

Notes on the 1

Foreign Office

June 1915

70 dominion

add- military attaches debanded for W Office  
(i) films for Bulgaria refused by W O.  
R<sup>a</sup> allowed to send ultimatum.

Dear Cecil,

I hesitate to give you my impressions of the working of the Foreign Office as I have seen it in connection with the Balkan question because I appreciate the difficulties inseparable from such a Department and because I have many friends in the service both at home and abroad. But I know that you will only use my notes for your private information and in time of war one must not allow personal or any other considerations to stand in the way of what may contribute to the national interest.

Outside observers find it hard to understand why, when we are fighting against the hereditary enemy of Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania, and when our victory would enable us to satisfy their national aspirations, we cannot contrive to get the support of even one of these States. But I prefer to confine myself to definite points which have come under my personal observation.

The trouble has largely turned on defective information about Bulgaria. ~~and in connection with this I will give you some points that have come under my notice~~ *an illustration of this is the fact that* when I had been asked by Grey to go to Sofia, one of the highest officials in the F. O. said that I could spare myself the trouble of going, as Bulgaria was "lost already" being definitely bound to Turkey.

This belief appears to have been responsible for the pessimism and inaction that prevailed for many months in regard to the question of getting Bulgarian support.

The belief was, I presume, due to the information sent by our Minister at Sofia. As I told Grey before going out, it is a matter of common knowledge that he is an ardent and ostentatious friend of Serbia and is therefore naturally on bad terms with leading Bulgarians and unpopular with the Bulgarian public.

Two special evils resulted from this, first, that Bulgarian Ministers *\* also the Opposition leaders (which mattered even more)* were disinclined to open 'pour parlers' through the normal channels, and second, that the news received by the Foreign Office was unduly pessimistic and therefore disastrously misleading.

It seems strange that at a time when Bulgaria was recognised as the crux of the situation, an opportunity should not have been taken for giving him another post. The blame clearly rests on the F.O. and not on B. I.

O'Reilly, the first Secretary at the Sofia Legation did much to diminish the unhappy effects thus produced. He was recalled in the Spring on the ground that he had kept up social relations with Germans his wife being German. His value as bringing the best and latest inside information might have been immense. It was precisely information that was wanted. But [not only was he not put into the War Department (where his knowledge would be of daily use) but he was not even seen by Grey or Nicholson on his return.]

The subject of loans to the Balkan States was urged on me in August by Lloyd George who wished me to raise the subject fully, and wrote a letter authorising me accordingly. Grey objected to this, but I naturally expected to find that our Ministers had been instructed to broach the subject. When I reached Sofia a fortnight later *Bar Windsor* had not heard a word. He took up the idea and wired for orders: He made a specific suggestion but the reply was so vague that it did not even enable him to raise the subject with the Bulgarian Premier. It is true that after long delay he was empowered to hint at a loan, but in an unacceptable form.

I was asked by Grey to express British friendliness, and Churchill wrote a letter for me to take, which while entirely non-committal and not offensive to any Balkan State, would have been of great use, *in showing British sympathy, which was Grey's avowed object.* This also was suppressed.

A fact which gave me an impression of amateurishness was that on my first interview with Grey he read out an extract from a wire which had been sent, containing a proposal that Bulgaria should be promised the territory "to the East of the Vardar River including Monastir". I understand that the French and Russians expressed themselves as puzzled, Monastir being a long distance to the West of the Vardar.

In Roumania I learnt from our Minister, so late as October (1914) that the Government had not been informed that Roumania's help in the war would be welcome.

The Minister himself had been told that he was expected to play "a minor role".

In October the Minister received a wire instructing him to announce that the opinions expressed in a Times article of October 12 1912 were not those of H. M. Government. He was ignorant of its tenor. Before it arrived he received another wire stating that the opinions were after all those of H. M. Government, ~~The~~ <sup>The</sup> article advocated the immediate intervention of Roumania on the side of the Entente.

On a non-political point of ~~view~~, it was curious that <sup>some</sup> ~~a~~ time after it had ceased to be necessary, telegrams were sent via Bombay at 8 francs a word. The Minister suggested a return to the cheap and direct route, but was told that no such change must be made.

As to Greece, so late as the end of December, the Greek Government was allowed to remain under the impression that there was no prospect of Greece obtaining acquisitions in Asia. This impression governed the whole attitude of the Greek Ministry as I

learnt from talks with M. Venizelos, as to their policy towards the Entente and especially on the point of possible concessions to Bulgaria.

Soon afterwards M. Venizelos raised the subject with the British Minister, and in January an offer of the Smyrna district was made.

It would appear unlikely that the proposal of M. Venizelos can have coincided with the exact moment when the offer became possible. A more probable explanation seems to be that this fundamental part of the Balkan problem had not been carefully considered.

On the question of conceding Kavala to Bulgaria, it was always assumed as axiomatic that Greece would be alienated if the concession were insisted upon by the Entente. This assumption was proved to be unfounded. M. Venizelos actually made this proposal without dictation from without. It is thus obvious that it would have been easier to plead that the Entente laid it down as a <sup>condition</sup> ~~consideration~~ of greater acquisitions in Asia.

Surveying the 10 months of the war it is noticeable that the argument which was mainly responsible for diplomatic inaction during the first six months of the war - viz. the contention that it was impossible to put pressure on a gallant ally - was in March completely withdrawn.

It was then decided that pressure could be exerted upon Serbia without delay. Since that date a similar argument has been employed in reference to pressure upon Greece. The delay in the latter case

appears as needless as in the former. It is difficult to see why all the arguments should not have been considered at the output, no new <sup>unfavorable</sup> circumstances having arisen to throw light on them.

[ Seeing the undoubted ability and personnel of the Foreign Office, one is puzzled by the apparent failures in its action.

One hears various reasons suggested, e.g. the traditions of short sighted circumspection ~~and habits~~ which weighs small risks and ignores great ones, of unwillingness to risk rebuff, however slight, ingrained in time of peace. ]

Various other causes are hinted at in the report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service. Its judgment confirms one in conclusions which otherwise one would hesitate to form, and still more to express.



June 7th, 1915.

My dear Buxton,

I am much obliged for your letter about the situation at Sofia, which I have read with great interest. It is good of you to have placed your views before me.

Believe me, *with many thanks*  
yours sincerely,

*Robert Cecil*

Noel Buxton Esq.



DOWNING STREET, S.W.

August 2nd, 1915.

My dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your letter and enclosure.  
If you cared to come and see me here at any time,  
I should always be glad to talk things over, but  
[at present the difficulty of making any of the  
Balkan States even moderately reasonable appears  
very great. Montenegro is a shade the worst, but  
Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece are only just behind.]

Yours very truly,

*Robert Cecil*

N. Buxton, Esq., M.P.  
Warlies,  
Waltham Abbey.



December 4th, 1915.

Dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your letter and your enclosure.  
Have you any reason to suppose that it represents  
more than the hopes of some Bulgarian enthusiast?

Yours ever,

Robert Cecil

Noel Buxton, Esq., M.P.

*Private*  
*Yes -*  
*in view of the*  
*fact that it is not*  
*clearly a*  
*document of*  
*the Bulgarian*  
*Government.*

*Will*  
*Refer to the*  
*Telegraph*  
*of the 1st*  
*of the year.*



Acknowledged

Bulgaria

April 3rd, 1917.

My dear Buxton

I have received your letter of yesterday's date with its interesting enclosure about questions which would arise if Bulgaria were willing to conclude a separate peace. As is pointed out in the memorandum military, dynastic and territorial questions would be alike involved, and I will have all the points raised in the memorandum carefully considered, and am grateful to you for having sent it to me.

Yours very sincerely  
Robert Cecil

Noel Buxton Esq., M.P.



June 9th, 1915.

My dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your letter of the 7th instant and the enclosures. I have read your letter with the greatest of interest.

Again with many thanks,

believe me,

yours sincerely,

Robert Cecil




25th June, 1915.

My dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your letter and enclosures.  
We had no opportunity to speak about them to-day,  
no doubt one will soon <sup>see</sup> appear.

Yours very sincerely  
Robert Cecil

Noel Buxton, Esq., M.P.



1st July, 1915.

My dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your private and confidential letter, which is interesting, but I am not sure that it leads to any particular conclusion.

Yours very sincerely,

*Robert Cecil*

Noel Buxton, Esq., M.P.



Tell Walter

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL.

October 30th, 1916.

My dear Buxton,

I return the three draft questions which you submitted to me.

*Paris*  
With regard to A. I do not think the Prime Minister can very well add anything to the speech he delivered on the subject of the Paris Conference, and I hardly think it is worth while putting the question.

*Int'l Comm<sup>n</sup>*  
With regard to B. I see no objection to your asking this question.

*Quaint*  
With regard to C. After careful consideration I think it would be undesirable that this question should be put. There appear to be only two possible answers to it. The first - "We shall take care that suitable "recognition is given to the American at the end of "the war". The other, denying the generosity and taking the credit to ourselves. As you know, the true state of affairs is that although the Americans have performed a very important work in conducting the relief



- 2 -

operations, the great bulk of the money has been provided by the Allied Governments, and very little has been subscribed by America, although that country has made vast profits out of the purchases which have been made there on account of Belgian relief. On the whole I think it undesirable to point this out, and I should therefore much prefer it if you would be kind enough not to put the question.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert Cecil*

Noel Buxton Esq., M.P.

A.

Whether His Majesty's Government are aware that the economic policy outlined in the Paris Resolutions is causing apprehension in neutral countries, and notably in the United States of America; and whether any assurance can be given that this policy after the war will not involve discrimination of any kind against the trade of any country that has been neutral during the War.



C.

Whether in view of the unparalleled generosity of the American public in regard to relief work for our Allies, Belgium, Serbia and Armenia, and for our own troops and prisoners abroad, any form of recognition can be accorded to those who took a leading part in promoting the above work.



November 13th, 1916.

*FA Conference*

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My dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your note. I suggested something of this kind to Ronald M'Neill, but he did not seem to be very favourably disposed towards it, and it is obviously no use making these suggestions in public unless they are going to be accepted.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert Cecil*

N. Buxton, Esq., M.P.



FOREIGN OFFICE.

January 1st, 1917.

My dear Buxton:-

Very many thanks for your letter of the 29th ultimo and for sending me some notes as to the position of America in regard to the Allies, for which I am much obliged.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert Cecil*

Noel Buxton, Esq.,  
12, Rutland Gate,  
S.W.



FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.,

February 27th, 1918.

Dear Buxton

Many thanks for letting me see the opinion lately expressed by your friend the neutral diplomat on the subject of democratisation in Germany, it is interesting.

Yours very truly  
Robert Cecil

Noel Buxton Esq., M.P.

117, Piccadilly, W.1

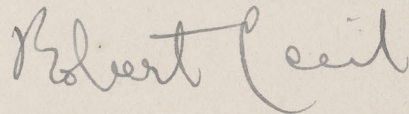
November 1, 1919

My dear Buxton,

Many thanks for your note and enclosure.

I should very much like to be able to do as you wish in this matter if I thought it would materially help to improve the awful conditions which I know exist among the people of Vienna, but I am afraid I do not feel convinced as to the desirability of publishing such a letter as you suggest. I am very sorry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robert Cecil". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Noel Buxton, Esq.

15, GROSVENOR CRESCENT,  
LONDON, S.W. 1.

23rd January, 1933.

Dear Madam,

In view of the very critical position at Geneva on both the questions of Disarmament and Manchuria, I venture to urge that a great effort should be made by members of your Branch to secure that the policy of this country should be adequate to the occasion.

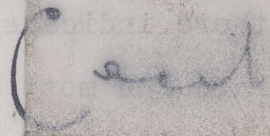
I do not know that I can put the substance of the matter more shortly than I did in a letter I recently wrote to The Times newspaper, of which a copy was sent to you on January 13th, with a copy of the most recent Resolution by the Executive Committee on the subject.

The urgent thing now is to convince the Government that there is a strong feeling in the country in support of the policy there indicated. For that purpose the most effective and the most constitutional course is to approach the Member for the constituency in which your Branch lies. This can be done either by way of an interview or by letters, the important thing being that no time should be lost, since both questions are actually under consideration at Geneva now. It is essential that any approach to your Member should be

LEAGUE OF NATIONS  
LONDON E.W.

devoid of party politics, and it is therefore extremely desirable that those who interview the Member or write letters to him should include influential members of the Member's own party if that is at all possible. Obviously the details of the best way in which the purpose I have in view can be carried out, if you feel able to do so, must be left to you and the other members of the Branch. I only write this because I do feel that a wrong decision by the League on either of these questions may be productive of the gravest consequences for the future peace of the world, and that a large measure of responsibility in this crisis rests upon the Government and People of this Country and particularly on the members of the League of Nations Union.

Yours sincerely,



15, GROSVENOR CRESCENT,  
LONDON, S.W. 1.

6th November, 1931.

Dear Sir,

May we ask you to read carefully and respond as generously as you can to the following appeal. We may mention that the chief officers of the Union have made a voluntary surrender of a portion of their salaries, and many members of the Executive Committee, in spite of financial difficulties, have increased their subscriptions in order that the Union's vital work for world peace and the restoration of confidence may not be wrecked.

Yours very truly,

Grey of Palladin.  
Cecil

The League's Conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments will meet next February. A substantial reduction in the world's armies, navies and air forces will restore international confidence and render possible the remission of war debts (including reparations); the United States cannot be asked to cancel war debts so long as the

P.T.O.



money saved may be spent on armaments. With the chief causes of our crisis thus removed, the League's financial and economic machinery can be used to revive prosperity.

But if the "Disarmament" Conference should fail, neither prosperity nor peace is likely for us or for our children. If the League breaks up because of failure to reduce and limit armaments, the sacrifices of those who died in the war will not have availed to prevent its recurrence, and their work and ours - now, as it seems, on the verge of success - will have to be begun all over again.

It must not happen. The Conference must succeed. The British Government must be able to rely upon the support of the nation in any steps they may find it necessary to take in co-operation with the other States, both inside and outside the League, represented at the Conference. The leaders of the Government and of the Opposition have assured the Union that they will do their utmost to make the Conference succeed. But they cannot go beyond what public opinion is prepared to support.

Here the responsibility shifts from the League and the Governments to the League of Nations Union. The Union has been incorporated by Royal Charter for the very purpose of educating public opinion, so that it may strengthen the hands of His Majesty's Government in pursuing the British policy of loyal co-operation with the League of Nations, the common foreign policy which unites all the members of the British Commonwealth. The crisis is helping the British people to understand the catastrophic times in which we live, and the critical issues now at stake.

But the Union's work goes deeper than current politics. It is concerned with the future as well as with the present. It

is going on in every British University, and, with the close co-operation of the teaching profession and the local education authorities, it is increasing in schools and training colleges. Following the British lead, similar work is being done, with the League's authority, in most of the countries of the world. If the next generation is learning to regard international co-operation as the normal method of conducting world affairs, that is largely due to the initiative and example of the British League of Nation's Union.

All this work is carried on in Britain by means of voluntary subscriptions. A few years ago more than half of the Union's income was munificently contributed by a few rich men. That was a precarious basis on which to finance an enterprise of such immense importance. The steady growth of the Union's membership is gradually placing its income on a broader and surer foundation; but membership subscriptions are not yet quite sufficient for the tasks immediately ahead, and nearly four-fifths of our members have so far contributed nothing beyond their membership subscriptions. Moreover, few of us have much money to spare just now; and some of the Union's members cannot even maintain their present subscriptions. The Union's income is bound to fall and its work to suffer unless the others increase their gifts.

We need another £10,000 a year for the next three years. Otherwise the unpreparedness of public opinion may well lead to world dismemberment and chaos, instead of to world "disarmament" and peace.

If each member who receives this letter - and we do not intend it for anyone who is now giving more than a membership subscription - will fill in the guarantee form at once,

our work will not be interrupted. But the trouble is that the majority seem always ready to leave it to the other fellow. We need not be alarmed by the size of our need. All we want is:-

2,000	gifts	of	10/-	a	quarter	for	three	years
500	"	"	£1	"	"	"	"	"
100	"	"	£5	"	"	"	"	"
50	"	"	£10	"	"	"	"	"

-- little enough in all conscience when one remembers the tremendous issues which have to be decided during these next three years, and the decisive part which the Union may play in their decision.

Please sign on even if it is only for 10/- a quarter. For the convenience of those with banking accounts, a Bankers' Order Form is enclosed. If you will complete this form, and return it to Lord Queenborough, 15, Grosvenor Crescent, London, S.W.1., your Bank will pay your quarterly instalments automatically, thus saving you trouble and postage. We would remind you of the words of the Prince of Wales:-

"I trust that the people of this country, which has been the pioneer of so many great and beneficent movements, will realise the urgent importance of doing all in their power to assist the League of Nations Union in the greatest Crusade of all -- the Crusade for World Peace".

*Bevil*

16 South Eaton Place,  
S.W. 1.

23rd. March, 1938.

Dear Noel Buxton,

Thank you very much for your letter and Memorandum.

I should hesitate to commit myself to the position that there should be a plebiscite of only the Sudeten Deutsch district. I have always understood that both economically and strategically the rest of Czechoslovakia has a very strong interest in the maintenance of Czechoslovak sovereignty over that district, and if that is so I should have thought they also ought to be allowed to vote. The truth is that unless and until an effective international authority - i.e. the League of Nations, - can be restored, nations will hesitate to give away territory which may be essential to their safety, and you will find it more and more difficult to get changes made by agreement; and, consequently, more and more tendency to abandon agreement for force.

*Crying + moon  
till war  
comes +  
burst /  
Lg!*

I certainly, as I have often said, am not prepared to fight for Czechoslovakia; but I am prepared to fight for the principle that no State is entitled to take the law into its own hands.

Yours very sincerely,

*Cecil*

The Right Honourable,  
the Lord Noel-Buxton,  
18 Cowley Street,  
Westminster, S.W. 1

Cecil

20.11.39.

CHELWOOD GATE, HAYWARDS HEATH.

TELEPHONE.CHELWOODGATE 8. STATION FOREST ROW.

Dear Noel Brunton

Thank you very  
much for your letter

I should like very much  
to discuss it with you. In

the meantime may I

send you the enclosed

which states my view

As to the basis of negot-  
iation, I feel very strongly  
indeed that we must keep  
faith with Poland -

Yours very sincerely

Cecil

I am coming up tomorrow  
Tuesday for two nights

Cecil

16, South Eaton Place,  
S.W. 1.

27th. November, 1939.

Dear Noel-Buxton,

*x) ed he ed I'd I may v bn right  
# He did say so-*

Thank you for your letter. On the personal point, my view as to the Lansdowne letter is not quite accurately stated. I should never have been in favour of negotiations unless Germany had withdrawn from Belgium. But I feel, looking back, that perhaps we rejected Lansdowne's proposal too summarily. Any-how now I should like to see a declaration by us that, on condition the Germans withdraw~~d~~ from Poland and Czechoslovakia, we should be ready to negotiate with them on ~~on~~ other points.

As to the general argument of the memorandum, it seems to me pure casuistry - worthy of Pascal's Jesuit opponents. On that reasoning one could get out of any promise. Our promise to Poland was quite unambiguous. It is suggested that it was conditioned. *(no. that nobody feels really bound)* It certainly was not so in form nor, as I think, in substance. What is the condition suggested? Apparently, that, as we cannot fulfil our promise except by war, it no longer binds us. *(no. It's that we aim at max welfare)* But when we made the promise we knew quite well, and the Poles knew quite well, that it meant a promise to go to war to prevent their absorption by Germany. That was the reason why

*gy then  
attack  
R a for-*

/they



they fought. And having suffered idescribably from the arrogance and cruelty of the Germans, we are not to leave them to their fate! As for our condonation of aggression in other cases, that is irrelevant to the question of our promise to Poland. Moreover, it is misleading to lump up the cases of Abyssinia, China, Albania and the Baltic States, - each case is different and, though I strongly disapproved of our policy as to Abyssinia and China, neither case was really like that of Poland.

*ms*  
The truth is that the author of the memorandum believes that war is always intrinsically indefensible. I believe that, though it is a horrible thing, yet unless and until we can set up an effective alternative solution of international questions there are cases in which it is necessary and right, and this is one of them.

Therefore I cannot go with you beyond the statement in the blue paper which I sent you.

Yours very sincerely,

*Cecil*

The Right Honourable,  
the Lord Noel-Buxton,  
18 Cowley Street,  
Westminster, S.W. 1.

Private Cecil

Chelwood Gate,

Haywards Heath,

Sussex.

4th June, 1943.

Dear Noel Buxton,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter and enclosure. I need not say, I am sure, that anything coming from you and the Bishop of Chichester will receive my deepest attention.

But I fear that I cannot sign this letter for several reasons. In the first place I do not wish to pledge myself to the Prime Minister's proposals for a European Council, which I don't quite understand but which in some people's minds means an effort to organise Peace in Europe separately from other parts of the world - a policy which I could not approve.

In the second place, I do not see how the policy you recommend is really consistent with the very specific pledges given separately by Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill that they insist on unconditional surrender by the Germans.

/Your letter

Cecil  
James

Your letter considers the possibility of a Peace Negotiation with a government different indeed from Hitler's Government but not necessarily more to be trusted.

Thirdly I think the situation is quite different from what it was in the last war, for very many reasons into which I need not now enter. I am, moreover, not at all sure that Grey's subsequent view as to the desirability of negotiation was the right one. ~~Anyhow, its decision seems to me a useful precedent for anything we have to consider to-day, for reasons which have often been stated.~~

Finally, I am convinced that if the Government were to envisage any such policy as you recommend it would mean a complete break up of national unity.

I am very sorry to have to write so definitely, but it is no use beating about the bush.

Yours very sincerely,

Cecil

The Right Honourable  
The Lord Noel Buxton,  
Crosslee Hotel,  
Heathside Crescent,  
Woking.

Private.

Cecil COPY

Chelwood Gate,  
Haywards Heath.  
Sussex.

4th June, 1943.

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of negotiation was the right one.

Finally, I am convinced that if the new Government were to envisage any such policy as you recommend it would mean a complete break up of national unity.

I am very sorry to have to write so definitely, but it is no use beating about the bush.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed)

Cecil.

a Cecil says  
Don't define your future is safe  
LNU. Split?  
This annex. Try change from?

Gift is annex. Lead LNU.  
CHELWOOD GATE - HAYWARDS HEATH.  
TELEPHONE. CHELWOOD GATE 8. STATION FOREST ROW.

Dear Noel Burton

Of course I shall be delighted to talk with you about future debates, as to the Atlantic Charter like many documents it is open to a variety of construction. My own feeling is that it was intended as a general declaration of policy rather than a specific undertaking to

observe its rules in their  
literal meaning as if it  
were part of a treaty. I  
should be afraid that any  
attempt to give it a very  
precise meaning now  
might lead to unfortunate  
pledge of Poles? No. means Vanim (v X)  
Page off Poles? No. means Vanim (v X)  
results. The tremendous-  
ly disturbing influence of  
Battles, Murders & Sudden Deaths  
involved in War makes it  
improbable that <sup>territorial</sup> problems  
will be <sup>now</sup> discussed & decided  
with due impartiality. I do  
not feel the same about

CHELWOOD GATE, HAYWARDS HEATH.

TELEPHONE. CHELWOODGATE 8. STATION FOREST ROW.

the future world organ-  
isation about which there  
seems to be an atmosphere  
approaching general agree-

ment - Int<sup>l</sup> force? (Reformed & fort?  
Feder<sup>n</sup>? Disarm<sup>t</sup> (Stalin apt  
you've ever

Cecil