



daughter of a family linked to watchmaking on one side and the corn trade
 She left elementary school when she married; given
A. J. P. TAYLOR *Walter Stoneman*
 her well-remembered dislike of children, it must have been a much-
 appreciated escape. Connie Taylor was a fairly tall woman with a forceful
 face. She is remembered as being a sharp-tongued and strong-willed
 woman who was very much in the public eye. Her husband, the author
 of the book *The British Academy 1993*, was a leading figure in the field of
 history.

Alan John Percivale Taylor 1906–1990

ALAN JOHN PERCIVALE TAYLOR was born on 25 March 1906 at 29 Barratt Road, Birkdale—then a separate town from, later a suburb of, Southport, Lancashire. His father, Percy Lees Taylor, was a cotton cloth merchant in the firm James Taylor and Sons, founded by Percy's father in the 1870s.

The Taylors stemmed from Scotland. Alan's great-grandfather, Edmund, moved south from Dunblane and in time opened a general store at Heywood. His son, James, married Amelia Lees, of an old Lancashire Quaker family. Probably much of the initial capital for the Taylor cotton cloth exporting firm came from the Lees family. Percy, the eldest of seven sons, joined the family firm in 1890 and was in effect the senior partner from 1898. According to Alan, his father made £5,000 or more each year. Apart from one six month stay at the Calcutta office soon after he married, Percy worked in the company's headquarters in Manchester. He was a good-natured man, short and a little plump. He suffered from poor hearing, a tubercular lung and an ulcer. He retired at the right time, selling out in 1920 at the peak of the post-war boom. Thereafter he ran a mill in Preston, began a wholesale confectionery business and enjoyed the income from the £100,000 he received for his share of the family business. Percy Taylor was a gentle person who loved children. He was devastated by the death of his daughter Miriam (born 1902), who died of meningitis at the age of eighteen months. He never fully overcame this loss. He compensated by being kind and generous to Doris Sharples and Lillius Blackwell who were roughly the age that Miriam would have been.

Alan Taylor's mother was Constance Sumner Thompson, the second daughter of a family linked to warehousing on one side and the corn trade on the other. She left elementary school-teaching when she married; given her well-remembered dislike of children, it must have been a much-appreciated escape. Connie Taylor was a fairly tall woman with a forceful face. She is remembered as being a sharp-tongued and strong-willed

woman. She was elegant, having good taste in clothes. Her main interests were politics, needlework, at which she was extremely good, and golf. After Alan was born, Constance Taylor suffered a miscarriage. He grew up an only child.

Both parents were naturally anxious about Alan's health, especially as he was a delicate child. Mrs Taylor, on the advice of a friend, sent him to a homeopathic doctor whose treatment apparently proved to be effective. In all ways Alan was a very much looked-after little boy. His parents hired a general maid primarily to attend to him. He later recalled, 'She adored me, hugged me, gave me whatever I wanted'. His father also doted on him. In short he was thoroughly spoilt, getting maximum attention from all but his mother. He grew up a self-contained child, who was eager to impress adults but not keen for the company of other children. Visitors to the Taylor's large house at 18 Crosby Road, Birkdale often brought Alan a box of soldiers. So he acquired a big collection and he played with these soldiers for hours undisturbed in the house's extensive attic. Such companionship as Alan had was with his father or with his father's friends and their children—notably the family of Joshua and 'Polly' Blackwell. Joshua Blackwell was secretary of the Congregational Church, superintendent of its Sunday school and a notable local socialist. On Sundays, after the adults had left the church, Alan would walk or play on the nearby dunes with his father, Joshua Blackwell and his daughter Eunice. On Saturdays Percy often took Alan and sometimes other children to Southport pier or funfair. Eunice later recalled of Percy and Alan that they were 'so happy together'. Later in life Alan Taylor gained great pleasure from the companionship of his children, especially on long walks and visits to ancient buildings.

Alan was a precocious child. He could read before he was four—and read and read again *Pilgrim's Progress*. When he was placed among other young children at a nearby nursery school, he was clearly unextended. However he enjoyed going to the Blackwell's house next door to the school, where he read Beatrix Potter and other books, ate chocolate and argued on intellectual matters with Mrs Blackwell. One daughter remembered a six or seven year old Alan asking her mother whether Jesus had spoken in Sanskrit and then arguing at length over the matter.

The Taylors and the Thompsons were great arguers. Alan was brought up in an atmosphere of radical and socialist politics. Political figures who visited Southport often stayed with the Blackwells. On such occasions the Taylors joined the gatherings around the Blackwells' large dining table—and the young Alan was kept amused playing dice with Eunice in a corner of the room. Later, in the 1920s, political figures stayed overnight in Preston with the Taylors. So Alan came into contact with nationally-known

politicians, including George Lansbury, Arthur Henderson, Harry Pollitt and William Paul. From an early age Alan learnt that to win the attention of his mother and various uncles and aunts he needed to be quick witted and to argue well.

The Taylors left Birkdale in 1911. After a period in Italy they lived at 10 Manchester Road, Buxton until early 1919, when they moved to 17 Rose Terrace, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston. Until he was eleven, Alan went to school locally, first to Madame de la Motte's school and then to Buxton College. After these he was sent to The Downs School, a boarding school near Malvern run by a Quaker. Both Taylor's approved of Quaker principles. Connie Taylor did so passionately, as she greatly admired her brother Harry's stand as an 'absolutist' conscientious objector during the war. She was horrified that at Buxton College or Rugby (their first choice for him) Alan would be given military training in the Officer Training Corps. As Bootham, the distinguished Quaker school in York, would not accept children under 13, Alan was sent to The Downs from 1917 until he went to Bootham in autumn 1919. He liked Bootham as strongly as he had disliked The Downs School.

Bootham was second only to his home life as a formative influence. There he continued to develop his intellectual abilities, which he displayed in school-work, in argument in debates and in discussion with his teachers. Though belief in any god fell from him in his second year, he benefited in a secular way from the Society of Friends' meetings. He gained further skill in preparing clear and plausible arguments and also learned to sit quietly and think. He also acquired a life-long love of church architecture during the long hours he spent in solitary explorations of York. He was a very sharp-witted, bookish schoolboy with only one or two friends; as he put it later, 'Life did not exist for me, except at second-hand—no experiences, no one to talk to'. His first big disappointment in the world of learning was to narrowly miss a scholarship to Baliol. However, probably as a result of displaying his exceptional knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture, he was awarded a scholarship at Oriel.

He arrived at Oxford University in October 1924 full of intellectual confidence and proud of being a radical outsider. His oft-repeated attitude was: 'I am no better than anyone else, but no one else is better than me'. However, as before, he tended to be a solitary, scholarly person—awkward in female company and an avoider of macho-male sports and of the Oxford Union. Later he wrote revealingly of being on television: 'It is actually an advantage to be quicker, cleverer, more intellectual than the other man. In this way television is not at all like life and is indeed a serious disqualification for real life'. Clever argumentativeness may have been

much esteemed in his family's circles, but it neither took him far with girls of his own age nor made him popular with many male undergraduates.

Not only did he bring to Oxford a Northern accent and a proud, secular nonconformity, but also he came with a radical political outlook. After the First World War both his parents had joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and become active socialists, rejecting the Lloyd George radicalism they had supported in pre-war days. In 1921, at the age of fifteen, Alan had also joined the ILP. When he arrived at Oxford he promptly joined the university Labour Club. He had been much influenced by his mother's close friend Henry Sara, a foundation member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), who introduced him to various Marxist classics and the communist press. While still at school Alan even upbraided Raymond Postgate for being a bourgeois and one who failed to understand the Materialist Conception of History when Postgate wrote on 'Literature and Communism' in *The Communist*, 27 May 1922. In writing from Bootham the young Taylor appears to have seen no irony in observing: 'I have always been afraid that bourgeois culture was too deeply ingrained ever to be eradicated or even completely nullified by doses, however continuous, of *Plebs* and the *Communist*'. Indeed he was often to expect sterner standards of socialist rectitude from other public figures than for himself. His joining the CPGB before the summer of 1925 was not as unexpected as he later suggested in autobiographical writing but more probably in part it was a case of him putting his money where his mouth was. It was also in part an early example of his tendency to grab attention by shocking conventional middle class people with unconventional views. He attended Labour Club meetings and made Marxist speeches and in the university was happy to be, as he later put it, Tom Driberg's communist rank-and-file; but then—as later—he had no taste for the anonymous slog of politics.

Alan's world still revolved round his family for at least his first two years at university. At Oxford he continued to be an avid reader, to view old churches and to talk late into the night with a small circle of friends: but his enthusiasm appears to have been for the family's way of life. In 1925 after holidaying in the Lake District (a favourite holiday location of the Taylor family), he went to Russia with his mother and Henry Sara. Armed with introductions from British communists and trade unionists they travelled freely around Leningrad, Moscow and Novgorod. Alan later observed when recalling having seen the mummified Lenin: 'I decided then that he was a good man, an opinion I have not changed'. During the General Strike he returned home to Preston and put himself and his Rover sports car at the disposal of the local strike committee. After the General Strike he abandoned his one team sport, rowing, and also 'quietly lapsed'

from the CPGB (not that he had ever been an activist). Though shocked by the expulsion from Russia of Trotsky (quite probably another case where Henry Sara influenced his views), he remained a vocal supporter of the Soviet Union longer than his memoirs suggest.

There is no reason to doubt that Alan Taylor worked hard throughout his undergraduate years, and very hard in his final year, whatever he may have written later. Before going to Oxford he had read most extensively. He had worked his way through such older historical works as those by Edward Gibbon, George Grote, Sir J. R. Seeley and Lord Acton and more recent books including many by G. M. Trevelyan, J. L. and B. Hammond, R. W. Postgate, R. H. Tawney, Sir J. Marriott, C. Grant Robertson, H. A. L. Fisher, A. F. Pollard and C. R. Fay. His knowledge of European literature was good, especially of Ibsen's work, while he had read very widely indeed in English literature. In addition he had read classic works by Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg plus recent British socialist writing such as that by Max Beer, Eden and Cedar Paul, William Paul, William Mellor, as well as works by H. M. Brailsford, G. Lowes Dickinson and Hilaire Belloc. At Oxford he kept up his prodigious reading. In his first year he still consumed great quantities of books, including Max Beerbohm, Saki, Robert Browning, more by Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, and A. Schnitzler's *Dr Graesler*, as well as working through solid medieval course books by Tout, Pollock and Maitland, Oman and Stubbs. He took the reign of Richard II as his special subject but also read widely on the French Revolution and the revolutions of 1848. His taste for nineteenth century European history was greatly stimulated when 'Sligger' (L. Francis Fortescue) Urquart of Balliol was his tutor for one year. He was less impressed by his usual modern British history tutor, G. N. Clark, or his medieval tutor Stanley Cohn. He also attended lectures given by J. M. Thompson, the distinguished historian of the French Revolution, at Magdalen. In 1938, eleven years after he had graduated with First Class Honours in History, Alan Taylor was to be Thompson's successor.

Alan still gravitated back to his family. His uncle Harry had a thriving solicitor's practice in London, specializing in trade union and left-wing cases. From October 1927 Alan became an articled clerk, with a partnership arrangement in the firm. His parents who, at Oxford had provided him with the then extremely rare undergraduate luxury of a sports car, now provided him with a costly six-room flat beside Hampstead Heath plus a housekeeper. However he had no taste for legal work, preferring to read, to watch films or to visit the theatre. So after six months he left, and his parents funded his return to Oxford, where at first he worked unsuccessfully for a prize essay on the foreign policy of the Parliamentary Radicals of the 1830s and 1840s. Later he revived this topic as part of his Ford

Lectures for 1956, published as *The Trouble Makers*. At the suggestion of H. W. C. Davis, then Regius Professor, he wrote to Professor A. F. Pribram of Vienna to enquire if he would supervise research linking British Parliamentary and Viennese Radicals before the 1848 revolutions. After Alan had visited Pribram in Vienna, the latter agreed to take him on from the autumn of 1928. The first year of his research was funded by his parents.

Alan Taylor worked hard in Vienna. He was impressed by Pribram's lectures, later commenting that these were 'wonderful impromptu performances that became my model'. However he made his own way in the archives and found his own specific research area within Pribram's broad suggestion of Anglo-Austrian relations 1848–66. This was to be his first book, *The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy 1847–1849* (1934). As for his approach to writing, he later claimed that his model was Heinrich Friedjung's work *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland, 1859–1866*, 2 vols (1897–8), which he recommended for translation and for which, when it was translated by his friend William McElwee in 1935, he wrote a eulogistic introduction. Alfred Pribram backed Alan in a successful bid for a Rockefeller Research Fellowship for 1929–30 and subsequently secured for him a post teaching modern European history at Manchester University.

As at Bootham and at Oriol, Alan Taylor lived within a small circle. Indeed his Oxford friends Innes Stewart and Charles Gott and also two Bootham friends spent periods with him in Vienna. He partially taught himself German by working through German history books and improved it through private lessons. He learned to skate and to ride. But the new leisure activity which was to have the greatest impact on his later life was music. He attended many of the performances put on to mark Schubert's centenary, regularly attended the opera and acquired his passion for chamber music. In his final year in Vienna he held a season ticket for the Vienna Philharmonic. His social circle did expand in one notable way—women. In London he had had a brief friendship with a girl named Dora. In Vienna he experienced his 'first real love affair' with a young Viennese woman Else Sieberg and after that was over he went out with his future first wife, Margaret Adams, who was studying German and the piano.

Alan Taylor lectured on European history from 1494 to 1914 at Manchester University. When he enquired who had covered this considerable time span before, he was given the answer: 'Oh Tout. He said that modern history was not a serious subject and anyone could lecture on it'. Taylor's teaching load was relatively heavy for from 1927 (when John Neale resigned) until 1931 the Chair of Modern History was vacant. In lecturing on modern Europe Taylor was happiest on the period of the

French Revolution and the nineteenth century. He gave most attention to the recent period he then knew least—1878–1914. In time he worked through the large collections of German, French and British diplomatic documents for that period. While his first book (1934) and his first essay in the *English Historical Review* (1936) drew on his work in archives in Vienna, Paris and London mostly carried out between 1928 and 1931, thereafter he came increasingly to rely on published documents. His second book, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies 1884–1885: A Move in Bismarck's European Policy* (1936), a 99 page monograph which grew from an intended article, rested heavily on such sources, especially the German, as well as on material from the Public Record Office and the Granville Papers. He had bought a set of the 54 volumes of *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette* (1922–6) from a German Jewish refugee in 1933. In his second monograph he high-lighted an aspect of Bismarck's policy. Indeed, he took his case to its limits. This was to become something of a habit. He also built on his knowledge of the published German, French and British diplomatic documents to teach from 1935 a special subject 'England and The Making of the Ententes 1898–1907'. This won the admiration of the History Department's external examiner, E. L. Woodward, who warmly commended Taylor to the Fellows of Magdalen College who were wishing to appoint a tutorship in modern European history. Taylor was elected, with effect from October 1938.

Alan Taylor's eight years at Manchester University were also marked by his association with Lewis Namier, who arrived as Professor of Modern History one year after him. Namier provided him with the stimulation of both a first rate modern historian and one whose experience of continental Europe and its history was greater than that of Sligger Urquart. He was an older figure whom Taylor could revere and a professor who encouraged a younger, ambitious but insecure colleague. Namier had connections which proved valuable. One was with the publishing house of Macmillan, which published *Germany's Bid*, the translation of Friedjung and *The Habsburg Monarchy 1815–1918* (1941), a commission which Alan took on after Namier had declined it. Another was with the *Manchester Guardian*. When in the autumn of 1934 Namier was especially tardy reviewing a book on Robespierre, he passed it over to Alan. Thereafter Alan eagerly reviewed and from early 1938 also wrote centennial and other occasional pieces for that newspaper. He also became a close friend of A. P. Wadsworth, then Labour Correspondent and from 1944 to 1956 the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*. Yet Taylor was not merely in Namier's shadow. Ernest Jacob, the Professor of Medieval History and the man instrumental in hiring both Taylor and Namier, later recalled when writing

of the latter: 'With A. J. P. Taylor fresh from Vienna a most powerful combination began to revive modern history in the university'.

During his years at Manchester Taylor broke away both from his parents and from some of their political assumptions. In his first year at Manchester he lived in lodgings during the week and returned home to Preston at weekends. In the summer of 1931 he and Margaret Adams married in a London Registry Office without informing his parents. This, not surprisingly, hurt his parents. After spending two years in the rented top flat of 120 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, which was two above that of Malcolm and Kitty Muggeridge, Alan and Margaret bought a large cottage, 'Three Gates', at Higher Disley on the edge of the Peak District. He later recalled the five years there as the happiest in his life, growing vegetables, walking in the surrounding countryside and enjoying music in Manchester.

In these years his views on international affairs moved away from the peace policies of his family and his Quaker upbringing. For four years, until he left Manchester, he was a delegate to Manchester Trades Council, having followed his father's example of joining a trade union to become eligible. Through it he gained his early experience of speaking at meetings and demonstrations. On 25 February 1934, when speaking in the Free Trade Hall at a meeting to protest at the Fascist suppression of working class organizations in Austria, he urged the need to be prepared in Britain lest similar attacks be made on the British working class. Similarly, his comments remained orthodox Left (no doubt still in line with the views of his parents and Henry Sara) when he spoke along with Arthur Greenwood, Aneurin Bevan, Willie Gallacher and several other speakers at a mass rally held on 21 October 1934 in Platt's Field against Fascism and the government's Incitement to Disaffection Bill. Alan Taylor dubbed the Bill 'a war measure, a deliberate preparation for the next European war'. 'Are we going to allow ourselves to be slaughtered', he went on to ask, 'or are we going to refuse to fight for capitalism and raise instead the standard of Socialist England?' During 1934 and 1935 he made his mark as an anti-war speaker. However in February 1936, fearing German reoccupation of the Rhineland, he abandoned his past and his own recent arguments and from then on called for British rearmament. At much the same time he changed his views about Germany's role before the outbreak of the First World War. From his work on the pre-1914 published diplomatic documents he now no longer believed Germany to be guiltless.

From 1938 until 1963 Alan Taylor taught at Oxford University. His feelings for the university often appeared mixed. But if it was for him something of a love-hate relationship, then love usually predominated. He enjoyed lecturing and he came to love his college. If he chafed at some of

Oxford's ways, he was punctilious about Magdalen College's traditions. He was proud of his administrative role in the college during Sir Henry Tizard's time as President (1942–6) and even more so of when he was Vice President during the college's quincentenary celebrations in 1958. He could readily have secured a chair outside of Oxford in the 1950s and later; but he declined all offers, even to succeed Namier at Manchester. He was disappointed to be passed over for the Regius Chair of Modern History in 1957. In his autobiography he disingenuously observed, 'I was hardly even aware of the Regius Chair'; yet a decade earlier he had actively championed Namier for the post. In private he did not hide his feelings. In October 1958 he wrote in a letter to his publisher:

. . . I doubt whether I shall write any more. The more one writes, the more one is ignored and slighted in the academic world, until one becomes embittered as I have.

While he later tried to hide his disappointment over the Regius Chair, he made little or no attempt to conceal his mortification when, in 1963, following the row over *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961), the History Board neither extended his special lectureship nor replaced it with something similar or made moves to secure him a personal chair. Later, he was pleased to give a series of lectures at Oxford by special arrangement. He also continued to give lectures on behalf of the extra mural department.

These years at Oxford, up to the early 1960s, marked his main period as a diplomatic and Central European historian. He wrote substantial works which covered the period from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe. The first of these Alan Taylor offered to Harold Macmillan in April 1939, not long after Alan Taylor had arrived at Magdalen. *The Habsburg Monarchy 1815–1918* (1941), substantially rewritten and published in 1948 with the dates altered to 1809–1918, has remained one of Taylor's most esteemed works. This took him back to the area of his postgraduate research and, in particular, to his reading of many German language works on Austrian history. In the interim his interest in Habsburg history had been fostered by talking with Namier. Namier had grown up within the Habsburg Empire, in its Polish lands close to the Russian border. He was a fount of knowledge of the Empire's history and of stories of old Vienna. Indeed Macmillan had first tried to interest Namier in writing such a book. Taylor dedicated both versions of his work 'To L. B. Namier: This renewed token of gratitude, affection and esteem'.

Taylor's lively and acute narrative history followed the works of Louis Eisenmann and Josef Redlich in concentrating on the constitutional issues

of the Habsburg monarchy. He also benefited in particular from the works of Anton Springer, Heinrich Friedjung and Otto Bauer as well as the British historian R. W. Seton-Watson. In his bibliography he paid special tribute to Eisenmann's book on the setting up of the Dual Monarchy in 1867: 'Though ostensibly dealing on with part of the period, [it] is a work of superlative genius which illuminates the whole; no greater work of history has been written in this century'. In his autobiography Alan Taylor observed that both he and Namier 'derived our views on the Habsburg Monarchy' from the book by Bauer (whom he had met in 1928) *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907).

The Second World War helped change Alan Taylor's perspective on the Habsburg Monarchy. During the war he became close to several eminent European *émigrés*. Even as he finished the first version of the book, he met Michael Karolyi and through him and Baron Hatvani learned more of Hungary. He met Eduard Benes and Jan Masaryk through Hubert Ripka, a member of the Czech government in exile. On 29 April 1943 Masaryk chaired a lecture by Alan Taylor on the theme of Czechoslovakia's place in a free Europe in which Taylor argued that Czechoslovakia should be a barrier against Pan-German expansion and a cultural bridge between the Western democracies and Soviet Russia. In private, he was even more pro-Czech. When declining in the autumn of 1943 to be involved with propaganda to Austria he observed: 'The best thing for Austria would be to become part of Czechoslovakia, but this is not a practical proposition; and the alternative, sooner or later, is that it will again become part of Germany.' After assisting the Czech government in exile in several ways, Alan Taylor helped the Yugoslavs with their claims to Trieste, a city which he had visited and which he felt should never have been allocated to Italy after the First World War. With his sympathies for the Slavic nationalities fully roused, Taylor firmly rejected any notions of a Danubian federation of any kind and saw the Habsburg Monarchy as a cloak for Pan-German expansionism. The second version of this book, rewritten mostly in the summer of 1947 and finished that November, a critical period for the new eastern European states, firmly saw off the Habsburg Monarchy as a dinosaur well beyond resuscitation. In the Preface to the second edition he renounced the first version's 'liberal illusion' of 'lost opportunities' and firmly stated: 'The conflict between a super-national dynastic state and the national principle had to be fought to the finish; and so, too, had the conflict between the master and subject nations'.

He also took to heart his former supervisor's criticisms of the first version of *The Habsburg Monarchy*. Pribram had observed: 'It can be shown that all the important events in its domestic policy from the Vienna

Congress till the collapse of the Empire were determined by successes or failures in the field of foreign policy'. The second version explicitly rectified this, though Taylor's emphasis on the working out of the 'national principle' led him to understate the impact of defeat in the First World War.

His other central European study—*The Course of Germany History* (1945)—was even more affected by the war. Though, again, Taylor had been working out many of its themes in his teaching and in book reviews in earlier years. He had not cared much for Berlin when he had visited Germany in 1924 and 1928 and had thought even less of upper Bavaria in 1932 when the growing strength of the Nazis was much in evidence. The war strengthened his beliefs of 1926 onwards that both the Kaiser and Hitler followed expansionist policies. Moreover, influenced by his own and Namier's historical work and by refugees from Nazi Europe, he came to condemn nearly all Germans for at least passively supporting German territorial ambitions. Hence though Hitler in domestic policy was of unparalleled evil, his foreign policy was a norm. He argued that Hitler's attack on Russia in June 1941 'was the climax, the logical conclusion, of German history'. He firmly coupled the failure of democracy in Germany with his belief in the German people's preference for German supremacy beyond their borders. So, he concluded, that the 1941 German invasion of Russia 'was the cause for which the German people had sacrificed liberty, religion, prosperity, law'. This was too gloomy a view of the German people, as opposed to the Nazis, for the Foreign Office. In fact the book had begun as a chapter he had written on Weimar Germany for a handbook for British officers who would have to administer Germany when the Allied armies advanced through it. It was rejected, a fate which earlier had befallen an Hungarian handbook he spent four months writing in 1943 on behalf of the Political Warfare Executive.

Later, reflecting on his two complementary books he continued to deem *The Habsburg Monarchy* to be one of his better books but wrote of the German one: 'It is pretty bad, too clever by half'. However this critique of his German book was to do with style. He later claimed that he drew the heavy use of paradoxes and epigrams from Albert Sorel. However the book had more serious problems of interpretation, which made it more evidently a period piece of history writing than the Austrian study. West Germany became prosperous and remained democratic. By the time of the 1961 paperback he was trying to explain this away by arguing, 'For only a divided Germany can be a free Germany'. But he still had his suspicions of the 'once a Hun, always a Hun' kind, stating: 'I have almost reached the point of believing that I shall not live to see a third German war; but events have an awkward trick of running in the wrong

direction, just when you least expect it'. Even twelve years later, holidaying in Florence, he found himself wondering about elderly German tourists:

. . . they must have been in the prime of life under Hitler and most of them Nazis. You think one man is a quiet distinguished scholar; perhaps he was once a German officer, massacring prisoners-of-war in Russia. And that grey-haired lady. She was no doubt a Hitler *madchen* and after that a guard in a concentration camp. How could such ordinary people have been so surpassingly barbarous?

However he himself came to feel that the Germans were not unique in the twentieth century in committing atrocities and historiographically it soon became sterile to explain German history on the basis of the peculiarities of the German character. In his autobiography Taylor stated his major influence as to interpretation had been the radical-liberal historian Eckart Kehr's work on the links between the Junkers and heavy industry. This may well be the case; but the bleak view of the Germans probably owed something to writers such as Rohan Butler as well as to Taylor's own reflections on European history.

Alan Taylor's wartime experiences had given him many opportunities to develop his views on Germany's history. He was not called up, but at first allowed to continue to teach European history at Oxford University. He volunteered for the Home Guard and later was enrolled in air raid precaution duties. Otherwise he devoted much time to giving his views on the European past and present to service personnel through the university's adult education department and to civilian audiences across the south of England on behalf of the Ministry of Information. In May 1943 he was summoned to London to write on Hungary and Germany for the Political Warfare Executive. This he did full time for four months and part time for a few months thereafter.

He took as his axiom during the war the British need for an alliance with the Soviet Union. This followed from the belief he had held throughout the 1930s that Russian predominance in eastern Europe was the only alternative to German ascendancy and that to resist Germany Britain needed Russia as the powerful ally in the east. During the war he took a tough line against a negotiated peace, decrying notions of there being 'good Germans' with whom Britain could deal. Like Churchill and Beaverbrook he wanted nothing short of unconditional surrender, which would thereby reassure the Soviet Union of Britain's determination to crush Nazism. This stance had its unpleasant side, with Taylor in October 1944 belittling on the radio such a German opponent of the Nazis as Karl Goerdeler, a Centre Party politician who was to be executed by the Nazis

for his efforts. *The Course of German History* was scathing on the failures of the liberal Germans and in its first edition ended on a triumphant note with the Anglo-Russian alliance which followed Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941. For Taylor, Churchill's action in proclaiming this alliance was 'the greatest act of statesmanship of the century—say rather, of modern times'. In the two lengthy paragraphs he added to the end of the 1961 edition of the book. Taylor took particular pains to dismiss the efforts of the 'coalition of the highminded' who did little that was effective to overthrow Hitler. Their fault in July 1944 was that 'even now they were more anxious to save Germany from the Russians than to save Europe from the Germans'.

The war gave Alan Taylor great openings in the press and on the radio. He was in Oxford, available to offer informed and/or controversial views on Europe while others were away on war service. Through Namier he came to write on Eastern Europe in 1942 for *Time and Tide*; but his advocacy of Soviet control of the Baltic states and of Russia keeping her 1941 Polish boundary outraged many readers as well as Lady Rhondda, the journal's owner. From the autumn of 1943, when the *Manchester Guardian's* editor, W. P. Crozier, was ailing, Taylor wrote editorials on Hungary. After his friend A. P. Wadsworth succeeded Crozier, he eagerly took on writing many editorials on Europe, which he telephoned through from Oxford. This also ended over his espousal of Russia, in this case at the beginning of 1946. In September 1944 he tried to arrange to be a special correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* immediately the war ended. This proved not to be feasible, given his university commitments; though he did go to Czechoslovakia for three weeks in 1946. In 1947 he still had aspirations of this kind, pressing on the editor claims of expertise on Morocco, Trieste and Austria. Wadsworth instead employed him in writing centenary and other occasional history articles as well as book reviews.

Alan Taylor's various lectures on the course of the war led him into educational radio work for the Forces network of the BBC. Between March and June 1942 he appeared on a weekly series entitled 'Your Questions Answered'. By the later stages of the war he had established himself as the *enfant terrible* of radio discussion; one producer hoping in spring 1945 that Robert Vansittart's views 'will stimulate you to your usual and endearing aggressive self'. Thus he came to join a roster of figures such as Harold Laski who would argue on controversial topics. He became a regular on 'Freedom Forum' a discussion programme broadcast to North America, from the last days of the war until mid 1947, and then on its successor, named 'London Forum', broadcast overseas, until August 1958.

While the war years were a major stage in his emergence as an early

national 'media personality', they were bad for him in his private life. Quite possibly the move to Oxford before the war had damaged his first marriage. Though it had been a good career move for him, it had not offered much for Margaret. Magdalen College was still rigorously male, Holywell Ford was not close to other academic's homes, Alan had his garden but she lost her cultural role as secretary of the Manchester Chamber Concerts Society. In Oxford she became attracted to sponsoring the young literary star Dylan Thomas whom the Taylors had first known in 1935. This was a major source of friction, as was her infatuation with Robert Kee. Alan and Margaret parted in the autumn of 1950, when he spent a sabbatical year researching in London. Thereafter Alan Taylor spent summer holidays with the children of his first marriage—Giles, Sebastian, Amelia and Sophia (born in 1937, 1940, 1944 and 1945 respectively)—on the Isle of Wight, first at Plevna House in Yarmouth and then at Yarmouth Mill. Later they were sometimes joined on these summer holidays by Daniel (born in 1957), the second child of his second marriage to Eve (Mary Evelyn Raven) Crosland. (An elder son, Crispin, had been born in 1955.) Taylor had become acquainted with her in the late 1940s when she was employed at the London office of the *Manchester Guardian* and they married in 1951.

After the end of the war Alan Taylor worked on what became *The Struggle For Mastery In Europe 1848–1918* (1954). It began as a book on 1878–1919, intended for Hamish Hamilton. By the start of the 1946–7 academic year he had written 60,000 words. He resumed some work on it from the summer of 1949, having diverted to rewrite his Habsburg book and to prepare his first of five collections of essays, published in 1950 as *From Napoleon to Stalin: Comments on European History* (originally provisionally titled *Echoes*). Much of the book, now assigned to the Oxford History of Europe, was written during 1950–51, his year of sabbatical leave. Later he recalled of the 1848–78 part:

I lived entirely in the diplomatic world between the revolutions of 1848 and the Congress of Berlin, going steadily through the volumes of Austrian, French, Italian and Prussian documents that had been or were being published. Most of this was new ground for me in a detailed way. I found it fascinating and I think it is the best part of the book.

He also entered territory new to him with the diplomacy of the First World War. The book rested on his mastery of published diplomatic documents and of other secondary sources. After a shrewd introduction on the Great Powers of Europe, which included a brief assessment of their demographic and economic strengths, Taylor provided a detailed diplomatic history of 'the perpetual quadrille of the Balance of Power' in 'the last age when Europe was the centre of the world'.

The Struggle For Mastery in Europe has always been one of Alan Taylor's most acclaimed works. At the time he saw it to be the book which would establish him as a serious academic historian, someone not in danger of being seen as just 'a playboy'. This it did. Yet while the book was executed with his characteristic brilliant style, the topic and its basic treatment was traditional. It took the old *genre* of careful, even blinkered, diplomatic history to a high level attained by few other practitioners. Forty years on the book remains an important work in its field and is much used by sixth formers and undergraduates. But this type of detailed diplomatic history is currently not as central to as many historians' concerns as it was then. Indeed it was an approach passing its prime even in 1952. Its limitations were highlighted when he himself went on to use a similar approach—reliant on printed documents and Eurocentric—in his *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961). When reflecting on *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe* in his autobiography, Alan Taylor conceded:

Certainly there is little about the 'profound forces' that were then becoming fashionable, though they came in more than might be thought. I agree that public opinion, economic factors and perhaps military calculations counted for more as the nineteenth century wore on.

During the 1950s Alan Taylor built on earlier academic interests while living a full life as a 'media personality', acting as a missionary for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and also being 'obsessed with Magdalen's quincentenary' (as he put it in his autobiography). When invited to give the Ford Lectures, he readily took up Alan Bullock's suggested theme of the opponents of official British foreign policy. This enabled him to return to John Bright and also to his youthful work on the 1830s.

He was always to deem the resulting book, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy 1792–1939* (1957) his 'favourite brainchild'. Why was this? It obviously had much to do with the subject matter. As he said in the first lecture: 'To my mind Dissent is too normal and sensible to demand explanation'. For him these critics of foreign policy were sturdy individualist Englishmen (no women) who were 'deeply English in blood and temperament'. He told his audience:

Conformity may give you a quiet life; it may even bring you to a University Chair. But all change in history, all advance, comes from nonconformists. If there had been no trouble-makers, no Dissenters, we should still be living in caves.

But his pride in *The Trouble Makers* was also to do with his pleasure in being invited to give the lectures. For all his gaminerie, he eagerly accepted Oxbridge's own valuations of many of its glittering prizes. In old age he

looked back on these lectures as being the peak of his career. One further element in his high estimation of this book was that it represented something of a voyage of discovery. He worked steadily through primary printed sources, sources which unlike the foreign policy documents had not already been edited, on a topic which dealt with those he could deem to be his political forebears. In his autobiography he recalled: 'For me the ideas, the characters and the excitement of presenting them were all mixed up'.

He also turned to British themes for two other major lectures. These developed his new interest in the politics of the First World War which had arisen from his work for the last chapter of *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe*. For the Raleigh lecture on History, given at the British Academy on 4 February 1959, he took the theme 'Politics in the First World War'. He followed this two years later, on 21 April 1961 at Senate House, Cambridge University, with his Leslie Stephen lecture 'Lloyd George: Rise and Fall'. These were early fruits of his work on *English History 1914-1945* (1965), which he had taken on after completing *The Trouble Makers*.

However during the 1950s the main emphasis of his work lay in his old areas of central European and diplomatic history. *Bismarck* (1955) arose from an approach made by the New York publisher Knopf which published a series of brief biographies. Having written several reviews of lives of Bismarck, including three in the *English Historical Review* on each volume of Eric Eyck's biography, and an entry on Bismarck for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Alan Taylor agreed to write a larger book but not for the series. While Blanch Knopf and Hamish Hamilton hoped for a book of 120,000 words, Taylor from the outset expected it to be 90,000. He began the book, writing some 20,000 words, in the summer of 1953 and wrote most of it the following summer while with his family at their holiday home on the Isle of Wight.

In keeping the biography relatively short, Alan Taylor knew his own strengths. Much depended on his ideas and his style. For his book was entirely based on printed sources. He himself confessed that he had never seen an original source in Bismarck's handwriting. *Bismarck* has many of the qualities of his better essays. Original and often provocative ideas were presented lucidly in a sparkling style. Arguments were pushed a long way with little or no qualification. His Bismarck responded to, rather than dictated, events: 'He always lived in the moment and responded to its challenge'. Like Taylor's later depiction of Hitler, he portrayed Bismarck as an opportunist in foreign policy. After 1866 Bismarck 'asked only to be left alone; and his desire seemed to challenge no one'. For Taylor, the older Bismarck was a conservative statesman who had no desire to upset

the Balance of Power and see Germany achieve ‘the effortless mastery of Europe’—‘his only object was to maintain the peace of Europe’. The biography very much fitted into the diplomatic framework erected in *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe*. But in writing a biography he had to attach more weight to domestic policy, and this led him, albeit reluctantly, to give more emphasis to domestic motives for Bismarck’s colonial policy than he had in *Germany’s First Bid for Colonies*. Unfortunately he did not give much weight to the influence of domestic on German foreign policy when he came to write his final major diplomatic history: *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961).

This, he later declared, was his only book which had not been suggested to him by others. After Bismarck he had initially liked the idea of writing another biography. However he turned down suggestions to write on the Kaiser, Metternich, Dilke and Charles James Fox. Writing on the origins of the Second World War in Europe drew again on his knowledge of published diplomatic documents and provided a sequel to *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe*. As with most of his major books, he had tried out many of his ideas in book reviews first. Thus in a 1949 review of a volume of German documents he had written:

Hitler intervened only on a sudden impulse, without plan or preparation. The editors reprint the Hossbach memorandum of November 5 1937, in which Hitler expounded his aggressive designs. This is evidence that he was a violent and unscrupulous man; it is not evidence that he had any concrete projects, and his prophecy of events had no relation to what actually happened.

Indeed he had been working out some of his revisionist views during the later stages of the Second World War. He had even been warned on 2 May 1945, when preparing the first of a series of short talks on the war to be broadcast by BBC radio during May to July, that his interpretation of the causes of the war was highly controversial. Then he was asked to make one change to his draft script:

I should say ‘made war inevitable’ instead of saying that ‘the failure of Britain, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. to come together caused the war’. This is mainly in the interests of clarity—in translation that sentence might serve to obscure the predominating war guilt of Germany.

Taylor’s approach to his subject in *The Origins of the Second World War*, like *Bismarck*, owed something to that of his more effective short pieces. In these he had followed a by then old fashioned pedagogic style of essay writing: taking a striking stance and then arguing it through, exercising his wit and debating skills to see what new light such argument threw on an old question. In *The Origins* he gave his readers the occasional

wink to alert them to this. For example, he wrote when arguing that Hitler did not have deep-laid plans but proceeded one step at a time:

Human blunders . . . usually do more to shape history than human wickedness. At any rate this is a rival dogma which is worth developing, if only as an academic exercise.

He also slipped into self-parody with the observation near the end of the book that 'it seems from the record that Hitler became involved in war through launching on 29 August a diplomatic manoeuvre which he should have launched on 28 August'.

In writing a long and sustained exercise in revisionism Alan Taylor was at risk of his readers being unable to see the wood when he was focusing on numerous individual trees. He expected that the book would shock many by its iconoclasm. He wrote to his publisher shortly after delivering the manuscript: 'I'm pleased with it. But I think it will annoy the old boys who thought they had settled everything about the Second World War years ago'. However he did not foresee how bitter a storm it would provoke, nor—least of all, given his anti-appeasement activities and the strong views on Germany expressed in his books—that he would be deemed an apologist for Hitler. One of Hugh Trevor-Roper's more telling criticisms at the time was the question: 'Was Hitler really just a more violent Mr Micawber sitting in Berlin . . . ?' Yet the book did undermine the existing orthodoxy of a Second World War coming about because of one evil man's carefully executed timetable for war. The ensuing uproar gave way to one of the more fruitful academic debates on modern European history.

Yet Taylor's book, in spite of its superb style and many revisionist merits, was one of the last of its kind. It highlighted as never before the dangers of heavy reliance on published diplomatic documents. Taylor himself, in 1971, seriously considered undertaking major archival research to assist him in rewriting it. The separation of German foreign policy from domestic policy was especially untenable for the Nazi state, as Tim Mason pointed out. Taylor later gave lectures in which he himself pointed to other major omissions, ranging from international economic policy to military considerations. Perhaps most surprising, given his comments in the opening section of *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe*, it was very Eurocentric, ending in 1939 not 1941. More than this, it ascribed to France and Britain an importance in diplomacy more appropriate to Edwardian times than the post 1921 period.

Taylor's approach to the writing of European history between 1941 and 1961 was very distinctive—and not just in style. It was rooted in an individualistic Radicalism. Yet there were probably some left-overs from

his brief youthful Marxist period. One was the historiographical issue of the weight to be assigned to individuals' actions in history. He depicted Bismarck, the Kaiser and even Hitler as responders to the forces of their time. This avoided making any claim that one person on their own could determine a nation's fate. There was also a certain degree of economic determinism behind his history. So German diplomacy, whether under Bismarck, the Kaiser or Hitler was likely to follow certain courses. For if the other powers permitted it, Germany would *inevitably* dominate Europe because of its geographic, demographic and economic advantages. Similarly he was an early exponent of 'the peculiarity of Germany history', which in part was deemed to be due to there having been no successful 'bourgeois revolution' in 1848 or lasting one after 1918. Though, characteristically, Taylor's yardstick when presuming that Britain was a norm and Germany an aberration was drawn much more on Radical affection for the Puritan Revolution, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the 1832 Reform Act and All That than from Marxism.

Alan Taylor's radicalism was as marked and as idiosyncratic in public affairs as in his historical writing. He often annoyed the Left as much as the Right. He was vehemently against the West's hostility to the Soviet Union during the Cold War years. Later he observed: 'I was as much against Communists at home as I was on the side of Soviet Russia abroad'. This was not just a matter of hindsight. He strongly denounced the British Communist Party in the 1940s and the 1950s. Similarly he condemned 'the tyranny of the Politburo'. After the end of the Second World War he had continued to champion the cause of the Anglo-Russian alliance but by the end of the decade he was disillusioned with Stalin and more suspicious of his intentions than those of the Americans. He never became a Cold War warrior. Instead he urged that Britain should pursue a foreign policy independent of the US, one which should encourage communist states to be independent of the Soviet Union and should help developing nations. In August 1948 he made something of an international name for himself as a plucky individualist Radical when he spoke out against the organizers' use of a congress of intellectuals held in Poland as a propaganda occasion.

Taylor made a national name for himself as a maverick Left-wing figure in the media. He was among the first generation of British television personalities. The BBC television discussion programme 'In The News' turned him into a household name. The programme, following US models, was a discussion programme which in its early days had Robert Boothby, W. J. Brown, Michael Foot and Alan Taylor as a regular team. After a while the Party whips objected to the prominence that Boothby and Foot, both backbenchers, were securing through the programme, an objection reinforced on the Labour side after Aneurin Bevan's resignation from

Attlee's government as both Foot and Taylor were Bevanite in their sympathies. This resulted in the appearances of the original four being rationed. Taylor appeared 8 times in 1950 from late August; 22 times in 1951; 12 times in 1952; twice in 1953; and 3 times in 1954. However with the coming of commercial television Alan Taylor and the other three had a further run arguing on TV, appearing weekly in a similar programme entitled 'Free Speech'.

These popular discussion programmes gave Alan Taylor an entry into journalism as well as gaining him contracts from ATV in 1957 for several series of historical lectures. For a year from January 1951 he wrote a weekly column in the *Sunday Pictorial*. At first this was captioned 'A million people see and hear this man on Friday night' From January 1953 until June 1956 he contributed a weekly column to the *Daily Herald*, which for the final year appeared under the appropriate heading of 'I Say What I Please'. Both columns were populist and often highly idiosyncratic; the views he expressed ranging from approving low church attendances and the decline in religious belief, applauding world-wide low turn-outs in elections ('It is common-sense anarchism—the best of political creeds') to supporting bus conductors who expect good manners from schoolchildren. He also wrote occasionally for the *New Statesman's* diary. All in all his pieces were often cantankerous and he appeared very much a die-hard member of the awkward squad. Indeed the *Daily Herald* headed his column with captions such as 'Alan Taylor is out of step again'. These columns were for publications which supported Labour. He surprised many when, for twenty years or so, he wrote regularly for the robustly Conservative Express Group of newspapers.

In his autobiography Alan Taylor was emphatic that he owed his appointment to John Junor, the editor, not to Beaverbrook, the proprietor. This may be the case—or it may very well be that Alan Taylor never knew otherwise. His favourable review of Beaverbrook's *Men and Power*, which greatly delighted Beaverbrook, appeared in the *Observer*, 28 October 1956 and Taylor's first article in the *Sunday Express* appeared a year later on 27 October 1957. Beaverbrook had written to Taylor in March 1955, praising *the Struggle For Mastery in Europe* and asking for Taylor's sources on two points. In replying Taylor observed: 'It is agreeable to please historians; but even nicer to satisfy those who have made history'. Beaverbrook in turn supplied Taylor with the sources which had made him doubt Taylor on these points. In May 1957, when he was beginning work on *England 1914–1945*, Alan Taylor wrote to Beaverbrook asking him for his sources for his account of Lloyd George's visit to the Admiralty on 30 April 1917. This led to more correspondence, including help for Taylor with documents which Beaverbrook owned or to which he

had access, and to lunch on 30 June 1957 (earlier than Alan Taylor remembered in his memoirs). This makes it likely, but by no means certain, that Beaverbrook had a hand in his appointment.

What is clear is that these contacts led to a friendship which Taylor later described as the greatest of his life. Beaverbrook captivated Taylor as he did many other younger men of ability, by his sense of fun, his wit and his fund of anecdotes. Taylor recalled in his autobiography: 'He had a gift for making you feel when you were with him that you were the most important person in the world'. Moreover for Taylor there was a fascination of being with a man who had been near the centre of British politics during the period of Taylor's current research; a man who even owned the papers of Bonar Law, Lloyd George and others. Karolyi's appeal had also been partly this. Moreover Beaverbrook entered Taylor's life at a time when he felt undervalued; when he felt that his earlier mentor Namier had failed to support him through thick and thin for the Regius Chair. Beaverbrook was a very large figure in Alan Taylor's other world of the London media.

Taylor's standing as a media personality as well as a historian enabled him to take a leading role in a cause which one might say was tailor-made for him: CND. He joined the initial big-name CND executive soon after it formed by telephoning Kingsley Martin, the editor of the *New Statesman*, and offering his services. In his autobiography he observed: 'We were an odd collection, appointed by nobody and convinced that we could change the fate of the world by our unaided efforts'. In recollections he wrote for Peggy Duff, CND's first secretary, he went further:

We imagined that unilateral nuclear disarmament by Great Britain would set an example to other countries, perhaps to all. This was a last flash of British Imperialism, redolent of earlier times when perhaps our country really set an example to others, as over the slave trade.

Taylor saw himself as a modern Richard Cobden, arguing nuclear weapons rather than the Corn Laws out of existence. He even suggested that membership, like that of the Anti-Corn Law League, should be restricted to the few who could pay a very large subscription. Between 1958 and 1960 he stumped the country, speaking at large numbers of meetings. By all the accounts of those who heard him, he was a very effective speaker on behalf of CND. However when the early momentum of the campaign went and the organization was placed on a democratic basis, he retired.

Taylor's emergence as an early television personality also gave him the opportunity to give the first televised lectures. They built on his reputation as a superb lecturer at Oxford. Indeed John Irwin, the producer of his 1957

television series, wrote at the time of an unannounced visit he made to one of Taylor's regular Oxford lectures:

I've seen nothing like it. That audience was hypnotised by Taylor's dynamic personality, his passionate sincerity, his wit, his command of words, his brilliant sense of timing, and his complete mastery of the subject—without a single note.

Alan Taylor explicitly intended to transfer his style of university lecturing to television. Before giving his 1962 series on BBC television, he wrote:

These lectures are intended as serious history lectures or as serious as I can make it. They are generally like the lectures which I give at Oxford University except that they are shorter and rather faster.

He delivered six series of lectures on independent television between 1957 and 1967: *The Russian Revolution* (3 lectures, 1957), *When Europe was the Centre of the World* (11 lectures, 1957–8), *Prime Ministers* (4 lectures, 1960), *the Big Rows* (6 lectures, 1964), *World War* (10 lectures, 1966) and *Revolution 1917* (5 lectures, 1967). He also gave five series (all of six lectures) on BBC television: *The Twenties* (1962), *Men of 1862* (1963), *The War Lords* (1976), *How Wars Begin* (1977) and *Revolution* (1978) plus one on Channel 4, *How Wars End* (1983).

The television lectures further enhanced Alan Taylor's name as the best known popular, yet academic, historian in Britain. In his prime, in the early to mid 1960s, the lectures were very well delivered and succeeded both in holding their audience's attention and in making many wish to find out more about their topics. Granada Television gave viewing figures of three quarters of a million for his second series in 1957–8. The series given in the late 1970s were also much admired. But by then the skills of delivering the lecture without notes and with precision timing at times over-shadowed the content and Alan Taylor was no longer as fluent as he had been. These later series were also transformed into slender books. In the case of 'Revolution', published as *Revolutions and Revolutionaries* (1980), it gave him the opportunity to reflect on several of his favourite topics, and in the cases of the French Revolution, Chartism and the Paris Commune of 1871 on topics in which he had long been interested yet had published relatively little.

Alan Taylor's major achievement of these years was his volume in the Oxford History of England, *English History 1914–1945* (1965). In this he succeeded in writing a very readable and perceptive standard history. It could be read cover to cover for pleasure, something which few claimed for *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*. Written before the archives were opened, it was often remarkable for the shrewdness of his surmises as to

what had happened; and so, more often than not, bore out his proud claims to having the historian's equivalent of the gardener's 'green fingers'. Yet, naturally, Taylor's hunches were not all sustainable when more information became available and, as was often the case, he did not always check his facts carefully enough. Henry Pelling, for one, highlighted this defect. Nevertheless the book deservedly proved to be both an academic and (when issued by Penguin) a popular success.

English History 1914–1945 was vintage Taylor. It was a great work of narrative history dealing with the major themes of 'High Politics'. The focus was on Whitehall and Westminster and figures such as Lloyd George received much attention, even if the book often also reflected his judgement (as he put it in his autobiography) that 'The poor were always right and the rich always wrong'. Later, in the mid 1970s, Alan Taylor became gloomy about Britain, but in 1964 he was happy to end his volume on a now famous note:

Imperial greatness was on the way out; the welfare state was on the way in. The British empire declined; the condition of the people improved. Few now sang 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Few even sang 'England Arise'. England had risen all the same.

The brilliant style and the narrative tour de force of *English History 1914–1945* partially distracted attention from Alan Taylor's weaker areas — economic, scientific and cultural history. On the last, he disingenuously wrote in his autobiography:

But what conceivable significance had such writers as James Joyce or Virginia Woolf for the majority of English people? These were coterie interests, irrelevant to history in any serious sense.

He took this attitude even further in his volume *From Sarajevo to Potsdam* (1966) published in Thames and Hudson's series *The History of European Civilisation*. In this he brazenly evaded concentrating on culture, declaring: 'European civilisation is whatever most Europeans as citizens were doing'. As he judged that 'war and economic problems predominated' in the 1914–45 period he felt justified in writing a primarily political account.

English History 1914–1945 was his major enterprise of his last years as a full-time teacher in Oxford University. He completed it in July 1964. A month earlier Beaverbrook died. Alan Taylor readily took on writing the biography of his friend. Shortly before Beaverbrook's ashes were to be placed in a plinth in Canada, he wrote to the widow:

Not a day goes by when I do not miss Max . . . It is a wonderful task to give him his true place in history, and I feel unworthy of it. Love for him is my only qualification.

The resulting biography, *Beaverbrook* (1972), was Alan Taylor's last large book. In taking it on, Alan Taylor returned to archival research. It was his first work based on other than printed primary sources since his *English Historical Review* articles of 1950 and 1951. However he confined his archival work to Beaverbrook's own huge collection of papers, which when he began were stored at Cherkley.

The resulting biography received much criticism. This was in part because few who had not been in Beaverbrook's circle of younger admirers could share Alan Taylor's enthusiasm for the book's subject. Moreover Alan Taylor in his introduction to the book repeated the sentiments he had expressed to Lady Beaverbrook. In the biography Taylor made light of Beaverbrook's unpleasant characteristics; C. M. Vines' damning account of Beaverbrook's inconsiderate treatment of those who worked for him, for example, being deemed a book which revealed 'a great humorist at work'. In part the criticism was due to Alan Taylor's omission of most of Beaverbrook's love life and his failure to explain fully the sources of Beaverbrook's great wealth. Though in the former matter Taylor was constrained by the need for the family's copyright approval as well as by his own choice. There was also much in Alan Taylor's own later self assessment: 'I am an historian, not a biographer, and I described what happened, not what people felt'. Most damaging of all were the later detailed analyses by J. M. McEwen and Peter Fraser of Beaverbrook's accounts of the high politics of the First World War, which in exposing Beaverbrook's technique as 'journalistic artistry rather than . . . historical scholarship' (as Fraser put it) also revealed Taylor's undue reliance on Beaverbrook's testimony in *Beaverbrook*. Indeed these studies showed that Alan Taylor would have been wise to have worked longer on the Beaverbrook Papers and to have used other archival sources. Yet for all this the book remains enjoyable to read, benefiting from Taylor's interest in its subject and from his mature style.

The Beaverbrook connection provided Alan Taylor with an unexpected but agreeable role from 1967 to 1975: as Honorary Director of the Beaverbrook Library. Sir Max Aitken moved his father's papers (including those of Bonar Law and Lloyd George) to 33 St Bride Street, an Express building just off Fleet Street. A large part of one floor was turned into a very attractive modern archive, the entrance to which was dominated by a huge portrait of Beaverbrook by Sickert. Taylor's new found role was to stimulate in him something of a renaissance. It provided him with an academic base, secretarial facilities, contact with postgraduate but not undergraduate students and a location in the midst of the world of journalism. He found more time for others than he often had in his hectic Oxford and 'media personality' days of the 1950s, discussing equally the

research of the most eminent scholars and newest postgraduates. He further encouraged researchers by running an excellent seminar in the Beaverbrook Library during university vacations. He secured the publication of several of the earlier papers given at this seminar when he edited *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (1971). He made more time for himself as well, viewing the old buildings of the City and assiduously attending the lunch-time concerts of the City Music Society (which made him its President in succession to Sir Arthur Bliss).

Alan Taylor drew on the archival resources of the Beaverbrook Library not only for *Beaverbrook*. The Lloyd George collection included the diaries and letters of Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's mistress and later second wife. He enjoyed meeting the elderly Lady Lloyd George when arranging for the publication of these records. In editing *Lloyd George. A Diary By Frances Stevenson* (1971) and *My Darling Pussy. The letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson 1913-41* (1975) he made further notable contributions to the study of the Welsh statesman's career. He drew on another Beaverbrook collection for a third edited volume of important primary source material for modern British politics. W. P. Crozier, *Off The Record. Political Interviews 1933-1943* (1973) derived from records that Crozier had made as editor of the *Manchester Guardian* during the period that Taylor had first written for the paper. His other substantial historical work written while at the Beaverbrook Library was *The Second World War: an illustrated history* (1975). This was a concise narrative history in which he succeeded in combining the war in Europe with that in the Far East. It complemented his earlier, much admired *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (1963).

By his period in the Beaverbrook Library Alan Taylor was revered by many of the younger generation of scholars as a Grand Old Man of History. The heat of the earlier controversies had died away. While many of his controversial views had not acquired the status of new orthodoxies, his questioning of old assumptions and his lively style were much admired. He was also greatly esteemed as a lecturer. He continued to give occasional lectures and seminars at Oxford. In March 1982 he delivered the Romanes Lecture, taking as his subject 'War In Our Time' and ending with his favourite theme of the follies of maintaining nuclear weapons. In London he gave lectures and seminars at University College from the mid 1960s until 1978 and for a short period, up to the end of 1978, taught at the North London Polytechnic. He derived particular pleasure from delivering lectures at Bristol University during 1976-8, and for this work agreed to accept the title of Visiting Professor.

In addition he continued generously to give much time to lecturing on behalf of the Historical Association, attracting huge audiences at many

meetings held all round the country. Told at Birmingham in October 1971 that he had excelled himself when speaking on 'The Austro-Hungarian Ruling Elite' before 300 people packed into a hall with a 250 capacity, he smiled and touching his forehead commented: 'When I see an audience of this size, it rather goes to my head'. For many of the general public in the 1970s he was the History Man.

The closure of the Beaverbrook Library in March 1975 was another severe blow to Alan Taylor. He had often been anxious about money, in large measure because he had six children to look after from his first two marriages. Quite possibly he was also mindful of how his father had gone through much of his income by the time of his death. Although an outspoken socialist, from the late 1920s he had been an eager investor in the stock-market. In the mid 1970s he suffered financially as shares went down. With his newspaper writing and other sources of regular income winding down, he became excessively alarmed by the economic problems of the British economy, predicting economic and social collapse. While remaining critical of the well-to-do, he now complained of trade unionists as 'the principal exploiters of the poor and humble'. This was a long way from the youthful upbraider of Postgate or the zealot of the television discussion programmes of the early 1950s.

Alan Taylor, however, experienced a further renaissance. He was boosted out of his post-Beaverbrook Library depression by his third marriage. This was to the Hungarian historian Eva Haraszti on 15 September 1976. Her arrival in England in 1978 gave him the impetus to travel and socialize more as well as to continue with some historical work and to undertake more television programmes. He published a further collection of historical essays, *Politicians, Socialism and Historians* (1980), a selection of his journalism plus his Romanes Lecture, *An Old Man's Diary* (1984) and his final best-seller, his autobiography—*A Personal History* (1983). Hamish Hamilton had sought to publish Alan Taylor's autobiography as early as 1956 and then Taylor, while answering that the suggestion was very premature, had promised it to him should he write it. His love for Eva provided the stimulus for him to do so from 1972. He continued to revise it up until publication. Mostly he was very frank in the telling of his own story, presenting it in his best pungent style.

Taylor's last notable public row was to do with the British Academy. He had been an active member since his election to it in 1956—and, like Magdalen College, it was an institution that he cherished. However he resigned in 1980 after a row over Anthony Blunt's membership, arising from the public revelation that Blunt had spied for the Soviet Union. Alan Taylor was outraged and felt that after the annual general meeting had moved to next business rather than expel Blunt, Blunt nevertheless was in

effect forced out by the President after a few Fellows threatened to resign if he did not go. He rejected all arguments to the contrary. At the time Taylor commented, 'I don't care a damn about him. But I do care about the Academy'. In his autobiography he explained: '. . . I reflected, perhaps too dramatically, on what had happened in the United States and decided I must go against McCarthyism the moment it appeared'. Though he did not regret resigning over what he felt to be an important matter of principle, Alan Taylor did miss being a member and privately expressed hopes of becoming a member again. He was, however, made an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy in 1986.

Alan Taylor remained a very fit man into his seventies. He had been a keen walker, including walking most days across part of London to the Beaverbrook Library from his house in St Marks Crescent, near Regents Park. He greatly enjoyed the company of his children and was proud of walking the Pennine Way and Offa's Dyke with his sons. In January 1984 he was injured by a car when he was crossing a London street. Thereafter the onset of Parkinson's Disease became increasingly apparent. He was well enough to enjoy and to speak at a birthday party held in 'The Gay Hussar' on his eightieth birthday. Until the disease had progressed a long way, he remained pleased to see visitors and eager to discuss history. He died at Moss Lodge, a residential nursing home, in West Finchley on 7 September 1990.

Behind the blunt, even testy, persona that he cultivated in public, Alan Taylor was a kindly man, somewhat shy and, when not busy, prone to self-doubt. He remained a Radical at heart throughout his life, impatient with authority, critical of the Establishment ('The Thing') and vehemently holding his own independent views. 'History', he wrote in his autobiography 'has always been my consuming passion: reading history, writing history, lecturing about history'. He saw history as a means of enriching his and other's lives through providing a deeper understanding of life. He wrote in 1953:

. . . history is more than scholarship, more even than a method of research. It is above all a form of understanding; and the general reader will not put a historian in the highest rank unless he has supplied a new version and a new vision.

Alan Taylor achieved his aims of writing history that could be admired both by general readers and by academics. In his hands History was never dull nor sterile.

CHRIS WRIGLEY
University of Nottingham

Note. In preparing this memoir I have benefited from discussions in the past with numerous people and from access to copies of much of Alan Taylor's private correspondence. As some people would prefer not to be named, I shall only thank by name Dr Eva Haraszti Taylor.

Bibliography

Chris Wrigley; *A. J. P. Taylor: A Complete Bibliography* (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980) lists 23 books and 2,216 other publications up to the autumn of 1979. In addition some later publications include:

- (1979) 'The Historian as a Biographer' in F. Engle-Janosi (ed), *History and Biography, Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, 6, pp. 254–61.
- Review of Istvan Deac, *The Lawful Revolution*, *New York Review of Books*, 27 September.
- Review of Ian Grey, *Stalin and Ronald Segal, The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky*, *Observer*, 7 October.
- Review of Michael Balfour, *Propaganda In War*, *Observer*, 28 October.
- Review of A. Boyle, *The Climate of Treason*, *Observer*, 4 November.
- Review of R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, *Observer*, 16 December.
- (1980) *Politicians, Socialism and Historians*, London, Hamish Hamilton.
- Review of K. O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, *Observer*, 6 January.
- Review of E. S. Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, *Observer*, 3 February.
- Review of D. Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance 1940–1945*, *Observer*, 10 February.
- Review of S. White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, *Observer*, 24 February.
- Review of H. H. Herwig, 'Luxury' Fleet, *Observer*, 9 March.
- Review of W. Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, *Observer*, 16 March.
- Review of John Turner, *Lloyd George's Secretariat* and Joan Beaumont, *Comrades In Arms*, *Observer*, 6 April.
- Review of Guy Arnold, *Held Fast For England*, *Observer*, 13 April.
- Review of John Grigg, *1943: The Victory That Never Was*, *Observer*, 27 April.
- Review of Marc Ferro, *October 1917*, *Observer*, 8 June.
- Review of Robert and Monica Beckinsale, *The English Heartland* and other English travel books, *Observer*, 27 July.
- Review of N. Stone, *Hitler* and Sebastian Haffner, *The Rise and Fall of Prussia*, *Observer*, 17 August.
- Review of A. Pollen, *The Great Gunnery Scandal*, *Observer*, 24 August.
- Review of R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right*, *Observer*, 31 August.
- Review of R. Lewin, *The Chief*, *Observer*, 14 September.
- 'A Southport Childhood' (based on a Granada television script), *Spectator*, 245, 20 September.
- Review of Jasper Ridley, *Napoleon III and Eugénie*, *New York Review of Books*, 27, 25 September.
- 'The boarding house culture' (Granada television script), *Spectator*, 245, 27 September.

- Review of Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare* and Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914–1945*, *London Review of Books*, 2, 2 October.
- ‘Across the Morecombe sands’ (Granada television script), *Spectator*, 245, 4 October.
- ‘Preston revisited’ (Granada television script), *Spectator*, 245, 11 October.
- Review of M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Companion Vol. 5, Part 1, *Observer*, 2 November.
- Review of Isaiah Berlin, *Personal Impressions*, *Observer*, 9 November.
- Review of J. Lees-Milne, *Harold Nicolson*, Vol. 1, *Observer*, 16 November.
- Review of P. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, *Observer*, 23 November.
- Review of S. Roskill, *Admiral of the Fleet: Earl Beatty*, *Observer*, 7 December.
- Review of John Tolland, *No Man’s Land: 1918* and Charles Mee, *The End of Order: Versailles 1919*, *New York Review of Books*, 27, 18 December.
- (1981) *1939 Revisited* (1981 German Historical Institute Lecture), London, German Historical Institute.
- ‘No sanctity of contract between nations’, *Chelwood Review*, 9 January.
- Review of R. Overy, *The Air War*, *Observer*, 11 January.
- Review of P. Marsden, *Roman London* and other Roman Britain books, *Observer*, 25 January.
- Review of E. H. Carr, *From Napoleon To Stalin*, *Observer*, 1 February.
- Review of Brian Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars*, *Observer*, 22 February.
- Review of Richard Jay, *Joseph Chamberlain*, *Observer*, 15 March.
- Review of Paul Haggie, *Britannia At Bay*, *Observer*, 22 March.
- Review of *Like It Was: The Diaries of Malcolm Muggeridge*, *Observer*, 29 March.
- Review of Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, *New York Review of Books*, 2 April.
- Review of Martin Kettle, *The Allies and the Russian Collapse*, *Observer*, 5 April.
- Review of Michael Balfour, *The Adversaries*, *Observer*, 19 April.
- Review of John Keegan and Joseph Darracott, *the Nature of War*, *New Statesman*, 101, 2615, 1 May.
- Review of Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill*, Companion Vol. 5, Part 2, *Observer*, 31 May.
- Review of Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Making of a General 1887–1942*, *Observer*, 7 June.
- Review of P. J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, *London Review of Books*, 18 June.
- Review of David Irving, *The War Between The Generals*, *Observer*, 21 June.
- Review of Arthur Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, *Observer*, 30 August.
- Review of Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh*, *Observer*, 6 September.
- Review of H. I. Dutton and J. E. King, *Ten Per Cent and No Surrender*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 September.
- Review of F. Kersaudy, *Churchill and De Gaulle*, *Observer*, 27 September.
- Review of Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, *Observer*, 11 October.
- Review of Iain Sproat, *Wodehouse at War*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 October.
- Review of Richard West, *An English Journey*, *Observer*, 18 October.
- Review of James Lees-Milne, *Harold Nicolson*, Vol. 2, *Observer*, 25 October.

- Review of H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl and B. Worden, *History and Imagination: Essays in honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, *London Review of Books*, 3, 5 November.
- Review of R. Holmes, *The Little Field-Marshal*, *Observer*, 8 November.
- Review of Roy Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, *Observer*, 22 November.
- (1982) 'Red Reed' (a review of the film 'Reds'), *Observer*, 21 February.
- Review of Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, *Observer*, 28 February.
- Review of John Morris, *Londinium*, *Observer*, 28 March.
- Review of Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe* and V. G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse*, *Observer*, 11 April.
- Review of D. Carlton, *Anthony Eden*, *New York Review of Books*, 15 April.
- Review of George Spater, *William Cobbett*, 2 vols, *Observer*, 18 April.
- Review of Denis Judd, *Lord Reading*, *Observer*, 9 May.
- Review of Walter Arnstein, *Protestant Versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England* and Brenda Colloms, *Victorian Visionaries*, *Observer*, 30 May.
- Review of Norman MacKenzie, *The Escape From Elba*, *Observer*, 6 June.
- Review of Ted Morgan, *Churchill: Young Man in a Hurry*, *New York Review of Books*, 15 July.
- Review of John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy*, *New York Review of Books*, 12 August.
- Review of Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years*, 29 August.
- Review of Nicholas Mosley, *Rules of the Game* and M. Block, *The Duke of Windsor's War*, *Observer*, 10 October.
- Review of Denis Judd, *King George VI*, *Observer*, 24 October.
- Review of G. Barraclough, *From Agadir to Armageddon*, *Observer*, 31 October.
- Review of Michael and Eleanor Brock (eds), *H. H. Asquith: Letters to Venetia Stanley*, *Guardian*, 25 November.
- Review of M. Bence-Jones, *The Viceroy of India*, *Observer*, 28 November.
- Review of Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill, Companion Vol. V, Part 3*, *Observer*, 12 December.
- (1983) *A Personal History*, London, Hamish Hamilton.
- Review of J. A. Cross, *Lord Swinton*, *Observer*, 2 January.
- Review of E. H. Carr, *The Twilight of the Comintern*, *Observer*, 23 January.
- 'CND: The First Twenty Five Years', *Observer Magazine*, 20 February.
- Review of Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars*, *Observer*, 6 March.
- Review of Keith Robbins, *The Eclipse of a Great Power*, *Observer*, 20 March.
- Review of John Kenyon, *The History Man*, *Observer*, 27 March.
- Review of Philip Crowl, *The Intelligent Traveller's Guide to Historic Britain*, *Observer*, 12 June.
- Review of Kenneth Rose, *King George V*, *Observer*, 10 July.
- Review of W. R. P. George, *Lloyd George: Backbencher*, *Observer*, 2 October.
- Review of Nicholas Mosley, *Beyond the Pale*, *Observer*, 31 October.
- Review of Nigel Hamilton, *Monty*, Vol. 2, R. Lamb, *Montgomery in Europe* and C. D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, *Observer*, 6 November.
- Review of Robert Rhodes James, *Albert Prince Consort* and Hermione Hobhouse, *Prince Albert*, *Observer*, 4 December.
- Review of John Campbell, *F. E. Smith*, *Observer*, 11 December.
- (1984) *An Old Man's Diary* (comprising his diary pieces for *The Listener* and *The London Review of Books* plus his Romanes Lecture for 1981).

- Review of Hugh Brogan, *The Life of Arthur Ransome*, *Observer*, 29 January.
- Review of Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland*, *Observer*, 12 February.
- ‘History Lesson We Can’t Ignore’ (condemns the Common Market), *The Mail On Sunday*, 25 March.
- Review of W. Roger Louis, *The British Empire In The Middle East*, *Observer*, 26 August.
- Review of Eric Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour*, *Observer*, 18 October.
- (1985) *How Wars End* (Channel 4 television lectures), London, Hamish Hamilton.
- (1991) *Letters to Eva 1969–1983*, edited by Eva Haraszti Taylor, London, Century.