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# The Personnel of the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service, 1851-1929

BY

ROBERT T. NIGHTINGALE.

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# The Personnel of the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service, 1851-1929.

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## I.

The connection between public opinion and public policy is slighter in foreign affairs than in any other sphere of politics. In normal times international relations have little palpable impact upon the life of the people. They are obscured by more vivid domestic issues until war or some sudden crisis throws a high light on their significance. Even since the Great War, although public realisation of the importance of foreign affairs has begun to be aroused in the late belligerent countries, in England at any rate, direct contact between popular opinion and Government action is still both sporadic and uncertain.

What is true of the British people as a whole is almost equally true of its representative assembly. Parliament has but little power over the conduct of foreign affairs. Some of the most momentous changes in the country's relations with other Powers have, in the present century, been accomplished without reference to the House of Commons, and often without even its knowledge. The people's representatives have no effective control over that department of public affairs which is at present of more vital concern than any other.

Most British Foreign Secretaries, indeed, regard their actions as matters of exclusively executive concern. A Cabinet of twenty Ministers, already overworked in their own departments, is not, however, a body which can conduct the country's foreign relations. The Foreign Secretary on his own subject dominates his Ministerial colleagues. Experience shows that he can avoid consultation with all the Cabinet save two or three of the principal Ministers. The Cabinet as a whole has an authority not much greater than that of Parliament in guiding foreign policy and even in controlling decisions which may pledge the nation to future hostilities.

Accordingly, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is subjected to less criticism from people, Parliament and Cabinet, and enjoys a greater freedom from outside control than any other Minister. It does not follow, however, that he is in the position of an isolated autocrat possessing, as Bryce said, "all but unlimited discretion." Fifty years ago, a Foreign Secretary, if he were of the Palmerston type, could stamp his whole policy with the mark of his individuality. But to-day the ramifications of international affairs are such that no one man, even

if assisted as at present by two parliamentary under-secretaries, can exercise an adequate supervision over the whole field of international relations. Just as Parliament has delegated foreign affairs to the Cabinet, and the Cabinet to the Foreign Secretary, so the Foreign Secretary is compelled by the pressure of business to delegate an increasing proportion of his authority to his chief permanent officials. Personal administration on any considerable scale is impossible. The Foreign Secretary is responsible for the lines of policy adopted, but in their practical execution he is guided by the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service.

The ephemeral political amateur must necessarily be greatly dependent on the established administrative expert. In foreign affairs the dependence is accentuated, owing firstly to the growing congestion of business, and secondly to the fact that intercourse between nations is carried on largely by ambassadors and envoys stationed abroad in each capital. These diplomatic representatives possess the exact knowledge on which the Secretary of State's decisions must be based, and they are also his chief means of implementing the policies on which he decides. The number of British embassies and legations has increased from 22 in 1851 to 46 in 1929. The Foreign Secretary, oppressed by the accumulation of affairs and the growth of contacts with foreign Powers, is drawn away from outside influences and relies increasingly on his official advisers at home and abroad.

The dependence of the Foreign Secretary upon his bureaucratic subordinates means that the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service are departments of greater autonomy than any other section of the British Civil Service. An exceptionally great authority is wielded in foreign relations by the bureaucracy in comparison with the democracy. It is truer in international even than in domestic affairs that to discover the incidence and effects of State action it is necessary to examine not merely the legislature and the executive, but also the administrative machine by means of which principles are translated into practice. Day-to-day relations with foreign Powers are in the hands of accredited representatives enjoying virtual independence. And whereas in domestic administration the future can in a measure be foreseen and provided for, in foreign affairs passing incidents often prove subsequently to be crucial, and crises usually arise without warning. On such occasions much of the Foreign Secretary's authority perforce devolves upon his representatives on the spot. Moreover the actual conduct of international relations depends in the main on the interaction of personalities. Individuals count for more than institutions.

Enough has been said to show that the instrument through which foreign policy is conducted, and in practice to a large extent

created, is of foremost importance, and that accordingly the character of its personnel is worthy of the closest examination.

John Bright, speaking in 1858, described England's foreign policy as "neither more nor less than a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain." What truth was there in the generalisation at that date? Has it become less true since then? If so, to what extent? To such questions and their implications a quantitative analysis of the kind that follows can alone provide satisfactory answers.

## II.

A permanent, competitively selected administration was one of the greatest political inventions of the nineteenth century. The reform of the British Civil Service began in 1855. Until then the administrative machine had been manned by placemen who owed their positions to family and political influence. The growth of democratic ideas and the multiplication of the State's liabilities made the system of patronage intolerable. The remedy applied was the competitive examination, which gradually opened the Civil Service to members of the newly enfranchised middle classes.

The first breach in the aristocratic political régime was made by the Reform Act of 1832. But it was nearly a quarter of a century before any step was made towards democratisation of the Civil Service. Realisation that administrators, like governors, must, if they are to be good servants of the people, be drawn from the people, came slowly and reluctantly.

In the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service progress was much slower even than in the rest of the Civil Service. Until 1880 no limit beyond a "qualifying test" was set to the patronage of the Secretary of State in making appointments to the Diplomatic Service, and even the "limited competition" then instituted was not, to quote the report of the Macdonnell Commission of 1912-14, "calculated materially to raise the efficiency of the service or to widen the area from which candidates were drawn." Until 1919 no candidates could sit for the examination for either the Diplomatic Service or the Foreign Office unless they were "known to the Secretary of State or recommended to him by men of standing and position on whose judgment he could rely and who themselves knew the candidates personally." Even after nomination, candidates were not permitted to sit for the examination until they were approved of by a Board of Selection who were beyond question influenced by considerations of social eminence. Moreover, until after the Great War it was made a condition of nomination that candidates should possess a private income of not less than £400 a year.

The reason why the democratic principle has been extremely slow in permeating the methods of recruitment for the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service is to be found in the theory by which foreign affairs have been conducted. "There is," wrote Bagehot in the 1860's, "one kind of business in which our aristocracy have still, and are likely to retain long, a certain advantage. This is the business of diplomacy. . . . The old-world diplomacy of Europe was largely carried on in drawing-rooms, and, to a great extent, of necessity still is so." Diplomacy was thought to require a breeding and finesse that could be found only amongst the aristocracy and the gentry. It was a branch of public affairs in which suitable administrators could be secured only if the democracy continued to select them according to the aristocratic principle. To associate on equal terms with the Ministers of foreign Governments, a diplomatist should possess the elegance and refinement of manners which result from gentle birth and aristocratic upbringing. Thus, until 1919, the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service remained as a relic of the régime which had first begun to crumble in 1832. It was almost a century after the first step had been taken towards democratisation of the State when the career of diplomacy was opened unconditionally to ability.

### III.

Some explanation is due of the nomenclature and classification adopted in this study. The term "aristocratic" has been applied to all who hold hereditary titles. The category of "rentier" includes all others who possess independent means which exempt them from the necessity of working for a livelihood. The great majority of this class belongs to the landed gentry and to county families. When, as often occurs, a man is a rentier and also follows a profession, he has been classified under his calling. The number of rentiers therefore is in fact somewhat greater than the figures disclose. "The Professions" comprise the Church, the Law, the Army and Navy, and Medicine. "The Higher Civil Service" indicates the Foreign Office, the Diplomatic Service, the Consular Service, and the rest of the administrative Civil Service.

The numbers of those educated at Eton and Harrow are given separately. Other public schools are sub-divided into two sections. The "leading public schools" are for this purpose nine in number, Westminster, Rugby, Marlborough, Clifton, Winchester, Malvern, Cheltenham, Charterhouse, and Haileybury. Under "lesser public schools" all schools are included if they are to be found in the "Public Schools Yearbook," a list which comprises, after allowance for the schools already enumerated, some 140 places of education. Where a man has

been at more than one university, both are recorded. Education at universities abroad is noted, but many classified under the head "No University" have doubtless studied languages at foreign universities. It is to be observed that the calculations derived from the tables are subject to a certain margin of error, since it has been impossible to obtain complete statistics.

The ranks included in this inquiry are, in the Foreign Office, permanent, deputy, and assistant under-secretaries, chief clerks, counsellors, and assistant secretaries; and in the Diplomatic Service, ambassadors extraordinary and envoys extraordinary. In the period 1851 to 1929, 249 men held one or more of these posts, of whom 39 served in the Foreign Office alone, 192 in the Diplomatic Service alone, and 18 in both services. Table I. shows their parentage and the school and university they attended, and gives the same particulars for the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service separately.

TABLE I.

## (a) PARENTAL OCCUPATION.

|  | F.O.      | D.S.       | Total.     |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| Aristocrats ... ..                     | 17        | 82         | 99         |
| Rentiers ... ..                        | 6         | 36         | 39         |
| Foreign Office ... ..                  | 1         | 3          | 4          |
| Diplomatic Service ... ..              | 4         | 10         | 12         |
| Consular Service ... ..                | 1         | 5          | 6          |
| Other Civil Service Departments ... .. | 4         | 6          | 7          |
| Church ... ..                          | 2         | 11         | 13         |
| Law ... ..                             | 3         | 8          | 10         |
| Army ... ..                            | 5         | 19         | 24         |
| Navy ... ..                            | 1         | 3          | 34         |
| Medicine ... ..                        | —         | 4          | 4          |
| Parliament ... ..                      | 4         | 3          | 67         |
| Business ... ..                        | 2         | 9          | 10         |
| Literature ... ..                      | —         | 2          | 2          |
| Academic ... ..                        | —         | 1          | 1          |
| Stage ... ..                           | 1         | —          | 1          |
| Unclassified ... ..                    | 6         | 8          | 14         |
|  | <u>57</u> | <u>210</u> | <u>249</u> |

## (b) SCHOOL.

|                                    | F.O.      | D.S.       | Total.     |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Eton ... ..                        | 27        | 67         | 85         |
| Harrow ... ..                      | 6         | 23         | 27         |
| Leading Public Schools ... ..      | 6         | 36         | 38         |
| Lesser Public Schools ... ..       | 4         | 22         | 26         |
| Other Schools ... ..               | —         | 9          | 9          |
| Military and Naval Colleges ... .. | —         | 5          | 5          |
| Privately ... ..                   | 1         | 18         | 18         |
| Abroad ... ..                      | 2         | 9          | 10         |
| Unclassified ... ..                | 11        | 21         | 31         |
|                                    | <u>57</u> | <u>210</u> | <u>249</u> |

## (c) UNIVERSITY.

|                             | F.O.  | D.S.  | Total. |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Oxford ... ..               | 15    | 62    | 72     |
| Cambridge ... ..            | 9     | 31    | 36     |
| London ... ..               | —     | 2     | 2      |
| Edinburgh ... ..            | —     | 3     | 3      |
| Glasgow ... ..              | —     | 1     | 1      |
| Dublin ... ..               | —     | 5     | 5      |
| Belfast ... ..              | —     | 2     | 2      |
| Foreign Universities ... .. | 3     | 5     | 7      |
| No University ... ..        | 24    | 100   | 115    |
| Unclassified ... ..         | 7     | 5     | 12     |
|                             | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/>  |
|                             | 58    | 216   | 255    |
|                             | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/>  |

The above table provides a broad picture of the nature of the personnel of the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service during the last eighty years. The most striking deduction is that 53 per cent. belong to the aristocracy or the gentry. Twenty-two per cent. were sons of men following one or other of the professions, but only 4 per cent. came from business families. Among parents dependent on their own efforts for a livelihood, civil servants and soldiers form easily the largest categories. The extent of heredity is worthy of remark: 12 per cent. were sons of members of the Foreign Office or the Diplomatic Service, and if the Consular Service and the rest of the administrative Civil Service are included, the percentage is 17. Investigation shows that the tendency for sons to follow their fathers in a diplomatic career was more marked in the earlier part of the period. Rather surprisingly, among those included in this analysis, only six were the sons of politicians.

Attendance at one or other of the great English public schools is the hall-mark of a high social position. Sixty per cent. went to the eleven most exclusive schools. Of the remaining 40 per cent., well over one-half attended the lesser public schools, received a military or naval education, or were educated privately or abroad. Only nine men out of 249 have been traced who went to schools other than the recognised public schools and the military and naval colleges, and of these five were not diplomats *de carrière*. Forty-five per cent. of the personnel of the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service went to the two foremost schools in the country, and over one-third were Etonians.

The statistics of university education bear out the inferences already clear. Of those who received higher education 90 per cent. went to either Oxford or Cambridge. The remaining 10 per cent. are accounted for by three who went to Edinburgh and seven who went to Irish universities. Not a single man went exclusively to London University. By far the largest category in this column, however, consists of those who went to no university at all. It is significant that only about one



man in two of those occupying the selected posts in the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service was university-trained.

A comparison of the two services shows that the Diplomatic Service is the more socially exclusive. The aristocratic and rentier classes form 56 per cent. of the Diplomatic Service, but only 40 per cent. of the Foreign Office. This fact is probably due to the attraction to men of noble birth of service abroad in an environment of Courts and aristocratic society, and equally no doubt to the necessity until recently for ample private means to supplement the diplomatist's official salary. A perceptibly higher proportion of the Foreign Office personnel consists of public-school men, and indeed no member of the Foreign Office has been traced who has attended any school in this country other than the public schools. In contrast, 13 per cent. of diplomatists have been educated either privately or abroad. This is due to the important part which foreign languages play in diplomacy, and to the exacting linguistic tests imposed on entrants to the Diplomatic Service. It is notable that among men trained at British universities every member of the Foreign Office without exception went either to Oxford or Cambridge, while 6 per cent. of diplomatists went elsewhere.

Table II. shows the proportion of aristocrats at some of the principal British embassies and legations.

TABLE II.

| Country.          | Total Number of<br>Diplomatic Representatives,<br>1851-1929. | Number of<br>Aristocrats. |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------|
| France            | 9  | 8                         |
| U.S.A.            | 14   | 8                         |
| Germany           | 12   | 10                        |
| Belgium           | 10   | 8                         |
| Austria           | 16   | 12                        |
| Italy             | 13   | 6                         |
| Russia            | 15   | 11                        |
| Portugal          | 18   | 10                        |
| Greece            | 12   | 8                         |
| Netherlands       | 14   | 10                        |
| Sweden and Norway | 20   | 10                        |
|                   | <hr/> 153  | <hr/> 101                 |

A majority of the ambassadors to the republican United States have been of aristocratic birth, and the French Republic has since 1851 received no ambassador, with the single exception of the present one, who has not been a member of the aristocracy. Furthermore, the proportion of aristocrats is distinctly higher in the more important than in the less important diplomatic posts. Over the whole period 35 out of the 66 ambassadors (or 53 per cent.) have been aristocratic in origin, but in the case of envoys the proportion is only 73 out of 194 (or 38 per cent.).

These figures lend colour to the theory that preference is shown to aristocrats in appointments to the highest-placed chancelleries.

The broad conclusion indicated by the statistics hitherto tabulated is that the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service are wholly unrepresentative of the general community whose accredited delegates they are. Their members are drawn to the extent of 37 per cent. from the aristocracy, which consists of no more than about one thousand families, and to the extent of 86 per cent. from the aristocratic, rentier, bureaucratic, and professional classes—classes which form a mere fraction of the total population.

#### IV.

It is important to discover whether, during the seventy-nine years under review, any change in the character of the personnel has taken place, and whether the reforms in the procedure of recruitment which have from time to time been effected, have enlarged the circle from which entrants are drawn.

Attention must be given mainly to the pre-war period, because, although far-reaching reforms in the examination system were carried out after the War, their effect during the last decade is as yet difficult to estimate. The system that the reforms of 1919 supplanted was recruitment by what has been called "limited competition." In the Foreign Office "limited competition" replaced patronage as early as 1857, but in the case of the Diplomatic Service there were two landmarks in the reform movement. In 1857 pure patronage was supplemented by a "qualifying test." No competitive element was, however, introduced into the test, and it was not until 1880 that "limited competition" was set up. Table III. gives particulars for 51 men who went into the Diplomatic Service during Period I., up to 1856, the period of undiluted patronage; 30 during Period II., 1857 to 1879, the period of the "qualifying test"; and 87 during Period III., 1880 and after, the period of "limited competition."

TABLE III.

| (a) PARENTAL OCCUPATION. |     |     |     |     | Period I. | Period II. | Period III. |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Aristocrats              | ... | ... | ... | ... | 32        | 15         | 25          |
| Rentiers                 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5         | 4          | 23          |
| Higher Civil Service     | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5         | 3          | 12          |
| Professions              | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3         | 7          | 19          |
| Parliament               | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1         | —          | 2           |
| Business                 | ... | ... | ... | ... | —         | 1          | 4           |
| Literature               | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1         | —          | —           |
| Academic                 | ... | ... | ... | ... | —         | —          | 1           |
| Unclassified             | ... | ... | ... | ... | 4         | —          | 1           |
|                          |     |     |     |     | <u>51</u> | <u>30</u>  | <u>87</u>   |

## (b) SCHOOL.

|                               | Period I. | Period II. | Period III. |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Eton ... ..                   | 15        | 7          | 38          |
| Harrow ... ..                 | 3         | 8          | 10          |
| Leading Public Schools ... .. | 7         | 5          | 18          |
| Lesser Public Schools ... ..  | 2         | 5          | 5           |
| Other Schools ... ..          | 2         | —          | 2           |
| Military Colleges ... ..      | 2         | 1          | —           |
| Privately ... ..              | 6         | 2          | 7           |
| Abroad ... ..                 | 3         | —          | 3           |
| Unclassified ... ..           | 11        | 2          | 4           |
|                               | —         | —          | —           |
|                               | <u>51</u> | <u>30</u>  | <u>87</u>   |

## (c) UNIVERSITY.

|                             | Period I. | Period II. | Period III. |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Oxford ... ..               | 8         | 13         | 34          |
| Cambridge ... ..            | 8         | 1          | 15          |
| Edinburgh ... ..            | 2         | —          | —           |
| Dublin ... ..               | 3         | 2          | —           |
| Foreign Universities ... .. | 2         | 1          | 2           |
| No University ... ..        | 27        | 13         | 36          |
| Unclassified ... ..         | 2         | —          | 2           |
|                             | —         | —          | —           |
|                             | <u>52</u> | <u>30</u>  | <u>89</u>   |

The foregoing table is evidence of a well-defined movement towards democratisation in the Diplomatic Service. During the epoch of patronage two out of three diplomatists were aristocrats. After the reform of 1857 the proportion declined to one in two, and when competition was inserted in the examination in 1880, to less than one in three. The percentage of men whose fathers earned their own livelihood rose from 20 in the first to 37 in the second, and 44 in the third period. The proportion of sons of civil servants increases perceptibly after 1880, and the parental categories of professional and business men show a marked expansion over the whole period. The percentage educated at the eleven most exclusive public schools rises from 49 in the first to 67 in the second and 76 in the third period. The higher proportion of public-school men in recent years may be attributed to the fact that Roman Catholics, who have always been numerous in both the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service, were formerly debarred from going to English public schools, and were educated, as investigation bears out, either at Catholic schools in England or abroad, or privately at home. Since the abolition of patronage there has been a discernible increase in the proportion of academically trained men. Moreover, it is noteworthy that not a single diplomatist of distinction who has entered the service since 1880 has been trained at any university other than the two premier ones.

In the case of the Diplomatic Service and, to a less degree, the Foreign Office, there has been a constant influx of men who have not entered the services at the usual age or passed through the lower ranks. Table IV. gives particulars including their previous careers, for these outsiders, who number 47 in all, and form 20 per cent. of the personnel of the Diplomatic Service and 11 per cent. of the Foreign Office.

TABLE IV.

| (a) PARENTAL OCCUPATION.      |    | (c) UNIVERSITY.             |    |
|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|
| Aristocrats ... ..            | 10 | Oxford ... ..               | 11 |
| Rentiers ... ..               | 6  | Cambridge ... ..            | 8  |
| Higher Civil Service ... ..   | 5  | London ... ..               | 2  |
| Professions ... ..            | 17 | Edinburgh ... ..            | 1  |
| Business ... ..               | 5  | Glasgow ... ..              | 1  |
| Literature ... ..             | 1  | Belfast ... ..              | 2  |
| Unclassified ... ..           | 3  | No University ... ..        | 24 |
|                               | —  | Unclassified ... ..         | 1  |
|                               | 47 |                             | —  |
|                               | —  |                             | 50 |
|                               | —  |                             | —  |
| (b) SCHOOL.                   |    | (d) PREVIOUS CAREER.        |    |
| Eton ... ..                   | 9  | Consular Service ... ..     | 25 |
| Harrow ... ..                 | 3  | Higher Civil Service ... .. | 5  |
| Leading Public Schools ... .. | 6  | Politics ... ..             | 9  |
| Lesser Public Schools ... ..  | 12 | Army ... ..                 | 1  |
| Other Schools ... ..          | 5  | Navy ... ..                 | 1  |
| Military and Naval Colleges   | 2  | Royal Household ... ..      | 2  |
| Privately ... ..              | 3  | Law ... ..                  | 2  |
| Abroad ... ..                 | 3  | Journalism ... ..           | 2  |
| Unclassified ... ..           | 4  |                             | —  |
|                               | 47 |                             | 47 |
|                               | —  |                             | —  |

It is clear from the above table that this category is drawn from a lower social class than the remainder. The percentage whose fathers belonged to the leisured class is 34, in comparison with 57 for the rest of the personnel. The professions are here the largest category of parental occupations. Sixty-five per cent. of those who spent their lives in the Foreign Office or in diplomacy were at the more exclusive public schools, as contrasted with 38 per cent. among the laymen, and in the foregoing table public schools of the second rank form the largest scholastic class. Of the seven members of the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service who alone have exclusively attended any British university other than Oxford or Cambridge, it is notable that three have been men who entered the services after careers elsewhere. It is worthy of note also that the proportion of outsiders who have had an academic training is slightly below the general average for the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service.

A study of the previous careers of men under this head reveals the fact that a majority of them had served in the Consular

Service. Earlier a number of the twenty-five thus accounted for had been student interpreters, while others had passed through the Army and become military attachés before being drafted into the Consular Service. In some countries where a thorough knowledge of national traditions and customs is desirable, it has been a common practice to fill diplomatic vacancies from the junior service. Four out of ten diplomatic representatives in Japan, seven out of thirteen in China, three out of eight in Morocco, two out of four in Ethiopia, and all three in Costa Rica have been appointed to their embassies or legations without previous experience in the Diplomatic Service, and all of them have graduated through the Consular Service. Of the 47 men drafted into the Foreign Office or the Diplomatic Service from outside, all except four came from some career of State service or public life. It is noteworthy that 19 per cent. of them were drawn from politics and in recent years there is observable a growing disposition to award the highest posts to distinguished politicians. Of the four most recent ambassadors at Washington, two—Viscount Bryce and Sir Auckland Geddes—had been Ministers of the Crown.

Ambassadors and envoys promoted from below or from outside have frequently had diplomatic careers of unusual distinction. Sir Ernest Satow at Peking and Tokio, and Sir John Jordan at Tokio, both of whom were preferred from the Consular Service, were diplomatists of special prominence. Sir William White at Constantinople was one of the most celebrated of ambassadors. Two ex-politicians—Viscount Bryce in the United States and the Marquess of Dufferin in France—were outstanding diplomatic successes.

The Macdonnell Commission on the Civil Service of 1912-1914 made certain recommendations for the reform of the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service which were put into effect in 1919. The two services were amalgamated into a single "Foreign Service." While special proficiency was still required in foreign languages, the general examination scheme was assimilated to that for the rest of the administrative Civil Service. The conditions requiring a candidate, before he could proceed to the examination, to obtain a nomination from the Secretary of State himself or from someone "of standing and position," and also to possess a private income of at least £400 a year, were both abolished. Effect was given to the proposal that "the salaries and allowances in the Diplomatic Service should . . . make it possible for a member of that service to live upon his official emoluments."

It is a matter of great importance to discover whether the adoption of these reforms has had any marked influence on the

nature of the personnel recruited since 1919. Statistics are sparse, but the Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners 1923 to 1928 give the places of education of the 31 successful candidates during that period. These figures are set out below.

TABLE V.

| (a) SCHOOL.            |     |     |           | (b) UNIVERSITY. |     |     |           |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| Eton                   | ... | ... | 7         | Oxford          | ... | ... | 19        |
| Harrow                 | ... | ... | 3         | Cambridge       | ... | ... | 11        |
| Leading Public Schools | ... | ... | 10        | London          | ... | ... | 1         |
| Lesser Public Schools  | ... | ... | 9         | No University   | ... | ... | 1         |
| Other Schools          | ... | ... | 2         |                 |     |     |           |
|                        |     |     | <u>31</u> |                 |     |     | <u>32</u> |

The Macdonnell Commission carried out a similar analysis for the same number of years just before the War, and it is instructive to set down their findings. "We have been furnished by the Civil Service Commissioners," states the Report, "with the educational antecedents of the successful competitors for attachéships in the years 1908 to 1913 inclusive. No fewer than 25 out of 37 (about 67 per cent.) came from Eton, while all but a very small fraction had been educated at one or other of the more expensive public schools. In only one case was any university other than Oxford or Cambridge represented." The conclusion is that "no further evidence is required to show the limiting effect of the present regulations upon the class of candidates from which the Diplomatic Corps is recruited."

Some change in the character of the personnel admitted appears to have resulted from the adoption of the new regulations. The percentage coming from Eton has fallen from 67 to 23. But the change is not profound: 65 per cent. in the later period attended one or other of the eleven leading public schools—a percentage which is actually five points higher than the corresponding percentage for the whole period since 1851. Moreover, every entrant, with the exception of one from a preparatory school and another educated at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, received a public-school education. Furthermore, as in the six pre-war years, there is only one instance of any university other than Oxford or Cambridge being represented, and this entrant in the later period was also an Oxonian. It is worth noting that while during the whole period studied only about one man in two was university-educated, in the selected post-war years one man alone out of thirty-one did not receive an academic training.

The general inference which follows from a study of the effects of the various reforms in the examination regulations is that they have been substantial but not profound. There has

been a gradual modification of the personnel, but no radical transformation. During the period of patronage nearly three out of four diplomatists were members of the aristocracy or gentry. Since then, democratisation of the conditions of entry has enabled civil servants and professional men increasingly to send their sons into the Foreign Service. The series of reforms has not yet sufficed, however, to make the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service representative of all classes of the community. No trace is discoverable, even since the Macdonnell Commission swept away social distinctions and made diplomacy a career open to talent, of men entering the Foreign Service who have climbed the educational ladder from State elementary school to university. This branch of the British Civil Service is still dominated by the greater public schools and by the older universities. Despite the reforms, environmental advantages still weight the balance heavily in favour of the propertied and the professional classes.

#### V.

The theory which was first enunciated by Macaulay, and has since 1855 governed entrance to the British Civil Service, is that the examination scheme should be bound up with the general educational system of the country. In the case of the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service, however, the prominence given to foreign languages in the examination has imperilled the full application of the "Macaulay principle." Great advantage in the linguistic section of the examination accrues to candidates who have proceeded straight from school to a foreign pension or tutor. Of the personnel investigated since 1851, almost one-half sat for the examination after having spent their post-school years elsewhere than at a British university.

This defect was recognised by the Macdonnell Commission. "If our proposals are adopted," the Commissioners stated, "the diplomatic service will be made more attractive to men of ability and high academic training, while its members will have greater opportunity of studying subjects of value to them in their profession. Charges have been made before us of defects of knowledge and narrowness of outlook in members of the diplomatic service, and without admitting the justice of such general criticisms, we consider that in many cases there is room for improvement." It appears from the admittedly incomplete evidence obtainable (see Table V) that the remedies they prescribed have had the desired effect. In the years 1923 to 1928 only one non-university-trained candidate was admitted into the Foreign Service.

Failure to profit by the widening of intellectual vision conferred by university life must be a severe handicap to the diplomatist. Once his career opens, he is an exile. Three years at a British university should enable him to appreciate the currents of domestic thought and to evaluate the social forces of his day. If this period of preparation for a diplomatic career is spent abroad, the would-be diplomatist is inevitably cut off from knowledge of the social and political movements of the country which he is destined to represent to foreigners.

The observations of the Macdonnell Report quoted above imply a further criticism of the customary education of candidates for the Foreign Service. Not only is it important that the diplomatist should have acquired a familiarity with what is best in the thought of his own country, but his intellectual equipment should also include a knowledge of economic and political science. It may be true that men who have stayed at a university to the age of 21 or 22 are well equipped for any profession, but this liberal education requires for such a career as diplomacy a supplement of specialised information. Men destined for the fighting services are trained in the art of war-making. Diplomats should have mastered whatever theoretical knowledge may assist them in the art of peace-making.

An inconsiderable fraction of entrants to the Foreign Service take economic and political subjects in the examination, and indeed an idea is current that some bias is accorded by the examiners to those who offer the classics. The fact that so substantial a proportion as 20 per cent. of the more distinguished diplomatists have since 1851 been drawn from the ranks of the Consular Service and of other branches of the Civil Service and from among eminent politicians, together with the additional fact that these laymen have often had careers of outstanding merit, justifies some criticism of the talent available among professional diplomatists. In particular, promotions from a junior service devoted to commercial activities, lend colour to the contention that a knowledge of the economic world, which forms the background of political activity in modern states, should be an integral part of a training for diplomacy. The conduct of foreign relations cannot be properly provided for unless it is recognised that they must be a subject of special study on the part of those responsible for them.

## VI.

The unchallengeable conclusion that emerges from this statistical analysis is that the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service have been a preserve for the sons of the



aristocratic, rentier and professional classes. For this reason their personnel is not a fair sample of British society as a whole. This was the view of the Macdonnell Commission: "... the Diplomatic Service is effectually closed to all His Majesty's subjects, be they never so well qualified for it, who are not possessed of private means. The official conditions of entry into this Service fix the amount of the private means required at a minimum of £400 a year. The effect is to limit candidature to a narrow circle of society." The bureaucracy in foreign affairs has been one of the last strongholds in which the aristocratic principle has withstood the advance of democracy.

Men who have been nurtured in the British upper class have lived in a world secluded from the common people. Education at a great public school and one of the older universities provides a liberal education that fits men to be good administrators, but it is also a process of initiation into a social caste. Those so reared and trained are imbued with the peculiar prejudices of their walk of life. They are too far removed from the common people to comprehend their point of view. Their perspective is not characteristic of the nation as a whole.

In a democracy the Foreign Service ought firstly to represent to peoples abroad the mental attitude of the nation it stands for, and secondly to convey to the Government at home the mind of foreigners. It is not qualified to perform either of these functions if it is representative only of a very small section of the life of the nation. With the best intentions, it can accurately interpret neither the broad lines of policy laid down by statesmen nor the inclinations of the people they represent. Unless the diplomatic personnel is typical of all classes, it will not work with a constant sense that it is the servant of the whole body politic.

In former times the practice of diplomacy was restricted to Courts and the highest social circles, and this was the reason Bagehot gave as justifying the predominance of the aristocracy in British diplomacy. But to-day aristocratic society is in most countries divorced from government. Familiarity with aristocratic habits is no longer a necessary qualification for the diplomatist. Indeed, the problems that have faced the world since 1919 demand treatment by men with qualities entirely different from those associated with the aristocratic frame of mind. The successful diplomatist needs in this age the capacity to mix with men of all classes and standpoints, a capacity which is not to be acquired from an upbringing in British upper-class society.

Since the Great War there have been in all countries a keener public interest in foreign affairs and a greater popular aspiration towards the maintenance of peace than ever before. In England

these feelings have to a considerable extent found expression in the form of dissatisfaction with the traditional conduct of international relations and with the old assumptions of diplomatic procedure. One general remedy which has attracted widespread support is the closer association of foreign politics with public opinion. The objects of diplomacy, it is argued, should be attuned to those of the people at large. Projects such as the establishment in the House of Commons of a Permanent Foreign Affairs Committee are now advocated as a means to this end. Another way of bringing diplomacy into closer touch with democracy would be to make its personnel a microcosm of the nation as a whole. A Foreign Service containing representatives of all social classes should produce a type of official more sympathetic to public opinion.

Bright's dictum has lost some of its force since it was first enunciated, but the property, if not the purely aristocratic, class is still predominant in the British bureaucracy of foreign affairs. The necessity for widening the field of selection was recognised by the Macdonnell Commission, and since 1919 the Foreign Service has been recruited by merit regardless of class qualifications. Reform of the method of recruitment, however, represents only the first step. As the available evidence indicates, it will not alone produce a genuinely democratic diplomacy. What has next to be done is less obvious, equally necessary, but more difficult. It is so to reconstruct the nation's scholastic system that citizens of all classes are enabled to reach the top rungs of the educational ladder.

Complete emancipation from considerations of social status must, of course, be a slow process. Even when the sons of the lower middle and the working classes gain admission to diplomacy, there is likely to be a bias against their preferment so long as the permanent under-secretaries and the ambassadors of the *ancien régime* remain in control. In the meantime a Foreign Service manned by those drawn from the privileged classes will remain antipathetic to the new internationalist ideals. A democratic diplomacy is alone capable of exploiting the moral forces to-day rallied behind the cause of world peace.

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