

Alfred Zimmern's Brave New World: Aberystwyth in 1919 and After*

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'The tents have been struck and the great caravan of humanity is once more on the move.' 'We are making the world safe for democracy.' Thus General Smuts and President Woodrow Wilson on the new post-war outlook in 1919.¹

There was an apocalyptic mood, symbolised by the creation of the Woodrow Wilson chair of International Politics in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1919, the first such university chair anywhere in the world. It shows vividly how the optimism and brave new world idealism of the immediate post-war period focussed on the creation of the new League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The naming of the chair after Wilson reflected the fact that the idea of a League of Nations was in practice very much an Anglo-American one. Wilson had developed the idea during the war – the League provided the climax of his famous Fourteen Points. He regarded it as the pivotal aspect of the Peace Treaty signed at Versailles, and got his close friend and confidant, Colonel House, to work out a detailed scheme.² At the peace conference at Paris that spring and summer, it was widely noted that Wilson seemed prepared to make concessions on other matters – the composition of Czechoslovakia and Poland, even German reparations – in order that his cherished idea of the League could come about.

But Wilson's ideas were very sketchy and imprecise. Hence there was a strong practical input from Britain to flesh the details out. This came initially through the Phillimore Committee in 1918, which proposed an international concert of powers which could impose economic and even military sanctions to enforce its wishes. Important also was the key role of individuals like Lord Robert Cecil and especially General Smuts of South Africa, 'that fine blend of intellect and human sympathy which constitutes the understanding man', a powerful influence on the British prime minister, Lloyd George, at the time.³ The League of Nations department within the Foreign Office in many ways supplied the architecture for a League. In particular, key proposals for the structure and mechanics of such a body were worked out by a relatively obscure cloistered Oxford scholar, hitherto best known for a learned work on the Greek

*This article is based on a ninetieth anniversary lecture given in the Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth, 14 May 2010.

- 1 Ruth Henig, *The League of Nations* (London: Haus, 2010), p. 27. This is much the best recent work on the formation of the League. Also helpful is Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2001), pp. 92–106.
- 2 Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life of Colonel Edward M. House* (Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 198ff.
- 3 Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace* (New Haven and London: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 28ff. The quotation on Smuts comes from David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (Odhams, 1938), 6 vols, I, p. 1032.

Commonwealth, Dr Alfred Zimmern, of whom much more shortly.

The Covenant of the League came about only after fierce battles in many countries. The League was simultaneously seen as both too strong and too weak. In the United States, isolationists were hostile to what appeared to be a damaging intrusion into US hemispheric independence, while liberal writers on the *New Republic*, such as Walter Lippman, Walter Weyl and Herbert Croly, rejected the Versailles Treaty, of which the League was a key part, *in toto*. It 'merely substituted the perverted nationalism of the victors for the rabid nationalism of the vanquished'.⁴ In Britain, radicals in the Union of Democratic Control saw the League as a replay of the Holy Alliance after 1815, a crude attempt to enshrine the national interests of the victorious great powers. Conversely, the French largely condemned it for being toothless, and not having the force to give effect to its decisions. Clemenceau and Marshal Foch thought the League illustrated the philosophical vagueness of the Anglo-Saxons in general. This negative view, broadly speaking, was also that of the British premier, Lloyd George, despite the impression given in his subsequent *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, in which he visualises the League as 'the effective guardian of international right and international liberty throughout the world'.⁵ In any case, the League was given an almost impossible range of new responsibilities – world disarmament, administering the new mandate territories such as Palestine, even internal ethnic disputes in the new post-war states. So from the start it was much contested in Europe, quite apart from arousing isolationism in the United States. And yet, the very idea of a League aroused huge enthusiasm worldwide. The League of Nations Union in Britain attracted hundreds of thousands of members.⁶ It symbolised hope of a new dawn for world peace and order in international relations. It commanded the eloquent enthusiasm of Liberal intellectuals such as General Smuts, Salvador de Madariaga and Professor Gilbert Murray. They hailed what was seen as a new 'Parliament for Mankind'. This was broadly the view of Alfred Zimmern.

In this wave of brave new world euphoria, was there much of it evident in Aberystwyth?⁷ Only to a very limited degree. The mood in the university college during the war had broadly been one of grim support for the war effort, and for the policy of a Welsh prime minister who preached the 'knock-out blow' and 'unconditional surrender'. Anti-war dissenters were severely dealt with. The eminent German scholar, Professor Hermann Ethé, was expelled from the town on purely racial grounds despite much courageous defiance by Principal T. F. Roberts, one of two Aberdyfi men to gain the principalship over the generations. The anti-war journal *Y Wawr*, edited by a notable nationalist and future founder of Plaid Cymru, Ambrose Bebb, was criticised, censored and finally suspended for its

4 Charles Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 289–92.

5 David Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (Gollancz, 1938), vol. 50, p. 409.

6 Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 62–63; Goronwy J. Jones, *Wales and the Quest for Peace* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969), pp. 93–96.

7 See E. L. Ellis, *The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), pp. 171 ff.; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 162 ff.

dissentient views. The appointment to a chair of Welsh after 1919 was deferred for the eminent poet and scholar, Thomas Parry-Williams, simply because he had been a conscientious objector during the war.

However, the post-war idealism found one powerful voice in Aberystwyth. This was David Davies, the college vice-president, later Lord Davies, to be president in 1926 and a major benefactor of the college through the Llandinam foundation.⁸ He was also Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire. After leaving the Prime Minister's secretariat or 'Suburb' during the war, he had set up the League of Free Nations Association, using his own funds to get it going. He worked closely with another important Aberystwyth figure, Thomas Jones, deputy-secretary to the Cabinet under Sir Maurice Hankey, and it was Jones who persuaded Davies to set up his proposed new chair of international politics, not in Oxford or in Strasbourg (named after Sir Edward Grey) as Davies originally visualised, but in the relatively remote 'college by the sea' on the seafront in Aberystwyth. Davies and his two sisters, Gwendoline and Margaret, put up the considerable sum of £20,000, over half the cost, themselves.⁹ It was the first such chair anywhere in the world. Its purpose was clear: it was to study 'the best means of promoting peace between nations', in other words to promote the League of Nations. Davies spelt out two central themes that would guide it – the 'will to create a new World State with its own laws', and the emergence of 'democratic nationalities'. A new chair would enable a small nation like the Welsh to conduct scientific academic research into the supreme problems of the post-war world. It should aim 'to cultivate an international intelligence in the mind of the Welsh Democracy in view of the ultimate Democratic control of Foreign Policy', as Davies phrased it grandiloquently.¹⁰ The College Senate accepted the proposals for the chair on 14 May. As if there was not enough excitement for one day, it was also agreed that men and women could play mixed golf together on the local golf links.

Through the subtle agency of Thomas Jones, the first new professor was acquired. He was Alfred Zimmern, one of the authors of the idea of the League, as has been seen. No other candidate was considered, let alone interviewed. Zimmern had sparkling references of approval from various eminences, Graham Wallas, the historian and President of the Board of Education, H. A. L. Fisher (whose pupil Zimmern had once been), the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Haldane, and A. L. Smith, Master of Balliol. Zimmern was able to negotiate his own terms – a research programme to attract foreign students to Aberystwyth; the appointment of a brilliant young idealist, Sidney Herbert, as his lecturer in the new department; additional funds of £200 to start up a specialist library; the provision that the new

8 See G. J. Jones, *Wales and the Quest for Peace* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969). The present writer wrote the entry on Davies in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Davies left a decent collection of papers and it is surprising that no biography of him exists.

9 Trust Deed of the Endowment, Council Minutes, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, archive; Ellis, *The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth*, pp. 187 ff. Davies's statement about the new chair was published in *The Times*, 7 December 1918. I am greatly indebted to Dr Gerald Hughes for his kind assistance with materials in Aberystwyth.

10 David Davies, *Memorandum on the Establishment of a chair of International Politics in the University of Wales*, 1919 (Lord Davies of Llandinam papers, D4/2 National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth).

Woodrow Wilson professor could spend one term in three on overseas travel; and the not inconsiderable starting salary of £750 for Zimmern. The entire appointment was felt to be an enormous coup for Aberystwyth.¹¹

The new professor, Alfred Zimmern, had a complicated intellectual background.¹² There were three main influences upon him. There was first the civic ideals of the Hellenic Greeks – of that Greek Commonwealth on which Zimmern had written a famous scholarly monograph, embodying Aristotelian ideas of citizenship and civic morality and accountability. Secondly, there was the Idealism drawn from Hegel, a major influence upon the New Liberalism and Fabian Socialism of the day, which led to Zimmern's interest in social questions at home and overseas, and his wish to create a worldwide moral community. Neo-Hegelianism impelled many into socialism. This was not true of Zimmern, although he stated that he had been 'as close to socialism as Agrippa had been to Christianity' (presumably meaning very close indeed). But it gave him an exalted view of the state and its moral dimensions. During his time at the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1916–18, he took a particular interest in the economic structure of a League of Nations, calling for a World Economic Council and a dedicated Labour department. And thirdly, there was Round Table ideology, originating from Milner's Kindergarten in South Africa after the Boer War, which led Zimmern to work with men like Philip Kerr and especially Lionel Curtis in fostering the idea of a multi-national British Commonwealth which he believed would form a prototype for the League of Nations which in turn would nurture it. 'The League,' he told members of Columbia University in 1925, 'is exactly fitted to meet the constitutional and other difficulties of adjustment with which the British Commonwealth is confronted.'¹³ Zimmern was very confident on the moral and ideological superiority of British political and civic ideas, but he also took a liberal, pluralist view of the role of the Empire in its new guise.

Zimmern was indeed a public intellectual of much authority. He was in close contact with the liberal intellectuals of the *New Republic* in the United States. He had also had important contacts with French intellectuals such as Elie Halévy, and had built up a powerful international reputation. He saw education as the key to the building up of an international awareness, leading on to a notion of world citizenship, and he would begin in Aberystwyth.

Zimmern's appointment created enormous excitement at first. There was some incipient alarm. 'Is he a German?' one lady was moved to ask; she was apparently reassured, however illogically, when told he was a product, indeed a scholar, of

11 Materials in Council and Senate minutes, University of Wales Aberystwyth archive.

12 For excellent accounts of his ideas, see Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, pp. 66 ff.; Paul Rich, 'Alfred Zimmern's Cautious Idealism: The League of Nations, International Education and the Commonwealth', in *Thinkers of the Twenty Years Crisis: Inter-war Idealism Reassessed*, ed. by David Long and Colin Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 79–99; and idem, 'Reinventing Peace: David Davies, Alfred Zimmern and Liberal Internationalism in Interwar Britain', *International Relations*, 16.1 (2002), 117–33.

13 For the Round Table, see J. E. Kettle, *The Round Table and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975). Zimmern's comments appear in *The Third British Empire*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934; 1st edn 1926), p. 75.

Winchester.¹⁴ Zimmern had to explain his parents' original decision separately to move from Germany to England in the mid-nineteenth century, his father migrating from the duchy of Baden, his mother from the city of Frankfurt; he kept quiet on his Jewish blood. Liberals throughout Wales were hugely excited by having him amongst them. Mrs Winifred Coombe-Tennant, an activist in the Welsh School of Social Service, wrote to him, 'We have a great man in Wales now. I think it must be many years since any good befell her greater than your coming to share her life.' In the press, excited journalists nominated Zimmern as a kind of dream-team prime minister of the world. He was immediately active as a propagandist for Aberystwyth as well as for the League. He sought to involve himself in Welsh life and even learnt the Welsh language; there is Welsh correspondence in his papers in the Bodleian.¹⁵ His views were always passionately expressed. He urged an idealist vision of international citizenship, shaped and buttressed by the great League itself.

However, things soon went awry. He did not see eye to eye with the imperious idealist, David Davies, who pressed the case for an international force to enforce decisions by the League, an issue on which he agreed with the French. Zimmern also made enemies in other ways, notably by criticising the limitations of the teaching methods currently being practised in Aberystwyth, the calibre of the students enrolled, and the restrictions on the social life of women students (on the last he was surely right since my own family's recollections suggested an atmosphere of repressive moral Puritanism not greatly removed from the world of the Taliban). He tried unsuccessfully to bring in other scholars, such as the celebrated Shakespeare authority, J. Dover Wilson, as professor of English, and the global public intellectual, Salvador de Madariaga, as professor of Spanish.¹⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, he did not put pressure on the Law department to develop international law. He was the candid friend more widely in Wales on many issues of national concern. His famous pamphlet, *My Impressions of Wales* (1921), originally a lecture to the Oxford University Cambrian Society at Jesus College, criticised Wales for the relative poverty of its political life and for not punching above its weight in international debate. Perhaps overdoing the candour of the candid friend, he declared that 'Welsh higher education is neither really Welsh, nor really education.' Wales, he pronounced, was a sick country, not giving the world what she could and taking refuge in filling major positions with mediocrities.¹⁷ It is perhaps not surprising that his popularity in the principality rapidly waned.

It was, therefore, almost inevitable that he should create tensions in Aberystwyth. The college was in something of an introspective mood in 1919, illustrated by the appointment of J. H. Davies, the registrar and a local Cardiganshire man, as principal in 1919 instead of Lloyd George's protégé, Thomas Jones, deputy-secretary of the Cabinet.¹⁸ There was criticism of Zimmern as a brash, tiresome

14 (Unknown) to Zimmern, 8 March 1919 (University of Wales Aberystwyth council minutes).

15 Winifred Coombe-Tennant to Zimmern, 11 November 1920 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, Zimmern Papers, 16, ff. 120–28); E. Griffith, Dolgellau, to Zimmern, 21 July 1920 (*ibid.*, f. 108).

16 E. L. Ellis, *T. J.: A Life of Dr Thomas Jones CH* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), pp. 207–8.

17 Alfred Zimmern, *My Impressions of Wales* (London: Mills and Boon, 1921), pp. 34, 39.

18 Ellis, *T. J.: A Life of Dr Thomas Jones CH*, pp. 208–10.

colleague. Worse still, there was criticism of his private life. He entered into a very public affair with the strong-willed Madame Barbier, the music-loving wife of the professor of French, herself a controversial figure who had fallen out with David Davies over the musical programmes offered in Gregynog, Davies's home and a centre for the arts. Zimmern's liaison with her aroused Old Testament passions in the chapel-going Calvinist fastnesses of Aberystwyth, and when in 1921 he was named as co-respondent in the divorce case, he had to leave his chair (Professor Barbier himself stayed on in Aberystwyth and died there in 1944). Zimmern was succeeded by a distinguished international relations historian, Charles Webster, also strongly pro-League, but far less of a propagandist than Zimmern. Although Zimmern left behind in Aberystwyth his colleague and disciple, Sidney Herbert, the Woodrow Wilson chair now entered a different phase.

After 1919, the idea of the League lost some esteem. It was inevitably caught up in Keynes's savage onslaught on the Versailles Treaty in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Lloyd George was never an enthusiast. He was always anxious that what he saw as essential British national interests should be protected from the operations of the League. He instanced in particular 'freedom of the seas' – it might be noted that Wilson and the Americans insisted in Paris that the League should exclude the Monroe Doctrine from its remit.¹⁹ The League, of course, suffered a huge blow at the end of 1919 when the US Senate rejected it. The support for the Cabot Lodge reservations, while benignly regarded by some scholars, seems to show a clear wave of enthusiasm for isolationist sentiment, whatever Lodge's own views.²⁰ Wilson, the victim of a stroke, was now a negligible force. There was always a problem of how the League could impose its authority. The Permanent Court of Justice set up at the Hague, following up pre-war international peace congresses, had little practical authority or ways of imposing its will.

By the time Lloyd George fell from power, in October 1922, the League was losing some of its early glamour. It lost prestige through its apparent ineffectiveness. At the outset, as Lloyd George himself pointed out, it failed to protect Armenia from being invaded and absorbed by revolutionary Russia. 'The League, I am sorry to say, is a failure,' observed Lloyd George as early as August 1919.²¹ It could do nothing except pass resolutions. There was scant evidence that it could ever fulfil its central purpose of preventing war or armed annexation. David Davies himself focussed on this issue henceforth, and elaborated schemes for a world police force. The League, however, lost credibility in the twenties with the failure of successive peace conferences, followed by repeated failure in the thirties to deter aggressors. The Japanese in Manchuria, the Italians in Abyssinia, finally the Germans in one demarche by Hitler after another, all drove nails into the coffin of the League, and left it looking like the pointless ineffective talking-shop that Lloyd George had derided back in 1919.

If the League lost prestige, so to a degree did its great evangelist, Alfred

19 Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand*, p. 211.

20 The converse is argued in Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson: The Great Betrayal* (London: Macmillan, 1945), but I do not find this convincing.

21 *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918–1923* (Gollancz, 1933), p. 118.

Zimmern. His career went through many gyrations after he left Aberystwyth. He became more of an anti-establishment critic. Thus in the 1924 general election, he surprisingly stood as Labour candidate for Caernarfon Boroughs, the seat of no less a figure than David Lloyd George.²² He fought on a radical programme. He claimed that Labour alone of the political parties really supported the League and he hailed Ramsay MacDonald's plans for peace and disarmament. Labour alone had turned the League 'from an academic idea into the chief instrument of policy'. At home, Labour stood for 'the Democracy versus the classes'; Zimmern now championed the nationalisation of the mines and the railways, and the adoption of scientific programmes to promote national production. It was a surprisingly left-wing programme for one who had rejected socialism during the First World War. But poor Zimmern was routed. He gained only seventeen per cent of the vote and Lloyd George breezed home with a majority of over 12,600.

After this, Zimmern rather drifted through the twenties. He moved away from the Round Table group, partly because of his criticisms of Lloyd George,²³ but could not find a secure niche elsewhere. He worked variously in Cornell, Paris and Geneva. His authority in international relations was deflated by the excessive enthusiasm he showed for the abortive Locarno pacts in the mid-twenties. He lamented to Thomas Jones, somewhat pathetically, that 'it is no good imagining that the other Great Powers are as *good* (socially-minded in a world sense) as we are or that the other Great Powers are as *great* as we are.'²⁴ However, he found a new haven in Chatham House and in 1930 became Montagu Burton professor of International Relations in Oxford. After the Second World War, Zimmern, now an elderly man, moved to the United States, for which he developed a new enthusiasm. He saw the US as inheriting the liberal international values of the British Commonwealth, and US federalism itself as a logical outgrowth from the ideals of Greek democracy. He worked with international relations specialists like Hans Morgenthau and had important pupils like the future US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk.²⁵

Zimmern remained strongly identified with the League. He published a famous book on its structure and purposes in 1936, perhaps the best account of that organisation.²⁶ But it had a somewhat dated air and was retrospectively propagandist. It embodied the consoling creed of a 'better yesterday'. His general reputation as an academic and public intellectual was still comparatively high. This standing, ironically, was undermined by events in Aberystwyth. His successor in the

22 Material in Zimmern papers, 18, including Zimmern's election address.

23 Lionel Curtis to Zimmern, 30 December 1922 (Zimmern Papers, 17, ff. 158–69). Curtis notes here that 'The Round Table is not a society or an organization from which anyone can secede. It is just a circle of friends who think for themselves.' Zimmern seceded nevertheless.

24 Zimmern to Thomas Jones, 8 May 1930, in *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary*, ed. by K. Middlemas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 3 vols, III, p. 256.

25 Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, pp. 99–100. Zimmern encouraged Rusk in 1949–50 in trying to turn the UN into a pro-American body that could by-pass the Soviet veto.

26 Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law* (Macmillan, 1936). His previous work, *The Third British Empire* (first published in 1926), based on lectures given at Columbia University, underlines the affinities, as Zimmern saw them, between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the League of Nations.

Woodrow Wilson chair, E. H. Carr, published in the autumn of 1939, shortly after the outbreak of war, his famous monograph, *The Twenty Years Crisis* which bade fair to destroy for all time the reputation of Zimmern as a pro-League evangelist, and that of all those who felt like him. Carr was appointed in 1936.²⁷ He was in every way a sharp contrast with Zimmern and with the origins of the Woodrow Wilson chair which he held. He was known at the time of his appointment, to be highly sceptical about the League, strongly sympathetic to Germany, even under Hitler, and a fierce critic of the Peace Treaties and the League. He was an unusual choice. He had held no previous academic post. He had latterly worked in the Foreign Affairs department. He had published books on Dostoyevsky and Karl Marx, and was shortly to publish another on the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. But he had no record of publication in international relations, while David Davies had strongly opposed his appointment on ideological grounds.

There had been a huge row on the seven-man appointing committee. Davies had wanted to appoint Will Arnold-Forster instead.²⁸ He was an interesting and civilised man who had worked at the League in Geneva with Lord Robert Cecil, and was also on the Labour Party advisory committee on foreign affairs, chaired by Hugh Dalton. Through his wife, Katherine ('Ka') Cox, he had personal links with Bloomsbury – Katherine Arnold-Forster had had a traumatic affair with Rupert Brooke which is thought to have resulted in a still-born child.²⁹ They were both friendly with the Woolfs. Arnold-Forster himself was a close associate of leftist commentators on world affairs like Arthur Ponsonby, Philip Noel-Baker and Leonard Woolf. He was a painter and landscape-gardener, and was a most attractive and liberal-minded personality whose support for the League was beyond doubt. But he was really not much of a scholar. His academic output consisted of just two slight works on disarmament, little more than pamphlets, along with discussion papers on international arbitration. He was not even a university graduate. Davies, with his passion for the League, had to argue, somewhat absurdly, that Arnold-Forster had qualities equal or superior to those of the other candidates, a view with which even the passionately pro-League Professor Gilbert Murray disagreed.³⁰ There was fierce contention between Davies and the Aberystwyth principal, Ifor L. Evans, who stuck to his guns. Arnold-Forster he described as 'a nervous, eccentric person with no academic qualifications...by occupation a painter and by predilection a propagandist'. At one stage, passions between president and principal ran so high that Davies stamped out, leaving his fishing tackle behind in the council chamber.

27 See Jonathan Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E. H. Carr, 1892–1982* (Verso, 1999); Brian Porter, 'E. H. Carr: The Aberystwyth Years, 1936–1947', in *E. H. Carr: A Critical Reappraisal*, ed. by Michael Cox (London: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 36 ff.; John Mearsheimer, 'E. H. Carr v. Idealism: The Battle Rages On', *International Relations*, 19.2 (2005), 139–52.

28 See Porter, 'E. H. Carr', and Ellis, *University College of Wales, Aberystwyth*.

29 For Katharine ('Ka') Cox (1887–1938) and her tumultuous relationship with the bisexual Brooke, see Brooke's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. She and Arnold Forster produced a distinguished son, the publicist and Liberal politician, Mark Arnold-Forster. I am indebted to my friend Paul Levy for information on her life.

30 Arnold-Forster's main works were *The Victory of Reason* (1926) and *The Disarmament Conference* (1931), both slight works. He was Labour candidate for St. Ives, Cornwall, in the 1929 general election and later worked for Transport House on foreign policy.

He resigned in high dudgeon as college Treasurer, though he was later to relent. In the end, Carr's main rival turned out to be someone perhaps less suitable even than Arnold-Forster, the expert on Hungarian history, C. A. McCartney, a right-wing defender of the regime of the neo-fascist Admiral Horthy. McCartney, fiercely attacked as an extremist by A. J. P. Taylor and his Hungarian wife, Eva, would, one might surmise, not have been a happy choice for the campus at Aberystwyth.³¹

Carr's duties were relaxed. He spent one day a week in the college, in which he delivered just three lectures. He did not bother to buy a property in the town, staying in the Belle Vue hotel. His view of Aberystwyth as a small provincial town was little short of contemptuous. Unlike Zimmern, he made no effort to get to know Wales or understand its culture and traditions. He used the long railway journey from Paddington to get on with his writing. He now turned for the first time to international relations. He broke totally with the tradition of Zimmern and Webster by removing the League of Nations as a central preoccupation of research and teaching in his department. His *Twenty Years Crisis*, in the view of his biographer, Jonathan Haslam, was a 'brutal and damning attack' on the idealists, on the 'utopians' who believed in a mythical world order, in the harmony of interests, and the importance of the League of Nations. Carr's view was to dominate approaches to international relations theory for many years to come. His views reflected the rise of the dictators in the thirties. He strongly defended appeasement on the grounds that Hitler was correct in condemning the injustices of the peace treaties, right to take up arms against them and also justified in arguing for the need for space in the east for a policy of *lebensraum*. He lavished praise on Munich and on Neville Chamberlain's conduct of foreign policy down to March 1939.³² It is noticeable that in the second edition of the book, long after war had broken out, a good deal of this praise was whittled down.

Carr's writing was marked by a thorough-going contempt for the very idea of a League of Nations. Zimmern was one of his chief *bêtes noires*. He identified him as foremost among examples of utopian fantasy, and ridiculed him in numerous footnotes, with much effect, as when Zimmern claimed that the League did not function properly because people in general were not intelligent enough.³³ In retaliation, Zimmern himself, a less unworldly figure than Carr suggests, attacked Carr for his 'moral relativism'. Norman Angell, a more pugnacious peacemonger, called it 'moral nihilism'.³⁴ Carr replied that they both wilfully ignored the simple element of power in world affairs.

Davies vehemently condemned Carr and his activities at this time. Carr worked during the war as leader-writer for *The Times*, where, *inter alia*, he campaigned strongly for a second front and a post-war alliance with the Soviet Union. Davies strongly disliked *The Times* in any case, and attacked Carr's far-left views. He also objected to Aberystwyth paying part of Carr's salary while he made money as a journalist in faraway London. Davies now became very embittered. He claimed

31 Personal knowledge.

32 Peter Wilson, 'Carr and his Early Critics: Responses to the Twenty Years Crisis 1939 – 46', in Cox (ed.), *E. H. Carr: A Critical Reappraisal*, p. 175.

33 E. H. Carr, *Twenty Years Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1951), p. 39.

34 Wilson, 'Carr and his Early Critics'.

that every Woodrow Wilson professor since Zimmern had worked against his own ideas for the League, and he resigned as President of the college.³⁵ He died in 1944. Controversially, Carr stayed on in Aberystwyth, until he too left in 1947, Ironically, in one personal respect he emulated Zimmern, since he also embarked on an affair with the wife of a colleague, in this case the distinguished geographer/anthropologist, Daryll Foorde. Carr was publicly named as co-respondent amidst much local scandal, the moral climate of Aberystwyth not having changed very much since 1919. Mrs Foorde in due course became the second of Carr's three unhappy wives. His biographer seems to depict Carr's role as husband as invariably insensitive and abusive.

By 1947, the utopian hopes of Zimmern's generation and of the League of Nations Union seemed self-evident. The United Nations after 1945 built in the preponderant weight of the great powers to avoid the appearance of being a replay of the ineffective League that preceded it. It sought to blend realism with idealism in a way that had not been attempted in 1919. Sixty and more years on, it was robust and thriving. It could legitimately claim, as its Charter had proclaimed back in 1945, to be the custodian of a global legal order 'securing human rights and fundamental freedoms'.

David Davies in his later years became very disillusioned with the holders of the Wilson chair, all of them, Zimmern as much as Carr. 'I wish to God I had never initiated this proposal,' he wrote. Every professor since Zimmern had resisted turning the League into an effective international authority.³⁶ Was this pessimism justified? Clearly the history of the Woodrow Wilson chair illustrated the story of the brave new world idealism of the post-war settlement in 1919 and its eventual eclipse amidst the appeasement of the 1930s and the carnage that followed. So is the story of Davies' venture after the First World War just one of the discrediting of international idealism in the face of the cynical, relentless, tough-mindedness of power politics? Were the dreams of the liberal left ninety years ago nothing more than a hopeless illusion? I do not believe that they were. In the early twenty-first century, despite the relative weakness of the World Court (as over the building of a divisive wall in Palestine by the Israeli authorities), despite the International Criminal Court being undermined by the United States and other countries, the idea of order in world affairs and the force of international law has become more coherent and its impact more effective.

As regards the debate between Zimmern and Carr, scholars have rightly pointed out that the contrasts often drawn between them are often overdone.³⁷ They have both suffered to a degree from being stereotyped. Zimmern's own critique of the League and the effectiveness of its powers was in many ways strongly realistic. Carr in certain definitions was something of a utopian, notably in the way his Marxist sympathies made him sympathetic to fundamental social change. Nor should the balance of error be tilted too one-sidedly. Both of them shared serious misjudgements about key issues. In particular, both made predictions about the

35 Ifor L. Evans, *Lord Davies, the Wilson Chair and the Presidency of the College*, February 1941 (University College of Wales archives, International Politics).

36 Porter, 'E. H. Carr'.

37 Cf. Mearsheimer, 'E. H. Carr v. Idealism'.

likely disappearance of the force of nationalism that the history of the world since 1945 has fundamentally discredited. Zimmern's view, conveyed to the readers of *Welsh Outlook* in July 1919, that there was 'no future for political nationalism in the modern world' now seems totally bizarre.³⁸ Both Zimmern and Carr got Munich hopelessly wrong, although from different perspectives.

But of the two, it is the so-called 'realism' of Carr that has worn much less well. His own writings on history did not aid his cause. In part, they read like a worship of the successful and the powerful. As he wrote, whimsically perhaps, in a passage on cricket, he supposed that the history of that game focussed on 'those who made centuries rather than those who made ducks and were left out of the side'.³⁹ His judgements could become discredited for their moral emptiness. He endorsed the appeasement of Hitler and his assault on neighbouring countries, and justified the Nazis' demand for *lebensraum* in the east. He justified Hitler's programme of enforced regime change much as President Bush, Vice-President Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld did during their invasion of Iraq. Carr went on to write an immense, scholarly account of the Soviet Union in which, however, the Stalinist regime is treated almost wholly uncritically. The massacre of the kulaks or the mass murder of Stalin's fellow Georgians are chronicled with a kind of moral indifference. Carr's magnum opus reads now as a conspicuous casualty of the Cold War.

Carr, then, was resoundingly wrong on both Hitler and Stalin. More generally, the world has moved on from the thought-worlds of both of the two famous Aberystwyth professors. But of those two, in a multi-polar world, with globalisation imposing a sense of interdependence and shared vulnerability, with a new quest for world order on environmental and other issues, it is Carr's approach that now looks the more debatable.

Zimmern, by contrast, is worth rescuing from the condescension of posterity, in E. P. Thompson's famous phrase, along with the ideals of 1919. In Aberystwyth itself, of course, Zimmern's legacy lies in what was closest to his heart – education. He was in many ways a difficult academic colleague, dogmatic, opinionated and tactless. But he wanted to make Aberystwyth a unique dynamo in the teaching and research of international relations, and, for all his immediate despondency at the time of his departure, he may surely be judged to have succeeded. He wanted to extend that inquiry into the spheres of international law and the study of a global economic order. The cult of the League is long past, but his wider analysis of the international community has won renewed academic and legal support. It is the idealists who now dominate the world of international relations within academia. The International Politics department at Aberystwyth has a named E. H. Carr chair and formal public lecture. Perhaps, if it is not mischievous to suggest it, the authorities there might also consider setting up a Zimmern chair and lecture as well.

Beyond the local confines of the Aberystwyth campus, the debate over the invasion of Iraq in 2003 may be seen as opening up a new phase in the age-long

38 Alfred Zimmern, 'The International Settlement and Small Nationalities', *Welsh Outlook* (July 1919), 171–75.

39 E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 121.

contest between the approaches of Zimmern and Carr. In fact, over issues such as unilateral 'regime change', the paying of heed to the wishes of the international community and the UN in particular, questions of legality in the use of force, the opening up of public information and the right to know, and over parliamentary and civil control over military policy, much of the argument has gone Zimmern's way. The legal tribunal in the Netherlands on the Iraq invasion in 2010, unlike the British Chilcot inquiry very much a tribunal of lawyers, brought all this out very clearly in a verdict of comprehensive condemnation. Lawyers like Philippe Sands and Lord Bingham, the former Master of the Rolls, have validated the need for stronger and more respected legal parameters for a lawless world.⁴⁰ The whole idea of an emergent international legal order has more support since the trial of ex-President Pinochet of Chile in the 1990s. Lord Bingham has written of how rulers and states are more likely to be 'arraigned at the bar of world opinion'.⁴¹

Robert Kagan famously wrote that 'Americans come from Mars, Europeans come from Venus'.⁴² This is perhaps an odd view since Woodrow Wilson, for eight years president of the United States, was the most dedicated Venusian of them all. But the history of the Aberystwyth Wilson chair offers both these deities in stark form. In their attitude towards power, Carr came from Mars, Zimmern was a camp-follower of Venus. Public debate after the attack on Iraq, even during the enfeebled inquiries of the Chilcot tribunal, suggest something of a posthumous victory for Zimmern and those who took his view. That, at any rate, is the judgement of Bingham in the *Rule of Law*. What seemed illusions or utopian fantasies when Zimmern left Aberystwyth have now more intellectual credence. International law is a far stronger discipline than in 1919. Our world, at a theoretical level at least, is to that degree less obviously lawless. So we should celebrate Zimmern at this ninetieth anniversary of the Aberystwyth chair. Carr's writings in part suggested that history was for the winners. It may now be that, nearly a century on, it is Zimmern's that is now the winning side. In the eternal struggle with the giant Mars, it may be poor little Venus who has prevailed.

40 Tom Bingham, *The Rule of Law* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), pp. 111 ff.; Philippe Sands, *Lawless World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

41 Ibid.

42 Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003).