EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

On 24 June 1980, William Hare, known to some as Billy Hare, fifth Earl of Listowel,[1] delivered the ninth Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture. As someone who had been the last Secretary of State for India he began his talk on the British transfer of power by stating that the story had been told before 'from the angle of the narrators'.[2] The narratives of key British players (and many Indian ones too) in the drama surrounding the demission of power in India had indeed been told either by themselves or in substantial biographies. Even the famously reticent Clement Attlee had penned accounts of this critical historical event,[3] while others like Lord Mountbatten almost never ceased to produce accounts in the public sphere on their contribution to what was unquestionably the seminal moment in the late British Empire.

This is Listowel's narrative of events. His career covered not only the transfer of power in India, but a great deal more. This is the first publication of an edition of his memoirs, encompassing his ninety eventful years. Listowel was a member of an old Anglo-Irish family. William Francis Hare's great-grandfather had been an Irish MP representing Cork and in 1800, on the dissolution of the Irish Parliament was raised to the Irish peerage as Baron Ennismore, advancing to viscount in 1816 and finally becoming the first earl of Listowel in 1822. The fifth earl's grandfather became a peer of the United Kingdom in 1869 with the title Baron Hare, which enabled him and his heirs to sit in the House of Lords. Listowel was born in London on 28 September 1906. He attended Eton where he was allegedly known as the only Labour supporter there other than the headmaster's wife, Mrs Alington. The poverty he witnessed in London as a boy reputedly kindled his interest in socialism.[4] He

[1] He will be referred to in this introduction and in all the footnotes as Listowel.

[2] Earl of Listowel, 'The British Partner in the Transfer of Power', The Ninth Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture, 24 June 1980, p. 1.

[3] For example, Clement Attlee, *As it Happened* (London, 1954), or Francis Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers: The War and Post-War Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Earl Attlee*, based on his private papers and on a series of recorded conversations (London, 1961).

[4] George Ireland, 'William Francis Hare, fifth Earl of Listowel', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

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then went to Balliol College, Oxford, but his father, Richard Granville Hare, from 1924 fourth earl of Listowel, a Conservative, removed him believing that his son was coming under the influence of left-wingers at the university. As he recounted later 'I regarded the Labour Party as representing the under-dog. It was of course, a complete break with family tradition'.[5] Indeed, his father's aggravation was prompted in particular when it had come to his attention that his son had appeared in a debate as plain Mr Hare dropping his courtesy title of Viscount Ennismore. From there he went to Magdalene College, Cambridge, but the admonitions of his father did not curtail his left-wing sympathies as he joined the university Labour Party. He attended many party events. After Cambridge he completed a PhD in London and spent time studying in Germany and France. Before he was thirty he had completed two books on critical philosophy *The Values of Life*[6] and *A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics*.[7] In 1931, when Listowel was twenty-five, his father died and he became the fifth earl of Listowel. His father's anger at his left-wing views had meant he was disinherited – though, as the memoirs relate, it is possible this was not meant to be the case. Like Attlee and others Listowel spent time working at Toynbee Hall and sincerely believed in social justice, especially for those in poverty and facing discrimination. While his hopes for a seat in the Commons evaporated with his elevation – renouncing his title was not a legal option at the time – he decided to join the sparsely populated Labour benches in the Lords. In these years, he travelled widely for the Labour cause including going to Spain with Ellen Wilkinson during the civil war and also doing his best to encourage support for China and the Soviet Union. Unable to join the Commons he was elected to the London City Council as the Labour member for East Lewisham in 1937. On the outbreak of war he volunteered for the army, but was rejected for active service due to his defective eyesight and served instead at 'home' with the Royal Army Medical Corps and later with the Intelligence Corps.

In 1941 he was persuaded to be the Labour whip in the Lords and took an increasingly active role in the chamber both for Labour and for Churchill's Wartime Coalition. Hugh Dalton confided to his diary the weakness of the few Labour peers in the upper house.

[5] Listowel quoted in an interview in September 1994 with Martin Pugh in his article, '"Class Traitors": Conservative recruits to Labour, 1900–30', *English Historical Review*, 113, 450 (February 1998), 53.

[6] Viscount Ennismore [as Listowel was then], *The Values of Life* (London, 1931).

[7] Earl of Listowel, *A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics* (London, 1933; recently repr. Routledge, 2016 in their Aesthetics series).

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The few did not impress this influential, but difficult senior Labour insider. Various Labour front benchers in the Lords were privately described as 'a complete nitwit', 'a pansy pacifist of whose private tendencies it might be slander to speak freely', 'a small man', 'very old indeed and deafer still'. His comments on Listowel, comparatively, seem merciful whom he describes as 'always white with stage fright and rather reassured that Labour peers were tolerated after all'.[8] Later in January 1943 over a dinner with Attlee, then deputy prime minister, the Labour leader revealed to Dalton that he had tried to get Listowel appointed to the government as under-secretary for either the Colonies or India, but was unable to persuade Churchill, mainly due to divisions of office between the coalition parties. Dalton archly divulged to his diary that he is 'quite glad that he [Attlee] didn't get in this poor little wisp of a peer, for he would have been of very little use and it would have roused great jealousies elsewhere'.[9] However, Attlee eventually succeeded and Listowel gained office as under-secretary of state for India in late 1944 and deputy leader in the Lords in Churchill's wartime coalition government. Even Dalton admitted just prior to the 1945 general election that Listowel was one of the few peers fit for office in any future Labour government.[10] On Labour's victory under Attlee he entered the Cabinet as Postmaster General and the youngest of His Majesty's Cabinet ministers, being just thirty-eight. When one considers that the average age of the Attlee Cabinet in 1945 was sixty-one,[11] it is all the more extraordinary that Listowel entered Cabinet before he reached forty. Listowel was, in Kenneth Morgan's survey of the Labour government, seen as one of the 'talented figures', who helped make the House of Lords more amenable to the government's legislation despite that chamber's almost atavistic disapproval of what Labour represented.[12] His biggest role was yet to come.

Days before his appointment as under-secretary of state for India in the wartime coalition, Listowel had sent a message to D.V. Tahmankar, the London editor of the United Press of India, for publication in the *Hindustan Times* on 14 November 1944 on the occasion of Nehru's fifty-fifth birthday. Listowel had to ask Tahmankar to write an addendum to the effect that the message had indeed been

[8] Diary entry, 27 October 1942, in Hugh Dalton, *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton 1940–45*, ed. Ben Pimlott (London, 1986), 508–509.

[9] Diary entry, 5 January 1943 in Dalton, *Second World War Diary*, 542–543.

[10] Diary entry, 25 April 1945 in Dalton, *Second World War Diary*, 854.

[11] R.K. Alderman and J.A. Cross, 'Rejuvenating the Cabinet: The record of post-war British prime ministers compared', *Political Studies*, 34, 4 (1986), 641.

[12] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945–51* (Oxford, 1983), 83.

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sent before he had any idea he would be appointed to the India Office. He had said

> I am glad of the opportunity to send a message to Mr. Nehru on his birthday … I met Mr. Nehru when he was in London before the war, I have read his book, and I have the greatest respect for his sincerity and strength of purpose. I feel that at this moment, when I and many of his other British friends probably differ from him about immediate issues relating to the war, it is specially important to emphasise our underlying agreement about the direction in which India must travel towards political independence and high standards of life, and to repeat my own conviction that he has a leading part to play in the future of India. I look forward to the time when he will again figure in the forefront of Indian political life.[13]

As Listowel recounts in his memoirs, his new boss, the Conservative Secretary of State for India throughout the wartime coalition, Leo Amery, was not overly impressed by this. No doubt Churchill, had it been brought to his attention, would not have been overjoyed either, being more reactionary in regard to India than Amery. This was in part caused by Nehru and Congress's different views from the Cabinet regarding the war and especially India's part in it, which not only resulted in grumbling in Downing Street but in Nehru's imprisonment. This was not an impediment, however, in the eyes of Attlee, now Prime Minister, who had kept relatively quiet on the India Committee during the coalition to serve wartime goals and save a fight with Churchill. Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, wanted a new man as India secretary and the septuagenarian Lord Pethick-Lawrence was ready to retire. Though he said he wanted Listowel 'because I already knew him and he was deeply steeped in India and I thought would be an easy person to deal with', the young earl was an 'afterthought' according to Mountbatten's biographer, Philip Ziegler. The new Viceroy was petrified that Sir Stafford Cripps, a highly determined and long-standing Labour expert on India, would go to Delhi himself with his own plenipotentiary powers and that Mountbatten would have to deal with what he thought would be the 'third version of the Cripps offer' countering any of the Viceroy's initiatives. Consequently, Mountbatten thought Cripps might be better at the India Office – and thus far away from the action. In contrast, Listowel was more 'amenable' to Mountbatten's personal ambitions perhaps because he was not privy to them beforehand and not of

[13] Listowel to Tahmankar, 28 October 1944, IOR: L/I/1/1443, India Office Library Collection, British Library, London.

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the same rank or influence as Cripps.[14] Not knowing any of this Listowel recalled that he 'accepted not without gloomy anticipation of the many anxieties which this great responsibility would bring; but I had long believed, since I was a university student, that India was fit for self-government … [and therefore] I could not shirk'.[15] Attlee deftly, and with the pithy clarity he was famed for, was firm in his choice. He told the youngest of his Cabinet ministers that 'it is quite clear to me that you have greater experience than anyone else available for this position. You will certainly need to work hard to catch up with the work … I do not think you need worry about insecurity … I am quite sure you can do the job all right'.[16]

Attlee, of course, had his own motives, as Listowel would learn and candidly admitted. The Prime Minister wanted to direct India policy himself and therefore a secretary of state for India in the Lords, like Pethick-Lawrence before him, would mean the Prime Minister would answer and command the subject in the House that mattered. As Listowel remarked, India animated the typically reserved Prime Minister, since on that subject in the Cabinet Room Attlee 'quite unlike his usual habit of quietly listening and doodling while others talked, became the dominant personality'. He met little opposition from the Cabinet and seemed to have with the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, 'at heart an old fashioned imperialist' a sort of 'non-intervention pact at Cabinet level between those two potentially formidable opponents', which enabled Attlee's (and Cripps's) recommendations on India to fly with 'little discussion and no substantial alteration'.[17] For all the admiration for Attlee and his historic role, Listowel believed that Sir Stafford Cripps was the essential force in the Cabinet in terms of its India policy. In 1978 he wrote as much to Lady Cripps saying that her late husband 'played a more important part than Attlee in the policy decisions leading up to the transfer', even though, as Cripps's biographer Peter Clarke argues, the contrary view is more often expressed.[18] The circumstances and realities of the Indian situation demanded imaginative, high-level responses. Attlee, in reality, with Cripps, took the key decisions concerning India in Cabinet. Listowel was often left out of the conversation and rarely was given an opportunity to influence the big decisions. As a small indication of this, when there was discussion

[14] Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography* (London, 1985), 356.
[15] 'Whitehall Events and Personalities, 1944–1950', undated, Listowel Private Collection.
[16] Attlee to Listowel, 5 April 1947, Listowel Private Collection.
[17] Lord Listowel, 'With Attlee for Indian Independence', Fifth Attlee Lecture, 16 February 1988, pp. 7–8
[18] Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps 1889–1952* (London, 2002), 467 and n. 35.

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in May 1947 of whether a Cabinet minister should go directly to India to 'settle matters there with full powers', Listowel, as secretary of state for India, was not considered a realistic option despite being the responsible minister.[19]

As R.J. Moore argues it is very likely, for all the flurry of memoranda and attentive communication, that the appointment of the youthful Listowel as secretary of state in place of Pethick-Lawrence gave the Viceroy 'enhanced … freedom' on the ground in India, which Mountbatten himself admitted.[20] Listowel was no pliant tool of Mountbatten, however, and, both officially and off the record, stated his reservations in writing and at times, as Moore argues, was 'alarmed at the tenor' of statements made by the Viceroy and 'demurred at Mountbatten's intimation[s]' to Indians, since there was usually a crevice between allusion and reality, especially regarding the princely states and their rights and prerogatives.[21] In one rare hint of disagreement with Attlee, Listowel explained that he believed he should have been told in advance by the Prime Minister on his appointment as secretary of state for India that Mountbatten had been given his so called plenipotentiary powers to decide things on the spot, since, as secretary of state, 'if Mountbatten had made a serious error of judgment and anything had gone wrong in India, I should have had to "carry the can" '.[22]

Chandrika Kaul has argued that Listowel was worried about the BBC and other media giving too much of an impression of British accomplishment and celebration as independence dawned in the midst of communal violence as a consequence of Partition. This would in Listowel's words, give unintentional offence as 'we should appear to be trying to emphasise awful consequences of abandonment of power'.[23] Indeed, writing over thirty years later, he confessed that '[i]t has been said that in agreeing with such alacrity to the final Partition Plan we failed to foresee the mass migrations and massacres in the Punjab to which it would lead. This is true. We did not foresee the terrible consequences of dividing the Province'. He then asked

[19] Rowan to Attlee, 14 May 1947, document 435 in *The Transfer of Power 1942–47: Constitutional Relations Between Britain and India*, Vol. X, Nicholas Mansergh, editor-in-chief (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1981), 818.

[20] R.J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford, 1984), 236.

[21] R.J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire: Studies of Britain's Indian Problem* (New Delhi, 1988), 195–198.

[22] Lord Listowel, 'The Whitehall dimension of the transfer of power', *Indo-British Review*, Vol. 7, Nos 3 and 4, (1978), 24.

[23] Chandrika Kaul, ' "At the Stroke of the Midnight Hour": Lord Mountbatten and the British media at Indian independence', *Round Table*, 97, 398 (October 2008), 688.

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himself rhetorically whether the 'greatest human disaster in India since the turn of the century' with millions destitute and thousands upon thousands of dead could have been averted. Listowel believed it impossible to answer such a question, but did argue that the 'sheer pace and momentum of Mountbatten's policy … gave no time for second thoughts', which enabled the agreement of both Jinnah and Nehru to the plan to divide India. More time, Listowel argues, would have seen a breakdown of that brittle settlement that acknowledged and realised the new states of Pakistan and India.[24] In an interview for the *End of Empire* documentary series in 1982, Listowel thought that in an otherwise commendable tenure as viceroy, Mountbatten 'for once … had slipped up' by underestimating how much the Sikhs would fight, and that the Cabinet had little idea beyond Attlee and Cripps, since 'the thing is that most members of the cabinet know almost nothing about India'.[25] Perhaps mindful of the calamity of being defeated or damaged in the House of Lords, which would derail the Attlee-Mountbatten rapid timetable, Listowel rose in the chamber to introduce the Indian Independence Bill by saying that the British 'in India have displayed an understanding not exceeded by the genius of the Romans, of the political requirements of a society utterly different from their own'.[26] As the son of a peer, he had sat on the steps of the throne in the Lords, and in 1926 had listened to Lord Irwin, the future earl of Halifax, on his way to India as viceroy. Lord Halifax spoke this time in defence of the bill and thus helped Listowel. As he recounted over forty years later, Halifax's speech 'was the only occasion I can remember in over fifty years in the House of Lords when a single speech has changed the mood of the House'.[27] Then the extraordinary bill went through easily and history was made. In one of his final telegrams to the Viceroy as secretary of state for India, on the eve of independence, Listowel praised Mountbatten as the man who had 'saved India from unimaginable disaster' and that would be 'remembered in time to come as one of the greatest feats of statesmanship in history'.[28]

[24] Listowel, 'Whitehall dimension of the transfer of power', 28.

[25] End of Empire Interviews: Archive Log of Transcripts, Lord Listowel, May 1982, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 527, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

[26] House of Lords Debate, 16 July 1947, *Hansard*, Vol. 150, cols 802–74.

[27] Andrew Roberts, *The Hold Fox: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 2004), 298.

[28] Not all shared this view. The Earl of Listowel to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, 14 August 1947 in document 480 in *The Transfer of Power 1942–47: Constitutional Relations Between Britain and India*, Vol. XII, Nicholas Mansergh, editor-in chief (London: HMSO, 1983), 726–727.

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Listowel seemed willing to help India and its interim government, including assistance on questions of diplomatic representation, sterling balances and a shared condemnation of the aggressive and armed restoration of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia.[29] Listowel, of course, not only had to deal with the Indian National Congress, but also the Muslim League. He personally had to tread carefully over the highly contentions Boundary Commission under Sir Cyril Radcliffe, where Jinnah carefully read every announcement from the India Office and was ready to pounce on any purported deviation from the agreed understanding.[30] As Listowel recalled he was not just secretary of state for India, but once it became inevitable, for Pakistan too. In 1984 Listowel gave an address on Jinnah at a memorial meeting at Lincoln's Inn. Listowel recalled meeting Pakistan's founder several times in London and once as his guest in Karachi, where Jinnah was now governor general. He found a 'relaxed and genial host, a very different person from the stern unbending figure usually depicted'. In the course of the lecture, almost forty years after independence, Listowel said that 'partition seemed to most of the British an evil to be averted at almost any cost' and yet 'from a greater distance in time we can perceive that they took too shortsighted and too self-centred a political view', since Jinnah's Pakistan is a 'secure and permanent reality', despite so many thinking it 'to be impossible'. For Listowel, of all the personalities in the drama, Jinnah was 'remarkable' in his 'clarity and inflexible determination about his vision of the future'.[31]

India (and Pakistan) were not the only things on Listowel's ministerial plate. He was also secretary of state for Burma and this was his only role after Indian independence in August 1947, till Burma's own independence in January 1948. As in India, he had to try and keep the peace between the different local factions and engender a Commonwealth connection. Listowel and the civil servant Sir Gilbert Laithwaite went to Burma to try and persuade the Burmese to accept Commonwealth membership, but, as he argues in the memoirs, a combination of misunderstanding of what

[29] See, for example, correspondence between Listowel and Krishna Menon regarding Indonesia in July 1947, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru,* 2nd ser., Vol. 3 (New Delhi, 1985), 358–363.

[30] See, for example, Jinnah's querying the contents of a speech made by Arthur Henderson, under-secretary of state for India, regarding the terms of reference of the Boundary Commission, July 1947, in Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), *Jinnah Papers: On the Threshold of Pakistan 1 July–25 July 1947*, 1st ser., Vol. 3 (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 1996), 481–482.

[31] Lord Listowel, 'Jinnah', Jinnah Memorial Lecture, April 1984, Lincoln's Inn, London.

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membership meant and the Cabinet's attention on India at the cost of Burma's future relations led to an inability to find a formula for the country to stay in the Commonwealth as a republic akin to the agreement that India would later get in April 1949.[32] Listowel was candid enough to tell Karen leaders in September 1947 gathered in Rangoon that he had been unable to secure the conditions that the Karens, who had 'such long, close and intimate relations' with Britain, wanted with the new Burmese state. Starkly, he warned them that no further financial assistance could be given to Karens living in what would soon be a 'foreign state' as opposed to a Commonwealth one. Listowel confessed that this and other related issues in Burma was a 'real disappointment', in effect admitting to his audience that Britain was leaving with obligations unmet and relations less close than hoped.[33] As late as 1985 a Karen in Burma would tell a visiting academic from the United Kingdom: 'Please take a message to Lord Listowel … Tell him about our situation'.[34]

On 11 September 1947, Listowel, no longer secretary of state for India, on his way home from Burma was in New Delhi as a guest of the Mountbattens at what was now Government House during a time when India was facing a great deal of hardship and an austerity regime meal was served among the contrasting splendour of his surroundings with a 'three-course repast consisting of some cabbage-water masquerading as soup, one piece of spam and potato, a biscuit and a small portion of cheese'. The Viceroy's press secretary, Alan Campbell-Johnson, observed that the noble earl asked afterwards 'whether this dinner had been specially laid on for his benefit!',[35] perhaps a droll comment on the rationing wartime Britain still faced after the war.

Writing in 1978 he believed that 'British statesmanship in the pre-war decade was at the lowest ebb that I can remember in forty-five years of public life' and had massive consequences on India, Pakistan and Burma: 'In the context of history, the transfer of power in 1947 was no more than a mitigation of the failure of British policy to part with it earlier, and to a united India'.[36] As

[32] Listowel's visit to Burma 1948, IOR/M/4/2148, India Office Library Collection, British Library, London.

[33] 'Speech by the Earl of Listowel to the Karen Leaders', 8 September 1947, document 515, in Hugh Tinker (ed.), *Burma: The Struggle for Independence 1944–1948: Constitutional Relations between Britain and Burma*, Vol. II (London: HMSO, 1984), 748–750.

[34] Julian Berger, 'Indigenous Peoples in Commonwealth countries: The legacies of the past and present-day struggles for self-determination', *Round Table*, 102, 4 (2013), 336.

[35] Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London, 1985), 186.

[36] Listowel, 'The Whitehall dimension of the transfer of power', 31.

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Peter Hennessy has argued, the Attlee years were full of idealism despite dealing with harsh post-war realities. In Hennessy's astute eyes there has never been in British history a more 'progressive phase to match 1945–51'.[37] The independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the emergence of the modern Commonwealth in 1949 and the process of decolonization during this period are undoubtedly part of this, as, of course, was Listowel.

Listowel thus found himself in the remarkable situation of successfully effecting the abolition of his jobs. With Indian and Burmese independence, his offices ceased to exist and unlike Mountbatten honours did not come his way and instead he found himself demoted to become a minister of Colonial Affairs, but typically Listowel preferred substance over style and relished the new opportunities of advancing self-government to other parts of the British Empire. In Australasia Listowel was given the tough mission of convincing the Antipodean prime ministers of the virtues of not only a republican India, but of a new conception of the Commonwealth that relaxed the hitherto constitutional requirement of keeping the Crown domestically as part of the local institutional infrastructure. Listowel was told in New Zealand, the Commonwealth member with the most intransigent attitude towards the issue at the time, that 'it would be more satisfactory to exclude India at this stage' rather than diminish the monarchy and risk change.[38] Eventually Attlee was able to convince all the Commonwealth ministers of the necessity of including republican India and with this the modern Commonwealth was born in April 1949.[39] In the Colonial Office he also had the heady task of dealing with Palestine, Malaya, and the West Indian territories among others. After the 1950 election he became a junior minister in Agriculture and Fisheries, a post he himself admitted he was most unsuited for. He remained in his job until Labour was defeated in the general election of October 1951.

Listowel was seen as a 'paternalistic' minister towards the colonies by the imperial historian D.K. Fieldhouse, but these memoirs reveal a different portrait.[40] Listowel saw Attlee as 'truly the architect of our

[37] Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945–51* (London, 2006), 454.

[38] H. Kumarasingham, 'The "New Commonwealth" 1947–49: A New Zealand perspective on India Joining the Commonwealth', *Round Table*, 95, 385 (July 2006), 441–454.

[39] See H. Kumarasingham, 'A new monarchy for a new Commonwealth? Monarchy and the consequences of republican India', in Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (eds), *Crowns and Colonies: European Monarchies and Overseas Empires* (Manchester, 2016), 283–308.

[40] D.K. Fieldhouse, 'The Labour governments and the empire-commonwealth, 1945–51', in Ritchie Ovendale (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments, 1945–1951* (Leicester, 1984), 107–108.

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modern Commonwealth' and himself saw it being one of great organizations for world peace and friendship out of the rubble of Empire – unlike what he had seen of the violent ending of French and Dutch imperialism and post-colonial hostility in Asia particularly.[41] Seeing as he did the will of non-white territories, Listowel believed the Commonwealth was an opportunity to redress colonial inequality and provide a body to promote progressive policies across the developing world. Indeed, for some in the Fabian Colonial Bureau, where Listowel was a long-standing stalwart, independence was not the goal. As Rita Hinden explained, to the consternation of Kwame Nkrumah in 1946, 'British socialists are not so concerned with ideals like independence and self-government, but with the idea of social justice.'[42] In opposition, Listowel co-wrote a Fabian publication called *Challenge to the British Caribbean* in 1952, which attacked the existing colonial system in the region and closely analysed the poor economic and political benefits for those who lived in these British territories. Listowel and his co-authors believed that, along with social reform, for the conditions of the British Caribbean to improve 'There is no answer other than in Federation' and with full collective self-government the Caribbean could 'manage its own affairs and … play its full part in the shaping of world events'.[43] Just months before going to Ghana as governor general, he wrote for the Fabian International Bureau in July 1957 a 'Fabian Tract' entitled 'Commonwealth Future' that argued among other things that 'If we in Britain are to pay more than lip-service to the Commonwealth, we must be prepared to forgo an element in our prosperity for the sake of those who lag far behind. This is the real challenge for believers in a world-wide community.'[44]

Nkrumah, a Commonwealth fellow traveller, gave Listowel his next dramatic job – the last governor general of Ghana in November 1957. The famous activist George Padmore, described by British officials, as a 'West Indian Marxist' and 'High Priest of Pan-Africanism' then advising Nkrumah, but without an official position, apparently 'reproached' Nkrumah for wanting a European to have the role.[45] Indeed Padmore had in fact written to the leftist

[41] Listowel, 'With Attlee for Indian independence', 1–22.

[42] Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914–1964* (London, 1975), 325–326.

[43] Earl of Listowel, Rawle Farley, Rita Hinden, Colin Hughes, *Challenge to the British Caribbean* (London, 1952), 36–37.

[44] Lord Listowel, 'Commonwealth Future', Fabian Tract 308, Fabian International Bureau (July 1957), 30.

[45] High Commissioner to Commonwealth Secretary, 18 April 1957, The National Archives of the UK (TNA), DO 35/6199.

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Ceylon government of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in the hope that their Governor General, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, might replace Arden-Clarke in Ghana.[46] Nothing came of this. It seems Lord Rennell was also in the running and the sitting Governor General, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, believed that it would be Rennell who would succeed him, but again this did not happen, perhaps due to Rennell's City and Conservative connections. The idea of a Ghanaian choice was also unattractive, since it was believed that Nkrumah did not savour the idea of another African stealing any limelight from him. So, it was Listowel who was chosen. His Fabian colours and role in India no doubt commended him to the Ghanaian leader. As his obituary in *The Times* reported, Listowel, whose outlook 'had always been a left-wing one', and as an active member of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, 'had no difficulty at all in adjusting to the "wind of change" era', that began in Ghana.[47] The *Ghana Daily Graphic* was clearly impressed that the son of a Conservative peer had joined Labour and proudly reported that when he was asked, on his selection as governor general designate, about his motives for 'embracing Labour' he replied: 'I felt the Labour Party would do more to help the ordinary people of the country than the Conservatives.'[48] Nonetheless, under the Conservative government, he was made a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of St Michael and St George to uphold the expectations of his new vice-regal office.

Listowel's dress and acclimatization to Ghanaian conditions clearly distressed some Britons in Ghana and was thus reported to the Commonwealth Relations Office. An MP even took the trouble to bring a letter from a Mrs Marriot to the attention of the Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Home, since Listowel's ways were conceived as 'regrettable' and 'damaging' to the Commonwealth.

> The British Community here are all very upset at our Governor-General – why the British Government sent a Socialist Irishman I can't imagine. He does not seem to care two hoots for British prestige. When they arrived back from leave, Lady Listowel's first appearance as Governor-General's wife, she arrived in slacks! Everyone there to meet them in gloves, hats, stockings etc. They gave a cocktail party for all the delegates to the African Conference and both he and Lady L. came dressed in the local native dress – kente cloth. All Africans in their best 'gents' natty suitings'.

[46] Commonwealth Relations Office Telegram to High Commissioners on 'Governor-General of Ghana', 9 May 1957, TNA, DO 35/6199.
[47] *The Times*, 13 March 1997.
[48] *Ghana Daily Graphic*, 12 November 1957.

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> Apparently even the Africans were livid. It's most distressing: we wonder now if they will wear kente cloth to greet The Queen.[49]

Meanwhile a retired brigadier from Suffolk, clearly not appreciating that Ghana was no longer ruled by Britain and thus no concern of the Colonial Office, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, complaining that Listowel as 'Governor' was 'not a particularly good example of British habits and customs to have before the Africans'.[50] An anonymous letter arrived at the Colonial Office of a clipping from the *Daily Mail* describing Listowel and his new wife, Stephanie Wise, going night-clubbing and not leaving the Coq d'Or till 4 a.m., 'one of the gayest night-clubs in Casablanca' and eating couscous 'a sort of curry made of mutton and chicken' and sipping champagne. Lady Listowel 'danced with Moroccans' [double underlined by the sender] and 'exchanged jokes with Berbers who danced in the cabaret'. In the corner of the clipping was handwritten the censorious injunction that 'Governors and their wives, we understand, have to he[a]d up British prestige abroad', clearly thinking the Listowels were doing the opposite.[51] The Ghanaian press, people and politicians, meanwhile, seemed very happy that Listowel had not only chosen to get married in Ghana, but that the bride's ring was made of the famous gold of the country. Nkrumah appreciated Listowel and he was given a grand send-off in 1960, but nearly outstayed his welcome, as the plane carrying him almost failed to get airborne in time to avoid the constitutional indignity of the Queen's Representative being still on the ground as the Republic of Ghana dawned.

Not long after his return from Accra, Listowel took part in the debate in the Lords where famously Lord Salisbury attacked the Conservative Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod, in March 1961 for being 'too clever by half' by effectively abandoning the Europeans in Africa and pursuing decolonization at, what appeared to people like Salisbury, an unseemly pace. Listowel tried to insert a conciliatory approach into the debate, but would not hide his deep concern for the African communities under British rule and tried to put on to Salisbury personally a responsibility for African self-government, as a former Colonial and Commonwealth Office minister. His intervention did little, however, to abate the rancour that Salisbury's verbal assault on the Colonial Secretary caused in the Lords and elsewhere.

[49] Ronald M. Bell MP to Lord Home, 12 January 1959, with extract of letter from Mrs Marriot to Lady Kittermaster, 30 December 1958, TNA, DO 35/9289.

[50] 13 August 1958, TNA, DO 35/9289.

[51] July 1958, TNA, DO 35/9289.

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The Lord Chancellor believed it the most 'bitter' assault on a minister in his 26-year parliamentary career.[52]

Linked to these views on race, Commonwealth migration was a hot topic in post-war Britain. Harold Macmillan, then minister of defence, confided to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Eden, in January 1955 that Listowel might be the person who could raise the subject of controlling the 'problem' of immigration from the British Caribbean, since Lord Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor, thought he might be amenable to a debate in the House of Lords. Macmillan was 'surprised' to learn this, as 'He is normally the wettest thing I know' and thought he would normally have 'been in favour of mixing up blacks and whites', but perhaps if his 'opinions are sound' he could be the peer they needed from the opposition to avoid its being seen as a Conservative ploy.[53] This assertion that Listowel was at least willing to discuss this despite his 'wetness' is confirmed by his being sounded out by other Conservatives like Lord Munster, who were worried about their party's policy being labelled as the blatant colour bar discrimination that it was. Listowel replied that he would need to discuss this with the senior Labour colonial affairs spokesman James Griffiths and get more information if 'coloured' immigration to Britain was indeed a problem and needed a policy check, a reaction, as D.W. Dean argues that was 'scarcely indicating uncompromising hostility'.[54] It could also be that Listowel's natural conciliatory nature allowed this impression and perhaps as well the reality that within Labour itself under Attlee it was discussed and later in the Wilson administration it became policy to impose restrictions on certain Commonwealth migrants that correlated to colour and race. Though this was realpolitik it was not unnatural for figures like Macmillan to be 'surprised' that they were not rebuffed by Listowel since he always aligned himself with Fabian beliefs and an association with self-determination and racial equality.

Having reached the Cabinet table before the age of forty, it was as Greg Rosen argues a little surprising to some, that Harold Wilson did not invite him to join his administration on Labour's victory in 1964. Arguably, though, Listowel found a more convivial role for his talents as chairman of committees and deputy speaker in the House of Lords

[52] *The Times*, 8 March 1961.

[53] 'West Indian Immigration', note by Macmillan to Eden, 14 January 1955, PREM 11/824, in *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1951–1957*, Part III: Economic and Social Policies, ed. David Goldsworthy, in *British Documents on the End of the Empire*, Ser. A, Vol. 3 (London: HMSO, 1994), document 523.

[54] D.W. Dean, 'Conservative governments and the restriction of Commonwealth immigration in the 1950s: The problems of constraint', *Historical Journal*, 35, 1 (1992), 187.

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the next year and held the post till 1976.[55] Andrew Roth described him colourfully as being 'the virtually unknown Fabian liberator of India, Pakistan and Burma'. Roth went on to write that he had last met Listowel at a Labour Party function in 1996 in the Lords, the year before his death, and was asked afterwards by some party members 'the name of the slight, grey and balding peer', despite being Labour's longest-serving peer in the Lords and its first, and the House's longest-serving, chairman of committees and deputy speaker. Lord Graham of Edmonton believed that for 'Billy' this period as a committee man in the Lords was a 'golden period in his life. His patience and sympathy for all benches gave the true feeling that he was working for all, and he gained additional respect which lasted until the day he died'.[56] As chairman of committees in the Lords he was able, at least, to give female peers the pleasure of approving in December 1965 their request to wear hats while speaking in the chamber.[57] Well into his eighties, Listowel was among those to defend and represent Labour interests in the upper house, despite, especially during the Thatcher years, the sparseness and advanced age of peers on the Labour benches.[58]

Listowel was an active person and heavily involved in a wide range of public activities. It says something about Listowel that he could be invited to give lectures on, and had known personally, Attlee, Mountbatten, Nehru and Jinnah. H.V. Hodson remembered Listowel as a 'loyal party member, a sound administrator, a good listener and a good chairman, a kind, gentle and gifted man, without competitive ambition, without a single enemy'.[59] He was a founder member of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society in 1935 and served as the longest-serving president of the world's first such society from 1951 to 1980 and then again from 1983 to 1995. His fellow member, the broadcaster Ludovic Kennedy, remembered that Listowel's 'commitment to the movement was part of his devotion to human rights' and his 'wisdom, political experience and charm inspired members', who totalled over 20,000 at the time of his death with over £1 million in assets in the society.[60] His connection to the society

[55] Greg Rosen, '5th Earl of Listowel (William Francis 'Billy' Listowel)', in Greg Rosen (ed.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (London, 2001), 360–362.

[56] *The House Magazine*, 24 March 1997.

[57] *The Times*, 21 December 1965.

[58] *The Times*, 4 May 1989.

[59] H.V. Hodson interviewed by Qutubuddin Aziz, *Encounter* (Pakistan), 1 November 1997.

[60] Ludovic Kennedy, *The Guardian*, 14 March 1997. He spoke on the subject of voluntary euthanasia at the Cambridge Union on 26 October 1981.

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may have encouraged the detailed correspondence he maintained with the Legalize Cannabis Campaign in the 1980s.[61]

Listowel's description of his role in the transfer of power to India perhaps illustrates more generally his role in British history:

> the recollections and reflections of one of the supporting cast in Whitehall may add an useful footnote to the sum of knowledge about a turning point in modern history.[62]

Listowel, while not a footnote, was never the key player. Instead through his long years in public life he was able, whether in the council room in the India Office, on the tennis court at State House in Accra, on the red leather benches of the House of Lords, at the bar after some difficult foreign mission, or in a committee room at Westminster, to judge and witness great, and not so great, events and individuals in British and Commonwealth history. Beneath the cover of a mild-mannered, quiet, courteous and bespectacled Englishman was hidden a man of many parts and views.

Listowel died on 12 March 1997 almost fifty years exactly after receiving the seals of office as secretary of state for India, metaphorically since the originals were lost (as recounted below). 1997 was also the year that India and Pakistan would celebrate fifty years of independence and that in which his old party, Labour, would achieve its greatest electoral victory since his old boss Attlee won the 1945 contest. Longevity, however, is no reason in itself to reflect upon his career. A Cabinet minister, social activist, campaigner, author, thinker, Queen's Representative, public servant, Parliamentarian and especially intimate witness of, and sometime participant in, some of the most important events of British history in the twentieth century must together focus our attention on examining and learning from the experiences and perspectives of a life devoted, sincerely and modestly, to the public good.

* * * * *

Lord Listowel lived a long life and these memoirs were completed in October 1995 just after his eighty-ninth birthday. It appeared in private circulation as *Memoirs – Earl of Listowel*. The main text of the memoirs needed hardly any alteration, since it was crafted carefully and with an eye to posterity. Thus as editor I have left the text largely as I found it with the exception of necessary formatting and, most critically, the insertion of a substantial number of footnotes. So many of the individuals Listowel came across in his long life are not

[61] Sean Blanchard to Listowel, 19 July 1982, Listowel Private Collection.

[62] Lord Listowel, 'The Whitehall dimension of the transfer of power', *Indo-British Review*, Vol. 7, Nos 3 and 4 (1978), 22.

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as well-known as they should be, or at least not nearly as recognizable as they were when he came across them. This tendency is further accentuated when there is a need, for example, to traverse a range of people from Carlists in interwar Spain to civil servants in Nkrumah's Ghana, including a stream of British characters spanning the leaderships of Ramsay Macdonald to Tony Blair. Where footnotes are italicized these are notes Listowel himself made and not mine. It was not always possible to find the necessary biographical information on the people mentioned and thus there are some who are unacknowledged despite my best efforts. The introduction above only skims his story since, as will be seen below in the memoirs, it is all covered clearly and tenderly in the text itself with some editorial explanation from me in the form of footnotes.

Interestingly Listowel only emerges as an incidental figure in diaries of fellow Labour figures like Richard Crossman and Tony Benn, who ignore his larger role and career. For example, from the latter at a lunch in May 1966 for former postmasters general, Listowel and Benn shared stories about how difficult it was to erase the sovereign's head from postage stamps.[63] Yet, the historian and journalist, John Grigg, on receiving an article by him in June 1980, implored Listowel to 'please expand it into a book covering, among other things, the whole of your political experience … I should love to read such a book, and have no doubt at all that many others would be equally keen to read it'.[64] Now Listowel's memoirs can finally join the ranks of Labour primary accounts from the twentieth century, but more than most of them give a wider canvas than just the United Kingdom. Within the pages of the memoirs comes an array of experiences that demonstrate intriguing variety and showcase a long political vintage. Beyond British domestic politics there are first-hand accounts of the Spanish Civil War; campaigning for pre-1949 China; giving speeches to Maori people in Rotorua; catching up with Barbara Tuchman in Washington; being greeted by Alexander Bustamante in Kingston; comforting the Kabaka of Buganda; listening to pleas for a separate Karen State while in Burma; or trying to maintain the rule of law in Ghana. Westminster, of course, figures prominently as well. Listowel's long public life meant he was in the Lords when some peers still wore top hats in the chamber; he saw the last occasion when a member of the Lords facing criminal charges was tried by his peers; he was assigned to share a room at the Palace of

[63] Diary entry, 13 May 1966, in Tony Benn, *The Benn Diaries: Selected, Abridged and Introduced by Ruth Winstone* (London, 1995), 151–152.

[64] Grigg to Listowel, 26 June 1980, Listowel Private Collection.

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Westminster with Lloyd-George; and most prominently he successfully piloted through the historic India Independence Bill in a House of Lords that was far from sympathetic to its contents. Along the way, at home and abroad, he met a fascinating range of political people from Churchill to Aung San, but also poets, writers and artists, which evidenced a cultured life.

Unlike some diarists Listowel kept his own feelings and personal life hidden. Other than the chapters on his ancestors and parents the reader will search in vain to know anything about his family life. Little mention, for example, of his distinguished younger brothers Richard Hare, a diplomat and professor of Russian literature; John Hare (later Viscount Blakenham, a Conservative minister and party chairman under Harold Macmillan; Alan Hare, an intelligence officer and later chairman of the *Financial Times*, let alone his two sisters. Listowel was married three times. Firstly, from 1933 to 1945 to Judith de Márffy-Mantuano, a Hungarian-born journalist and activist, who met Listowel at the London School of Economics. They had one daughter together. Secondly from 1958 to 1963 he was married to the Canadian blues singer Stephanie Wise. This relationship also produced a daughter. Finally, in 1963 and for the rest of his life he was married to Pamela Read, who had been a hairdresser in London and with whom he had two sons and a daughter. None of these family members are to be found in the main text of his memoirs. I have kept to this conscious style of keeping his immediate family outside the text apart from where a rare comment dictates a footnote, but these are almost all from his childhood.

As editor, I have added an appendix containing the collection of personal correspondence between Lord Listowel and Lord Mountbatten in 1947, when they were respectively the last Secretary of State for India and the last Viceroy of India. This crucial correspondence was donated by Lord Listowel to the India Office Collection at the British Library in 1982.[65] Twenty-five of those key letters are reproduced here for the first time in a more accessible format with annotations and references, so that scholars and readers interested in the last days of British rule in India can see the issues, subjects and eccentricities of this remarkable and dramatic period.

[65] These can be found in the British Library's India Office Records and Private Papers section under the reference MSS Eur C357.

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