Fighting on All Fronts
Leo Amery and the First World War

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LEOPOLD S. Amery was a British Conservative statesman whose career in Parliament (1911-45) spanned the major events in the British Empire for a half century. He was a considerable scholar and was regarded as the chief imperial theorist of the time period, but he also loved the political fray. As the London *Times'* chief war correspondent he led the extra-Parliamentary fight for army reform following the Boer War. From 1916-1918 he served as under-secretary to Prime Minister Lloyd George's war cabinet, and helped draft the Balfour Declaration. As junior minister in the Admiralty he led the "revolt of the under-secretaries" in the Conservative party which toppled the Lloyd George coalition government in 1922. In the 1920s he served as First Lord of the Admiralty and then as Colonial and Dominions Secretary, both considered "imperial" offices.

Amery left the cabinet in 1929 and did not serve in any governments in the 1930s. During these years he was a vocal opponent of disarmament and became a leader of an anti-appeasement faction after 1938. In that capacity he led the attack on Neville Chamberlain that brought down his government in 1940. Finally, as Secretary of State for India in Winston Churchill's war cabinet (1940-1945), he fought Churchill's obstructionism and charted the course for the transfer of power in 1947.

All of Amery's attitudes and political actions sprang from a world view which he championed throughout his political life, although this often placed him at odds with his own party's leadership. While still at Oxford in the 1890s, Amery was attracted to the neo-imperialism espoused by Sir John Seeley and George Parkin. He became an enthusiastic disciple of imperial unity, believing that the empire should be transformed into a commonwealth of sister nations under allegiance to the British crown, with England as *primus inter pares* rather that the mother country for whose benefit the dominions and colonies existed.

Although Amery refined and expanded his thinking over the rest of his life, the basic core of his belief never changed. Consequently, his patriotism was for the empire rather than just for England, and he viewed economic and military development as imperial issues rather than parochial ones. As the Unionists (from 1887 to 1924 the Conservative party was known as the Unionist party

because of their merger with the Liberal Unionists) struggled to locate itself in the new twentieth-century political landscape, debate focused on the nature of conservatism and the future of the empire. Eschewing the negative and sterile policy of anti-socialism by which the party was defining itself, Amery sought to invigorate conservatism with a set of positive policies of social imperialism. But to what extent was he successful?

Amery entered the House of Commons in 1911 filled not with the awe becoming in a novice member but rather with an agenda. He aimed to discredit and eventually eliminate classic liberalism, which was embodied for him in Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith's government. Although Asquith and his cabinet's liberal imperialism kept them from being direct heirs of Gladstone, the government's policy of free trade, their traditional views on the dangers of military preparedness and government by amateurs, and their tendency to "muddle through" in all areas seemed anachronistic and ill-suited to the quickened pace of the twentieth century. Amery wanted to replace liberalism with social imperialism, an all-encompassing and statist philosophy of government that would keep the imperial perspective at the forefront of all issues, and he would seek to solve Britain's and, indeed, the empire's social problems by intelligent and expert government intervention.

Amery found, to his dismay, that nineteenth-century thinking permeated the Tory elements of his own Unionist party as well. Particularly during the Tariff Reform struggles of 1903-1910 the party was riven with schisms between the younger and progressive Liberal Unionists and the older and more traditional Tories. As a member of the loose-knit efficiency group Amery struggled against the country-house and "mandarin" thinking of his own party even as he worked to divide and destroy the Liberal party. This became even more apparent with the advent of war.

Throughout the first two years of the war Amery found himself not only at odds but actively opposed to the government's policies on recruitment, conscription, strategy, manpower utilization and tactics. After the Asquith government fell in December 1916, and Lloyd George became Prime Minister, Amery was called to London by Viscount Milner, his mentor, and spent the rest of the war as a political secretary to the newly formed War Cabinet Secretariat and later to the Supreme War Council in Versailles. In this position he worked tirelessly to improve and consolidate imperial communication, and more often battled Tory dullness and obstructionism over the conduct of the war than lingering Asquithian individualism. Amery and his friends mistakenly labeled the inefficient policies as liberalism, but in time Amery, at least, realized that the battle was not against liberalism, but an old world view versus a new one.

As a War Cabinet secretary Amery found himself at the center of power without official power himself, but near enough to comment on issues and influence others. Only in matters affecting the Empire was he acknowledged an expert. In some ways Amery's position in the First World War was a microcosm of his career: close to the center, without enough power to determine policy, he had to rely on influence to see his vision implemented, and his ability to influence fluctuated.

THE WAR within Britain began just before 4 August 1914, and was fought as vehemently as the war in France and Belgium. Within Britain the war was fought between the forces of freedom and control, particularly between those in the government who thought the war should be conducted according to traditional British methods of economics, military conduct and tactics and those who, like Viscount Milner and Winston Churchill, believed that modern war would call for new and nation-wide strategies, efforts, and, above all, coordinated planning. Leo Amery was, naturally, all on the side of efficiency, control, and planning. Amery and several of his cohorts bedeviled Lord Milner and Austen Chamberlain to protest Richard Haldane's reinstatement the War Office on 4 August. As soon as they succeeded Amery began exhorting them to pressure the government to make General Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener the Secretary of State for War because he seemed so decisive and energetic. Although Chamberlain was annoyed at Amery's persistence, Unionist leaders did indicate their preference and did encourage Kitchener to take the appointment. Meanwhile Amery and his friend Simon Lovat created a recruitment scheme that would build on the existing Territorial Army organization.

When Amery and Lovat called on the new Secretary of State on 7 August, Kitchener vetoed their scheme out of hand and "ordered" them to go to their respective constituencies and encourage recruiting there. Amery was so successful that the next week Kitchener appointed him Director of Civilian Recruiting for the Southern Command, with an office in Whitehall, under the Director of Recruiting, General Sir Henry Rawlinson. For the next month Amery traveled around the southern and midlands cities, creating recruiting committees from existing political organizations and enlisting the local authorities to lead recruitment programs. He convinced several members of Parliament to help channel public opinion and energy towards recruitment by holding large recruiting meetings.

Amery was increasingly aware that his small team's energetic efforts were inadequate to keep abreast of the work. He saw men of all stations and diverse abilities offering their services to the nation and being ignored or turned away

by administrators of the hide-bound policies of the government and the War Office. Although Kitchener had enough insight to realize from the beginning that the war would last for years, he was one of the most obstreperous of the bureaucrats. Kitchener, who had spent almost all of his military career away from Britain, knew little about the British people or social and even military changes within the last thirty years. He distrusted any scheme which he had not created himself. When Amery saw that the swarms of recruits pouring in could neither be trained nor housed by existing methods he created a scheme that used the Territorial Army Associations already in place to take over part of the housing, clothing, and training of recruits. Since some of the most vital workers in Britain, miners and machinists, were the quickest to volunteer, the nation's capacity to arm and support itself was in danger, and the government was ignoring the problem. Amery suggested that recruited men should continue at their own jobs until actually called up (when the army was capable of using them), and until then would receive the normal reserve army payment of sixpence a day. Kitchener was convinced that the Territorial Army and the National Reserve were the modern equivalent of the traditional militia, and scorned using them for any military purpose.

Nevertheless, Amery won his point and the scheme was put into effect. Contemporary observers relate that Kitchener listened to very few people, and usually responded to opinions or advice by shouting them down. But Amery was a person to whom Kitchener listened. In his memoirs Amery recounts on one occasion, when interrupting Kitchener, "[I] cut his tirade short, and patiently explained the difference . . . whereupon Kitchener at once gave way."[1] Hamar Greenwood, Amery's brother-in-law and fellow parliamentarian, wrote to Amery's wife about Amery's influence over the general:

> K[itchener] of K[hartoum] was reluctant to accept this, the only possible scheme, but Amery told him he must, and he has. I write this down now, so as in years to come, the facts will be known as they are . . . All the soldiers here are afraid to argue with K. of K. who is not a mental giant, but he listens to Leo and agrees—though reluctantly—with him.[2]

After a few weeks Kitchener refused to approve an appeal to employers telling them to let their men take off a day to enlist rather than simply discharging them. Although Amery reasoned with him Kitchener remained obstinate, and the numbers recruited soared beyond the feasible again. Soon afterwards Kitchener notified Amery and his aides that their services were no longer needed, and Amery went to join the personal staff of General Rawlinson who had been given

a command in Belgium. Thus began a two year period which saw Amery involved in several kinds of intelligence and staff work.

On 6 October Amery landed in Belgium where Rawlinson's staff had collected. They immediately became part of the British retreat towards Ypres. Amery did routine intelligence work and interrogated prisoners during the First Battle of Ypres for the next three months. In January 1915 Amery was sent home to report on the Front; he was met almost at the dock by General Callwell, the Director of Intelligence, who was anxious to commandeer Amery's services as one of the few Englishmen who was well acquainted with the Balkans. The Cabinet had just voted to send a British and a French division through Salonika to aid the Serbs, and information about Serbia was vitally in demand. The War Office had handbooks for every conceivable location of military action except Serbia. Amery collected books and maps and produced a handbook on Serbian history, politics, topography, economic resources, transportation and communications a week later, and three days after that added a short English-Serb phrasebook for the British troops.[3] He was then informed that the Cabinet had decided to send troops to the Dardanelles instead.

Rawlinson was informed in February 1915 that Asquith disapproved of Amery's presence on his staff, presumably because of his lingering resentment of Amery's parliamentary attacks. After Rawlinson let him go, Amery was invited by Ian Hamilton to join his staff which was just leaving for the Dardanelles. Asquith then informed Hamilton that he could not approve the appointment of Amery to his staff. Amery applied to Balfour for assistance, and finally Asquith conceded that Amery might be allowed to serve, "as long as it was not on the personal staff of a senior officer." While waiting to be reassigned, Amery went back to Belgium for a short time where he saw the conclusion of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. This, along with the casualty figures for the Battle of Ypres, convinced Amery of the "futility of the trench attacks on the Western Front," and prompted his search for a more promising theater in which to concentrate their offensives.[4]

Amery became a regular member of the Balkan section of military intelligence under General Callwell in March 1915. He was immediately sent to the Balkans to study transport and communication lines in preparation for Hamilton's expected advance from the Dardanelles, and to act as liaison officer with the military attaches at the British embassies in the Balkan capitals, several of which were still neutral. His first stops were in Greece: Athens, Salonika, and overland to Macedonia. In Serbia he surveyed conditions in Nish and Belgrade; he wrote to Mrs. Amery that conditions were grim and typhus was rampant. Still, he liked the war-torn cities and citizens of Serbia better than the comfortable and

cosmopolitan air of Bucharest, where, he said, the people "look soft and sensual, mostly concerned with having a good time".[5]

Amery was much opposed to the Foreign Office scheme to bring Bulgaria into the war on the Allied side by promising her Serbian and Greek territory. He believed that Greece was the most dependable potential ally in the area and wrote to Lord Milner that Greece should be encouraged to enter the war with promises of British assistance and territory taken from their enemy Turkey. In the same letter he repeated his belief that the stalemate on the Western Front could be aided by a large alternative advance in the East, where troops would be able to "fight on less congested and fortified ground," and where a victory would bring in the wavering Balkan neutrals. But that kind of operation would call for heavy concentrations of men; he was very much afraid that unless the government committed themselves to a "big push," Hamilton's limited forces at the Dardanelles would barely be able to take that "rocky peninsula," much less advance to the Balkans, and the Eastern effort would end in disaster.[6]

After visits to Bulgaria and again to Athens, Amery and another officer sailed to the Dardanelles at the end of June, and Amery found the situation was as disastrous as he had feared. General Hamilton had been ordered by Kitchener to land his men only on a tip of the peninsula. This created an ideal situation for the "stubborn" Turkish defense: British troops charging uphill into deep ravines commanded by Turkish machine gun emplacements. Since his landing in late April, Hamilton had been deprived of munitions and additional troops upon the advice of the highest ranking generals, all "Westerners," those old-fashioned officers, many of them cavalrymen, who believed the war could only be won on the Western Front and that any "sideshow" in another theater was extraneous and a waste of men and material. Amery viewed one of the last major attempts at advance by the left flank of the main force on 4 July. The artillery units had hoarded ammunition for weeks for this endeavor and were supported by some naval firepower, but it was not enough. There was a very small advance at the cost of many casualties.[7] Amery left the Dardanelles for London and arrived in late July 1915. He had promised to put the Dardanelles and Balkan situations to members of the government, but by this time the government was beginning to disavow the action, and no one, including Grey, seemed interested in his opinions on the Eastern Front.

General Callwell had other work for Amery to do. Callwell and many of his brother officers insisted that until the army had conscription they would not be able to win the war. Knowing that Amery had been a renowned journalist and a tireless worker for the cause of national service, he wanted Amery to "work up the case for conscription," especially through private memoranda for members

of the Cabinet, but also in the House of Commons and in the Press.[8] His official position would be as an officer in the Balkan section of Military Intelligence at the War Office, but his duties there would not interfere with his work for conscription. Amery saw nothing wrong with this arrangement; he saw this as an admirable way to deal with the biggest obstacle to winning the war: Asquith's government. For Amery, the liberal enemy at home was almost as dangerous to Britain as the Prussian enemy abroad. He and his friends believed that liberalism was dead, but its carcass was still befouling Britain's life. In response to a letter from Amery, Fred Oliver agreed with him that "Squiff and Squiffery must go. 'Liberalism' is . . . a dead foetus in the womb of Government, and more dangerous being dead and putrescent."[9]

Recruiting was in a disastrous way. The first waves of enlistment put unforeseen demands on the system and called for solutions that the Cabinet could not contemplate if it were to continue as a traditionally Liberal government. The lack of coordination between ministries, the lack of analysis of policies, the complete lack of administrative skill had never been so apparent. Lord Milner, long the focus of discontent with Asquith and his conduct of the war, had been held in check by Bonar Law and other Unionists who stressed their duty to be a loyal opposition during the war. But by the middle of 1915 he began to call attention to war-related problems. Indeed the concern over these problems had become so quietly pervasive that Asquith was forced to create a coalition government in May, and many Unionists hoped that a place would be found for such a proven administrator as Lord Milner. The new coalition, however, was so judiciously arranged that Asquith believed he would still not have to give in to the idea of conscription. Although he included more hawkish Liberals like Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions, and a few Unionists, such as Bonar Law and Walter Long, he kept the most important positions for his loyal followers. No position was found for a man of such decided opinions as Milner.

And yet the British were not winning. At the Ministry of Munitions, Lloyd George worked miracles but the production of shells barely kept pace with their expenditure. Each new attack, or "push," gained the British only a few meters or possibly a mile at the cost of thousands of British men "wasted." Nevertheless, Asquith's government did not presume to consider the real abilities of the general officers they had put in command. The government allowed them to pursue their strategies virtually unquestioned. And in fact, Kitchener had become such an icon to the British public that they did not like to see him or his generals criticized in any way. But Amery and Milner, who now saw that Kitchener had been a very bad choice for the War Office, could and did criticize the government for their lack of leadership, and for refusing to pass conscription when it was needed. By

July 1915 when Amery began to assemble facts and figures, he discovered that divisions were undermanned even though recruiting standards had all but disappeared. Thus the army was actually shrinking, and men were being sent to the front with virtually no training at all.

Amery found on returning from the Balkans that other than Milner the Unionists continued to uphold the facade of national unity by keeping criticism of the government to a minimum, and allowing no criticism at all of military issues. But as the months passed he found a small group of Unionists and Liberals whom defeat and frustration had made willing to fight the government on conscription. The Liberals included Josiah Wedgewood, Freddie Guest, Chiozza Money and Ellis Griffith. Lord Curzon and Lloyd George, members of the government themselves, were also in favor of national service. Amery wasted no time in laying down the gauntlet. On 25 July, in moving the summer recess, Asquith was inspired to give a very laudatory summary of the year's major events. During the debate that followed Amery attacked the smug self-congratulation of the government as a bitter deception.

> It is a time of immeasurable urgency. . . . We can not go on drifting as we have been doing. This afternoon I heard the Prime Minister . . . bidding us to persevere as we have been doing . . . towards inevitable victory. If we do persevere in conducting the War in the manner in which we have conducted it hitherto, if we persevere in postponing decisions . . . in waiting and seeing . . . in half-measures . . . with this dogged irresolution on every question of importance, the only end of our perseverance must be inevitable defeat.[10]

Amery continued the fight with a long article in the *Times* in August. He spoke again in debate in September. Having been accused of dividing the nation by arguing for conscription Amery was stung into replying, "When we are told to preserve a united front, the question that occurs to me is this: a united front for what purpose? United in action? United in defeating our enemies? That is the only form of unity that is worth having."[11]

And yet Amery did worry about his negative image in the House. He had attempted to mend fences with Lloyd George back in June 1915, after Lloyd George had been named Minister of Munitions. He wrote to his wife to tell her he had acted on her suggestion and written a note of congratulation to Lloyd George:

> I hesitated a little because I don't want any of them to think that I am making up to them with an eye to an odd plum from the coalition

> cake later on. But I know they have a sort of notion that I am a rather truculent, rancorous person, and I don't want that to get stereo-typed in their minds.[12]

Besides parliamentary speeches he had written several memoranda on national service or conscription for the Cabinet members' use. Soon after his September speech, he recorded in his diary that Lloyd George had stopped him in Downing Street, shaken his hand, and warmly thanked him for his "able and helpful document" on conscription.[13]

CONSCRIPTION was, of course, not the only dilemma that the government faced. Sir Edward Carson, who had been appointed Attorney General in the May 1915 Coalition, resigned from the government in the autumn of 1915 because of the government's refusal to aid Serbia against massive German attacks after promising to do so. The betrayal of Serbia was simply a last straw; Carson had become disgusted with the government's lack of decision on any problem. Now Carson was free to join Amery and Milner in their parliamentary attacks. By December 1915 Britain had lost over three hundred ninety thousand men in the war, with over sixty-one thousand lost just at the Battle of Loos in October, while the House debated national service. At the end of December Asquith promised to bring in some form of compulsory service legislation in the new year.

In January 1916 Leo Amery invited several of his friends to dinner to discuss current political problems. Besides Milner and Carson, he invited Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the *Times,* Waldorf Astor, owner of *The Observer,* and Fred Oliver. This group and other invited guests continued to dine together for the duration of the war, and was openly called the "Monday night cabal" by its members. Amery, at the first few meetings, wanted to bring Lloyd George together with Milner and Carson. He believed that these three men held the key to Britain's survival and victory. A. M. Gollin has pointed out that this was not just another "ginger group," whose purpose was to spur Asquith's government to action; this group's purpose was to bring that government down, and replace it with one to their own liking.[14] In fact, in May 1916 Sir Maurice Hankey, Asquith's War Committee Secretary, warned the Prime Minister that the cabal was planning an intrigue, led by Amery, "the very soul of the Unionist War Committee," and whose accomplices numbered Milner, Robinson, and Lloyd George.[15]

In February Amery spoke in debate and again in April in secret session. Both times he railed against the government for its paralysis, especially in the realm of national service. It took those debates, more men lost, and several attempts

at partial compulsion before Asquith finally introduced a complete Bill for Universal Military Service in early May, which became law by the end of May.

Once the bill was brought in, Amery's real job was completed, and the army sent him east, attached to the staff of the Salonika Army in late May 1915. His duties included evaluating information obtained by spies and writing reports, but occasionally he was sent to the front where the army was vigorously fighting the Bulgarians. In December 1915 Amery received Christmas home leave. On his first attempt to travel home his ship was sunk by a German submarine, and Amery and the other survivors were rescued by a French hospital ship and returned to an Allied port. A few days later he embarked on another vessel and had an uneventful voyage home.

Amery arrived in England on 19 December. After checking in at home, he wandered down to the House to get some news, and found himself listening to Lloyd George's first speech as Prime Minister. He learned, to his great satisfaction, that Lloyd George had created a small group of ministers, the War Cabinet, from the traditional Cabinet, to direct all of the war effort. Even better was the news that Lord Milner was to be Minister without Portfolio, a sort of trouble-shooter who would in time become the Prime Minister's most valued assistant. When Amery saw Milner he discovered that he had been appointed one of two political secretaries to the new War Cabinet, under the direction of Sir Maurice Hankey who was superintending the new Cabinet Secretariat. Still nominally attached to the War Office, Amery's official title was Personal Assistant Military Secretary to the Secretary of State for War temporarily lent to the War Cabinet. Since Amery had been rather forlornly hoping that he would get an undersecretary position in the new government, he did not find this sudden elevation extraordinary, but Hankey did.

Hankey had resisted having Amery, whom he regarded as "anti-Russian" and "a scheming little devil" thrust upon him by Milner.[16] And Hankey was not the only one. Thomas Jones, the chief of the civil side of the Secretariat had written to his wife about the new secretaries; he said that, "Amery I rather avoid as a politician and pressman."[17] This concern over Amery's well-known press contacts was felt by Hankey and the Colonial Secretary Walter Long as well. On 1 January Hankey noted in his diary that Amery had "let me in for a row with the Colonial Office by his tactlessness."[18] The row developed because Amery had his own agenda for his new position. On 10 January Hankey recorded in his diary that Amery had asked to have two assistants assigned to him to enable him to establish regular correspondence with the Dominion Prime Ministers, and that the Secretary of the Dominions' Inter-Parliamentary Association "should send variants of his letters to various parliamentary 'bottle-washers' in the Dominions.

This fairly took my breath away, but I reserved judgement."[19] On the 12th, Hankey remonstrated with Amery:

> [I] told him I could not possibly have his scheme of a subterranean line of communication with the Dominions . . . and he frankly admitted that his ultimate idea was to displace the Colonial Office, and substitute my office as the means of communication between the Dominions and the Prime Minister. I don't mind the principle so much . . . but anyhow I won't have his methods and told him so flat. He is a scheming little devil and his connection with the *Times* would make it possible for him to oust me, so the position is delicate.[20]

Amery was certainly busy enough without any extra machinations. His duties included being at the beck and call of any of the War Cabinet members but also being free to submit ideas on all subjects. Amery took notes at daily meetings and wrote up minutes and conclusions, acted as liaison between the Cabinet and the other ministries, saw that conclusions were transmitted into actions and carried out, and, with his colleague Mark Sykes, wrote weekly memoranda summarizing the world situation.[21]

One of the first ideas Amery submitted dealt with the Imperial Conference that Lloyd George had promised to convene in his first speech as Prime Minister. It echoed Amery's earlier idea of using the Committee for Imperial Defense for intra-imperial union. Amery suggested to Lord Milner that the dominion premiers should not just be invited to a conference but also to sit on the War Cabinet itself, symbolizing their equal right to be directing the conduct of the war. Lord Milner heartily approved of the idea and took it up with the War Cabinet, which named Amery, Milner, Austen Chamberlain, and Walter Long as a sub-committee who subsequently drafted an invitation to wire to the dominions. When Amery discovered that the Colonial Office had changed the telegram to render the War Cabinet invitation almost meaningless, he went to Long and argued with him, eventually bringing Milner and Lloyd George into the affair before the Colonial Office would surrender any of their presumed authority.[22] This incident explains Long's distrust of Amery, but it also reinforced Amery's desire to bypass the Colonial Office when dealing with the dominions.

It fell to Hankey to prepare the agenda for the Imperial War Cabinet and Conference and he was grateful to Amery for doing most of the work: by the time the dominion premiers gathered in London in March 1917, Hankey had revised his first impression and decided that Amery was a helpful and loyal colleague.[23] To Amery the Imperial War Cabinet was not only an immense stride forward in

imperial organization but also a harbinger of the future—a glowing future of imperial unity. And indeed, after the fourteen sittings of the Imperial War Cabinet between March and May 1917 the ministers, both British and dominion, considered it a very successful experiment and set in motion plans for it to become a regular part of the imperial constitution. Most of the advice given and the decisions reached dealt directly with the empire's war effort, but economics were also discussed. The Imperial Cabinet passed an unanimous resolution approving the principle that each part of the empire should give as favorable a treatment as possible to the manufactured and agricultural products of the other parts of the empire; Amery recognized this as a veiled imperial preference.

The Imperial Conference was not so successful in its efforts to quantify intra-imperial relations, and eventually agreed to leave decisions on an imperial constitution to later conferences. Once again imperial union was foundering because the dominion premiers did not want closer official relationships with Great Britain. Each attempt to codify imperial relations met with distrust from the leaders of the larger dominions, men who were proud of the imperial tie but no longer thought of themselves as *British* colonists. Although Amery still had trouble understanding such a parochial viewpoint, Milner finally saw the light. He had always thought that closer imperial ties were being held up by "Little Englander" Liberals, but now he saw that, taking dominion nationalism into account, imperial union was a concept based on a fallacy. After this point Milner no longer worked for official federation, but strove for a system of intimate consultation that would hopefully serve the same ultimate purpose.[24] With the Imperial War Cabinet achieving such success, however, Amery continued to hope for an evolution toward some official imperial union. It was his goal to continue the Imperial War Cabinet into the postwar period, but he also recognized the value and strength of personal ties around the empire. To this end he continued to correspond with imperial enthusiasts in the dominions, supported the calling of more frequent imperial conferences, and encouraged the development of inter-dominion communications. It was several more years before Amery would acknowledge the inexorable power of dominion nationalism.

Amery's friend and fellow secretary Mark Sykes had introduced him to a serious consideration of Zionism, which had became a more controversial issue for Britain upon Turkey's entry into the war. Although Amery continued to be pro-Arab (as opposed to pro-Turk), his increasing respect for the Jewish settlers in Palestine and his consideration of what a strongly pro-western and Jewish nation could do for Britain strategically in the Middle East led him to be pro-Zionist as well. Within the Cabinet Milner, Balfour, Smuts, and Lloyd George were very sympathetic to Zionism. As negotiations proceeded between the

government and Zionists led by Dr. Chaim Weizmann on the question of a Jewish homeland, Amery, as well as Mark Sykes, took notes at meetings and wrote memoranda on the subject. In fact, when the Cabinet became divided on the extent of the authority implied in the note which became known as the Balfour Declaration, Amery was asked to redraft the note to meet the objections of both the pro-Jewish and pro-Arab camps. His version, based on two other drafts by Cabinet members, satisfied everyone enough to gain approval, and was finally announced formally on 31 October 1917.[25]

Ireland also continued to be an area of contention for the government. In the wake of the 1916 rebellion, its aftermath of trials and executions, and the continuing question of Irish conscription, Amery revived his idea of a national convention of Irishmen to work out a solution to their conflicts. He also enlisted the support of Milner, Smuts, Fred Oliver, and Philip Kerr, one of Lloyd George's personal advisors, in bringing his idea to Lloyd George's attention. The Prime Minister was enthusiastic about the idea of a national convention and put it to the leaders of the two sides as a more palatable plan than partition. In May 1917 Redmond and Carson accepted the idea and the convention met in July, but after eight months it broke down, unable to overcome the extreme emotions which the Easter Rebellion had engendered on both sides.

MOST OF Amery's work, however, dealt directly with the war itself. As he took minutes, or "vetted," for the daily War Cabinet meetings, and later for the "X" committee (a small strategy committee of Lloyd George, Milner and General Henry Wilson), he became involved in the titanic struggle between Lloyd George and "the military clique" during the rest of 1917 and the first half of 1918. This struggle was also part of the larger problem of freedom versus control that sprang from the battle between individualism (both Liberal and Tory) and statism. As stated earlier, Asquith had chosen generals who were supposedly the best men in their field for the top positions, and subsequently he let them alone to run the war as they saw fit. Tory opinion warmly seconded his trust in the generals. Although the British were traditionally wary of military authority, Asquith did not presume to tell the "experts" how to do their work.

Most of these experts, however, belonged to the same group that had almost lost Britain the Boer War. At Sandhurst they seemed to have studied nineteenth century colonial war experiences and Crimean war tactics rather than the lessons learned during the American Civil War. General Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief in France, was convinced that one good cavalry charge would win the war for the Allies, so he continued to throw thousands of men at the German trenches in hopes of opening a large enough gap for the cavalry to pour through.

As Amery often pointed out in debate, throughout the war the British stabled and fed two hundred thousand horses in France, waiting for their great charge. At any rate, from early in the war Lloyd George was exasperated by the diverse strategies of the various Allied forces, the intransigence of the "Westerners," the veil of secrecy which the War Office inevitably threw over the generals' deliberations, and their implacable opposition to a civilian running the war. Lloyd George stood for control, civilian control of the military and unified control over all parts of the war effort: domestic, foreign and military.

Naturally, Amery agreed with Lloyd George. Looking back to his attitude towards the "mandarins" he saw in public service in the first years of his career, Amery was always on the side of planning and organization, new ideas, and unconventional methods to obtain his ends. In his work for the War Cabinet his earlier world vision predominated and to some extent he was able to further his imperial agenda. Amery had never felt that Britain's future lay in Europe. It was natural for such a pragmatic person to oppose further waste of men and resources on the Western Front, and, like Churchill, to see Eastern Europe or the Middle East as reasonable alternatives. As he stressed in his numerous memoranda on the subject to Lloyd George, the more of the Ottoman Empire, or Central Asia that Britain occupied at the end of the war, the better she could press her claims to extend the empire in particular strategic areas at the peace conference.[26]

Amery wanted a victory in Europe, and he wanted to see Germany and "Prussianism" beaten, but he saw no reason, and in fact, much reason not, to beat Germany into the ground, or to leave a power vacuum in Central Europe. When asked what constituted victory at a dinner with Lloyd George and others, C.P. Scott records that Amery "gave the obvious and simple reply that he should consider we were victorious when we were able to secure the terms of settlement which we considered necessary, in which I entirely concurred."[27] Nevertheless, Scott's ideas of what was necessary were hardly likely to coincide with Amery's. Amery held no romantic ideals of European self-determination and heartily despised Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the idea of a league of nations.[28]

In June 1917 the War Cabinet was still hedging on allowing Haig to launch a major attack in Flanders at the end of the summer. Haig had been pressing for this attack since February, and Lloyd George did not have the backing or confidence at this time to overrule the generals. The result was the disaster known as Passchendaele, which claimed in four months two hundred fifty thousand casualties on each side. Holding the line against the British, however, did not stop the Germans from launching a devastating attack against the Italians at Caporetto in late October. About this time Amery also contrived to aid Lloyd George by putting him in touch with General Henry Wilson, an officer who had

been stationed in London in July 1917, and could offer him strategic alternatives to the advice that the C-in-C and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) were tendering. Wilson had begun the war as a convinced "Westerner," but Amery's arguments and the evidence of the futility of Western campaigns amassed by the spring of 1917 had finally convinced Wilson, and Milner, that the traditional military men were wrong.

At the summer's end Wilson began to visualize a plan which would both give Lloyd George good military advice and legally allow him to sidestep the "Westerners," and would secure far more unified strategic and political action among the Allies. By October he had written a plan for a permanent Inter-Allied Supreme War Council, consisting of the prime minister, a leading minister, and a military representative from each ally who would meet once a month to decide on joint strategy, planned by a staff whose purview would be all the theaters of the war simultaneously. A conference of Allied leaders had been called for 7 November at Rapallo to discuss the Italian collapse at Caporetto. The situation in Flanders and Italy was so dire that Lloyd George vilified the military in his speech and presented the new plan as the only alternative. As Amery states in his memoirs, Lloyd George's "forcible eloquence persuaded the Allies to the immediate setting up of the Supreme War Council," as per Wilson's memorandum.[29]

The new Supreme War Council was set up at Versailles. Amery was appointed political secretary of the British section, liaison officer with the War Office, and personal representative of Lloyd George and Milner, and Henry Wilson was appointed Permanent Military Representative. On 17 November Amery was sent to Versailles with General Sackville-West and Henry Wilson to get the council set up. On arrival they learned that the Painleve government had fallen in France and the new premier, Georges Clemenceau, had little knowledge or enthusiasm for the new unified council. Amery spent several days working on logistics and drew up a plan of organization for the council's affairs. Hankey proved helpful by approving the plan and facilitating its passage. He, as well as the War Cabinet and Amery, was determined to make the council a success, but Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War, was hand in glove with the military clique and proved obstructive. He delayed making Wilson a full general for as long as possible and flatly refused to make Amery a Lieutenant Colonel.

At the first council meeting on 1 December 1917 the resolutions that the British had brought up were approved and discussion focused on major war problems. After this auspicious beginning Amery attended most military representative meetings to record minutes and keep his chiefs posted on events. During the first month one of the issues discussed at Versailles was the need for

the British to take over part of the over-extended French front line. When the War Office balked at Lloyd George's ideas by trying to show that they could not spare men for the French line, Lloyd George began to suspect that the War Office was distorting the figures. In early January 1918 Lloyd George privately asked Amery to look into the manpower issue, and determine some accurate numbers. On 4 January word came to Versailles from the Adjutant General, General Macready, that the army would shrink to forty-four divisions in the spring and thirty by the next December. Wilson became very upset and sent Amery back to London to check the numbers himself.[30]

By 8 January Amery had spent two days going over the figures and interviewing pertinent officers at the War Office, and had found a "serious flaw" in the numbers that had been given to Hankey for use in War Cabinet deliberations.[31] There followed two more days (and one whole night) of checking figures with National Service department men and private accountants to adjust the figures to give Lloyd George an accurate accounting of manpower. Hankey took great offense at Amery working on the issue, not knowing about Lloyd George's request, and recorded that Amery was "butting in" as usual.[32] When he angrily confronted Amery after the War Cabinet meeting on 10 January, Amery was quite surprised, and recorded the incident in his diary, adding that he was glad Hankey had spoken to him and not "sulk[ed] in silence."[33]

The incident is important for two reasons. First, it is further evidence of the perception of Amery as schemer that was fairly widespread at the time. Colonel Repington, the *Morning Post* military correspondent, wrote a letter to the Morning Post in which he accused Lloyd George of starving the Western Front of men, using figures Repington could only have obtained from within the War Office. Once Derby was acquitted of leaking the information Lloyd George believed the figures had come from General Sir Frederick Maurice, Director of Military Operations and a follower of the military clique. But Hankey's biographer states that Hankey's anger at Amery having interviewed several people probably stemmed from his suspicions that Amery had talked to Repington and leaked the information. He points out that Hankey recorded that Derby was "indignant about the Amery episode."[34] This accords with the earlier fears of Hankey, Tom Jones, and Walter Long that as a former journalist Amery could not be trusted, but the facts completely exonerate Amery from this particular charge. Amery had become a sworn foe of Repington's over the whole issue of the Western strategy and the primacy of the War Cabinet over the War Office. Amery would never have given Repington information that would harm Lloyd George and, more importantly, Milner's reputation or power. Yet the note Amery wrote to his wife in December 1916 proves that his public persona at this

time was not a positive one. Secondly, the incident illustrates the great rift between the War Office and military clique versus the War Cabinet and Versailles. The War Office and "Westerner" generals accused Lloyd George of "starving" the Western Front of men, and were not above falsifying the numbers and using the press to further their agenda. On the other hand, it was true that Lloyd George had not sent as many men to the Western Front as the general headquarters had requested because he hoped in that way to limit the size of offensives and thereby limit the waste of men.[35]

Wilson, the outsider and military representative, asked Amery to draft a plan of campaign for the Allies for 1918 which could be presented at the Supreme War Council's next meeting and voted on as a resolution. By the end of the month Amery had written a plan that called for the Allies to maintain a strong defensive on the French and Italian fronts until the anticipated German springtime attack had worn itself out. It also suggested that by combining the troops the Allies already had in the separate eastern theaters they could make a concerted push towards Damascus on the Middle Eastern front; this plan became known as Note 12. Meanwhile, Amery had several times suggested to Lloyd George that he take advantage of General Smuts' presence in London by using him decisively in the war effort. Now he suggested that Smuts take command on the Palestine front. Lloyd George was amenable to the general idea, and in January he appointed Smuts as Inspector-General over military and civilian authorities in the Middle East. As a reward for his interest, Amery was invited to go with Smuts on an inspection trip to Palestine that lasted most of February.

While Amery was out of the country the feud between the War Office and the War Cabinet reached its climax. At the 28 January meeting of the Supreme War Council at Versailles, the council had voted to accept Note 12 as its battle plan after Amery reworded the note to assure them that no forces would be drained from the Western Front to stage General Allenby's Middle Eastern campaign. Lloyd George saw this resolution as a major breakthrough in his battle for control over the military and praised Amery, saying that he "deserved a statue as the saviour of Note 12," adding that Robertson's violent protests against it had "put the lid on" as far as Lloyd George's opinion of him was concerned.[36]

Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, the CIGS, indeed, felt that things had come to a head, and after he returned from Versailles demanded that Wilson be formally made subordinate to the Army Council, and only act as a deputy to Robertson to report to Versailles the requests of the Army Council. When Lloyd George opposed this Robertson suggested that he should be the Permanent Military Representative at Versailles and Wilson could be the CIGS. Robertson did not understand that Lloyd George had decided to dismiss him and that,

whichever position he took, the other would become the one with power. When Robertson finally realized this, he resigned on 15 February, and Derby and Haig, faced with dismissal, promised to loyally uphold Lloyd George's control and plans. Now Lloyd George made Wilson the CIGS and Henry Rawlinson the Permanent Military Representative, and reinvested the CIGS with power over Versailles.

Amery was back in time for the March meeting of the Supreme War Council, which saw the genesis of a tragic situation. Although Lloyd George, seconded by Milner, Wilson, and Amery, was interested in the idea of an Allied Supreme Commander, or generalissimo, none of the other leaders accepted the idea, nor did the British parliament. After that rebuff and in preparation for the anticipated German attack, Lloyd George, Milner and Amery pressed for at least the creation of a reserve (made up of reserve divisions from each ally) which would be commanded by Versailles, in the person of the Military Representatives, to be sent to the positions most in need as the representatives saw fit. They were defeated by the French, albeit with the help of Haig, and had to be content with assurances from Haig and Petain that they had already pledged mutual cooperation in regard to reserves.

On 21 March 1918 the German attack began and concentrated on the extreme right of the British line. After the first two days the British desperately needed reinforcements, but when Haig notified Petain that he was now calling on him for reserves, Petain refused to send them, saying that he needed them to guard Paris, which appeared to be in danger. On the morning of the 24th Milner called Amery at Versailles and asked whether he should come over; Amery told him to come immediately to confer with Clemenceau. Milner came over that afternoon and the next morning at his meeting with Clemenceau the two of them decided that only a supreme commander, a generalissimo, could salvage the situation; Milner insisted on Foch for the job, and overrode all of Clemenceau's objections and pleas for Petain. When he came out of the meeting an hour later he told Amery of the decision and said, "I hope I was right; you and Henry [Wilson] have always told me that Foch is the only big soldier."[37] The move had been a bold one since Parliament had always opposed the idea, but here Milner showed the kind of strength and decision that had always made him an excellent administrator in an emergency. On 26 March all of the council currently in France met at Doullens with Haig and Petain, with Amery acting as secretary. As might be expected, the two commanding generals in the field did not approve of the resolution and it was passed over their heads, although Haig promised to abide by it. Later that week Foch was able to bring the reserves into action, and the line, though badly pushed and bent, held.

The British were still in a critical situation, however, and continued to take the brunt of the attack. This caused an upheaval in Parliament, with Asquith's remaining Liberals and the military clique using the opportunity to sow distrust of Lloyd George and his latest efforts to control the direction of the war. Repington, Maurice and the *Morning Post* carried on an anti-Lloyd George campaign and many ultra-Tories went along with their strictures. Amery had been suggesting and bedeviling Lloyd George to replace Derby with Milner at the War Office for over a year, and had persuaded Milner to consider the idea. Lloyd George had hitherto refused to consider it because he wanted to retain Milner on the War Cabinet itself, but in the wake of the German attack and the attack on his government, Lloyd George gave in. On 19 April, the day after receiving an unusually frank letter from Amery on necessary changes at the War Office, the Prime Minister announced that Derby was going to Paris as Ambassador, Milner to the War Office, and Austen Chamberlain would take Milner's place on the War Cabinet.[38]

This shift of personnel heralded a change for Amery. Now that the War Office, Versailles, and the War Cabinet were all under the direction of Lloyd George or his supporters, Versailles lost some of its strategic importance, and Amery spent less time there. When Milner moved into the War Office, Amery's position shifted so that, although he was still the secretary to the "X" committee and sometimes vetted for Hankey with the War Cabinet, he spent most of his time working directly for Milner and living in London. He went down to the House more often and again attended meetings of the Unionist War Committee.

A meeting of the committee was held 8 May to decide what attitude to take up in the debate and vote in the House on Asquith's charge that Lloyd George and Bonar Law had systematically misled the House concerning the number of British troops in France and in the Middle East. Carson and Lord Salisbury, both Tories who were hostile to the government and especially to Lloyd George, led off at the meeting, but they could not agree on a concerted action. The more members spoke, the less constructive the criticism became. Since the Unionist party was traditionally supportive of the army, many members were angry and confused at Lloyd George and Bonar Law's activities. Amery had not thought himself a very influential member at this point in his career, but he recorded in his diary that night:

> I got up and tried to bring them very firmly to the principal point, that this was a manoeuvre to get in Asquith and that we should only weaken the Government at his moment in Asquith's interest. Our immediate task therefore was to reject the Asquith motion by as large a majority as we could. Rather to my surprise I found I had got

practically the whole meeting with me.[39]

The committee spoke in favor of the government in the House; Asquith and his remnant of the old Liberal party were trounced, and though scarred, Lloyd George and his plan carried the day. Perhaps Amery deserved a second statue at this time, but Lloyd George never knew it. In August General Foch counterattacked and the slow retreat of the Triple Alliance armies began. In the Cabinet the focus of attention veered from the Western Front to postwar issues.

The Imperial War Cabinet began a new session again in June and continued to meet in London from time to time until they became the official British Empire Delegation at the Peace Conference. The dominion premiers had been surprised and disgusted with the incompetence of British military headquarters. Australia's premier, William Hughes, and Canada's Sir Robert Borden called for a postwar reorganization of the army to which Lloyd George responded by appointing an intra-imperial committee to plan such an overhaul. Together with the War Cabinet members, the dominion premiers spent many of their sessions discussing war aims and planning for post-war territorial redistribution. In the beginning of July, the dominion premiers went to Versailles with Lloyd George to attend the monthly meeting. One of Clemenceau's aides told Amery that the presence of the premiers impressed the French, who "for the first time realized there is such a thing as the British Empire."[40]

The dominion premiers were not reticent in discussing their aims and hopes for the peace. William Hughes informed the French that he intended for the British Empire to keep the German colonies, but that Australia did not mind a continued French presence in the Pacific, and would cooperate on the New Hebrides. Amery heartily approved of this kind of pragmatic negotiation for the sake of national interests. What he did not approve of was the theorizing of Woodrow Wilson based on abstract ideals. To Lord Reading he wrote, "To my mind the whole League of Nations idea hinges on the question of who is to be represented and what votes they have. If every state is represented as an equal unit because it is a state and irrespective of its size or civilization the thing becomes a farce."[41] And again in his memoir he recalled:

> My conception of a balanced world of inherently stable and largely self-regarding units stood no chance against President Wilson's facile slogan of self-determination, pressed home to its limits by the victorious smaller nations, or against the specious sham of a world authority, which regarded nations as mere legal individuals irrespective of their character or their power, and claimed to treat war, as a magistrate's court decides an ordinary breach of the peace,

by punishing the 'aggressor.' [42]

As the allies pushed forward on all fronts, Amery began to work on the armistice terms. On 1 October the British and their Arab allies took Damascus; by the end of October Turkey capitulated, and Austria soon followed suit. Milner and Amery went to Versailles on 24 October to draft the Turkish armistice terms which Lloyd George subsequently approved. Next Amery set to work on terms for Austria-Hungary, but his version was greatly amended before it was agreed upon by General Henry Wilson and the French General Franchet d'Esperey.

The advent of Germany's capitulation raised the issue of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. Although Britain decided to approve the Fourteen Points, it was with a few reservations which President Wilson accepted. They refused to accept the point on Freedom of the Seas, and while both France and Britain agreed to forego an indemnity, both insisted that Germany make restitution for damage she had caused. When Germany announced that she accepted the Fourteen Points, Australia's Billy Hughes erupted in anger. The dominion premiers were still sitting in conference in London, but had not been consulted about the British Empire's acceptance of the German armistice terms. Amery, well-known as the friend of the empire, was ordered to smooth things over with Hughes and the other premiers, and reassured them that they would be involved in the peace process.

Though not always known for his conciliatory manner or his diplomacy, Amery was also used by Hankey to "smooth matters out between Milner and the P.M." Although Lloyd George had looked upon Milner as a savior of the War Office in the middle of the Western Front crisis, he now, in characteristic fashion, was blaming Milner for every hitch in demobilization operations. Hankey recorded in his diary that since Amery was "very intimate" with Milner, he could use his influence to keep Milner at his post where he served as a useful antidote to Lloyd George's impetuousness.[43] Amery was successful in reconciling both Hughes and Milner to Lloyd George's actions, and Milner even agreed to ignore Lloyd George's slights and serve in the new Cabinet.

What then was the compass of Amery's political powers? He had to some degree influenced the choice of Kitchener for Minister of War and the scope of recruiting schemes. He had written a case for conscription and brought the power brokers of both major parties together to bring down Asquith's government. He had encouraged Lloyd George in his struggle against the military clique, made the case for alternative theaters of war, and suggested Milner and Smuts for positions to which they were later appointed. More importantly, Amery seems to have changed the mood of the Unionist War Committee in its crucial meeting on 8 May 1918, and carried the day for Lloyd George. He was the author of the

suggestion that dominion premiers sit on the War Cabinet and deliberate as equals on the conduct of the war. In the struggle within Britain Amery had been on the winning side. Amery had not yet held a position in the government, but during the war his influence was telling in several situations. He ended the war a more powerful and popular politician than he had entered it.

On 11 November Amery was already busy both with peace conference details and with writing campaign literature for the coalition candidates. He did, however, go to 10 Downing Street for the announcement and cheered and sang with the crowd. He then turned to his own campaign and on 28 December was returned by a majority of over twelve thousand. Lloyd George and his supporters won by a landslide. The Labor Party won 59 seats, becoming the official Opposition, and the Asquithian remnant of the Liberal party won less than 24. Although Amery's future was far from assured at the end of 1918, the first of his career goals had been achieved: to his mind the election had spelled the end of nineteenth century liberalism and individualism, and for that he rejoiced greatly. The war had forever changed Britain, and liberalism was now dead, but what were Amery and his fellows going to put in its place?

ENDNOTES

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