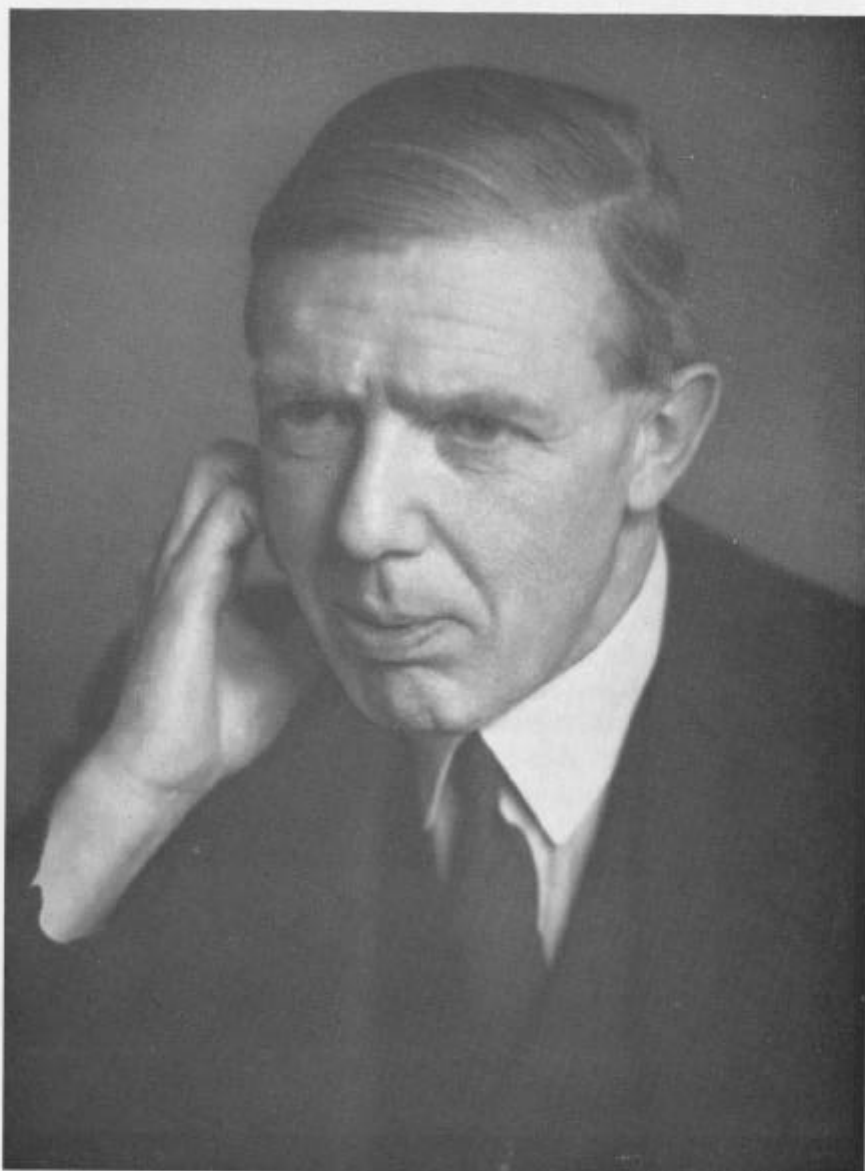


PLATE XXXVIII



*Photograph by Walter Stowman*

SIR LLEWELLYN WOODWARD

## SIR LLEWELLYN WOODWARD

1890-1971

ERNEST LLEWELLYN WOODWARD was a Fellow of the Academy for just on a quarter of a century before his death at Oxford on 11 March 1971 at the age of eighty. In the Academy's Raleigh Lecture for 1950 he had emphasized 'the importance of retaining a sense of the heroic—perhaps I should say a sense of fate—in our historical studies'.<sup>1</sup> Woodward, unlike G. M. Trevelyan, was not given to hero-worship. His considered judgements were usually cool. But his elevated sense of destiny in human affairs, and of their transience, lay at the heart of his eminence as a historian. He observed in the same lecture: 'All the past is past; a thousand years are as yesterday, and yesterday as a thousand years. The limits are in the nature of the historian.'<sup>2</sup>

Woodward's limits were wide. This was already suggested by his first book, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire*, completed on sick-leave from the Western Front at the age of twenty-five. He had chosen a remote period and informed it with an original intuition into the nature of its religion and society. Woodward was one of the first to state explicitly that late Roman society should be studied in totality, in the outlook of its members and not only in its institutions and laws. An early evidence of Woodward's notable independence of judgement was his refusal to accept any one of the then orthodox views on the decline of the Roman Empire. His central problem was: 'How far was the struggle between Orthodoxy and Heresy, in the later Roman Empire, really a political struggle between the authorities of the Empire and the different nations of which the Empire was composed?'<sup>3</sup> Before 1916 nobody had asked such questions; and only recently has their full importance begun to be appreciated. A reader nowadays might indeed detect in Woodward some special pleading on behalf of the influence of Christianity, some limitation of interest in the social basis of nationalist feeling in the Roman provinces, an area particularly explored by more recent historians. Woodward's treatment as a whole was short and there has since been an extension of

<sup>1</sup> 'Some Considerations on the Present State of Historical Studies', in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xxxvi (1950), p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire* (1916), p. vi.

erudition. But new archaeological evidence for the vigour of provincial forms of Christianity has revived the relevance of Woodward's study, and rather few first works by historians still command such scholarly interest after nearly two generations.

Woodward's first book reflected not only his intellectual interests as an undergraduate but also in some measure his personal development in youth. Born in Ealing on 14 May 1890, the son of G. E. Woodward, C.B.E., a civil servant in the Admiralty, the historian had his happy but modestly suburban childhood grounded upon evangelical anglicanism. 'I did not distinguish between the Church Missionary Society and the Navy League as bodies worthy of Divine patronage',<sup>1</sup> he wrote in his subtly reflective autobiography, *Short Journey*. It describes how this slight, nervous boy was classically drilled at the old Merchant Taylors' School and took to books in the Hampstead Public Library. A scholarship to Corpus Christi College at Oxford led on to a second class in Greats, a first in Modern History and a senior scholarship at St. John's College. This enabled Woodward to indulge his lasting taste for travel before, as he then expected, taking holy orders. He had developed towards anglo-catholicism via Pusey House and in 1913 went to Paris to lodge in a small community of priests in order to pursue his studies.

This outset in Paris was a formative experience. Woodward had some distant Huguenot ancestry and from early on he differed from prevalent opinion in England in admiring French scholarship more than German, which struck him as somewhat provincial and contorted. In after years the Abbé, as he came to be nicknamed by some, wrote history with the graceful ease of a man of letters in a gallic tradition, if at times with a more romantic inspiration. He was also what in an earlier age might have been called *un homme multiplié*. His interests were manifold, his character complex.

Woodward's development, like that of millions of others, was sliced across by the First World War. He became something of a horseman, served as a subaltern in Flanders and subsequently on the staff at Salonika. The routine rigidity and ultimate ferocity of military existence reduced him to 'a state of angry depression'<sup>2</sup> but he did not doubt where duty lay: 'all that one can say is that there are worse evils than war.'<sup>3</sup> In 1918 malaria

<sup>1</sup> *Short Journey* (1942), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918* (1967), p. xx.

<sup>3</sup> *Short Journey*, p. 83.

returned Woodward to the Foreign Office to write a short handbook, for the peace conference, on the Congress of Berlin. His first production of nineteenth-century history was aptly set in the diplomacy of the twentieth. And it had been through a diplomatist, the second Lord Acton, posted at Darmstadt before the war, that Woodward's shift of interest towards the modern period had then begun from involvement in a project for an edition of the letters of the first baron, the catholic historian.

After the war and a false start as a history-master at Eton, which inspired in him wry but pronounced admiration, Woodward returned to Oxford as a don at Keble College. He was, however, already in retreat from the faith of established religion. This bleak retreat lent a certain melancholy to the mood-pieces which he published a decade later as *The Twelve-Winded Sky*. The title, however, signalled refuge in a response to natural beauty, especially under the play of light, with a sense of involvement that became almost Wordsworthian although it had originated in closer sympathy with his favourite Thomas Hardy. Woodward himself expected his confession to appeal only to some twenty or thirty persons. A poetic vein, however, persisted beneath his prose and at times surfaced later, in some of his many occasional, and uncollected, articles and, impressively, in his lecture at Wooster, Ohio, in 1956 on *The Influence of History*. If only as a reader, Woodward increasingly found in poetry an almost ultimate value. He did not, however, merely relegate religion in 'the struggle against the deadness of the universe or the treachery of life'.<sup>1</sup> Even in sunlit hours he was liable to be nudged by the ultimate riddle of death. In dark ones it was worse. Yet 'an inexplicable . . . sense of the unity and goodness of life'<sup>2</sup> helped him to win through to a sceptical but confident deism. Towards the close of his life Woodward said in an address in the chapel of All Souls College: 'If . . . we look at the world in its beauty, its seeming indifference to us, we must repeat the words of Job about an incomprehensible God. . . . I have . . . not found God, yet I too am sure that he knows the way that I take.'

All Souls had elected Woodward to a Fellowship by examination in 1919. He was particularly proud of this distinction and thankful for the opportunity for historical research. For his practical abilities he soon found scope as Domestic Bursar of the college and, in 1928-9, as Senior Proctor of the University.

<sup>1</sup> *The Twelve-Winded Sky* (1930), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918*, p. xxxiii.

Woodward's revisionism made him prominent then in a controversy over the extension of the Bodleian Library. He argued in vain and in a minority for its modernized resiting in the interests of long-term needs, and against the Library's persistent unwillingness, still maintained, to grant shelf-access to scholars; at least, though, the facilities of the present New Bodleian owe him more than a little. In another university context Woodward's valued work for the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board reflected his continued interest in the teaching of history to schoolboys. He was also a good friend to women's colleges in Oxford. In this as in so much else he drew upon his deeply felicitous marriage in 1917 to Florence Marie O'Loughlin, youngest daughter of the sometime Dean of Dromore.

Woodward's greatest contribution to his university on the functional side was his admirable teaching of undergraduates in his additional capacity as a lecturer at New College. He enjoyed the exacting intellectual play of tutorials and infused into them a creative freshness of often unexpected comment and suggestion which was calculated to stimulate even his duller pupils. As for the bright ones, a number of leading historians, not all of them in this country, acknowledge their debt to him. However, Woodward, unlike some more obtrusive contemporaries, did not found a particular school or fashion of history. Nor would he have wished to, holding as he did that 'resistance to any single interpretation of an age is the first duty of an historian'.

The quotation is from the preface to Woodward's *Three Studies in European Conservatism*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1929 and followed two years later by another and lesser collection of essays on the nineteenth century, *War and Peace in Europe 1815-1870*. The latter book was based upon university lectures, including a telling one on 'Historians of the Nineteenth Century'; the three evocative studies reflected the tutorial background both in their play of ideas, seldom far from Woodward's feeling for history, and in choice of subject. One of his star pupils has retrieved from Woodward's teaching method his provocative paradox that the only two periods of European history worth studying are the dark ages and the nineteenth century. It was noticed,<sup>2</sup> though, that this contained enough truth to steer the attention of one who, as Woodward later explained, 'had always been interested in ends and beginnings'.<sup>3</sup> He collaborated with E. F. Jacob, his benign colleague at All Souls who was to die within a few months

<sup>1</sup> p. v.

<sup>2</sup> Notice in *The Times*, 20 March 1971.

<sup>3</sup> *Some Political Consequences of the Atomic Bomb* (1945), p. 3.

of him, in devising the seminal Special Subject on Saint Augustine in the Oxford History School. That early period of imperial decline continued to frame Woodward's outlook but, as he was to say, 'after 1918 I wanted to know more about the "end and beginning" of which I was myself a witness'.<sup>1</sup>

The three studies in the nineteenth century cannot claim the originality of Woodward's first book. Youth, after all, cannot be reclaimed; the slighter form did not impose much original material; nor perhaps is it now easy after forty years, such years, to recapture the freshness of an English approach to the liberal certitudes of nineteenth-century progress from the reverse side of conservatism overborne. Of the three studies the most novel was, significantly, 'The Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century'. This could draw upon Woodward's earlier concern with Acton and Döllinger, and it included fine perceptions of Lamennais and of the First Vatican Council. Characteristic of the deft analysis which nourished Woodward's narrative skill was his incidental notice that of the bishops at the inauguration of the council 'three-quarters . . . were men between fifty-six and ninety years old'.<sup>2</sup> Woodward did not feel the need here to plunge into a demographic breakdown of social structures in order to drive home an implication sufficiently obvious. He later remarked that 'much of what passes for history today is of the nature of instrument-making'.<sup>3</sup> More denominational academics did not always appreciate the fact that this withdrawn historian habitually wrote with an audience wider than them in mind. Woodward had at first been far from sure that he wished to be a don. He became an excellent one but he reserved a margin of personal distinction which made him a man of unusual depth and an historian of cumulative reputation.

Of the three studies the other two were of Metternich and, not least, Guizot. The statesman of the July Monarchy particularly attracted Woodward as one of the few major historians who for long held major office. Woodward had projected a full-scale study of Guizot but forbore, partly from a prudent estimate of the long toil of working upon original material in foreign archives. Woodward was adept at proportioning means to ends. Even Professor Charles Pouthas, whose standard *Guizot pendant la Restauration* had appeared in 1923, did not get beyond *La Jeunesse de Guizot* in 1936. English coverage was to fall

<sup>1</sup> *The Study of International Relations at a University* (1945), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Three Studies in European Conservatism* (1929), p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> *The Influence of History* (1956), p. 15.

to a pupil of his, Professor Douglas Johnson. Guizot, however, remained with Woodward. He tended to detect ultimate historical wisdom in the cryptic dictum: 'C'est aussi une majorité que celle qui se compte par générations'. Perhaps this was the closest that Woodward himself came to interpreting what he thought he saw or half saw in history as 'the working of a strange moral law which takes or seems to take no account of individuals'.<sup>1</sup>

For the period from 1789 to 1871 Woodward produced a coda to these essays in a little book of 1934 entitled *French Revolutions* and drawn from lectures delivered to Alexandra College in Dublin. The following year brought *Great Britain and the German Navy*. Woodward's background of naval concern helped to make this one of his best books. To a considerable extent he was breaking new ground in selecting for special study the key issue of Anglo-German naval rivalry before the First World War. For this he enjoyed the use of original documents in the archives of the Admiralty and, especially, the Foreign Office. Woodward, however, did not fall into the vulgar error of supposing that published documents need be of diminished significance. Exploiting his linguistic attainments, Woodward was one of the first English historians to make a critical and comparative study of the large documentary collections published by a number of governments for that pre-war period which still stands out as a *locus classicus* in high diplomacy. He was also one of the first to cast justified doubt upon the full impartiality of *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*, a title which annoyed him in its European presumption from German archives alone. While immersed in diplomatic and technical developments Woodward also attained to a broad appreciation that 'the resigned and almost complacent pessimism of statesmen make[s] an ironical background to this picture. There was foreknowledge of danger, but the time and thought given to the gravest questions of European importance were as nothing compared with the hours spent in idleness, enjoyment, or lesser disputes over the plunder of the world.' From this he typically moved into counterpoint: 'Are we to condemn every generation except our own? Or are we to give the benefit of "extenuating circumstances" to every age except the age into which our fathers and grandfathers were born?'<sup>2</sup>

Woodward's pioneering approach to his naval theme was primarily diplomatic and much has since been added, not

<sup>1</sup> *Short Journey*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain and the German Navy* (1935), pp. 16-17.

least by Professor A. J. Marder's masterly scoop and presentation of British naval papers. Woodward's diplomatic evaluations, however, are not to be lightly superseded. Because, as an authoritative reviewer wrote of his book at the time, it was grounded upon 'excellent judgment'. That applied to a remarkably high proportion of all that Woodward wrote and did.

Thus three decades later, in preparing a second edition of his next work, Woodward did not need to recast radically *The Age of Reform 1815-1870*, first published in 1938. The plan of this large volume in the Oxford History of England stood firm in accordance with Woodward's initial appreciation that the period could indeed be covered from an angle which 'would give a larger place to Faraday and Darwin than to Peel or Gladstone. On the other hand, a student of the progress of science or technology would soon find that this progress was not uniform, and . . . the history of science would become a history of politics, if it were to attempt explanation as well as narrative. Again, administrative developments might well be considered the most important features of the period. . . . Once more it would be found that the solution of administrative problems, including the treatment of education, depended upon political issues . . . also the decisions taken in matters of foreign and imperial policy depended upon party leaders and party politics . . . and even if this political history is to be explained as an economic conflict of classes, it is necessary, as a preliminary to analysis, to see what there is to be analysed.'<sup>1</sup>

This penetration of forces meant that a chapter for 1830-50, boldly entitled 'The Politics of the People', is primarily economic. Another brilliant illustration of such interplay is the treatment of Victorian architecture, slipping in such factors as the cheaper adaptability of gothic over classical, and the political slant to Palmerston's rejection of the former for the new Foreign Office. Woodward's continental concern insured against insularity with a whole section of the book devoted to 'England and Europe'. If the treatment of imperial themes sometimes indicated less detailed assurance, his general understanding of colonial politics was also instinctively shrewd. The whole field just suited Woodward's remarkable range of learning and produced a notable contribution to an authoritative series.

By the close of the nineteen-thirties Woodward had established himself as a leading authority on the period from 1815 to 1914, as we may hope to be reminded by the posthumous

<sup>1</sup> *The Age of Reform 1815-1870* (1938), pp. 47-8.



publication of further essays as a *Prelude to Modern Europe*. For a busy don Woodward's output in the thirties was indeed impressive, amplified as it was by a full quota of reviews and articles including, in *The Spectator*, a delicately perceptive series of 'Marginal Comments' which set the tone for the singular success of Sir Harold Nicolson in those columns. Woodward was an almost compulsive writer in his increasingly minuscule hand. Such was his fertility, his fluency—and of course his sheer industry—that it was no grind for him as an author to work over even a large theme in more than one treatment. He used to say that he did not know which he enjoyed most, reading or writing. But he did know really and would occasionally blame himself, occasionally with some slight reason, for beginning to write too soon.

Those productive years of home enjoyment in Savile Road were among Woodward's happiest, with his work going well, his opinion highly valued in his faculty, and his sensitive integration in the life of Oxford and its countryside supplying a link for the young with an earlier ethos that was passing away. Personally, the deeper persistence of that darker underside meant indeed that, as Woodward once volunteered, 'my life was divided. I enjoyed the details of living'.<sup>1</sup> Though even there he had to endure at times what he once termed 'academic malice'. But then Woodward's pronounced acumen embraced his own interests; also, he did not suffer clever fools gladly. (A former President of Corpus was a case in point.) This very clever man valued cleverness less than wisdom.—'History does not teach "lessons". History teaches wisdom.'<sup>2</sup>—Occasionally this could make him unexpectedly formidable and since history was for him such a personal preoccupation he tended to distrust the work of historians whom he distrusted. Considerate and generous to the weak and dependent, Woodward was notably ready not only to encourage originality in younger historians but also to esteem in some contemporaries what he judged to be qualities profounder than his own. This lapsed Christian 'was sure that the only hope for the future of the world lay in accepting the Christian virtues of compassion and humility'.<sup>3</sup> It was not in his own interest that Woodward spelt out 'the difference between the type of cleverness within ordinary reach and the highest kind of intellectual distinction'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Short Journey*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *French Revolutions* (1934), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918*, p. xxviii.

<sup>4</sup> *Short Journey*, p. 160.

Woodward's genuine though encased modesty largely held the secret not only of his charm as a person but also of his strength as a historian. For an arrogant historian is exposed to serious and often fatal dangers. His domination of his chosen past can prove insidious: anyone who largely deals with those who cannot answer back needs to be careful not to get above himself. Historical wisdom so easily degenerates into merely being wise after the event. Woodward was protected here by imaginative insight and by fastidious taste. He subscribed early to Metternich's condemnation of 'the presumptuous man'.

Woodward could be an amusing and delightful companion both socially and professionally, though not with rapid intimacy. He took rather a remote view of even his own Christian names. He understood friendship too well, perhaps, to have many close friends. One was his fellow bursar at All Souls, Sir Geoffrey Faber, the publisher. Personally frugal and thrifty, Woodward was too gifted with aesthetic sensibility not to be keenly alive to the quality of his surroundings (the special attraction of the Coffee Room at All Souls largely derives from him); at the same time his sense of the human condition was too developed for him to care very much about possessions. To some extent this applied even to his library and he once gave a highly entertaining broadcast 'on getting rid of one's books'.<sup>1</sup> In his quiet voice Woodward could talk nearly as well as he wrote, and he did a fair amount of broadcasting in the latter half of his life.

In the years between the two world wars Woodward's professional ascent was superimposed upon political concern. He felt himself one of 'the lost generation' and keenly regretted the liberal eclipse. If he was critical of those whom he considered to have been so 'scorched' by the first conflict as to lapse into shallow cynicism or foolish pacifism, perhaps he was not fully conscious how far he had himself been seared, so that to him those who had not seen active service seemed almost excessively diminished in authority. However that may be, within two months of Hitler's assumption of power Woodward wrote a long letter to *The Times*, wherein he notably inquired:

Are we to regard the present nationalist movement, in its deepest aspect and not merely in the form given to it by Herr Hitler and his colleagues, as no more than a by-product of the economic depression? Those who have studied closely the manifestations of Prussian and German opinion since 1918 can have little doubt about their answer. . . . Is it, then, a safe and easy matter for the pacific democracies of Great Britain and

<sup>1</sup> *The Listener*, 14 February 1963.

France to deal with Germany as an 'equal', to give up their present superiority of armed force, to regard as a matter of indifference to international relations the re-establishment in Germany of the type of rule which maintained itself with ease, arrogance, and terrible consequences between the fall of Bismarck and the War of 1914?<sup>1</sup>

This pregnant letter of 24 March 1933 was dated from All Souls, in this respect in the very van against appeasement. Few historians can claim a clearer or more creditable record of foresight informed from study of the past. Only, Woodward's view was then far from generally popular and he did not persist with an idea of trying to promote it as a member of parliament. As he explained, 'I have never had any serious temptation to proselytise, because, in political and other questions, the only subject upon which I have wanted to be an advocate has been the importance of exact knowledge and clear thought.'<sup>2</sup> Precisely those qualities, however, inspired in him such alarm as to the German menace in the nineteen-thirties that he published in *The Times* several warnings, which mainly went unheeded, at very heavy cost. One of Woodward's maxims was: 'History does not repeat itself, but historical situations recur.'<sup>3</sup>

The outbreak of the Second World War took Woodward into official work in political intelligence at a country retreat, of which he preserved some mordant recollections. Subsequently the Foreign Office made fuller use of his capacities, which were indeed so appreciated there that, had he been so minded, he might perhaps have succeeded Sir Stephen Gaselee as Librarian. If Woodward had a knack of apposite availability, he was anything but a yes-man.

Woodward's work for the Foreign Office included the preparation of an unpublished collection of diplomatic documents on Anglo-German relations from 1925 to 1939. This was the precursor of his outstanding contribution to the annals of British diplomacy as the founding editor for a decade after 1944 of *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*. This weighty publication from the archives of the Foreign Office resulted from a Cabinet decision reflecting the far-sighted sponsorship of the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Avon, to whom historians likewise remain indebted.

The predecessor in this documentary field was the excellent collection by Gooch and Temperley of *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*. One or two historians initially made

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 27 March 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *Short Journey*, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

a point of criticizing *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* by comparison, sometimes for following the earlier publication too closely, sometimes not enough. There was some suggestion, even, that the editors of the later collection might somehow be less historically independent than their predecessors in the selection and publication of documents. Any such suggestion was wrong. Woodward was quite ready, should it prove essential, to resign his editorship on an issue of historical principle not only on his own behalf but also in support of a fellow editor. The Foreign Office to its credit recognized this. Woodward, however, was better than his predecessors at conducting editorial relations with the office, with the result that he secured improved co-operation.

Woodward explained the editorial decision broadly to 'follow Dr. Gooch and Dr. Temperley in arranging their material by subject . . . [rather than on] the French plan of a strict chronological order'.<sup>1</sup> It was a question of a balance of advantage and, for instance, since that was written the editors of the *Documents Diplomatiques Belges 1920-1940* have avowedly preferred to follow the British rather than the French pattern. On the question of the publication of Foreign Office minutes, Woodward never precluded himself from this; but his early practice here was probably too restrictive, and later volumes in the documentary collection included rather more minutes. At the same time anybody who has worked in the Foreign Office will recognize the great difference, in relation to policy and to history, between a considered memorandum or formal 'minute' in that sense and a minute on a paper in the shape of a passing comment, often jotted down in haste. Woodward used to say that true history is not a ragbag. If his editing was not always elaborately detailed, it was most judicious and effective. His was the organizing conception which set a lasting standard. Every volume of *Documents on British Foreign Policy* edited by Woodward has recently gone into a new impression.

In the same year that Woodward began his long task of editing he was appointed Professor of International Relations at Oxford, where he transferred in 1947 to become the first holder of a new Chair of Modern History. His interest in expanding modern studies further directed him to Nuffield College, and his successive professorships made him a Fellow first of Balliol, then, congenially, of Worcester. He thus established something of a record by having had a working association at Oxford with

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 20 September 1955.

eight colleges, half of which will have cause to be grateful for his benefactions. Woodward was latterly elected to honorary Fellowships at Worcester and at Corpus, and at All Souls to a Distinguished Fellowship, an honour rather rarely accorded to academics.

Yet the strain of the grim days of 1940, above all, had begun to sever a link of sympathy, never to be wholly reforged, between Woodward and Oxford, which maybe came to seem a little parochial then in some of its concerns and characters. Woodward found himself less happy in the post-war university, indeed in the post-war world. Within a year of the end of the Second World War he was asking in a lecture, 'Have we won the war?' He proceeded to analyse the incipient Cold War in Europe, notably in terms of a 'deep cleavage of opinion over the idea of property'. Years earlier he had already evaluated the decline of religious belief as ushering in 'a phase of popular materialism and intellectual anarchy'.<sup>1</sup>

On the personal side Woodward's wife, a rare and cherished spirit, fell ill after the war and was never subsequently in entire health. This long anxiety may perhaps have increased his unrest in the atomic age. In 1947 he proclaimed an unfulfilled 'dream' of an Institute of North American Studies in Oxford, and four years later he left his Chair there in order to assume for a decade a research-professorship at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

Woodward was held in high esteem at Princeton, where he received an honorary doctorate. At the Institute he enjoyed the kind of exchanges with scientists which he had previously advocated, and also release from administrative duties. Woodward could concentrate further upon his written output which, as his closer friends in England were now reminded, included letters vivid with reflective relish. In America he found new friends and sympathies: he was always a quiet opponent of 'parade and humbug'. He became a member of the American Philosophical Society and in 1952 he was knighted. Woodward still returned to England annually and ultimately upon retirement.

Accumulated distinctions were matched by unabated diligence. Woodward found relaxation from his wartime and later editorial duties in more popular composition. In addition to his autobiography, an attractive little book on *British Historians* (1943) was followed by a potted *History of England* (1947) and

<sup>1</sup> *Short Journey*, p. 221.

subsequently by plans for a much larger study of British, including imperial, history from 1906 to 1926. In this period Woodward perceived a cohesion which had been neglected through preoccupation with the First World War. It is possible to regret that this original vantage-point was ultimately abandoned in order to produce in 1967 the more manageable *Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918*.

Woodward explained that his study was both narrower and wider than the *History of the Great War* by Cruttwell, an admired friend: narrower in that Woodward concentrated upon the British participation, wider in that he ranged behind military operations into the domestic organization of Britain at war. This newer field of attention was remarkably well surveyed and proportioned. In other parts the treatment might at times seem a little dated, occasionally questionable as over the failure to bring the Greeks in on Gallipoli. If Woodward himself described his narrative as a running commentary, it was of such authority as to constitute one of the last major estimates of that war from a participant. Such was the scope of his scholarship, as of his mind, that one critic at least had no doubt that Woodward had replaced Cruttwell.

Such an achievement might be judged remarkable in a historian of seventy-seven. It was in fact considerably the lesser part of Woodward's closing range of publication. His contribution to the history of the First World War was surpassed in length and depth by that to the Second. Already in the nineteen-forties Woodward had been preparing his magisterial narrative of *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* in his capacity as an official historian working upon a formidable mass of unpublished material in the Foreign Office and the Cabinet Office. A decision from on high deferred publication for long years. The appearance in 1962 of a much condensed version provided a rather tantalizing stopgap. Woodward just lived to see the publication in 1970 of the first of the five volumes of the full work.

In entering upon the extensive and difficult terrain of the Second World War in terms of British foreign policy Woodward was confronted by the same kind of alternative approaches as in his editing of the diplomatic documents. He again chose a judicious blend of what he called the method of simultaneity, implying a narrative in chronological sequence, and that of analysis. This matched both his own technique and his complex theme so as to produce a co-ordination that was as masterly in

its organization of detailed developments as in its over-all sweep. On the structural level Woodward had to reckon, for instance, with the circumstance that so early as September 1940 there were in the United States nine British missions reporting directly to departments other than the Foreign Office. In the sphere of execution Woodward found that

British diplomatic methods were at once cautious and extremely flexible, informal and highly professionalised; these habits of caution and understatement were a part of the tradition of a maritime and trading community aware of its vulnerability . . . Furthermore a cautious policy was necessary owing to parliamentary control at home and owing to the ties linking the United Kingdom with the rest of the Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

In these conditions Woodward's story came to turn largely upon the fruitful tension between the prudential calculations of the Foreign Office, his point of departure, and the offensive thrust of Winston Churchill, who had already given his own splendid account of himself. Both sides emerge with remarkable credit in Woodward's balanced estimate, which is perhaps another way of saying that it produces few startling disclosures. Woodward also did justice to the cardinal role of the then Foreign Secretary, right in the middle of it. British relations with the Free French and with resistant Yugoslavia were good illustrations of this; and the more one ponders it the longer the significance which may seem to attach to Woodward's quiet reminder that 'the Foreign Office was more free than the Prime Minister to put long-range considerations affecting the post-war situation in Europe before matters of immediate military relevance'.<sup>2</sup>

In the first book that he published Woodward had not shrunk back from the field of Gibbon. In writing the last he had in mind the treatment given to contemporary events by Thucydides. Woodward had noticed long ago that Guizot, in composing his memoirs, had consciously looked back to the Athenian statesman and historian. If Woodward himself would have been the first to maintain that he saluted Thucydides but from afar, yet it was worthily, upon a vast theme of conflict and of the destiny of nations.

The first volume of the full history of *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* was published shortly after Woodward's

<sup>1</sup> *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (1970 f.), vol. i, p. xxx.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. lii.

eightieth birthday and was authoritatively hailed as the first instalment of a magnificent achievement, of what was certainly the best of our official histories of that war. It was also the greatest single contribution to them, made by England's foremost authority upon the diplomatic history of the twentieth century. The master of style had steered home his archival mastery. Few historians have left so great a legacy for posthumous publication as the four remaining volumes of his *magnum opus*.

Thus did Woodward's achievement outrun his life. Before his death he had characteristically completed the revision of two, almost three more volumes. He was working on this right to the end in the house which he had been able to build in the grounds of Worcester College. There he was fondly cared for by his surviving sister. His wife had predeceased him in 1961. The lonely years ensued. There were no children of the marriage.

To revert to the Raleigh Lecture delivered to the Academy in 1950: 'The living who write about the dead feel the sadness of Vergil's line "Tendebantque manus . . .", but the hands stretching out into the past without response are our own.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the British Academy, ut. sup.* p. 100.