing put it: 'To make success the criterion is to fall into the mistake of supposing that whatever has in fact happened inevitably happened'.⁶¹

Most worrying was the implication that Fascist bullying, dictatorship, intimidation, and violence, was a necessary and therefore inevitable part of the historical process. Woolf considered this an outrageous claim - especially in an age in which the corollary of 'inevitable' violence and conflict was recurrent totalitarian war.⁶²

The determinism of Carr's conception of realism is certainly striking. He describes the following three suppositions as the foundation-stones of political realism: (i) that history is a sequence of cause and effect; (ii) that theory does not create practice but practice theory; and (iii) that politics is not a function of ethics but ethics politics. 'On the "scientific" hypothesis of the realists,' he continues, 'reality is thus identified with

⁶¹ Ibid. 17. William Pfaff made the same observation of The Twilight of Comintern: 'Carr sought to demonstrate, tautologically, that those who were successful were right, as is proved by their success'. Quoted in W. T. R. Fox, 'E. H. Carr and Political Realism: Vision and Revision', Review of International Studies, XI, 1 (1985), 6.

⁶² Woolf, War for Peace, 125.

the whole course of human evolution, whose laws it is the business of the philosopher to investigate and reveal.' He cites Spinoza: 'every man does what he does according to the laws of his nature and to the highest right of nature', and adds the famous phrase of Hegel: 'World history is the world court'. He amends the popular but 'misleading' paraphrase 'Might is Right' with the more refined formula: 'History creates rights, and therefore right.'⁶³

However, as we have seen in the previous section, Carr did not fully ~~to~~ subscribe to the doctrine of political realism he himself so vividly explicated. This is clear, among other things, from his use of inverted commas around the word 'science' in the sentence quoted above. Woolf's claim that Carr's determinism resulted in the rationalization of violence is therefore only partly true. Carr was no bellicist or militarist, though Woolf sometimes gives this impression. His later, lesser known, works contain far less of the 'ruthlessness' and 'detached relish in the supremacy of things evil'⁶⁴ than his famous polemic. As will be seen in the next section, Carr's Conditions of Peace is markedly progressive, even 'utopian'. In addition, it should be remembered that the principal policy recommendation of The Twenty Years' Crisis is appeasement,

⁶³ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 81-6. Morgenthau argued that Carr's relativistic and instrumentalist conception of ethics made him a 'utopian of power' - superior power being the necessary repository of superior morality. Morgenthau, 'Political Science of E. H. Carr', 136. See also Whittle Johnston, 'E.H. Carr's Theory of International Relations: A Critique', Journal of Politics, 29 (1967), 874-84.

⁶⁴ Crossman, 'Illusions of Power', 91.

conceived as a relatively peaceful means of securing necessary adjustments to the status quo.

Nevertheless, after saying this, some of Carr's assertions on appeasement and peaceful change do lend credence to Woolf's claims. To describe such events as Mussolini's successful conquest of Abyssinia, and Hitler's successful seizure of the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia, as instances of peaceful change does seem, at the very least, euphemistic. Also, as W. T. R. Fox has demonstrated, although Carr stated that he did not substantially revise anything in the second edition of The Twenty Years' Crisis he had said in the first, one revision at least is highly significant. In the second edition the following passage was omitted:

If the power relations of Europe in 1938 made it inevitable that Czecho-Slovakia should lose part of her territory, and eventually her independence, it was preferable (quite apart from any question of justice or injustice) that this should come about as the result of discussion round a table in Munich rather than as the result either of a war between the Great Powers or of a local war between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia.⁶⁵

The omission of this passage suggests that by 1946 Carr was conscious of the fact that some of his pronouncements could be interpreted as callous, perhaps even apologetic. It would, however, be only half the story to interpret this passage as a rationalization of violence, since the clear implication is that a certain amount of intimidation may be

⁶⁵ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 278; W. T. R. Fox, 'Vision and Revision', 4. Also note Carr's remark in the first edition (p.277), substantially modified in the second (p.215), that yielding to threats of force 'is a normal part of the process of peaceful change'.

justifiable in order to stave off something much more odious: war, especially war between the Great Powers.

Ultimately, whether or not the deterministic elements in Carr's thesis amount to a rationalization of violence depends on the extent to which such a rigid theory of historical cause and effect is true. Woolf believed it profoundly untrue. He was, as I have argued, a voluntarist. He attached great importance to the psychological aspects of human affairs. He believed that there was no reason why a body like the League could not work as long as the necessary 'internationalist psychology' existed to back it up. This psychology had been steadily building up for a century or more. It was driven by the onward march of technological progress and the inexorable demands of modern commercial life. It had received a huge boost with the mass revulsion against war which had occurred in the wake of World War One. Until 1933 Woolf felt that for these and other reasons, that the prospects for an effective League based on a strong and widely shared internationalist psychology were not discouraging.⁶⁶ Thus radical progressive change was possible in international affairs and it was a product of sometimes rapid, but usually gradual, changes in people's ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. For Woolf it was a travesty to suggest that international conflict was 'more real' than international cooperation, that conflicting interests were immutable, and

⁶⁶ See Chapters 3 and 4 above for a more detailed treatment.

that the League was doomed to fail.

Woolf and Carr Compared

Despite Woolf's rejection of Carr's analysis, and despite the fact that Woolf himself noticed little common ground, it can be argued that there are many similarities in the thought of Woolf and Carr. Indeed, it might be said that they argued not from the opposite intellectual poles of utopianism and realism but from a very similar perspective. This perspective was, broadly speaking, socialist, functionalist, and collectivist. They shared the belief that nineteenth century liberal democracy and laissez faire were obsolete, that the nation-state was obsolescent, and that the future lay in economic and social democracy and cross-border functional and collective organization.

Woolf did not notice the functionalist and collectivist aspects of The Twenty Years' Crisis even though they are fairly explicit. This is primarily due to the fact that he gave all his attention to the first half of the book and largely ignored the second. If he had paid more attention to the latter, he would have realized that the book was far more than an apologia for violence and unbending political realism. This is certainly true of Carr's work as a whole. The diversity and indeed eclecticism of his thought is clearly revealed in subsequent works, Conditions of Peace, Nationalism and After, and The New Society in particular.

To some extent Woolf remedied his omission when he reviewed Conditions of Peace.⁶⁷ He welcomed much of what Carr had to say about post-war reconstruction and organization, especially the idea that democracy needed to be reinterpreted in predominantly economic terms, and the view that the right to self-determination needed to be incorporated within a wider framework of international obligation. Woolf insisted, however, that these ideas were far from new. They had, he maintained, long been central to radical and socialist thought. Such a reinterpretation of democracy had been called for in The Communist Manifesto and it had for many decades been the policy of the Labour party. Similarly, what was the League, asked Woolf, if it was not an attempt to place self-determination within a wider framework of obligation? He was astounded that Carr failed to acknowledge this, and he boldly concluded that Carr 'has always misunderstood and misinterpreted the years between the wars, and particularly the history of the League of Nations.'⁶⁸ Woolf's general view was that although Conditions of Peace was in the main correct, it essentially a naïve book since it failed to recognize that its central arguments had been made before.

The common ground in the thinking of Carr and Woolf

⁶⁷ Woolf, review of E. H. Carr, Conditions of Peace, Political Quarterly, 13, 3 (July-September 1942).

⁶⁸ Ibid. 330. Norman Angell drew much the same conclusion. He argued that the League was not predicated, as Carr said, on a harmony of interests but was founded precisely in order to create one. 'Who are the "Utopians", and Who the "Realists" ?' Headway, January 1940, 4.

may be illustrated by reference to five points.

First, they both argued that nineteenth century liberal democracy had become hollow, and that, if democracy was to remain meaningful in the age of mass production and mass participation, narrow 'political' democracy needed to be supplemented with economic and social democracy. According to Carr, political equality needed to be supplemented with 'a progressive advance towards social and economic equality'. The will of the ordinary citizen, he contended, must be made to prevail against the 'organised forces of economic power'. This could be done by giving him a much greater say in the process of administration. Similarly, Woolf argued that democracy could not survive unless vast differences in wealth were reduced, education improved, and 'socially equal opportunities' established.⁶⁹

Second, they both argued that the right of self-determination was not an absolute right. It did not permit states to do anything they wanted to as long as they had the backing of their peoples. So conceived, the right of self-determination was destructive. Consequently, both argued that it was essential to place it within a framework of international obligation. Carr emphasized the need for 'a new conception of obligation'. The right of self-determination, he contended, 'must carry with it a

⁶⁹ Carr, Conditions of Peace, 36; Woolf, 'Can Democracy Survive?' in Mary Adams (ed.), The Modern State (London, 1933), 42-5. See also E. H. Carr and S. de Madariaga, The Future of International Government (London, 1941), where Carr asserts (p.3) that if liberty is to be 'effective in the modern world' it must be defined as 'something like "maximum social and economic opportunity".'

recognised responsibility to subordinate military and economic policy and resources to the needs of a wider community ...'⁷⁰ Woolf argued that despite the shortcomings of the minorities treaties, it was necessary to establish a charter for the rights of minorities which would be supervised internationally.⁷¹

Third, both Carr and Woolf felt that one of the central problems of reconstruction would be how to deal with the 'small state'. The political and economic weakness of small states had significantly added to the instability of Europe during the inter-war years. Carr argued that small states had become a dangerous anachronism. The great social revolution of the twentieth century, of which the two world wars were the creative birth pangs, demonstrated that the future lay in large scale economic and political organization. Small states could survive 'only as an anomaly and an anachronism in a world which has moved on to other forms of organisation'.⁷² Carr's rejection of the Wilsonian belief in national self-determination was unequivocal:

By treating the principle of national self-determination as an absolute and by carrying it further than it had ever been carried before, [Woodrow Wilson and his associates] fostered the disintegration of existing political units, and favoured the creation of a multiplicity of smaller units, at a moment when strategic and economic factors were demanding increased

⁷⁰ Carr, Conditions of Peace, 62-6.

⁷¹ Woolf, 'The Future of the Small State', Political Quarterly, 14, 3 (July-September 1943), 218.

⁷² Carr, Nationalism and After (London, 1945), 37.

integration and the grouping of the world into fewer and larger units of power.⁷³

Accordingly, Carr suggested that small states should pursue their economic and military policies 'jointly' with a Great Power. This would involve the pooling of resources and the establishment of some sort of common control.

Woolf's view was that the future of the small state in the 'international firmament' would be one of the most crucial and difficult problems of post-war reconstruction. But in contrast to Carr, he emphasized that the status and position of the Great Powers was also a matter of crucial importance. Whilst agreeing with Carr that the sovereignty and independence of small states, both in political and economic terms, would have to be curtailed, Woolf was critical of the notion, strongly implicit in Carr's scheme, that small states would inevitably be reduced to the status of mere satellites around the Great Power in whose orbit they happened to fall. On the contrary, the wings of sovereignty of Powers both small and great had to be clipped. All states would have to consent to some form of international government.⁷⁴

As well as suggesting that it was specifically the sovereignty of small states that would have to be curtailed, Carr, like Woolf, also made a number of assertions about sovereignty per se. 'The concept of sovereignty', he contended, 'is likely to become in the

⁷³ Carr, Conditions of Peace, 49. See also Nationalism and After, 54-5.

⁷⁴ Woolf, 'Future of the Small State', 209, 221-4.

future even more blurred and indistinct than it is at present.' The chief task facing the peace-makers was not, therefore, to change the location of frontiers, as had happened disastrously at Versailles, but to change their meaning. Carr further claimed that 'The military security and economic well-being of Great Powers, not less than those of smaller countries, is bound up with the acceptance of a new conception of obligation.' In doing so he was stepping out onto conceptual ground very similar to that trodden by Woolf 25 years earlier.⁷⁵

Fourth, there are pronounced elements of functionalism in both Woolf and Carr. As I argued in Chapter 4, Woolf was a pioneer of international functionalism. Carr, as will be further illustrated in my fifth point, was also thinking very much along functionalist lines by the early 1940s. There are numerous allusions to functionalist organization in Conditions of Peace. He suggests that 'practical international cooperation', such as international public works, could become a 'psychological substitute for war'. He asserts that 'for the control of military and economic policy, the national unit has become visibly too small' and that 'if a durable international order is to be realised, men must be induced to determine themselves into different units for different purposes'. He emphasizes 'the psychological importance of introducing at an early stage

⁷⁵ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 295-7; Conditions of Peace, 65, 241. Carr's views on sovereignty brought a stinging response from Charles Manning. See his review of Conditions of Peace in International Affairs, XIX, 8 (1942), 443-4.

[in post-war reconstruction] the conception of cooperation in a common task'. He talks of 'new loyalties arising out of newly felt needs' and the building 'new institutions' on the basis of these loyalties. He also talks of forging 'regional industrial groupings which cut across national frontiers'.⁷⁶

Fifth, both Woolf and Carr contended that the achievement of economic and social equality was an absolute precondition for the future maintenance of international stability, and that this could only be achieved through substantial government intervention. The nineteenth century idea of the night-watchman state needed to be replaced by the twentieth century idea of the social service state. Moreover, this 'broadening of national policy' needed to go hand in hand with a 'broadening of international policy'. The new Europe, as Carr called it, would have to be dedicated to the satisfaction of the interests of the whole and not just, as had happened in the past, the parts. Thus the welfare of Lodz, Lille, and Düsseldorf would have to be taken into account as well as the interests of Oldham and Jarrow.⁷⁷ Just as Woolf argued that the pursuit of common interests almost always involved the sacrifice of some 'immediate individual interests', so Carr asserted the importance of self-sacrifice. Indeed, in places he gave this an expressly socialist form:

⁷⁶ Carr, Conditions of Peace, 252, 261, 274. See also Nationalism and After, 47-51.

⁷⁷ Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 306-7.

... the conflict between nations like the conflict between classes cannot be resolved without real sacrifices, involving in all probability a reduction of consumption by privileged groups in privileged countries.⁷⁸

Carr went on to advocate international 'control' of trade, finance, and production. He argued for production for use rather than production for profit. He asserted that 'Employment has become more important than profit, social stability than increased consumption, equitable distribution than maximum production.' To ensure full employment he called for a 'programme of economically unremunerative expenditure' such as the provision of 'free housing, free motor cars, or free clothing'. He proposed the establishment of a European Relief Commission, a European Transport Commission, a European Construction and Public Works Commission and, most radically, a Bank of Europe with 'ultimate' control over national currencies. The task of 'overseeing' these bodies would be given to a European Planning Authority which should, he recommended, 'be encouraged to develop into the ultimate authority responsible for vital decisions on European economic policies'. Some of these institutions and their areas of competence would be created and assumed immediately, whereas others would be the product of gradual evolution.⁷⁹

Together these bodies have more than a passing

⁷⁸ Ibid. 304.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 302-7; Conditions of Peace, 236-75. See also The New Society (London, 1951), 98-9. Hayek was not impressed. See The Road to Serfdom (London, 1986 [1944]), 138-41.

resemblance to Woolf's 'International Economic Commission' possessing 'very extensive powers' and 'far-reaching responsibilities'.⁸⁰ Most significantly, however, Carr's ideas on these matters were similar to the ideas Woolf had been discussing and developing over two decades earlier. No doubt Carr was much more of a 'regionalist' than Woolf. He also envisaged a world (certainly a 'Europe') with a much greater degree of central planning. Woolf, by contrast, was generally distrustful of extensive centralization (though as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4 there are some notable exceptions): hence his earlier attachment to international Co-operative trade rather than state trading. It is clear, however, that despite certain differences, the economic and social structure of the post-war world envisaged by both Woolf and Carr were predicated on very similar assumptions. Laissez faire was dead, sovereignty was obsolescent, and the era of mass democracy had arrived.

Conclusion: Woolf:Carr = Utopianism:Realism?

These similarities in the thought of Woolf and Carr suggest that the conventional view that Woolf was a 'utopian' and Carr a 'realist' is, to say the least, inadequate. By placing Woolf and Carr in opposing schools of thought some of their most important ideas and beliefs have been

⁸⁰ Woolf, 'How to Make the Peace', 374. Chapter 7 above.

effectively 'lost'. This is especially the case with Carr who has generally been characterized in IR on the basis of a one-dimensional interpretation of The Twenty Years' Crisis. But it is not only 'realists' anxious to co-opt such a great man to their cause who stand guilty of this charge. Thinkers of more 'utopian' inclinations do too. Indeed, Woolf was one of the first commentators on The Twenty Years' Crisis to misinterpret it as merely a realist tract - a view that has regrettably stuck.

Scholars of the 'first great debate' have invariably analyzed this debate in simplistic terms.⁸¹ By overlooking the socialist, functionalist, and collectivist aspects of Carr's and Woolf's thought, analysts of the idealist-realist debate have omitted a crucial set of factors.⁸² Without reference to these factors the thought of Carr and Woolf, and the ideas of notable socialist 'utopians' such as G. D. H. Cole, Harold Laski and H. N. Brailsford, and left-liberal 'utopians' such as David Mitrany, J. A. Hobson and J. M. Keynes, becomes largely inexplicable.

However, given the fact that Woolf was severely

⁸¹ See W. Olson and N. Onuf, 'The Growth of the Discipline: Reviewed', in Steve Smith (ed), International Relations: British and American Perspectives (Oxford, 1985), 24; John Vasquez, The Power of Power Politics (London, 1983), 13-16. No mention of Carr's functionalism, socialism, or collectivism is made in Bull's 'Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years on'. This is significant because it is probably the most widely read article on Carr.

⁸² Not all writers have ignored these elements in Carr's thought: see the works of Hayek and Johnston cited above; Suganami, Domestic Analogy, 100-5; K. W. Thompson, Masters of International Thought (London, 1980), 67-78. Woolf recognized them, as mentioned, in his Conditions review.

critical of the bulk of Carr's thesis, might it not be said that the conventional view is not entirely without merit? The question turns on the meanings of the terms 'utopianism' and 'realism'. Both Woolf and Carr might be considered utopian in the dual sense that they desired radical change of the international system, and that they felt that change was not a wholly pre-determined process. Both Woolf and Carr challenged the international system of supposedly sovereign, independent states and argued for its replacement by a more collectivist and functionalist world order.

There is, however, a more pronounced element of historicism in Carr than there is in Woolf. Carr held that a 'great social revolution' was occurring and that the task of the political scientist as well as the practitioner was to make the transition as painless as possible. Woolf, by contrast, believed that international change, like any other kind of social change, was primarily a product of political purpose and rational choice - though determinism is not completely absent from his thought.

In one sense the essence of 'realism' for Carr was the ability to comprehend the forces of historical change. These forces were primarily economic. Indeed a central difference between Woolf and Carr is that whereas Carr emphasized the importance of substructure over superstructure, Woolf maintained that substructure and superstructure were interdependent. Carr's principal objection to the League was that it was a blueprint or

paper scheme. It sought to rid the world of war by simply outlawing it. This, to Carr, was unforgiveably 'utopian': a form of naïve constitutionalism: a naïve faith in the ability of 'rational' laws and institutions to mould behaviour.⁸³ While sharing some of Carr's scepticism, Woolf firmly believed that building a new international system required not only material foundations but also an overall plan or conception. At a minimum, prior agreement on the broad outline of this system was needed if further descent into hostile competition and anarchy was to be avoided.⁸⁴

Carr argued that in contrast to Versailles, economic and social questions should have priority over political and territorial questions. Only after social and economic cooperation had been working successfully for some time could the question of a permanent international political framework be addressed. Woolf, by contrast, argued that politics and economics were inextricably linked and that it was a fallacy to suppose that if one looked after the economics, the politics would look after themselves. Concentrating exclusively on social and economic matters - which he doubted was possible - would not solve the problem of nationalism and national self-determination. It was not

⁸³ Carr (Twenty Years' Crisis, 239) dismissed proposals for world federation or a 'more perfect' League of Nations as 'elegant superstructures' devoid of foundations. His emphasis on substructure led R. W. Seton-Watson to conclude that he had 'succumbed to one-sided materialism'. See 'Politics and Power', The Listener, Supplement No.48, 7 December 1939.

⁸⁴ Woolf, 'How to Make the Peace', 376.

the case that if Poles, Czechs, and Serbs had enough to live on, they would cease to bother about their nationality. Woolf agreed with Carr that Versailles was a flawed peace. But he considered Carr to be under the illusion that if you reverse what is unequivocally wrong, you get what is right. Economic and social questions were vital and Versailles had largely ignored them. However, if the process was reversed, 'we shall do no better with our economics than they did with their politics'.⁸⁵ In any case, international economic cooperation and control, as advocated by both Woolf and Carr, would immediately and inevitably involve one of the most crucial of all political questions - sovereignty.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 370.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: Woolf in the Zoo of International Theory

In the final volume of his autobiography Leonard Woolf, casting a sagacious eye over his long career, lamented:

Looking back at the age of eighty-eight over the fifty-seven years of my political work in England, knowing what I aimed at and the results, meditating on the history of Britain and the world since 1914, I see clearly that I achieved practically nothing. The world today and the history of the human anthill during the past fifty-seven years would be exactly the same as it is if I had played pingpong instead of sitting on committees and writing books and memoranda.¹

But Woolf's achievements, as we have seen, were considerable. His ideas were influential on the creation of the League of Nations. Through his empirical and theoretical work on imperialism, he contributed to the erosion of the intellectual foundations of empire. His propaganda work for the Fabian Society and Labour Party contributed to the erosion of its political foundations. He played a large part in encouraging the Labour movement to abandon its traditional indifference to foreign affairs and engage seriously in analysis and debate of broad issues of international policy. In the process he pioneered international functionalism, and made a substantial contribution to the development of what can be broadly described as 'practical', 'welfare', or 'constructive' internationalism.

Less tangibly, he was an indefatigable critic, in true Dissenting mould, of the 'official view' of foreign policy,

¹ Woolf, The Journey Not the Arrival Matters, 158.

and a vigilant opponent of all forms of complacency in world politics whether emanating from the Left or the Right. In doing so he repeatedly challenged the fatalists and dogmatists of his age, as he saw them, to examine and re-examine their assumptions.

It was in this role that he penned, among other things, a trenchant, if partial, critique of one of the most important IR texts of the twentieth century. This was the text which, more than any other, established the reputation of the inter-war period as the 'utopian' phase of IR thinking. Paradoxically, its author, E. H. Carr, held many of the beliefs that his acerbic critic, Leonard Woolf, had been advocating for over twenty years.

Despite this complicated and paradoxical picture, Woolf has been classified in IR historiography, for the reasons described in Chapter 1, as an 'innocent' and 'simple-minded' 'utopian'. I have argued in this thesis that this label is misleading and inappropriate.

In Chapter 2 I contended that the core characteristics of 'inter-war utopianism' are far from clear. An examination of ten well known studies confirmed that it has been interpreted in a highly elastic way. From the various premises, hypotheses, and prescriptions attributed to utopianism, an 'ideal type' was constructed. This brought the diversity of contemporary understandings of utopianism into sharp relief: the ideal type utopian was seen to believe in a wide variety of vague and not necessarily compatible things.

I then constructed a framework for analysis consisting of three broad objections to utopianism, central to Carr's critique, from which virtually all subsequent objections to the doctrine derive. I proceeded to explicate the three most important areas of Woolf's thought - international government, imperialism, and international economic organization - and analyze and assess them in terms of this framework.

Woolf's thought was shown to exhibit a degree of complexity and eclecticism which in itself defies the simple designation 'utopian'. It is true that, in Chapters 4, 6, and 7, some severe shortcomings were found in his use of certain concepts, his reliance on certain methods, and his articulation of certain prescriptions for change. Some of these shortcomings - particularly regarding his use of the domestic analogy in his later works, his pronouncements and strictures about disarmament and collective security in the 1930s, and his understanding of the League's mandates system and his proposals for its development in the 1920s - were indeed found to be tantamount to utopianism in two of the three senses alluded to above.

But in other areas of his thought - his analysis of the progress of international government, his theory of economic imperialism, even his proposals for the expansion of international Co-operative trade - these charges were found to be strangely inappropriate. In these areas it cannot be said that Woolf 'ignored facts and payed little attention to analysis of cause and effect'. Nor can it be

said that he 'underestimated the role of power in international relations and overestimated the role of morality, law, and public opinion'.

While much of Woolf's vast output was exhortatory, admonitory, and prescriptive in nature, his best known and most substantial books contain a considerable amount of detailed empirical analysis. He was, as pointed out in several chapters, a political publicist in the Radical Dissenting tradition. But he was also a Fabian social investigator with a tremendous faith in reason as revealed by 'the facts'. Woolf, like Carr, wanted to change the world. But he did not, pace Carr, seek to do this by the 'elaboration of visionary projects' or by uncritical reference to a priori principles. Few of his proposals for change amount to 'projects' in the sense, nor are they based on principles cut-off from their social, economic, and political context.

Woolf had a wide and profound historical knowledge. He sought to change the world not by discounting this knowledge, but by harnessing it for the greater good of society as a whole, itself informed by a reading of history. His desire to change the world was always informed by an interpretation of that world. Indeed, his most substantial works on the subject can be seen as an attempt to discern and promote the main currents of modern historical progress. Yet his work on economic imperialism, the rise of militarism and fascism, and the international crisis of the 1930s, demonstrates that he was far from

blind, pace the strong inference of the term 'utopian', to currents of a quite different kind.

This is why comments to the effect that Woolf was an early 'critical liberal internationalist' are not as far-fetched as they first seem. It would be foolish to contend that Woolf matched contemporary critical liberal internationalists in rigour and theoretical sophistication. But his approach to the analysis of world politics was essentially the same.

Perhaps the most striking finding of this thesis, however, concerns the third, and arguably most important, objection to utopianism. As with the other two objections, the issues at stake are complex and they involve a high degree of subjectivity. But it would be difficult to construct an argument to the effect that Woolf's thought was, in the ways suggested by Carr, 'self-interested', and that his 'espousal of universal values', such as peace, 'amounted to the unconscious defence and promotion of a particular status quo.' The reason for this is, at root, quite straightforward.

As argued in Chapter 2, and reaffirmed in Chapters 4 and 6, The Twenty Years' Crisis is essentially a critique of liberalism, particularly the way in which 'nineteenth century liberalism' (meaning classical economics plus utilitarianism plus constitutionalism) was applied to the emerging, twentieth century, field of international relations. There are many respects, of course, in which Leonard Woolf can be described as a liberal

internationalist. He inherited much, for example, from the Benthamite and Cobdenite radical critique of orthodox foreign policy. But he also inherited much from the parallel British tradition of reformist socialism. There is a sense in which the former tradition informed his critical faculties whereas the latter tradition educated his creative desires. While he utilized radical liberalism in his critique of protectionism, secret diplomacy, the balance of power, colonialism, national armaments, and so on, his preferred world order, and the one he felt was firmly in the process of becoming, was essentially a socialist world order which differed profoundly from the world envisioned by nineteenth century liberals.

Woolf cannot, therefore, be accused of 'unconsciously defending a particular status quo' resting on 'nineteenth century' principles since ultimately he rejected these principles.

It is when we look at the matter from this perspective that we see that Woolf and Carr had much in common. Both men rejected the idea of a natural harmony of interests: laissez-faire, both economic and political, had become obsolete: the promise of a spontaneous world order arising from the unfettered pursuit of economic interest and the self-determination of free nations, was no longer tenable in the heavily armed, industrialized, fiercely nationalistic world of the twentieth century.

But this did not mean that some kind of harmony could not rationally and purposefully be created. Though there

were some important differences between them, both Woolf and Carr argued for the creation of such a world largely on functionalist and collectivist lines. Whether they should ultimately be deemed liberal or socialist internationalists is a moot point. The important point is that, along with G. D. H. Cole, J. A. Hobson, Harold Laski, David Mitrany, and others, they shared a vision of world order that was broadly speaking welfare or constructive internationalist: they believed in the possibility of utilizing modern scientific knowledge and technical know-how, to construct a more rational and harmonious world than the one based on the 'anarchy' of unfettered capitalism and unregulated inter-state competition.

The realist-utopian dichotomy as it has been conventionally understood provides no intimation of this community of outlook. As a consequence it gives no intimation of an important strand of thinking that was developing throughout the inter-war period and to which Leonard Woolf was a notable and highly respected contributor.

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