

British nationals in the League and the UN

“The highest interests of one own’s country are served best by the
promotion of security and welfare everywhere »

Eric Drummond, 1944

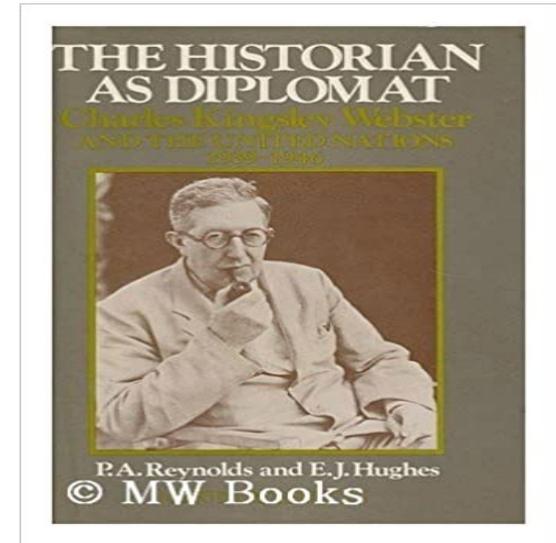
John Burley and Michael Davies

What we will cover

- How the UK officials with experience of the League influenced the drafting of the UN Charter
 - The setting-up of the new organisation, 1945
- The early British staffing of the UN and the agencies

The Foreign Office triumvirate

- Sir Alexander Cadogan (1884 – 1968)
 - Gladwyn Jebb (1900 – 1996)
 - Charles Webster (1886 – 1961)



Lessons of the League

Based on their direct experiences of League deficiencies, the triumvirate sought stronger means to guarantee peace and security:

- The outlawing of use of force, except under SC authorisation
- Collective security whereby all members accept mutual obligations to act
- A political approach to the peaceful settlement of disputes, rather than a legal one as in the League
- Possession of military forces, under the auspices of a Military Staff Committee
- Recognition of responsibility of the great powers: permanent membership of the SC and the power of the veto

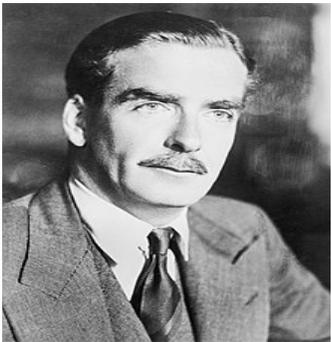
Other British contributions to the Charter

In addition, the British in Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco built on positive attributes of the League:

- The success of the League's secretariat, which led to Article 99 on the principle of independence for the Secretary-General and to Article 7 that establishes the ICS as a principal organ
- The economic and social work of the League and ILO, which led to the specialised agencies linked to the UN through ECOSOC, as proposed by Bruce in 1939
- The acknowledgement that international legitimacy is obtained through recognition of the role of smaller powers
- The continuity of the League's mandates, in the form of trusteeship, whereby colonial powers were made subject to international oversight

The unknown story of the British establishment of the UN, late 1945

- London saw the birth of both the League (May 1919 – October 1920) and the UN (September 1945 – February 1946)
 - Jebb as UN Executive Secretary and then Acting SG
- Largely British staffing of the secretariat of Preparatory Commission
- Remarkable success in rapid time in setting up the principal organs of the UN



Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin: British consensus



Key early British staff of the UN and the agencies

Senior British officials were heavily involved in the establishment and initial staffing of the UN and heading several of the agencies. Some examples:

- At the UN, David Owen (2nd staff-member: economic affairs, technical cooperation, UNDP) and Brian Urquhart (1st staff-member: SG's assistant, peace-keeping)
- At FAO, Director-General John Boyd-Orr
- At UNESCO, Director General Julian Huxley
- At ILO, Director-General Wilfred Jenks
- At GATT, Executive Secretary, Wyndham White
- And of course Maynard Keynes, for the Bretton Woods institutions

British League staff associated with the UN and agencies

A number of Brits gained international experience at the League early in their careers which they used later on. Some examples:

- From the EFO: John Fleming (IMF), Martin Hill (UN), Kathleen Midwinter-Vergin (UN), Lord Arthur Salter (UNRRA),
- From the Health Organisation: William Aykroyd (FAO), Melville Mackenzie (WHO)
- From the Social Section: Arthur Felkin (INCB)
- Special cases of Philip Noel Baker (Minister of State FO, 1945) and Alexander Loveday (Head of the EFO Princeton Mission that influenced the establishment of the BWIs)

Early British attitudes to staffing of the IOs

- By the 1950's and 1960's, the UK government had a “hands-off” approach to staffing and use of the multilateral machinery. Most senior UK staffing in the UN in this period came through internal promotion
- Former colonial technical staff joined agencies such as FAO and WHO
- The UK UNA/VSO programme enabled several young British staff to pursue successful careers in the UN

Suggestions for further work

- Comparative analysis of US and UK contributions to the drafting of the UN Charter: who really did what? And who should really take the credit?
- The UN Preparatory Commission, London, Sept 1945 – February 1946, has not been the subject of a special study. Period when the League de facto transitioned to the UN
- Socio-economic analysis of background to UK international civil servants: origin, family background, education, language skills