



SIDNEY POLLARD

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## 1925–1998

### I

SIDNEY POLLARD died in Sheffield on 22 November 1998. He was not quite seventy-four years of age.<sup>1</sup>

His origins lay outside Britain. His father came from Stryy near Lvov in Galicia. His mother was born at Radauti (Radautz), in Bukovina and then moved to Stryy. Like many of their Jewish contemporaries in Central Europe both his mother and father were attracted to a life in Vienna.<sup>2</sup> Moses Pollak migrated there before the outbreak of the Great War and Leontine Katz followed later, in the wake of the pogroms which the Russians perpetrated after their advance into the eastern provinces of Austria-Hungary. Following his migration Moses Pollak earned a living as a commercial traveller. Although his wife had qualified as a teacher, it is thought that she did not continue with her career following her marriage. They maintained a traditional, though not an Orthodox home, and led a comfortable existence. Of their first child, a boy, little is known. He was ill and confined to an institution. Their second son, Siegfried, was born on 21 April 1925. He grew up essentially as an only child and eventually attended the Chajes Realgymnasium, a school named after Rabbi

<sup>1</sup> A private funeral service took place on 27 Nov. 1998. A memorial service was held in the University of Sheffield 12 Feb. 1999.

<sup>2</sup> S. Beller, *Vienna and its Jews*. (Cambridge, 1989).

Hirsch Perez Chajes, the Chief Rabbi in Vienna for nine years from 1918, who was well known for his scholarship and his attachment to Zionism. The school set high standards, not always in the easiest of circumstances. Social Democrats were critical of it because it fostered Jewish consciousness. At the same time, anti-semites targeted the institution. The young Pollak learnt early, that to be Jewish carried its own problems. He retained personal memories of the anti-semitic hostility he had regularly encountered at Easter.

Siegfried Pollak excelled as a pupil. He displayed a particularly remarkable grasp of mathematics. Indeed, he found this subject so easy that often he had time to complete the work of other students. Music was another subject which attracted him and in which he revealed considerable promise. He became an exceptionally proficient violinist and his parents encouraged this interest through private lessons. By contrast, he did not excel at physical education. A series of school reports which he kept throughout his life confirm his early interests and capabilities.<sup>3</sup>

His early intention had been to pursue a scientific career. However, developments in Central Europe soon changed his life for ever. In March 1938 following the Anschluss Austria became part of the Greater Germany and the anti-semitism which had long been a feature of Austrian society received a freer rein. The Pollaks lost their flat in Sieveringer Hauptstrasse in district 19 because they were Jewish and were also reminded more dramatically of their possible danger with the *Kristallnacht* pogrom on 9 and 10 November 1938 when attacks were unleashed against Jews throughout the Greater Germany. In these circumstances an increasing number of Jews became convinced that for their own safety they ought to leave Central Europe. However, problems often stood in their way, not least the barriers which existed in those countries to which they might have looked for refuge. In the case of Britain, the 1919 Aliens Act had placed firm controls over the immigration, employment, and residence of aliens. Moreover, the British Government, alert to sensitivities in the Middle East, restricted immigration into the mandated territory of Palestine. Faced with this situation, Anglo-Jewry attempted to relieve some of these problems by guaranteeing that Jews who entered Britain would not constitute a burden on the State. Even with that assurance, however, the British authorities remained anxious that Jews who were admitted would eventually move on to other countries.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Now in his private papers.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, T. Kushner and K. Knox, *Refugees in the Age of Genocide*. (1999), ch. 5.

In these circumstances the Pollaks also had a personal problem: the difficulty relating to their elder son. Could they leave him behind? From their one-room flat in the Leopoldstadt area to which they had been moved, Pollak's parents or at least his mother, who appears to have been the dominant partner in the marriage, contemplated two possible escape routes. Their younger son might secure a new future in Palestine, on account of his musical abilities. The other possibility involved a transfer to Britain. Leontine Pollak had a distant relative, a cousin, John Katz, who lived in London. This link afforded the prospect that Moses, Leontine, and Siegfried Pollak might secure entry to Britain with Katz's support. In the event, for reasons which are now unclear, that plan failed. But in 1938 Siegfried Pollak secured a place on one of the child transports leaving Vienna. In the company of 500 other children, he then arrived in Britain.

His parents had lost sight of their son, who had become the centre of their lives. Apparently they became too depressed and exhausted to show much more fight against their circumstances. For their exiled son there would be no more summer visits to Stryy where he could play with his family. Professor Ora Kedem recalls how they would do crossword puzzles together. Indeed, they would construct them. We shall return to crosswords later. They would also go through the alphabet and, using the world atlas, link the letters to particular towns and cities, little thinking that events would soon take them away from their roots to a wider world.<sup>5</sup>

After his arrival in Britain the young Pollak was transferred first of all to a reception camp in East Anglia. Then, in the spring of 1939, he moved to Whittingehame Farm School in East Lothian. There he worked on the estate of Lord Traprain, the heir to the Balfours. The children were being prepared for an eventual emigration to Palestine, in the expectation that the skills they acquired on the land would then be put to use on a Kibbutz. Although he was a young teenager, Pollak did not receive any formal education under this arrangement. 'We didn't learn anything except to speak English with a Scottish accent and Hebrew', he remarked later.<sup>6</sup> This observation underlines the recent judgement that Whittingehame was 'hardly a success story'.<sup>7</sup> A Jewish committee in Edinburgh had provided the funds for the initial journey from Austria and for the upkeep of the refugee children. However, by 1941 the money for Whittingehame had

<sup>5</sup> O. Kedem to author.

<sup>6</sup> S. Pollard, undated note to author.

<sup>7</sup> B. Turner, *And the Policeman smiled* . . . (1990), p. 171.

been exhausted. In that year, consequently, he transferred to Bredon's Norton in Worcestershire, which was run on similar lines. However, around this time he became convinced that he did not yearn for a future life in Palestine. He struck out for Cambridge, where, with the help of Greta Burkill, who acted as a saviour to many of the young refugees, he secured a place at a hostel.<sup>8</sup> He then found lodgings and began to work for Ridgeon's, a firm of market gardeners.

During this period he was engaged in study by correspondence course. In these circumstances his early interest in science proved difficult to sustain, because he did not have access to any laboratories. But his thirst for education continued. He was successful in the London Matriculation examination and in 1943, also through correspondence course, he passed the intermediate stage of the B.Sc.(Econ.) degree. At this point the war took him away from his studies.

He left Ridgeon's in 1943 and volunteered for the British army. The Austrian refugee had become a British soldier. To all intents and purposes his enlistment converted Siegfried Pollak into Sidney Pollard. He served in the Reconnaissance Corps. His knowledge of German was particularly useful to the army authorities, and although the war ended in 1945, he did not obtain his release from armed service until 1947. Until then he was employed as an interpreter in the British Zone of Germany. By the time of his demobilisation he had attained the rank of corporal. He became naturalised in the year he left the army.<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of his performance in the intermediate B.Sc.(Econ.) examinations in 1943 he had been interviewed at the London School of Economics, then evacuated to Cambridge, and promised a place to continue his studies at the end of the war. Following his demobilisation he went straightaway to the LSE. It was a golden age for Economic History at the School. His contemporaries included Donald Coleman, Ralph Davis, and Walter Minchinton. These students were exposed to the teaching of staff who included R. H. Tawney, T. S. Ashton, and Lance Beales. Although he missed part of the 1946–7 session, on account of the timing of his demobilisation, Pollard graduated with first class honours in 1948. Since he had not fulfilled the minimum prescribed period of study, however, his name appears on the 1949 class list. By that time, he had already

<sup>8</sup> There is an audio tape on Burkill in the Imperial War Museum collection, 'Britain and the Refugee Crisis, 1939–1947'. (Margareta Burkill (née Braun).) Accession Number 004588/08.

<sup>9</sup> The naturalisation document, AZ 27064, carries a final registration date of 17 June 1947. (Pollard's private papers).

begun work on his doctoral thesis. F. J. (Jack) Fisher had suggested a theme in industrial history and, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, Pollard focused on 'The Economic history of British shipbuilding 1870–1914', under the supervision of T. S. Ashton and Lance Beales.<sup>10</sup> He completed the research in 1950 and received his doctorate in 1951.

He was moving forward quickly in his academic work and one wonders whether the single-mindedness was intended to fill other gaps in his life. During the war his possessions had fitted into one suitcase, a symbol of his loneliness, and there was no family home to which he could return on leave from the armed forces. Moreover, he feared the worst for the fate of his parents and his brother (whom he would visit every Sunday during his days in Vienna), particularly when all contact with them via the Red Cross dried up. To compound his problems, a young woman refugee to whom he had become attached had subsequently been killed in the course of a bombing raid on London. Against that background the academic work on which he was engaged after the war not only held an intrinsic interest for him, it also provided an anaesthetic against the past and a possible guarantee of a better future. Another form of compensation for the loneliness of these early days came through the work he undertook for the Holiday Fellowship during his time at the LSE. He would act as guide and leader and, in return, secure board and lodging. It was on one of these breaks that he met Eileen Andrews. They married in 1949.

He was anxious to secure an academic post as soon as possible. But he found it difficult. There was, possibly, an element of anti-semitism involved in some of the rebuffs he encountered. But leaving that issue on one side, there was another aspect of Pollard's life at this stage which, more certainly, was turned against him. For six months during his period at the LSE he had been a student member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The CPGB was then enjoying one of its strongest periods of growth and exercised an appeal to Pollard on several grounds. But his Marxist sympathies came to haunt his career for a considerable time. In the immediate post-war years a considerable amount of academic patronage in the field of Economic History lay in the hands of T. S. Ashton who held the Chair at the LSE between 1944–54. Ashton did not view the world through the same lenses as Pollard. In his book *An Economic*

<sup>10</sup> S. Pollard, 'The Economic History of British Shipbuilding, 1870–1914', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London (1951).

*History of England: the 18th Century*, he boasted that the reader would be unable to find any 'ism' in his book, and that would include capitalism.<sup>11</sup> A further clear indication of Ashton's ideological position can be detected in his contribution to F. A. von Hayek's edited collection on *Capitalism and the Historians*.<sup>12</sup> In other words, at a time when Cold War issues entered into the writing of Economic and Social History, Pollard had run into a set of ideological buffers which he found it difficult to circumvent. He found himself in this position despite the fact that he was never a committed long-term member of any party or movement. The fact that he held to a Marxist interpretation of history was sufficient.

Nevertheless, after several disappointments Pollard did obtain an academic post. On 28 June 1950 he began his long association with the University of Sheffield. Douglas Knoop, who had held the Chair of Economics in the University since 1920, died in 1948 and left £39,343, to fund research in Economics and Economic History. It was Pollard's good fortune, twelve years after he arrived as a child refugee with no knowledge of the English language and only three years after his demobilisation, to be appointed the first Douglas Knoop Research Fellow in Economic History. The records of the University make it clear that on this occasion—it was a short-term appointment of three years—Pollard came 'highly recommended' by Ashton.<sup>13</sup> But Pollard's own version of events was that Lance Beales acted as the decisive referee. Although Ashton's obituary in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* mentioned Pollard as one of the acolytes who beat a path to Ashton's door during his retirement at Blockley, Pollard denied ever having visited him there and throughout his life maintained an adverse view of Ashton's influence on his early career.<sup>14</sup>

The study of Economic History at Sheffield had relied heavily at first on Knoop's involvement. He had been appointed to a lectureship in Economics in 1910 but wrote extensively on Economic History and, towards the end of his career, on Freemasonry. In a way which reveals the close inter-connected academic world at the time, T. S. Ashton had supplemented Knoop's activities in Sheffield. Following Ashton's depar-

<sup>11</sup> T. S. Ashton, *An Economic History of England: the 18th Century* (1955), preface.

<sup>12</sup> T. S. Ashton, 'The Treatment of Capitalism by Historians', in F. A. von Hayek (ed.), *Capitalism and the Historians* (1954), pp. 31–61.

<sup>13</sup> Personal file in the Vice-Chancellor's office, University of Sheffield.

<sup>14</sup> R. S. Sayers, 'Thomas Southcliffe Ashton', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 56 (1970), 280. For Pollard's opinion on the problem, see his 'In Search of a Social Purpose', in P. Alter (ed.), *Out of the Third Reich. Refugee Historians in Post-War Britain* (1998), p. 205.

ture, Knoop had been assisted between 1919–26 by Pollard's other referee, Lance Beales, who then departed to the LSE. Then from 1926 a growing influence in the development of Economic History at Sheffield came through the teaching and research of G. P. Jones. Jones was the key internal figure in Pollard's appointment and they remained on friendly terms until Jones's death in 1975.

Pollard had managed to secure an academic footing within a university which had a long tradition of Economic History. But he faced a problem. What should be his research theme during his tenure of the Knoop Fellowship? Sheffield did not possess the resources of the LSE library. He needed to make a careful and considered choice. Labour conditions had already started to interest him. He believed particularly that what is now called 'History from Below' had been seriously neglected. The study of Labour History had often concentrated on movements and organisations. Pollard's interest, by contrast, lay in the underdog, a theme which is overtly or discreetly present in much of his work. Against that background he began his research on the history of labour in Sheffield, concentrating on the years between 1850 and 1939.

Contemporaries in Sheffield recall that at this stage he remained extremely anxious about his future prospects, the more so now that a child, his elder son, had been born in 1951. An opportunity then arose which he was quick to seize. In 1952 the University created an assistant lectureship in Economic History and Pollard was recommended for the post. The appointment was renewable annually for a period of three years and there was no absolute guarantee that it would become permanent. In 1955, however, Pollard was appointed lecturer and five years later promoted to senior lecturer.

By this time he had developed a recognisable momentum in his research. Although his major interest focused on his Labour in Sheffield project, from which he began to publish articles, he developed an increasing interest in the history of the Northwest and published material on Barrow.<sup>15</sup> In addition, he wrote on retail distribution.<sup>16</sup> Moreover he compiled business histories of local firms. *Three Centuries of Sheffield Steel*, a history of Marsh Brothers, appeared in 1954 and a study of Shirley,

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, 'Wages and Earnings in the Sheffield Trades, 1851–1914', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, 6 (1954), 49–64 and his 'Barrow and the 7th Duke of Devonshire', *Economic History Review*, 8 (1955), 213–21.

<sup>16</sup> His work on the retail trades, written in collaboration with J. D. Hughes, began with 'Costs in Retail Distribution', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 7 (1955), 71–93.

Aldred and Company was published in 1958.<sup>17</sup> However, the publications which planted his reputation firmly on the national stage came with his article 'Investment, Consumption and the Industrial Revolution' which appeared in the *Economic History Review* in 1958<sup>18</sup> and his book *A History of Labour in Sheffield 1850–1939*, published by Liverpool University Press in 1959.<sup>19</sup> He dedicated the book 'to the late John Katz, guide, teacher and friend'. Katz had provided Pollard with a German–English dictionary soon after the young refugee's arrival and had paid for his entrance to the Matriculation and B.Sc.(Econ.) examinations. It was typical of Pollard's generosity that he placed so much value on these relatively small gestures. Pollard's interest in Labour History was further underlined by his involvement in the origins of the Society for the Study of Labour History which held its inaugural meeting on 6 May 1960. He then proceeded between 1960 and 1971 to serve as joint-editor of the Society's Journal.<sup>20</sup>

There was clearly sufficient research and recognition here to justify his progression to a senior lectureship. But that promotion depended also upon teaching and on this front he made a recognisable contribution to the work of the Department of Economics. He offered courses on the Economic History of Britain, Europe, and the United States. His involvement can also be traced in the business studies programme organised by D. C. Hague, then the Newton Chambers Professor in Applied Economics. He was also a frequent contributor to courses mounted by the Extra-Mural Department.

There is no doubt that by the late 1950s he had established a reputation as one of the emerging scholars in his discipline. His article on 'Investment, Consumption and the Industrial Revolution', allegedly rejected by *Economica*, was widely recommended to undergraduates and his book on Sheffield Labour attracted favourable notices. Eric Hobsbawm writing in the *Economic History Review* referred to it as, 'indispensable to

<sup>17</sup> S. Pollard, *Three Centuries of Sheffield Steel* (Sheffield, 1954); S. Pollard, *Shirley Aldred and Co. Ltd 1796–1958* (Worksop, 1958).

<sup>18</sup> S. Pollard, 'Investment, Consumption and the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 11 (1958), 215–26.

<sup>19</sup> S. Pollard, *A History of Labour in Sheffield, 1850–1939* (Liverpool, 1959).

<sup>20</sup> See the obituary by D. Martin in the *Labour History Review*, 64 (1999), 139–42. Pollard served as Vice-President of the Society between 1972 and 1980. This obituary notice concentrated chiefly on Pollard's contributions to labour history, including his work on nineteenth-century co-operation, his edited work on Robert Owen and his continuing interest in the Sheffield Outrages of 1867.

every student of modern economic and social history'. But he asked whether it was 'pushing scholarly austerity to the extreme to complete a book on Sheffield workers without once mentioning the names of either Sheffield United or Sheffield Wednesday'.<sup>21</sup> It was a fair point. Pollard was not the man to be seen on the terraces or afterwards in the pub. He might write on working class life but parts of its culture never touched him, though he always remained strongly committed to the Co-operative movement and its ideals.

These early days provided a sound launch pad for the next stage of his career. The late 1950s and the 1960s were of immense importance in the development of the Social Sciences in Sheffield. These subjects became organised into a separate faculty in 1959 and shared fully in the expansion of the 1960s, stimulated by the Robbins Report. During these years various subjects were spun off from the Department of Economics and received departmental recognition in their own right. In this context the University decided to establish a Chair of Economic History.

By the early 1960s Pollard had begun to express an interest in chairs. However, various applications came to nothing. There was a rueful remark in his subsequent inaugural lecture to chairs which were filled even before they were advertised.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the Sheffield chair, fortune was on his side. And so was timing. Just before the creation of the post he published in 1962 his survey on *The Development of the British Economy 1914–1950*, which became a widely used and frequently reprinted text.<sup>23</sup> Some of his later work was to grow out of this book which reflected a sure touch in its capacity to blend economics and history. In view of his developing academic profile it was hardly surprising that on 10 July 1963 the chair committee at Sheffield unanimously recommended his appointment to the newly created professorship. He cited a number of powerful referees in support of his application. J. D. Chambers, then at Nottingham, H. J. Habakkuk of Oxford, Francis Hyde of Liverpool, and the formidable Michael Postan of Cambridge, all put their weight behind his candidature. Chambers's reference was particularly valuable. 'He is, I should imagine, one of the best equipped economic historians writing at the present time', Chambers advised the University,

<sup>21</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm's notice in the *Economic History Review*, 13 (1960–1), 127.

<sup>22</sup> S. Pollard, *Economic History: a Science of Society?* (Sheffield, 1964), p. 1. The lecture also appeared in *Past and Present*, 30 (1965), 1–22 and in N. B. Harte (ed.), *The Study of Economic History: Collected Inaugural Lectures 1893–1970* (1971), pp. 289–312.

<sup>23</sup> S. Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy 1914–1950* (1962).

‘and when he has acquired a greater confidence and willingness to put himself forward in public discussions he will receive the general recognition which his published work so enormously merits.’<sup>24</sup>

Pollard delivered his inaugural in the recently built Arts Tower on 28 October 1964. He had a large audience which he addressed on the theme of ‘Economic History: a Science of Society?’. The lecture amounted to a bold statement which defended the significance of historical materialism as a means of unlocking the problems of the past and understanding key issues of the present. On re-reading it one is struck by the bluntness of his Marxism. His lecture was also heavily influenced by E. H. Carr’s *What is History?*, the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures which had been delivered in Cambridge between January and March 1961. It is quite clear that Pollard might have been a confirmed non-joiner, apart from a brief student flirtation with the CPGB, but the intellectual thrust of Marxism still exercised a powerful attraction for him. Hence his observation:

All of us owe an incalculable debt to the genius of Marx, and it has been a tragic loss for the study of history that his teaching has been so often banished or traduced because his latter-day followers have become closely associated not merely with one political movement but with a particular region of the globe. . . .<sup>25</sup>

Years later, in 1994, in a seminar he gave in the Department of History at Sheffield, he reiterated that after thirty years he still clung essentially to the same beliefs.<sup>26</sup>

## II

From 1963 until his resignation from the University of Sheffield in 1980 Pollard built up the department he led and continued to work personally at a prodigious rate. With the expansion of student numbers in the 1960s the department’s staffing level increased. In the early days he was responsible for two assistant lecturers and one Knoop Fellow. When he resigned there were ten members of staff. During this period Pollard’s own contribution to teaching involved a first year course on British Economic History in which he took students on an intellectual journey from the

<sup>24</sup> Chair file in the Vice-Chancellor’s Office in the University of Sheffield.

<sup>25</sup> S. Pollard, *Economic History*, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> S. Pollard, ‘Economic History: a Science of Society? Reflections on an Inaugural Lecture’, delivered to a seminar in the History Department, University of Sheffield, 5 Oct. 1994.

1760s to the twentieth century. In addition, he taught a third year special subject on the Industrial Revolution, which reflected his current research preoccupations. These were in fact busy years with sufficient undergraduate demand to justify a gentle expansion of staff. But undergraduate activity reflected only one part of the department's role. Pollard held firmly to the view that research should lie at the heart of each lecturer's work and by encouraging this activity in the individual the corporate image would be strengthened. He also attached great importance to post-graduate research. Pollard never developed a school. He never sought to create his own acolytes. However, he did encourage students to undertake research at Sheffield and his postgraduates covered a wide range of subjects. One might have expected him to supervise work on such themes as Capital Formation, as well as the history of Radicalism in Sheffield. But theses were also completed on subjects as diverse as William Caslon, the premier English type founder, and on the History of Hairdressing.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1960s much of his research focused initially upon the contribution of managers to early industrialisation. It had been a neglected area. The sources were geographically dispersed as well as being patchy and unreliable. Yet aided by a grant from the Houblon-Norman Foundation and support from the Knoop Research Fund at Sheffield, he set to work on this theme. His conclusions appeared in various articles and also in his book *The Genesis of Modern Management*.<sup>28</sup> The central emphasis in the latter was that “‘management’ in our sense’ was neither ‘a barrier to progress’, nor ‘an initiator of change’ but nevertheless its ‘influence on the texture of the new industrialism . . . was enormous’.<sup>29</sup> A low key notice appeared in the *Economic History Review*, but in the United States one reviewer's remark, ‘my reaction . . . is one of gratitude and admiration’, was enough to raise any author's pulse.<sup>30</sup> In Pollard's own opinion the book, which was awarded the American Newcomen Society prize for the best work on business history between 1964 and 1966, remained his most satisfying work.

<sup>27</sup> J. Ball, ‘The Ancestry, Life and Contribution of William Caslon, the Premier English Type-founder’, MA Thesis (Sheffield, 1968); J. R. N. Ewbank, ‘A Social and Economic History of Hairdressing 1935–1965’, MA Thesis (Sheffield, 1977).

<sup>28</sup> S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management. A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (1965). ‘The Factory Village in the Industrial Revolution’, *English Historical Review*, 74 (1964) 513–31, was one of the important articles linked to this research project.

<sup>29</sup> S. Pollard, *Genesis*, p. 271.

<sup>30</sup> See the notices in the *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), 431–2 and the *Journal of Economic History*, 26 (1966), 397.

The 1960s also saw him bring to fruition, in collaboration with younger members of staff, *The Wealth of Britain* and an edited collection of *Documents of European Economic History*, both of which grew out of his earlier teaching interests.<sup>31</sup> These were books he felt he had to produce. By contrast, he admitted that he was less at home with his slim philosophical volume, *The Idea of Progress*, which appeared in 1968 and drew from his inaugural lecture.<sup>32</sup> The application of theory to a quantity of empirical data, limited in time and space, was where he functioned most effectively.

With this growing output and increasing intellectual stature, Pollard received invitations to visit other institutions. Two instances, significant in different ways, need to be recorded. He visited the German Democratic Republic on two occasions. When he returned from these academic expeditions to the Soviet bloc, laden with Cuban cigars, incidentally, he realised that he had been a privileged guest. He observed that his contacts in the GDR could read literature which was not generally available in East Germany. Nevertheless, the cultural life of East Berlin appealed to him. The facility of his academic contacts to work fluently in several languages also provided a sharp contrast with the intellectual milieu he usually encountered in Britain. During these visits to the GDR his path was smoothed by the influential Jürgen Kuczynski, who played a major role in East German political and academic life. The 1960s also resulted in his working in a different kind of society. He was invited to America and between 1969 and 1970 passed the academic year at Berkeley in California. Here too, he was impressed and on his return contrasted the richness of Berkeley's facilities with the resources he encountered in Sheffield. He had laboured long in the field at Sheffield without any leave and believed that he was entitled to accept these overseas invitations. However, these visits generated a certain restlessness within him. Certain members of his own university also cast envious eyes towards his activities.

That tension with Sheffield became linked to another issue. He was an efficient departmental administrator. He would arrive early in the University and, whilst waiting for the mail to arrive, would settle down to the crossword in *The Times*. He generally completed it within fifteen to

<sup>31</sup> S. Pollard (with D. W. Crossley), *The Wealth of Britain, 1085–1966* (1968) and (with C. Holmes), *Documents of European Economic History*, 3 vols. (1968–73).

<sup>32</sup> S. Pollard, *The Idea of Progress. History and Society* (1968).

twenty minutes.<sup>33</sup> When the post did arrive, he dictated answers in order to dispatch the business as quickly as possible. He was equally prompt in dealing with the afternoon's correspondence. The time then remained free for research. There had to be breaks, nevertheless, for the ritual taking of morning coffee in the department, as well as for afternoon tea, both of which provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and opinions. Moreover, he was always available to discuss any personal problems of his staff and ever anxious to offer support and reassurance. But he was less attracted to faculty and university business, even though he served as Deputy Dean of the Social Sciences between 1967 and 1969. He skilfully avoided ever being appointed Dean, an appointment which would have taken him away from his scholarly pursuits. His reluctance to involve himself too deeply in administration beyond his department was sometimes held against him.

The restlessness which he began to experience in the course of the 1960s, stimulated by foreign travel, was not easily assuaged and in 1971 he accepted the offer of a chair at Berkeley. However, at this point his past returned to haunt him. He resigned his Chair at Sheffield on 14 May 1971 only to find that the US Immigration authorities refused to grant him a permanent visa. He was reminded by them of his link with the CPGB during his student days at the LSE. The visits to East Germany and, in particular, the link with Kuczynski can hardly have helped his case. After all, during the war Kuczynski had been supplying the Soviets with confidential information drawn from the US strategic bombing surveys. As a result of his difficulty with the US authorities, Pollard had to apply for reinstatement at Sheffield, and, ultimately, acting upon the advice of senior academic staff, the university agreed to this request on 9 July 1971.

For his part, Pollard picked up the strands of his career, even though there was no disguising his bitter disappointment. He had regretted the possibility of a break with Sheffield but, to those closest to him, he continued to emphasise the enormous attractions of academic life at Berkeley. With his plans thwarted he had to seek for some rationalisation of his disappointment and found it in the suggestion that Berkeley would not have been a suitable environment for his children. By now his children had increased to include another son and a young daughter. Throughout his

<sup>33</sup> His early interest in crosswords has been noticed. At one stage he contemplated a part-time career in retirement as a compiler of such puzzles.

life he remained close to his children and devoted to their interests. However, his claim that the drug culture of the West Coast would have been detrimental to their personal development does not tell the whole story of the Berkeley episode.

The disappointment increased his sense of restlessness, a mood reflected in further international travel. He passed the spring term of 1973 at Bar-Ilan in Israel. The following summer he taught at Bielefeld in the Ruhr. In 1975 he visited Swarthmore. Between August and September 1977 he went to institutions in Australia. Then in 1978–9 he returned to Bielefeld and this link proved significant. He resigned from Sheffield in 1980 to take up a professorship at that institution. He left the Steel City where he had spent much of his life, relishing the prospect of working alongside scholars such as Jürgen Kocka and Hans-Ulrich Wehler and benefiting also from the academic resources at Bielefeld.

### III

The move coincided with an upheaval in his personal life. In 1980 he was divorced and, in that respect, Bielefeld afforded the prospect of a new beginning. But the transition to a life in Germany did not prove easy. In Bielefeld he had to spend much time initially on his own in the flat he rented in Loebellstrasse. In other words, the loneliness which he dreaded had returned to visit him. That feeling started to lift in 1982, when he married Helen Trippett, who then moved with him to Germany. This second marriage also brought him the stability he had long sought but which had so often eluded him.

Although more at ease with his circumstances, he still displayed an interest in taking up visiting academic appointments. He spent the winter semester of 1983–4 at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. In 1985 he worked at the Rockefeller Study Center at Bellagio. Then, between 1985 and 1986 he held the post of Visiting Professor at the European University Institute in Florence.

These years at Bielefeld and his visiting posts elsewhere in Europe did not result in a complete break with Britain. He stayed closely in touch with the Society for Cooperative Studies and the Economic History Society. He returned to England on a regular basis to attend conferences and also during the vacations. Furthermore, for one of his seminars at Bielefeld he was permitted to bring in foreign speakers, an arrangement which allowed him to keep in contact with British academics. But some

things did change. When one met him on these occasions he emphasised that although he continued to read *The Times* he did so in batches and was generally a fortnight behind with the news and events. He had always viewed Britain with a degree of detachment and that sense increased during the years in Bielefeld. He never understood the vast changes taking place in higher education in Britain, consequent upon public spending cuts, and the growing emphasis that universities had to be run as businesses. Matters such as the RAE and the TQA he never comprehended.

Not that Germany provided an absolute haven of academic satisfaction. Two matters in particular created tension within his life. Although he did not carry a heavy teaching load, it was constantly changing and he found it a strain to engage in the constant preparation of new courses. The other matter carried with it echoes of the past. The reluctance he had displayed in Sheffield to involve himself in onerous administrative duties persisted during his time at Bielefeld. A reliable source has observed that this stance created some friction with other senior academics at the university. At the side of such tensions there were compensations. He delighted in the progress of his postgraduate students and the undergraduates respected him. Among one group of the latter it became apparent on a visit to Sheffield that they found him intriguing. Here was an Englishman who had excellent German. In other words, he had not alerted them to his origins in Central Europe. He remained still the intensely private person he had been in Sheffield where few of his contacts had known in any detail of his early life, little more about his interest in the cinema and nothing of his skills as a violinist.

During his period in Bielefeld his research output continued unabated. His book *Peaceful Conquest. The Industrialization of Europe 1769–1970* had been largely researched before he departed to Germany but it appeared following his appointment to Bielefeld and contained a warm tribute to that ‘admirable and generous institution’.<sup>34</sup> His interest in European development was also reflected in his joint-editorship of the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*.<sup>35</sup> He also published major works on British economic history. *The Wasting of the British Economy*, a book which provided an example of Pollard in especially polemical vein and which he had intended initially to call ‘The Rake’s Progress’, appeared in

<sup>34</sup> S. Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest. The Industrialization of Europe 1760–1970* (Oxford, 1981), p. ix.

<sup>35</sup> With P. Mathias (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. VIII. *The Industrial Economies. The Development of Economic and Social Policies* (Cambridge, 1989).

1982.<sup>36</sup> *Britain's Prime and Britain's Decline*, his work on the British economy between 1870 and 1914, which might be regarded as a companion volume to *The Wasting*, even though written in a more restrained style, was published a few years later.<sup>37</sup>

Certain important themes are present in these publications. In *Peaceful Conquest*, which one reviewer described as 'a book of great scholarship, daring and provoking in parts . . . unbalanced though it maybe in others' and 'a major contribution to our understanding of the world we have gained', his emphasis lay on the importance of the regional rather than the national approach to industrialisation in the decisive years after 1760.<sup>38</sup> He contested the claim that 'countries within their political boundaries are the only units within which it is worthwhile to consider the process of industrialization'.<sup>39</sup> On the contrary, regions within a country, say Lancashire, or industrial regions such as the coalfield of Northern France and Belgium, which crossed national frontiers, were of greater significance. This emphasis, which admittedly drew from the work of earlier scholars such as W. W. Rostow and E. A. Wrigley, was radically different from the approach to European economic development which had generally prevailed when Pollard set out as a student of the subject.

In his treatment of British development in *The Wasting of the British Economy*, he argued principally that Britain's relative economic decline had stemmed from the Treasury's obsession with protecting the value of sterling and looking after the interests of the City of London, rather than focusing upon the interests of British industry and its workers. He hammered home this emphasis not only to academic audiences—he had adumbrated some of his thoughts in his earlier book on the gold standard—but to a wider public through his letters to *The Times*.<sup>40</sup> The book, published in the shadow of the monetarist policies pursued by Mrs Thatcher's first Conservative administration, did not please all its readers. It encountered opposition particularly from individuals who had served at one time or another as advisers on government economic policy. Some of Pollard's caustic comments, such as 'Within the span of

<sup>36</sup> S. Pollard, *The Wasting of the British Economy* (1982). Enlarged edn. 1985. Detail on 'The Rake's Progress' is from his personal papers.

<sup>37</sup> S. Pollard, *Britain's Prime and Britain's Decline. The British Economy, 1870–1914* (1988).

<sup>38</sup> S. B. Saul in the *Economic History Review*, 35 (1982), 329.

<sup>39</sup> S. Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest*, p. vii.

<sup>40</sup> S. Pollard (ed.), *The Gold Standard and Employment Policies between the Wars* (1970). See also his letters to *The Times*, 11 Oct. 1976, 13 Oct. 1977, 20 July 1978, and 26 July 1978.

half a lifetime Britain has descended from the most prosperous major state of Europe to the Western European slum' could expect to meet with criticism.<sup>41</sup> But his observations reflected his passionate belief that Britain possessed enormous economic potential which could be released through sound stewardship.

His later work on the British economy between 1870 and 1914 focused on three themes, generally regarded as exercising a major influence on the level of economic performance during these years: the export of capital; the state of education, particularly scientific and technical education; and, finally, the role of the state. His work convinced William Ashworth, another leading historian of the period, of 'the fundamental soundness of the British economy in 1914'. The same historian described the book as 'an admirable example of the virtue of combining scholarship with commonsense'. Through this study Pollard was continuing to underline his claim that the problems faced by the British economy in the late twentieth century had their origins in the very recent past. In the homely words of William Ashworth in the *Economic History Review*, 'those who argue about more recent economic tribulations could use this new pre-1914 study to remove the temptation to say it was really great-grandfather's fault for stepping on the downward path. It wasn't.'<sup>42</sup>

These major publications, along with other research, such as his edited work with Charles Feinstein on capital formation, substantially enhanced his already high reputation and resulted in 1989 in his election as a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.<sup>43</sup> He was deeply moved by this seal of approval on his work and remarked that the news of his election had given him one of the happiest days of his life. (He was subsequently, on resuming residence in Britain, transferred to Ordinary Fellowship of the Academy, in 1998.)

#### IV

Soon, however, he had to occupy himself with personal matters. In 1990 he was scheduled to retire. The strategy for coping with this challenge had long fascinated him. In Sheffield he had taken a keen though detached

<sup>41</sup> From *The Wasting*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> W. Ashworth, writing in the *Economic History Review*, 43 (1989), 612.

<sup>43</sup> With C. Feinstein, *Studies in Capital Formation in the United Kingdom, 1750–1920* (Oxford, 1988).

interest in the responses to retirement pursued by his former colleagues. In his own case he contemplated setting up home in Harrogate which would have been close to libraries in Leeds and York. In the event, Sheffield drew him back. Before he left Bielefeld, he had bought a house in the city and moved there in 1990. His former University then appointed him an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Department of History, a post he held until his death. In 1991 at a gathering in Sheffield he was presented with a *Festschrift*, intended to mark his achievements up to retirement.<sup>44</sup> Then, in the following year, in recognition of what the Public Orator described as his 'seminal contributions to his subject', the University of Sheffield conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.<sup>45</sup>

This link with the University provided him with the facilities to continue with his work, although he spent much of his time at home. Here he maintained his demanding work schedule. He would rise early, having laid out his day's clothes on the evening before and enter his study by 8 a.m. He believed that the people who rose early dominated the world. The ritual taking of coffee still persisted. After lunch he would work through, with an interruption for afternoon tea, until 7 p.m. He pursued this regime for six and a half days of the week. Breaks did occur in this routine when he visited the University Library and also when he undertook duties elsewhere. He held visiting posts during his retirement in the United States, Japan, and Switzerland. In addition he maintained a regular attendance at the prestigious meeting of historians at Bad Homburg. He would also slip away more frequently than in the past for short breaks: Scarborough had long exercised a powerful attraction. Walking expeditions into Derbyshire, which he had always relished, also took him away for a time from his study. To the end, however, he remained single-minded, pursuing research as the chief object of his life.

In his retirement publications continued to appear. He told one young correspondent that he spent his days just pottering about.<sup>46</sup> That remark amounted to a massive understatement. *Marginal Europe* was his last major work and its acknowledgements revealed the extent to which he remained busy, aided on this occasion by an Emeritus Fellowship grant

<sup>44</sup> C. Holmes and A. E. Booth (eds.), *Economy and Society. European Industrialization and its Social Consequences* (Leicester, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> Contained in the Public Orator's address to the degree congregation, 17 July 1992.

<sup>46</sup> Details from Pollard's private papers.

from the Leverhulme Trust. This book reflected his interest in a puzzle. He wanted to understand why, in Britain,

Instead of developing out of the background of the richest and in many ways most advanced regions such as London and the Home Counties, Bristol or East Anglia . . . the great spurt in technological, economic and social change which we term the Industrial Revolution . . . had its origins, rather suprisingly, in the main in parts of the country which may be termed 'marginal', defined . . . as relatively poor, relatively backward, and located far from the centres of power and wealth.<sup>47</sup>

From this starting point he then asked whether these developments in, say, Lancashire, the Durham and Northumberland coalfield and the Southwest represented 'a simple aberration of the path of world history'.<sup>48</sup> In order to pursue this question, he concentrated especially upon the history of the Pennines and the Anglo-Scottish Borderlands, together with the Swiss and Bavarian Alps, though data drawn from all parts of Central and Western Europe were incorporated whenever relevant. The definition of marginal lands posed its own problems. In Pollard's own words 'not only might the boundary of any given marginal area change, but its degree of marginality itself is mutable, rendering a previous periphery into a central area, or vice-versa'.<sup>49</sup> Others have spotted that problem.<sup>50</sup> However, the importance of considering marginal areas, another expression of Pollard's interest in regional history, had now been placed centre stage for discussion.

## V

Sidney Pollard remained modest about his achievements and he preferred modesty in others. He had no time for what he termed the 'besserwisser', the know-all who engaged in self-projection. In his own case he claimed that his work, which displayed a marked inter-connectedness throughout his career, was merely that of a synthesiser. This suggestion needs to be placed alongside the observation of one of his contemporaries that 'Few of his generation anywhere in the world have equalled the range or

<sup>47</sup> S. Pollard, *Marginal Europe. The Contribution of Marginal Lands since the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> S. R. Epstein in the *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), 629.

excellence of his writings.<sup>51</sup> His major contributions derived from his work in four central areas: labour history; industrialisation in Britain; regional patterns of economic development in Europe as a whole; and, finally, the decline of the British economy in the twentieth century.

This life's work is yet another indication of the influence on the subsequent intellectual life of Britain exercised by the émigrés who arrived from the Greater Germany. Some scholars arrived with substantial reputations. But the young refugees had to make their way from the beginning. They faced serious problems and to surmount them required not only considerable ability but also other strong personal qualities which allowed them to benefit from this 'Second Chance'.<sup>52</sup> Pollard was one of the conspicuous success stories who carved out a substantial academic career in a context he could hardly have envisaged when he arrived lonely and anxious as a thirteen-year-old refugee at Harwich. However, in spite of his transformation he never fully escaped the past. He never discovered what had happened to his family but their fate stayed with him constantly. On returning to Vienna after the war he was handed a tablecloth, embroidered by his mother, which a neighbour had kept throughout the war, hoping that the exiled son would return to collect it. That item remained of profound significance for him. There were other powerful traces of the past. As a child he had once lived close to a chocolate factory and, wherever he went, he kept a bar of chocolate in his desk drawer, ready to be consumed when the craving arose. He maintained his preference for German wines rather than the vintages of France and the New World. His spoiling of his children, remarked upon at his funeral service, can be regarded as his attempt to compensate them for what had been taken away prematurely from him. The extended family he acquired on his second marriage provided a warm substitute for the family he had lost in Central Europe. His love of gardening which he maintained to the end, reflected the best of his early refugee experiences. So did his acute awareness of the weather. Someone who had been obliged to endure the wind and rain in Scotland and East Anglia knew all about the demands made by the elements on the lives of workers employed outdoors. In keeping

<sup>51</sup> J. Saville in his obituary notice in *The Guardian*, 22 Dec. 1998. Other notices in the national press appeared in *The Independent*, 10 Dec. 1998 and *The Times*, 18 Dec. 1998.

<sup>52</sup> W. E. Mosse *et al.* (eds.), *Second Chance. The Centuries of German-Speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tübingen, 1991). This volume derived from a conference held at Clare College, Cambridge, in Sept. 1988. Pollard was present at the proceedings.

with his early experiences he also had an immediate sympathy for the underdog, the deprived and the dispossessed, with whose experiences he could identify on the basis of his own tortured past.

But the past never left him in other ways. There was that sense of loneliness through loss which drove him on. But there was almost certainly a greater force which possessed him. Towards the end of his life, in his contribution to a collection of essays written by émigrés from Nazism, he remarked that ‘The feeling of not wholly belonging anywhere remains.’<sup>53</sup> More than any other place he could relate to Sheffield where he spent so much of his life. However, a degree of marginality, a sense of his being straddled between two cultures, remained in his consciousness. That feeling persisted despite the image which others could gather of Pollard as an integrated Englishman. In Germany, for example, he was widely regarded as the most English of Englishmen. But a reading of his book on *Marginal Europe* contains the following: ‘the margin, generally pitied or despised, could be, at times, ahead of the rest, at the cutting edge of economic and social advance; and there were good reasons in the internal resources and social make-up of these regions, why this should have been so’.<sup>54</sup> The reference is to geographical areas, but it requires no great leap of the historical imagination to find a personal dimension lurking within it.

He was driven forward, then, by powerful forces. He remained, consequently, until his death an avid reader and researcher. He busied himself with future plans. He continued to dispense advice. In particular, he remained ever curious about the world and continued with his efforts to understand it. He was fortunate that right to the very end he could continue with his own academic work and he would have wished it so. Years earlier when he arrived as a child refugee he had brought with him a reference provided by the Director of his school in Vienna. Written with an awareness of his pupil’s needs in exile, he emphasised that, ‘Der Genannte ist ein sehr begabter, arbeitswilliger und gesitteter Schüler und kann daher in jeder Hinsicht bestens empfehlen werden.’<sup>55</sup> There is no doubt that in his later life, in his bearing and achievements, Pollard fulfilled all these early expectations.

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<sup>53</sup> S. Pollard, ‘In Search of a Social Purpose’, p. 216.

<sup>54</sup> See *Marginal Europe*, pp. 1 and 267–8 for Pollard’s interest in human marginality.

<sup>55</sup> A reference provided on 8 Dec. 1938. It is now in Pollard’s private papers.

*Note.* In writing this memoir I have benefited from discussions at various times with Sir Kenneth Alexander, Roger Allum, Alan Booth, the late William Carr, George Clayton, the late J. C. Gilbert, Ora Kedem, the late Brian McCormick, and Ronald Rees. I have also drawn from the obituaries written by David Martin, Peter Mathias, and John Saville. The addresses at the memorial service for Pollard, especially the offerings of Alice Teichova and Dieter Ziegler have also added to the picture. I am indebted particularly to Dieter Ziegler for additional detail. This memoir could not have been completed without the co-operation of Helen Pollard, Brian Pollard, David Pollard, and Veronica Pollard. None of these people is responsible for the final shape of the notice. Finally, the memoir has drawn heavily on Sidney Pollard's published works and also the conversations and discussions we had over many years.