Clear out the Reds!
Anti-Communism and the Conservative Right: The Case of Oliver Locker-Lampson, 1926-1933

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
  - Literature Review 5
  - Primary Sources 9

Chapter 1: Biographical Sketch of Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson 14

Chapter 2: Anti-Communist Campaigning 23
  - Campaign Collaborators 29
  - The Arcos Raid 36
  - Conclusion 40

Chapter 3: The Blue Shirts 42
  - British Perceptions of Foreign Fascism 50
  - Locker-Lampson’s Political Shift 52
  - Conclusion 57

Chapter 4: Anti-Communism and Anti-Semitism 59
  - Explaining Locker-Lampson’s Political Shift 63
  - Conclusion 69

Conclusion 71

Bibliography 75
The period that followed the end of the First World War was one of destabilisation and social upheaval throughout Europe. In Russia, the Bolshevik-led October Revolution of 1917 had overthrown the Provisional Government, which had ruled since the abdication of the Tsar in February, and power was transferred to the soviets (workers’ councils) across the country. This saw the creation of the first communist state in history, as well as Russia’s withdrawal from the First World War with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March 1918.

Throughout the following years across Europe many rebellions and strikes took place, inspired by the example of the Bolshevik Revolution.¹ This struck terror into the hearts of European elites, who were threatened by the organisations of the working class and feared communist expropriation of their property. As a result, as David Baker has explained,

In countries like Italy and Germany, where loyalty to the liberal system among ruling elites was highly conditional, some conservative elites sought uneasy alliance with ... new and more extreme movements against their common enemies on the left. In the process new and increasingly influential movements of the right emerged combining populist parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities.²

Britain, too, experienced mass unrest in the months following the ending of the war. Throughout 1919, dozens of strikes brought British cities to a standstill, and mutinies by soldiers and sailors both at home and abroad were ‘looking dangerously like ... soviet-style insurrection’, writes Anthony Read.3 Britain did not find itself in such a revolutionary situation that a violent state crackdown was necessary, such as with Germany’s Spartacist uprising of January 1919 which was brutally put down by the Freikorps. Similarly, Italy’s ‘Biennio Rosso’ (the ‘Two Red Years’) of 1919 to 1920 was soon followed by the violent reaction of the Italian Fascisti, which took power under the leadership of Benito Mussolini in October 1922.

Though not reaching the extremes found in continental Europe, Britain became significantly more polarised along class lines, with housing and unemployment being continuing issues throughout the interwar period. The Labour Party also saw a rise in popularity, and eventually formed a short-lived government in 1924, which as Colin Cross put it, ‘seemed in thousands of secluded middle- and upper-class homes the prelude to a Red Terror in which property would cease to exist’.4 This anti-communist fear reached a height in 1926 during the General Strike, which took place between the 4th and 13th of May. These developments stimulated the creation and growth of right-wing organisations and groupings, such as the Middle Classes Union, which ‘were concerned with para-military, extra-parliamentary direct action’ to fight trade unions and the threat of

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revolution in Britain. At the extreme right of these groups was the British Fascisti (BF), founded by Rosa Lintorn-Orman in 1923.

After the defeat of the General Strike, the weakness of the labour movement in Britain was exposed, and the threat of a workers’ uprising in Britain seemed to have subsided. In Farr’s words,

The Strike had shown that the leadership of the Trade Unions was moderate and conciliatory. … Both the moderate Labor movement and the Parliamentary Labour Party seemed to have abandoned the class war and instead were resorting to … concessions, not workers’ control.

Farr goes on explain that the defeat of the strike had ‘eliminated the justification for organized action groups’ and as such resulted in a decline in right-wing activism. On the other hand, the strike had ‘provided grist for the anti-socialist mill’, as Kenneth D. Brown put it, and its defeat seems to have further invigorated sections of the Right. Just a few months later, anti-communist rallies began to be held across Britain protesting against

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7 Farr, *The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics …*, p. 64.

8 *ibid.*, p. vii.

what was seen as Bolshevik interference and the threat of revolution both at home and throughout the Empire. They were known as ‘Clear Out the Reds’ rallies, and the organiser of these events was a Conservative and Unionist Member of Parliament known as Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson.

Locker-Lampson had a long and colourful career as a backbench M.P. throughout the interwar period. He was a leading anti-communist organiser in Britain between 1926 and 1933 and collaborated with a spectrum of right-wing groups, including the BF. In 1930 he created his own anti-communist league, and during its existence he pronounced his admiration for Hitler and Mussolini. However, by mid-1933 he became famous for his pro-Jewish and anti-Nazi campaigns. Despite this high-profile and seemingly contradictory career, Locker-Lampson is a remarkably under-researched and mysterious character, and as such the wider implications of Locker-Lampson’s eventful career have not been explored.

This paper will attempt to unravel the enigma of Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson’s interwar years, and in doing so will shed light on wider issues within the anti-communist movement in Britain at this time. In doing this, it will be argued that Locker-Lampson was in fact a far more prominent anti-communist figure in interwar British politics than has been recognised in previous research, indicating a gap in the historiography on the link between anti-communism and fascism in the interwar years. Locker-Lampson’s activities

demonstrated the ambiguities and fluidity between right-wing Conservatism and fascism, and highlight how anti-communism was the defining feature across this political spectrum and underpinned these ambiguities.

**Literature Review**

Locker-Lampson is a neglected figure in the literature on anti-communism, fascism, and the Conservative Party. The only attempt to map his life and career was by Glenys Hitchings, who produced a forty-page local history booklet on Locker-Lampson for Cromer Museum, funded by the Arts Council. It is an insightful booklet which illustrates the type of man Locker-Lampson was, but was not written for an academic audience, and is very sparse on information from the period 1926-1933. In the majority of other published works on the right-wing politics in this period, Locker-Lampson features at best as a passing character. Therefore, it has been necessary to use archival material to uncover more specific information about Locker-Lampson and his campaigns, but secondary literature has been consulted to explore the wider implications of his activities.

The subject of anti-communism in interwar Britain is also relatively under-researched, despite the wide range of literature on British fascism in same period. In addition, the study of British fascism is heavily skewed towards the activities of Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists (BUF). Richard Thurlow’s *Fascism in Britain: A History* is one

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example of this, as well as S. J. Woolf’s *Fascism in Europe*, which, when discussing fascism’s British variety, is almost exclusively confined to the study of the BUF.12

One of the reasons for the focus on Mosley is due to the fact that many of the major scholars of fascism consider Mosley’s BUF to be the only ‘genuine’ fascist movement in interwar Britain. This is because many of these writers follow the definitional interpretation of fascism argued for by writers such as Roger Griffin, Stanley G. Payne, and Thomas Lineham, who insist that fascism can be pinned down to specific ideas, ‘possessing an ideology in its own right’.13 These authors either ignore or reject the centrality of anti-communism in the nature and origin of fascism, and by doing so they remove the development of fascism from its contemporary historical context.

For example, it is popularly insisted by scholars that the British Fascisti, despite their name, were not *real* fascists. David Baker is one such scholar who applies this theory of fascism. He claims that because the BF was neither anti-capitalist nor (officially) antisemitic, and due to its ties with the Conservative Party, it could not be a true fascist movement.14 Thomas Lineham also notes that the BF lacked ‘an irrationalist anti-positivist culture, a rebirth mythology, the yearning for spiritual transcendence,’ which he insists is

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vital for an ‘authentic fascist ideology’. In addition, it is often asserted that fascism is revolutionary and anti-establishment—despite the fact that both main fascist parties in Europe, the Italian Fascisti and the Nazis—eventually came to power through constitutional means. Scholarly debate over what really constitutes fascism has reached such a point that, by the logic of many scholars, not even Hitler or Mussolini could be called fascists.

In contrast, this paper will stress that fascism was a specific phenomenon that arose from historical conditions. As David Renton has put it, ‘Fascism should not be understood primarily as an ideology, but as a specific form of reactionary mass movement.’ Traditional conservatives may have, as Martin Blinkhorn argued, ‘almost always preferred more conservative outcomes’ to fascism, but the point is that fascism became a viable political option when these traditional forms of governance became unable to contain a revolutionary situation.

This paper will argue that Locker-Lampson and his activities demonstrate this fluidity between right-wing conservatism and fascism—that the only boundaries between them were not ideological but circumstantial. In doing so, it builds on Martin Pugh’s work, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts!*, which analyses the often very close relationship between

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16 *ibid.*, p. 6.
Conservatives and fascist movements, and argues that historians should not ‘identify too rigidly the boundaries between fascism and other adjacent ideologies and movements’. 19

With the exception of Pugh’s work, the history of the Conservative Party during the interwar period has generally been seen as distinct from the study of fascism. Phillip Williamson, for example, has sought to draw a clear line between the Conservative Party and fascism in his article in *Varieties of anti-fascism*. 20 In it, Williamson argues that, due to the Conservative Party’s ‘dominance of not just most of the political right but also large expanses of the political centre,’ they were in fact the largest ‘non-fascist’ political organisation of the time, and moreover, one which ‘constituted a more decisive barrier to the growth of British fascism than the explicitly antifascist bodies of the political Left’. 21 This idea has been also argued in the negative by writers such as Mike Cronin, who suggests that fascism was ultimately unsuccessful in Britain due to the fact that the Conservatives were sufficiently right-wing and anti-communist to soak up support for fascist groups. 22 Both these positions will be contested by this paper, which will argue that Locker-Lampson showed that the Conservative Party and its membership rather played a role in facilitating the development of the fascist movement in Britain to develop.


21 *ibid.*, p. 73.

Other texts such as E. H. H. Green’s *Ideologies of Conservatism*, particularly its chapter ‘Conservatism, Anti-Socialism and the End of the Lloyd George Coalition’, have been successful in drawing out the extent of anti-socialist feeling within the Party and its middle- and upper-class voters, while also making clear the divisions within the party over the means by which to counter socialism.

Finally, vital to this research is literature on attitudes towards Jews in Britain. Sharman Kadish and Gisela Lebzelter have examined the role of anti-semitism in Britain during the interwar period; specifically, the interplay between anti-semitism, anti-alienism and anti-Bolshevism. Harry Defries has also written specifically on the various views within the Conservative Party regarding Jews, and more recently Daniel Tilles has discussed extensively the role of anti-semitism in the British fascist movement. All these historians successfully capture the complex character of anti-Semitism throughout this period, and their work is invaluable for making sense of Locker-Lampson’s ambiguous position on the ‘Jewish question’ and its wider implications.

**Primary Sources**

The Norfolk Records Office (NRO) has a large collection of approximately fifty boxes of Locker-Lampson’s papers from between 1906 to 1920, mostly correspondence and ‘miscellaneous’ documents. Their provenance is obscure. According to the NRO, they were

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retrieved from the attic of a Cromer hotel—presumably Locker-Lampson’s former home, Newhaven Court—and handed over to the NRO’s county predecessor between the late 1950s and early 1960s. Leeds University Library’s Liddle Collection also has two boxes of papers on Locker-Lampson, predominantly concerning his time in the Royal Naval Air Service’s (RNAS) Armoured Car Division during the First World War. However, it does contain his unfinished autobiography Nothing to Offer but Blood, edited by his son Stephen Locker-Lampson. Due to its incomplete nature, this is largely a collection of personal anecdotes of his early life. Though not covering the period which this paper is researching, these earlier materials have been extremely helpful in gaining insight into who Locker-Lampson was, the beginnings of his anti-communism, and his political motivations. In particular they reveal his vast circle of contacts in the military, finance, industry and the media, and his talent for using these connections to garner publicity and support for both himself and his campaigns.

Despite this extensive source of primary material from the earlier part of his career, there are no known papers from Locker-Lampson’s period as a prominent anti-communist. It is telling that such a huge amount of material was preserved from his earlier life, and that in contrast there is a black hole when it comes to this part of his career, which one assumes would consist of an equal amount of—if not more—correspondence, pamphlets, leaflets, etc. A man who meticulously preserves all his papers in once instance, and in the other

25 Newhaven Court was thought to be sold by Locker-Lampson just before the Second World War, and was afterwards run as a hotel under new management. The hotel was seriously damaged in a fire in June 1963. The site is now home to a ‘cul-de-sac of 1960s-built bungalows and flats named Newhaven Close’. Information given to the author by staff at the NRO.

26 Locker-Lampson Collection, Liddle/WW1/RUS/30 GB 206.
appears to have preserved nothing, suggests that there was much that Locker-Lampson
did not want to be remembered. Indeed, this is supported by the contents page of his
unfinished autobiography, where in his plans for each chapter he sweeps over nearly all of
his activity between 1926 and 1933.\textsuperscript{27}

Notably, Hitchings wrote that Locker-Lampson ‘was well known for his volatile moods,
being full of charm when it suited him but vindictive in the extreme if he did not give his
approval to a course of events.’\textsuperscript{28} This is consistent with her suggestion that Locker-
Lampson had also omitted from his unfinished autobiography particularly unfavourable
episodes from his time leading the RNAS Armoured Cars Division (one of the sections he
successfully completed). Hitchings goes on to suggest that it was ‘out of character’ for him
to leave things out of his writing, but ‘it can only be assumed that he must have been
embarrassed’.\textsuperscript{29} This seems to corroborate the theory that Locker-Lampson attempted to
eliminate anything from his past that was inconvenient or embarrassing.

However, when it comes to interwar anti-communism, historians have recognised a wider
trend in the difficulty in retrieving primary material. The files of other interwar
organisations with which Locker-Lampson was associated are notoriously hard to come
by. In his M.Phil thesis for the University of Wolverhampton, which focused on such
organisations, Ian Thomas states that, for example, writers such as Ewen Green, John

\textsuperscript{27} O. Locker-Lampson (edited by S. Locker-Lampson) \textit{Nothing to Offer But Blood}, Unpublished Manuscript,
Locker-Lampson Collection, Liddle/WW1/RUS/30 GB 206.


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 16-17.
Mason, and James Peters have attempted and failed to locate the material of the Anti-
Socialist Union. Historian John Hope had also unsuccessfully tried to uncover papers of
the National Citizens’ Union, and speculated that ‘the records of the NCU may have been
destroyed during the 1940s after the organisation was discredited by its association with
British pro-Nazi elements.’ According to Thomas, ‘The consensus of opinion among the
historians and archivists consulted … is that much of the manuscript record of inter-war
British anti-socialism has been destroyed, misplaced, or deliberately withheld from
scrutiny; with most suspecting the former.’

This research has consequently relied on newspaper archives in order to extract the most
information about Locker-Lampson and his campaigns, as well as to gauge the perception
of, and attention gained by, the M.P. and his activities. American newspapers and
magazines seem to provide more detailed, critical accounts of his anti-communist activity
and his international reputation, though understandably they reported on Locker-
Lampson less frequently.

Nevertheless, British newspapers still provide the majority of information on his
campaigns at this time. National and local newspapers offer reports of the dates, venues,
attendance, prominent speakers and attendees, content of speeches, as well as reports of
disturbances. This is an extremely useful source for gauging the significance of these
campaigns and how they were perceived by the press and, to some extent, the public. The

30 Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism…’ pp. 10-11.
31 ibid., p. 11.
Daily Mail in particular stands out as a newspaper which had an especially close relationship with Locker-Lampson, which will be discussed in further detail later.

Finally, Sheffield University’s Cooper Collection and Blackshirt Collection have been consulted, which include documents and pamphlets from the BF and the Imperial Fascist League (IFL), and the British Union of Fascists respectively. Though there were some limited but useful references to Locker-Lampson in these archives, they most of all provided a broader perspective of the interwar fascist movement.

Overall, despite Locker-Lampson’s apparent efforts to cover up certain aspects of his past, for the aims of this paper the material that has been accessible—especially newspapers—has provided much information to fill in gaps of knowledge and provoke discussion for this dissertation. Moreover, the absence and potential destruction of such potentially sensitive material reinforces arguments which will be made in this work about the memory of the interwar period.
Chapter 1:
Biographical Sketch of Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson

Oliver Stillingfleet Locker-Lampson was born in 1880 in Belgravia, London. He was born into a upper-class family—his mother was Hannah Jane Lampson, daughter of Sir Curtis Lampson, and his father was the poet Frederick Locker, who later adopted the hyphenated surname ‘Locker-Lampson’ in compliance with his step-father’s will. Oliver had 4 siblings; his elder brother Godfrey Locker-Lampson, who also became a senior Conservative M.P., sister Dorothy J. Locker-Lampson, twin sister Maude Fisher-Rowe (née Locker-Lampson), and half-sister Eleanor Tennyson (née Locker).

Oliver Locker-Lampson was educated at Cheam and Eton, and graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge with Honours in Modern Languages and History. After a year of pupillage in chambers he was called to the bar in 1907, but instead went on to pursue a political career. His first political role was as secretary to the Unionist Working Men’s Candidates Movement, which formed part of a wider pursuit by Locker-Lampson in his earlier political career to recruit working-class candidates for Unionist seats.

Locker-Lampson became a Unionist Member of Parliament for the North Huntingdonshire constituency in 1910. He would then serve as the parliamentary private secretary to

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32 Daily Mail, 3 Mar. 1933, p. 11.
Austen Chamberlain between 1919 and 1921. During this time he was a member of ‘Reveille’, a group of right-wing Conservative rebels formed by Sir Henry Page Croft in 1910, which campaigned against Arthur Balfour, party leader at the time, and pressured for the policy of imperial preference and social reform. He was also involved in the secret funding of Charles Butt Stanton of the Independent Labour Party during the 1915 General Election, and was known as ‘one of those people who can get things financed’. Certainly, in his early letters available in the Norfolk Records Office, there is an abundance of correspondence regarding fundraising, investments, etc. During this earlier part of his career he also wrote for a handful of journals and magazines, and was a keen auto-mobile enthusiast. In fact, in 1909 he was one of three founders of the Norwich motoring firm Duff, Morgan and Vermont.

During the First World War, Locker-Lampson served as Lieutenant Commander, serving in France, Russia, Belgium, Turkey, Persia Romania and Austria. His most prominent role was commander of the Royal Naval Air Service’s Armoured Car Division, in which he

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39 See, for example, NRO/OLL 322X1 and 322X4.


41 Now known as Duff Morgan; see ibid., p. 10.

42 Witherell, Rebel on the Right, p. 223; Time, 6 July 1931, p. 15.
funded a unit himself at the cost of £31,000.43 The armoured cars were designed and manufactured by his own company, Duff, Morgan and Vermont.44 To recruit for his special division, he advertised in over a dozen newspapers for ‘Young gentlemen who can drive large motor cars and ride motor bicycles for the front.’45

By around 1915, however, Locker-Lampson’s unit was under threat of being disbanded, and as such Locker-Lampson feared he would lose his prestigious role. To avoid such a scenario, he ‘volunteered himself and his squadron to engage in active service for the Czar,’ encouraged by the Admiralty and King George V. From then on, Locker-Lampson spent his time on the Eastern Front, and maintained very close links with the Russian aristocracy. He claimed to have been asked to assist in the assassination of Rasputin in 1916, then after the outbreak of the February Revolution he was involved in a failed plan to assist the escape of the Tsar Nicholas II after his abdication.46 He was also close to Kerensky, who led the Provisional Government in Russia between February and October 1917, and was also involved in the attempted military coup carried out by General Kornilov in August 1917, known as the Kornilov Affair.47 As Richard H. Ullman wrote in Anglo-Soviet Relations:


45 NRO/OLL 1678/89 322X1, 23 Nov 1914.

46 New York Times, 3 March 1934, p. 3.

47 ‘When Korniloff’s rebellion broke out the only ally Korniloff sent for was myself. I was with him when he decided to rebel and I was at Headquarters when Kerenski arrived to take his place. I spent the ensuing working week with Kerenski, three days of which I was with him as his guest on the train.’ Letter to Mr. Norman Marlowe Esq., 2nd July 1918, “Daily Mail” from Oliver Locker-Lampson, NRO/OLL 1682/2 322X1.
When, on 9 September, Kornilov ordered the troops under his command to march on the capital to unseat the government, one of the few units which proved faithful to him was a British armoured-car squadron, under Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, whose members were furnished with Russian uniforms for the occasion.\textsuperscript{48}

Locker-Lampson remained in Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution, and in 1918 became the Ministry of Information’s Russian Representative. At the end of the war, the Bolsheviks confiscated his armoured cars, valued at around £300,000.\textsuperscript{49} In various accounts Locker-Lampson credits his time in revolutionary Russia as forming his fierce anti-communism, recalling that he returned home with ‘one longing, to work might and main to preserve England from revolution’.\textsuperscript{50} In 1919 he was invited by General Denikin and Yudenitch to return to Russia to command the White Russian Army’s armoured unit, but turned down the offer in order to accompany Austen Chamberlain to the Versailles Peace Conference.\textsuperscript{51}

Locker-Lampson was something of a socialite who had an ‘extraordinary gift for making friends in any and every situation’.\textsuperscript{52} He owned a house in Mayfair as well as two


\textsuperscript{49} Locker-Lampson, Nothing to Offer but Blood.

\textsuperscript{50} The Times, 2 Oct. 1926, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{51} ‘The only thing that might sever me from him [Austen Chamberlain] for the moment would be another call to Russia, and I have just been asked by General Denikin and Yudenitch.’, Letter from Major-General Count Arthur Tcherep-Spiridovitch to Locker-Lampson, 29 June 1919, NRO/OLL2168/4 322X4; Perrett and Lord, The Czar’s British Squadron, p. 180; Letter to Brig-General H. Page-Croft C.M.G., M.P., from Oliver Locker-Lampson, 20 Oct. 1919, NRO/OLL 2168/4.

\textsuperscript{52} Petersons, The Rowfant Story, p. 25.
grandiose family properties: Rowfant House in Sussex, and another in Cromer, Norfolk, which he used as ‘a sort of private hotel for important friends’. He became a close friend of Winston Churchill at the beginning of his parliamentary career, and remained one of his most loyal supporters during Churchill’s ‘wilderness’ years. Another notable friendship was with King Albert of Belgium.

Locker-Lampson was made Lord Privy Seal for a short time in 1921 and at the 1922 election he became the M.P. for the Birmingham Handsworth constituency, where he would remain as an M.P. until his retirement in 1945.

Throughout the 1920s, Locker-Lampson was ‘widely regarded as an intriguer and one of the most intransigent of the coalitionist Conservatives’. Though he rejected the label, he was recognised as a so-called ‘Die-Hard’ within the party, and one of ‘the noisiest’ at that. The Die-Hards were an unofficial grouping in parliament distinguished by ‘their pre-war aristocratic forebears’ who campaigned for ‘true conservatism’ against ‘Bolshevist Labour Socialism’, as Baker put it. Thurlow described the group as ‘an unarmed paramilitary group … a cross between an adult boy scout movement and a slightly more


54 Locker-Lampson, Nothing to Offer but Blood.

55 Time, 6 July 1931, p. 15.

56 Witherell, Rebel on the Right, p. 223.


sinister defence force and strike breaking organisation’. 60 Locker-Lampson’s ‘full-bodied and quixotic Parliamentary sallies’ were contrasted with his older brother Godfrey’s ‘discreet style [and] under-statement’. 61

Locker-Lampson in 1923 also purchased and edited the Empire Review, a monthly journal which contained discussions on issues within British Empire, and was described by H.G. Wells as being ‘of interest to many … Imperialists’. 62 Particularly towards the latter half of the decade, Locker-Lampson also wrote features for newspapers such as the Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, and others, as well as gossip column for the Daily Telegraph. 63

It was in 1926 that Locker-Lampson first gained notoriety for organising ‘Clear out the Reds’ rallies, sometimes referred to as ‘Rout the Reds’ and later ‘Hands Off Britain’ rallies, in association with various anti-communist groups such as the National Citizens Union and the Anti-Socialist Union. These rallies, at least on several occasions, were stewarded by the BF. They attracted thousands of people—reportedly reaching up to 10,000 for those held at the Albert Hall—as rousing speeches were given lambasting Bolshevism in Russia and its indirect, and alleged direct, influence on the labour movement in Britain. 64

60 Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, p. 24.
64 Daily Mail, 16 July 1927, p. 7.
the majority of these rallies were held in 1926, variants on them continued to be held until 1932.\textsuperscript{65}

In early 1930 Locker-Lampson created his own anti-communist league called the ‘Sentinels of Empire’, also known as the Blue Shirts, whose policy was to combat alleged Soviet propaganda by ‘peaceful means.’\textsuperscript{66} It was here in the early 1930s that Locker-Lampson started to make clear his admiration for foreign fascists, and this is the point at which Locker-Lampson’s career exhibits some puzzling, apparent contradictions. In September 1930, writing an article for the \textit{Daily Mirror}, Locker-Lampson praised Hitler as a ‘legendary hero’.\textsuperscript{67} In 1931, he met Nazi philosopher Alfred Rosenberg for lunch at the Savoy.\textsuperscript{68} And in 1932 he sent a gift to Mussolini on behalf of the Sentinels of Empire.\textsuperscript{69} His activities during this time resulted in his being referred to as a fascist.\textsuperscript{70}

In April 1933, however, Locker-Lampson’s politics took a surprising and unexplained turn. The Sentinels of Empire appeared to have all but disappeared, and Locker-Lampson dedicated himself to protesting the treatment of Jews in Germany. The Nazis had come to power three months earlier, and Locker-Lampson soon came to regard both Hitler and

\textsuperscript{65} The last reported anti-Red rally was in June 1932, in the \textit{Daily Worker}, 25 June 1932.

\textsuperscript{66} ‘A new league to fight the Reds in the Empire has been formed by Commander Locker-Lampson. It is known as “The Sentinels of Empire,” and is non-party.’ \textit{Daily Mail}, 23 June 1930, p. 12; \textit{The Daily Times, Rochester and Beaver, Pa.}, 16 Sept. 1931, p. 2.


\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Berkeley Daily Gazette}, 8 Mar. 1932, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Daily Worker}, 18 May 1931, p. 2; \textit{Time}, 6 July 1931, p. 15; \textit{The Daily Times, Rochester and Beaver, Pa.}, 16 Sept. 1931, p. 2; \textit{Time}, 7 Aug. 1933, p. 18.
Mussolini as enemies of Britain. Then, in September 1933, Locker-Lampson provided refuge in his Norfolk home to Albert Einstein, who was fleeing anti-semitic Nazi persecution, and the following month organised a rally for the Refugee Assistance Fund.\(^{71}\)

In Parliament, Locker-Lampson became known for his initiatives to pass bills to support persecuted Jews, as well as his less successful attempt to ban the wearing of political uniforms, aimed primarily at Mosley’s Blackshirts.\(^{72}\) His ‘Hands Off Britain’ campaign was no longer obsessed with communist infiltration, but rather the issue of air defence against Nazi Germany.\(^{73}\)

Towards the latter half of the 1930s, Locker-Lampson was one of the few alongside Churchill who advocated war with Germany, and at the outbreak of war he joined the Home Guard.\(^{74}\) After his retirement in 1945, Locker-Lampson ‘devoted himself to writing, producing an uncompleted volume of memoirs, articles and stories’, of which ‘little, if any … has ever been published, and much has disappeared’.\(^{75}\) He spent his final years living in his London home as a recluse and died aged 74 on 8 October 1954.\(^{76}\)


\(^{73}\) *The Times*, 29 June 1934, p. 12.

\(^{74}\) Locker-Lampson, *Nothing to Offer but Blood*.


Locker-Lampson was the archetypical upper-class Edwardian who consistently adhered to the right of the Conservative Party. He was an eccentric and an adventurer, who comes across as something of a cut-price version of Churchill. And though Churchill’s anti-communism peaked in ferocity between the years 1917-1926, Locker-Lampson appears to have embodied the continuation of this intense anti-communism. In exploring the ‘missing years’ of his life, which contains his most politically extreme and seemingly contradictory activities, this paper will shed light on the wider significance of Locker-Lampson to the interaction between right-wing Conservatism, anti-communism and fascism in the interwar period.
As a Conservative M.P. since 1910, Locker-Lampson had long been an opponent of communism. But the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917 motivated him to use his military and political influence to actively campaign against communism. As summarised by his son, Stephen Locker-Lampson, ‘He had been building up to his earlier attacks on communism ever since he had been so involved in the revolution in Russia and his Armoured Cars had been confiscated by the Bolsheviks - he never forgave them.’

Locker-Lampson did not gain notoriety for his anti-communism, however, until the launch of his ‘Clear Out the Reds’ campaign in the Daily Mail in July 1926, which also marks the beginning of a close relationship between that newspaper and Locker-Lampson. As previously mentioned, the timing of his campaign—coming immediately after the defeat of the general strike of May that same year—suggests that Locker-Lampson and his fellow anti-communists were emboldened, rather than pacified, by the defeat of the strikers and trade unions.

The function of Locker-Lampson’s Clear Out the Reds rallies was to protest against what was believed to be Soviet subversion in Britain and its Empire. Speakers claimed that Trade Unions had been infiltrated by agents of Moscow, and groups such as the

77 Locker-Lampson, Nothing to Offer but Blood.

Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and its industrial arm, the National Minority
Movement (NMM), were spreading Russian propaganda. Moreover, this was being
funded by ‘stolen gold’ from the Bolshevik nationalisation of British owned industry.\textsuperscript{79} It
was ultimately hoped the Government would sever trade relations with the Soviet Union
and cease recognition of the communist state. Locker-Lampson summarised his
motivation for initiating the campaign in his speech at the very first meeting at the Royal
Albert Hall in Kensington on 15 July, which reportedly attracted 7,000 punters:

\begin{quote}
The Soviet [sic] owes private British creditors alone more than £250,000,000, and I ask, what right had we to recognise this swindling
syndicate until it had owned up and paid up?

… Petrol which is ours has been sent over here and dumped below cost
price upon our market. It is disposed of by the agency known as Russian
Oil Products, Limited.

… It first steals our goods; secondly, it sells them to us; and, thirdly, our
money, realised from the sale, returns in the form of subsidies to
encourage chaos throughout the Empire and to undermine constituted
civilisation. It pours in to irrigate the thirsty palms of spouters in the
park, agitators in every strike, and even to nourish anti-English
candidates in elections.

… Should the Government forthwith take a referendum in this grave
emergency? If to each citizen, simply and straightly the question is put—
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} Daily Mail, 15 July 1926, p. 8; Daily Mail, 16 July 1926, p. 10.
Yea or Nay, under which flag will you live: the bloody banner of Bolshevism or the Union Jack?80

Along with Locker-Lampson, speakers at this first rally included Colonel John Gretton, M.P., right-wing president of the Seamen’s Union Joseph Havelock Wilson,81 and ‘many other conservative M.P.s.’ including Henry Page Croft.82 Throughout 1926, rallies were also held in Ilford, Southampton, Bournemouth, Eastbourne, Croydon, Bristol and Coventry.83 The final meeting of the year was held again at the Albert Hall on 15 October to mark the end of the ‘first round’ of the Campaign.84 The resolution at the end of each rally was typically the same:

This meeting protests against the subversive activities of Soviet agents within the British Empire, and will support the Government in any steps which it may take to deal with this menace to our freedom and stability.85

The miners’ trade union leader and member of the NMM, A. J. Cook, was a particular target of these meetings. He was referred to by Locker-Lampson as a ‘puppet Napoleon’, a

80 Daily Mail, 16 July 1926, p. 10.
81 ‘Wilson’s general historical reputation should be linked … not to militant labor internationalism but rather to its polar opposite—that is, national chauvinism, racist protectionism, and even collusion with employers versus worker unrest’, L. Fink, Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World’s First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present (University of North Carolina Press, 2011) p. 118.
82 Daily Mail, 16 July 1926, p. 10.
84 Nottingham Evening Post, 16 Oct. 1926, p. 1
‘parasite of Moscow’ and ‘the vassal of the Soviet’. When Cook wrote a letter of protest to Locker-Lampson in April 1927, essentially accusing him of libel, Locker-Lampson denied having ever called Cook an ‘agent of Moscow’ or of having claimed that Cook had received money from Moscow. Locker-Lampson’s publication of Cook’s letter in the Daily Mail prompted another letter of complaint from Cook which he sent to the press himself, describing the publication of a private letter as ‘of questionable taste and actuated apparently only by the desire for self-advertisement’.87

To open the meeting, Locker-Lampson and the other speakers would typically enter the building ‘escorted by a Fascist Guard of Honour, carrying the Union Jack’. Anticipating the probability of ‘interrupters’ attending the meetings, tickets were printed with a ‘difficult to forge’ design, which included a declaration on the back which attendees should sign, pledging ‘not to create any disturbance or in any way impede the progress and proper conduct of the meeting’.89

It was made no secret that ‘there were plenty of young men present “on guard, ready-armed”,’ as the Manchester Guardian put it, to deal with any disturbances. But these provisions were not fool-proof, and Communists made known their intention to gain

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87 Daily Mail, 13 Apr. 1927, p. 16.
88 Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser, 22 Sept. 1926, p. 1.
89 Daily Mail, 16 Sept. 1926, p. 10.
90 Manchester Guardian, 7 May 1927, p. 15.
access to and protest the Clear Out the Reds rallies. At the very first meeting, a woman was ejected by stewards after ‘waving her arms and shouting “Up the Reds!”’. Another meeting saw a party of youths attempting to sing the Red Flag at the back of the hall ‘quickly broken up by a band of local Fascists.’ This kind of disturbance appears to have become so frequent as to have become unremarkable throughout the years of his campaigning. For example, the Manchester Guardian reported in 1929 that, ‘[Locker-Lampson’s] meetings are rowdy. Uniformed fascists are there to support him. Probably that is why they are rowdy.’ Indeed, Martin Pugh has highlighted that, at the first Albert Hall meeting there were around 600 stewards from the BF, and in the second Albert Hall meeting there were ‘no fewer than 1,500’.

The Clear Out the Reds campaign commenced again in February 1927, though during this year it also began to be known more often by its slogan, ‘Hands Off Britain’—in direct counterposition to the anti-interventionist ‘Hands Off Russia’ campaign of 1919. Rallies were held in Lincolnshire, Folkestone, Durham, Shrewsbury, Surrey, and, of course, at the Albert Hall. However, Locker-Lampson and his campaigns struggled in the industrial north. Labour M.P. for Hull Central, Joseph Kenworthy, pointed out in an article for the

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92 Daily Mail, 6 July 1926, p. 10.
94 The Manchester Guardian, 27 May 1929, p. 3.
95 Pugh, Hurrah for the Blackshirts!, p. 61.
96 Surrey Mirror, 6 May 1927, p. 13.
Graphic that ‘the leaders of the “Clear out the Reds” campaign hold very few meetings in Lancashire and Yorkshire’. He claimed that this was likely due to the fact that trade with Russia enabled employment in the shipping, docking and railway industries. As of 1926, forty-seven per cent. of the total export of Egyptian cotton from Liverpool and Manchester went to Russia. The purchase of wool tops from Bradford for the Russian market in 1926 was twice as great as the purchase of the same goods in 1913.98

The Manchester Guardian noted in May 1927 that a rally held at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester had a small attendance, only filling half the hall despite the many attractions, such as community singing conducted by Clara Novello-Davies—the mother of the famed composer Ivor Novello. The rally was also targeted by ‘interrupters’, who were ‘frog-marched’ out by over-zealous armed stewards.99

Overall, the Guardian, of the mainstream national newspapers, was the most critical of Locker-Lampson and his campaigns. On his speech at the meeting, the article reported that, ‘apart from citing some instances of Bolshevik murder and outrage, which no-one questions, [Locker-Lampson] did his audience the discourtesy of making too many charges without thinking that evidence was necessary to support them.’ The article noted the Commander’s unsupported claims that Lenin was ‘given £2,000,000 by the Kaiser,’ and


99 Manchester Guardian, 7 May 1927, p. 15.
that ‘Moscow was behind the general strike, behind the coal stoppage, behind the trouble
in China.’

**Campaign Collaborators**

Locker-Lampson worked with a number of anti-communist organisations to host the Clear
Out the Reds campaigns. The most significant were the National Citizens’ Union (NCU),
the British Empire Union (BEU), the British Fascists (BF), and the Anti-Socialist Union
(ASU). Other groups reported as collaborators included the National League, British
Women’s Patriotic League, British Air League, and the National Free Labour
Association.

The Anti-Socialist Union (ASU), also at this time known as the Anti-Socialist and Anti-
Communist Union (ASACU), was founded by *Daily Express* editor R. D. Blumenfeld in
1908, and Locker-Lampson was on the organisation’s executive at least from 1928, if not
earlier. It became notorious in the 1920s for its production of propaganda on the Soviet
Union and communism. The group claimed that Russia was ‘full of haunted people …
orphans … spies everywhere … overcrowded prisons… appalling housing … anti-
religious propaganda’ and that women were communalised. The ASU made efforts to
prove that the Labour Party encouraged bolshevism, and insisted that the Soviet

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100 ibid.


104 ibid., pp. 252-253.
government was behind industrial unrest—particularly the 1926 general strike.\textsuperscript{105} It was also alleged by the ASU that the Bolsheviks had infiltrated the British Broadcasting Corporation, as well as universities and schools. As Kenneth D. Brown wrote:

among ‘reds in the universities’ singled out for special comment in 1932 were Maurice Dobb, Hugh Dalton, Harold Laski and R. H. Tawney. [Bolshevist teachers] were responsible for the fact that so many university debating societies were passing antiwar resolutions and in 1933 the A.S.U. undertook a campaign in the nation’s university and college towns to counteract their influence. Nor were schoolteachers immune, for when the Teachers Labour League encouraged children ignore the celebration of Empire Day in 1928, Information [the ASU’s publication] responded by suggesting that teachers who could not be loyal to the state which employed them should be dismissed.\textsuperscript{106}

Brown highlights, however, that the ASU was less successful than other similar organisations in the 1920s, and argues that it probably lost ground to the ‘rising fascist movement’, which advocated very similar policies.\textsuperscript{107} Indeed, many members did end up joining the BF. Other leading members including Blumenfeld, George Makgill and John Baker White ‘became closely associated’ with the BF. Moreover, Nesta Webster, the well-known author of anti-semitic conspiracy theories, was also an active member of the ASU

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 253-254.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{ibid.}, p. 253.

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{ibid.}, p. 254.
and wrote for its publications, and the ASU chairman, Wilfred Ashely, went on to chair the pro-Nazi Anglo-German Fellowship in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{108}

The National Citizens Union, until January 1922 known as the Middle Classes Union (often misnamed the Middle Class Union\textsuperscript{109}), was initially set up to defend what it saw as the interests of the middle class. These interests were said to be to ‘withstand the rapacity of the manual worker and the profiteer. But in reality the ‘profiteer’ was of far less concern than the manual worker, and the group became known for its recruitment of strike-breakers.\textsuperscript{110} In fact, when the Italian Fascisti were rising to prominence in 1921, the movement was described by then-communist Sylvia Pankhurst’s newspaper \textit{Workers Dreadnought} as ‘a sort of Italian Middle Class Union [sic]’.\textsuperscript{111} With its name change to the NCU, it declared that its primary objective was the defeat of communism.\textsuperscript{112}

The NCU’s monthly, the \textit{New Voice}, was full of Webster-inspired theories about Communist conspiracies against England. The organisation had also held open-air anti-communist rallies in the summer of 1924 in Bristol, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Knaresborough, Farnham and Southport, which were purposely organised to coincide with Communist or Labour meetings.\textsuperscript{113} It was also known for its campaign against ‘Red

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[109] Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism’, p. 8.
\item[110] \textit{ibid.}, 6.
\item[111] \textit{Workers Dreadnought}, 18 June 1921, p. 5.
\item[112] Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism’, p. 6.
\item[113] \textit{ibid.}, p. 77.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Sunday Schools’ in the early 1920s in cooperation with the BEU, as well as its commitment to strike-breaking.\textsuperscript{114} In mid-1927, Locker-Lampson became the NCU’s vice-president.\textsuperscript{115}

The British Empire Union was an offshoot of the Anti-German Union, which was founded in 1915,\textsuperscript{116} and is viewed as the most successful of the 1920s anti-Communist organisations. This is not least due to its intimate links with various important figures in British society.\textsuperscript{117} The board of the BEU ‘consisted almost entirely of landed gentry, wealthy businessmen and retired military figures’,\textsuperscript{118} and had links to ‘sections of the British secret state’, thanks to its connections with George Makgill, who worked for the private ‘Industrial Intelligence Board’, and William Reginald Hall, previously Director of Naval Intelligence during the Great War and a founder of the Economic League.\textsuperscript{119} It was also backed by Havelock Wilson and other ‘patriotic sections of the British labour movement’—that is, right-wing trade unionists—and, of course, many Conservative and ‘Constitutionalist’ politicians in parliament.\textsuperscript{120}

Keen on a united anti-communist movement, during the Great War the BEU combined forces with other groups to ‘disrupt pacifist and socialist meetings, often violently.’\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 77-95.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{The Times}, 14 July 1927, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{117} Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism’, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{118} Toczek, \textit{Haters, Baiters and Would-Be Dictators}, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{119} Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism’, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{ibid.}, p. 18.
Throughout the 1920s, through a private network of ‘special agencies’, writes John Hope, it would ‘collect intelligence on left-wing adversaries and engage in sabotage operations against them’.¹²²

For this, Makgill recruited agents grown mostly from far-right organisations, notably from British Fascisti (BF), among them Maxwell Knight and John Baker White. Knight, who served as the BF’s intelligence director, would later become a leading figure in MI5. White, a friend and admirer of the Judeo-communist conspiracy theorist Nesta Webster, was part of a group within the Anti-Socialist Union which had long worked closely with the BF.¹²³

In 1925, with the growing prospect of a general strike, the BEU became a key organiser of a coordinated strike-breaking movement, which would eventually result in the creation of the controversial Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS).¹²⁴ Set up in September 1925 by the Home Secretary at the time, Conservative Die-Hard William Joynson-Hicks, the task of the OMS was to recruit people to fulfil roles in the event of a general strike.¹²⁵ It was a private organisation, though during the 1926 general strike its personnel and recruitment lists were handed over the the government. Much of the press, even including the anti-communist Daily Express, expressed concern over its fascist

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¹²³ Toczek, Haters, Baiters and Would-Be Dictators, p. 197.

¹²⁴ Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism’, p. 41.

undertones.\textsuperscript{126} Despite the ban on members of the BF participating, due to the purported ‘non-political’ nature of the OMS, many BF members found themselves able to assist.\textsuperscript{127}

The ASU, NCU and BEU all operated under the coordination of a highly secretive group known as the Economic League (EL) throughout the 1920s and 1930s. As such, when each individual group was wound up, all their assets, including archival documents, were turned over the the EL. The Economic League disbanded in 1993 after years of bad publicity, and researchers have long been refused access to their archives.\textsuperscript{128}

Finally, the British Fascists are the most well-known group with which Locker-Lampson’s campaign associated. The organisation was founded by Rosa Lintorn-Orman in 1923 as the ‘British Fascisti’, inspired by Mussolini’s March on Rome two years earlier. However, it changed its name to the British Fascists in 1924 ‘in the hope of deflecting accusations of alien influence’.\textsuperscript{129} The BF was heavily made up of generals and admirals, and as Colin Cross summarises, the group ‘stood simply on the basis of defending King and Parliament against the forces of Communism, Socialism, Anarchism, free love, atheism and trade unions, which the members tended to lump into a mysterious single entity.’\textsuperscript{130}

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\textsuperscript{126} ibid., pp. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{127} Farr, \textit{The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics in Britain}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{129} Pugh, \textit{Hurrah for the Blackshirts!}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{130} Woolf, \textit{Fascism in Europe}, p. 257; Cross, \textit{The Fascists in Britain}, p. 58.
\end{flushright}
Though the first nominally fascist group in Britain, it has been argued by many scholars that the BF was not particularly fascist in reality; it was ‘a disaffected middle-class defence league, made up largely of Conservatives obsessed with the dangers of civil strife and Bolshevism,’ in David Baker’s words.\textsuperscript{131} Despite this, Barbara Storm Farr asserted that ‘The British Fascisti viewed itself as “fascist” and its opponents considered it “fascist.” Therefore, it is valid to consider them a native British fascist movement within the context of the image of fascism in the early 1920s.’\textsuperscript{132}

By the time the BF began stewarding Locker-Lampson’s meetings, its President was Brigadier-General R.G.D. Blakeney, who had developed an arguably clearer ‘fascist’ approach. This included a more explicit form of anti-semitism, with Blakeney insisting that Communism was controlled by ‘international Jews’.\textsuperscript{133} Indeed, stewarding Conservative meetings was one of the BF’s primary functions throughout the 1920s, and was one of the main ways in which the BF recruited ‘new converts’.\textsuperscript{134} In fact, the prominent facial scar of William Joyce (the infamous ‘Lord Haw haw’ who was hanged for high treason in 1945) was the result of ‘a razor slash which he received while the British Fascists were stewarding a Conservative meeting at the Baths Hall in Lambeth’.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{131} Baker, ‘The Extreme Right in the 1920s...’, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{132} Farr, \textit{The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics in Britain}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{133} Cross, \textit{The Fascists in Britain}, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{134} Baker, ‘The Extreme Right in the 1920s...’, p. 20; Cross, \textit{The Fascists in Britain}, p. 58; Farr, \textit{The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics in Britain}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{135} Toczek, \textit{Haters, Baiters and Would-Be Dictators}, p. 206.
John Hope has highlighted how collaboration with the conservative right meant that the BF benefited from ‘the links that the conservative right had with the security apparatus of the state, in particular with MI5.’ He adds that, ‘To the Security Service, the British Fascists would have appeared merely as a more militant and aggressive version of those organizations with which it was already colluding – the more so as fascism appeared to emerge from the same bodies.’\(^{136}\) Indeed, the lack of a ‘formal and centralised approach to dual membership’ in the Conservative Party, as Pugh has highlighted, meant that this relationship between the Party and right-wing organisations like the BF was relatively fluid.\(^{137}\) Locker-Lampson was the embodiment of that porous boundary between conservative and fascism.

**The Arcos Raid**

In 1927, Locker-Lampson and the Clear Out the Reds campaign found itself invigorated by the Arcos Raid of 12 May. London Metropolitan police agents, having been tipped off about a missing War Office document possibly being in the hands of an Arcos employee at the Soviet House to be transmitted to Russia, received a warrant to search the headquarters of the Russian trade delegation and the All-Russian Cooperative Soviet (Arcos) in London. Though this document was never recovered in the search, other evidence was found to reveal that the London trade headquarters was being used by the Soviet Union as a base to direct subversive activities and spread propaganda. As a direct result, on 24 May, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin announced the termination of...

\(^{136}\) J. Hope, ‘Fascism, the Security Service and the Curious Careers of Maxwell Knight and James McGuirk Hughes’, *Lobster*, No. 22 (1 Nov. 1991) p. 3.

\(^{137}\) Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts!*, p. 62.
diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and the Russian diplomatic mission, trade
delegation and Arcos officials were expelled. Moreover, as Harriette Flory has written,

Over the next eight months the Home Office closely inspected these
papers and concluded that beyond any question the CPGB took its orders
and received money from the USSR. These documents also revealed that
the National Minority Movement … had as its primary purpose to
infiltrate the Trades Union Congress, to convert fractions into a Marxist
majority.

The Clear out the Reds campaign was not only vindicated by the findings of the Arcos
raid, but it had achieved one of it major objectives, which was the severing of relations
with Russia. Speaking at anti-Red campaigns in London and Bridlington in the days
following Baldwin’s announcement, Locker-Lampson declared ‘that the raid upon Arcos
disclosed a foul conspiracy against ordered democracy and alone justified our saying
good-bye to these false friends.’

On the eve of Baldwin’s speech, the New York Times described how the Foreign Secretary,
Austen Chamberlain, had up until this point ‘successfully resisted the efforts of the Die-

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139 ibid., pp. 710-11.

140 Daily Mail, 28 May 1927, p. 4.
hards to “clear out the Reds” some months ago’. Flory has noted that the main implications of the Arcos raid, as such, was embarrassment for the Conservative cabinet:

By means of the Arcos raid those who wanted a rupture forced the hands of those who opposed it. The break with the Soviets, then, came because its adherents found or created the public event which justified it — which even made it unavoidable — rather than when a breach was opportune, expedient or even necessary.

On 1 July a victory rally was held at Albert Hall by Locker-Lampson, with François Coty as a speaker. Coty, French businessman whose ‘anti-Communist obsession’ fuelled his fierce anti-semitism, went on to form the fascist league ‘Solidarity Française’ in France.

Meanwhile Locker-Lampson was being hailed in the media as the man who cleared out the Reds from Britain. The *Sphere* insisted that he, ‘more than anyone else,’ was responsible for routing the reds, and the *Tatler* described him as ‘that doughty champion of the Anti-Red movement, to whose energies must be ascribed a great deal of the progress which has

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141 *New York Times*, 23 May 1927, p. 23
143 *The Times*, 16 July 1927, p. 7.
145 *Sphere*, 11 June 1927, p. 466.
been made in clearing out the Reds from this country.’\textsuperscript{146} Locker-Lampson’s most steadfast ally, the \textit{Daily Mail}, also proclaimed:

\begin{quote}
The long overdue expulsion of the Red agitators from this country is due in great part to Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson…. He has carried on a campaign in the country the effectiveness of which was due almost entirely to his own personality and eloquence. His organising powers have been proved in many fields, but the effectiveness of the machinery which he improvised for the campaign may be measured by the fact that in the last six weeks he has distributed more than one million leaflets stating the facts in simple, cogent, and persuasive language.\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

Always a man of modesty, however, Locker-Lampson returned the compliment to the \textit{Mail}:

\begin{quote}
If I am able to single out one supporter, may I on your behalf thank \textit{The Daily Mail}? (Cheers.) Without its dauntless ingenuity and persistence this campaign never could have been won, and it is right and fitting that the great journal which refused to bow the knee to Bolshevism in the general strike a year ago should be the main organ in clearing out the Reds. Hats off to the Northcliffe House! (Cheers.)\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{146} \textit{Tatler}, 3 Aug. 1927, p. 215.
\item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{Daily Mail}, 25 May 1927, p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{148} \textit{Daily Mail}, 16 July 1927, p. 7.
\end{footnotes}
Having achieved his primary aim, Locker-Lampson continued to support ‘the effort, initiated by *The Daily Mail*, for the boycott to this country of Russia petrol and oil, drawn from wells stolen by the Soviet Government from British citizens.’¹⁴⁹ He did, however, get sued for libel by the National Fuel Oil Company for his claims in a pamphlet entitled ‘Plundered Petrol’.¹⁵⁰ The 24 months following his campaign’s victory, however, were relatively quiet for Locker-Lampson.

**Conclusion**

The Clear Out the Reds campaigns successfully rallied together many of the most prominent far-right organisations under the banner of mutual anti-communism, and these organisations undoubtably ‘encouraged and fostered the early versions of fascism’, as John Hope has written.¹⁵¹ This collaboration highlights the fluid relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics on the far-right. Unlike the Labour Party, there was a lackadaisical approach to dual membership in the Conservative Party, as Pugh explains:

> In the case of the British Fascists it was easy to turn a blind eye because they did not run their own candidates and claimed to be a non-party, patriotic organisation which respected the British constitution; consequently, Conservatives could reasonably regard them as allies who

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¹⁴⁹ *Daily Mail*, 16 June 1927, p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ *The Times*, 4 June 1927, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ Hope, ‘Fascism, the Security Service…’, p. 3.
supplied the party with stewards for its meetings and might, in some future crisis, fulfil an even more vital function for the state.\textsuperscript{152}

Certainly, it would be absurd to suggest that it was due to Locker-Lampson’s campaigning alone that Britain ended up severing relations with the Soviet Union in 1927. However, he was clearly the most prominent of right-wing organisers of extra-parliamentary campaigns which strengthened the hand of the extreme anti-Soviet elements within government. His close relationship with the \textit{Daily Mail}, which reported on his rallies no less than 27 times throughout 1926 alone, would have made him a well-known name in right-wing politics and gave his campaign invaluable publicity. Thus, as Farr also argues, when it came to the decision to raid the offices of the Russian Trade Delegation and Arcos, pressure from the Clear Out the Reds campaign would have further justified the hunt for incriminating evidence against the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{153} Overall, Locker-Lampson played a crucial role in the organisation of anti-communists and publicising anti-communist propaganda throughout the 1920s, and his activities would contribute to the developing fascist movement in Britain.

\textsuperscript{152} Pugh, \textit{Hurrah for the Blackshirts!}. p. 62.

\textsuperscript{153} Farr, \textit{The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics in Britain}, p. 65.
Chapter 3:

The Blue Shirts

The success of the Clear Out the Reds campaign in ending trade relations with the Soviet Union was short-lived, however. On 5 June 1929, the Labour Party was elected to government. The Party had campaigned on a pledge to restart diplomatic relations with Russia on the basis that trade was vital in helping ameliorate the escalating economic crisis that Britain was facing at the time.\footnote{B. Bridges, ‘Red or Expert? The Anglo–Soviet Exchange of Ambassadors in 1929’, \textit{Diplomacy & Statecraft}, Vol. 27, No. 3, (2016) p. 440.} Keeping their promise, by early October diplomatic relations had indeed been established with Russia—incensing Locker-Lampson. At a conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations in November, he described Russia as a ‘moral leper’ and pushed for a resolution which read:

\begin{quote}
That this gathering protests against the official return of Soviet agents to England, and will do its utmost to refuse the resumption of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia until these alien enemies have ceased all propaganda and paid up what they owe.\footnote{\textit{Daily Mail}, 23 Nov. 1929, p. 6.}
\end{quote}

At another unspecified meeting in Glasgow, he derided the Labour Prime Minister:

\begin{quote}
MacDonald has become the chief apostle of that very secret diplomacy which he has always professed to deplore. He has once again let in the agents of the Soviet, and they are to be allowed diplomatic passes and
\end{quote}
secret bags, with which to foment another general strike and racial riots
in the Empire.¹⁵⁶

In retaliation, Locker-Lampson wrote an article for the *Daily Mail* on 27 March 1930 outlining the return of the Clear Out the Reds campaign, in light of the Labour government’s restarting of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. ‘I write … to say’, he wrote, ‘that we are launching at once our old campaign to clear out the Reds and we will not rest until we have driven these pestilent foes from our shores.’¹⁵⁷ Highlighting the kidnapping and presumed assassination by Soviet agents in Paris of General Alexander Kutepov, former White Guard leader during in the Russian Civil War and then leader of the *emigre* veterans ‘Russian All-Military Union’,¹⁵⁸ Locker-Lampson insisted that

… This could not have happened if France had not recognised the Soviet and permitted Soviet spies freely to enter and dig themselves in. For the accredited agents of a country with diplomatic rights are inviolable; they cannot be arrested, and the Embassy which they inhabit is sacred ground. Conceive, therefore, the ease with which the Bolsheviks could plot this outrage in Paris, and the ease now, too, in England. If these monsters are capable of such a crime in France, they are capable of it in England. It is part of their policy of terrorism to hold hostages and torture them. If they

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¹⁵⁶ *Daily Mail*, 27 Nov. 1929, p. 12.


do not kidnap anybody in England, there can be only one reason that
they dare not—yet!

But the disappearance of this general and the attempted assassination of
our Viceroy in India both point to the perils of inviting these false friends
to share our hospitality.\textsuperscript{159}

As such, on 24 June, the Albert Hall once again played host to an anti-Red rally, with
various important names in the military, politics and entertainment as guests. It was so
popular, an overflow rally was held on 25 July at Westminster Hall. For the event, the
\textit{Daily Mail} reported, ‘Several hundreds of young Conservatives will travel by special train
from Birmingham to London … and almost every conservative organisation in London
will send representatives.’\textsuperscript{160} On the first night, ‘[q]ueues formed early outside every door
and members of the Fascist organization distributed leaflets bearing the words “Moscow
Unmasked”, wrote \textit{The Times}, and just like the Clear out the Reds campaigns which had
preceded it, ‘[a] procession with the Union Jack at its head escorted the speakers through
the centre of the hall to the platform.’\textsuperscript{161} This procession was, of course, escorted by the BF,
which was led by Neil Francis-Hawkins of the Fascist General Staff, who would later go
on to become a leading member of the BUF.\textsuperscript{162}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{159}] \textit{Daily Mail}, 27 Mar. 1930, p. 10.
\item[\textsuperscript{160}] \textit{Daily Mail}, 19 June 1930, p. 7.
\item[\textsuperscript{161}] \textit{The Times}, 25 June 1930, p. 18.
\item[\textsuperscript{162}] Lineham, \textit{British Fascism…}, pp. 104, 110.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
But these rallies differed slightly from their predecessors; they formed the launch-pad for Locker-Lampson’s new anti-communist league, the ‘Sentinels of Empire’. The league was also commonly known as the ‘Blue Shirts’ (not to be confused with the more well-known fascist ‘Blueshirts’ group led by General O’Duffy in the Irish Free State, formed slightly later in 1932\(^{163}\), and less often as the ‘Loyalist League’ (also not to be confused with the similarly anti-communist, Italian Fascisti-inspired ‘Loyalty League’ formed October 1922\(^{164}\)).\(^{165}\) A fortnight after the inaugural Albert Hall meeting, the American *TIME* magazine described the event:

> With his chest expanding under a livid blue shirt Commander Oliver Stillingfleet Locker-Lampson, patriotic Conservative M. P., proudly surveyed last week 20,000 seething, applauding Britons whom he had summoned to London’s mammoth Albert Hall. A big blue flag drooped from a staff at the Commander’s right. Most of the audience wore at least a bit of blue. … Outside Albert Hall waited several swank blue motor cars with the radiator emblem *Fear God! Fear Naught!* The blue blood of the British ruling class was up—this was the charter mass-meeting of Commander Locker-Lampson’s blue-shirted “Sentinels of Empire,” found “to peacefully fight Bolshevism and clear out the Reds!” Brass bandsmen

\(^{163}\) Cross, *The Fascists in Britain*, p. 95.

\(^{164}\) ‘Another organization which was, quite frankly, modeled on Italian fascist lines was the Loyalty League which appears for the first time in October, 1922. Its purpose was simply to “fight communism.” … Existing along with the British Fascisti, the League gained few adherents and described itself as primarily a propaganda supplement to the Conservative Party.’ Farr, *The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics in Britain*, p. 55; ‘Apologists of the Russian Revolution and its Atrocities’, Pamphlet, 4 pp. Redhill, Surrey, The Loyalty League, n.d. (c.1924), Cooper Collection MS 181/36.

blared a stirring tune. … Stirring speeches at the mass meeting were made by Rear-Admiral Murray Fraser Sueter, M. P., and Brigadier-General Sir Henry Page Croft, M. P., as well as by Commander Locker-Lampson …

By September 1931 the League was reporting that its membership had reached 100,000. They had their own ‘gentlemen’ cufflinks and badges with the League’s motto ‘Fear God, Fear Naught’ inscribed, which had been the motto of the Locker family for generations. He even wrote an anthem for the Sentinels entitled ‘March on!’, which was sold as sheet music and as a 78 rpm record. Locker-Lampson remarked that the song was primarily designed to drown out the Communist songs The Internationale and the Red Flag:

Wherever the Reds gather … they sing the Red Flag. We think that there should be a song which anti-Communists can take up in response to the Red Challenge. Our Blueshirts march can drown out the Red Flag any time.

However, this mass meeting appears to have been the last of its kind for the Clear Out the Reds campaign. Instead, what appear to have been far more exclusive ‘balls’ were held,

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167 *Time*, 6 July 1931, p. 15.

168 The Daily Times, Rochester and Beaver, Pa., 16 Sept. 1931, p. 2.


170 *Time*, 6 July 1931, p. 15.

attracting members of fashionable English high society, and their events were reported as society news in newspapers. The Daily Mirror’s gossip column reported on 9 July 1931:

Ten Volunteer Young Ladies, led by Miss Barbara Goodall, are now appearing in cabaret as Blueshirts at the Chantilly in Trafalgar-square. Tonight is a gala All-Blue Night, with blue cocktails, blue matches, blue cigarettes and even blue bread. Lady Birkenhead, Lord Wharton and Miss Betty Nuthall are among those who are to support the new venture with their presence.172

The event was also featured in the Daily Mail’s gossip column:

I went first to a restaurant in Trafalgar-square for an “All Blue” night, in honour of Commander Locker-Lampson’s anti-Socialist blue-shirted party.

The waiters wore blue ties, the table napkins were blue, the menus, as much of the decorations as possible, and the dresses of the cabaret were all of the same shade.

The cabaret chorus, which sings a spirited reply to the “Red Flag,” written by Commander Locker-Lampson, is remarkable …

There was a distinguished and enthusiastic crowd present, for apart from “Our Commander,”- as his party call him, I saw Lord Scarsdale, ex-King George and Prince Paul of Greece, Mr. Handley Page, Mr. Andrew Soutar,

172 Daily Mirror, 9 July 1931, p. 11.
and the two English film stars, Miss Muriel Angelus and Mr. John Stuart...

Another such event was held at Dorchester House in November, which followed a similar blue-coloured theme, whereby 1,000 invitations were reportedly ‘issued to most of London’s society leaders and to Blue Shirts’ supporters all over England’.\textsuperscript{174} Despite the socialite aspect of these meetings, it was made clear that their object was ‘to further the Blue Shirts’ organization’s propaganda against alleged Soviet propaganda’.\textsuperscript{175}

It seems that with the creation of his new anti-communist league, Locker-Lampson also felt emboldened to express his admiration for foreign fascists. In September 1930 Locker-Lampson wrote a positive appraisal of Hitler for the \textit{Daily Mirror}, touting the future leader of Nazi Germany as ‘a legendary hero’ and ‘the most masterly expounder and contriver in the length and breadth of the Reich.’\textsuperscript{176} In 1932, Mussolini received a phonograph record of the Sentinels’ ‘March On!’ song, along with silver and blue-enameded cufflinks and badge, as a gift from the Blue Shirts.\textsuperscript{177} As reported in the \textit{Berkeley Daily Gazette}, ‘The messenger, a prominent member of the Italian Fascist Party, was asked to convey to him [Mussolini] the greetings of Britain’s hundred thousand-strong Blue Legion.’\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Daily Mail}, 25 July 1931, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{The Daily Times, Rochester and Beaver, Pa.}, 16 Sept. 1931, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{175} \textit{ibid}.


\textsuperscript{177} \textit{Berkeley Daily Gazette}, 8 March 1932, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{ibid}.
The Blue Shirts also attracted the praise of the Nazi philosopher Alfred Rosenberg, who in 1931 had lunch with Locker-Lampson at the Savoy during a visit to London.\textsuperscript{179} This was organised by the MI6 spy F. W. Winterbotham who was investigating the Nazis at the time, posing as an admirer who could help the Nazis make links with prominent figures in Britain. Locker-Lampson’s Blue Shirts apparently ‘delighted Rosenberg, and when he heard that their objective was to counter Communist propaganda he was even more enthusiastic’, and Rosenberg later sent him a gold cigarette case as a ‘token of his esteem’. However, perhaps at this time not wishing to be directly associated with the Nazi Party, Locker-Lampson did not accept the gift. Nevertheless, the meeting, Winterbotham recalls, ‘reinforced [Rosenberg’s] belief that I was an obvious admirer of colour-shirted chaps, a part I would have to play if I was to mix with the Nazis.’\textsuperscript{180}

Indeed, it was around the time of the creation of the Sentinels of Empire that Locker-Lampson and his campaign began to be referred to as fascist. In May 1931, Harry Pollitt wrote of ‘the Fascist Lampson’ in the CPGB’s paper, the \textit{Daily Worker}.\textsuperscript{181} An American newspaper in Rochester, Pennsylvania, noted that the Sentinels of Empire were ‘sometimes called the English Fascists’.\textsuperscript{182} In a tongue-in-cheek article in \textit{Time} magazine in 1931, it was written that, at the Albert Hall event in June, ‘few expected him to become in more than nickname “Britain’s Hitler,” much less “Britain’s Mussolini.”’\textsuperscript{183} Though this

\textsuperscript{179} Recalled in the memoir of former MI6 spy, Winterbotham, \textit{The Nazi Connection}, pp. 34-5. The meeting is further verified in a report in the \textit{Daily Express}, 5 May 1933, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{180} Winterbotham, \textit{The Nazi Connection}, pp. 34-5.

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Daily Worker}, 18 May 1931, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{182} \textit{The Daily Times, Rochester and Beaver, Pa.}, 16 Sept. 1931. p. 2.

\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Time}, 6 July 1931, p. 15.
article appears to be mocking Locker-Lampson as something of a buffoon, and not to be taken particularly seriously, on the other hand this line suggests that Locker-Lampson was striving to, or was seen as striving to, emulate Mussolini and Hitler. *Time* later described Locker-Lampson as a rival to Mosley ‘as an organiser of British Fascists.’\(^{184}\)

**British Perceptions of Foreign Fascism**

In Conservative circles, admiration for Mussolini and Italian fascism was not something out of the ordinary. As A. J. P. Taylor pointed out,

> Every politician extolled the virtues of democracy, especially at the expense of the Soviet Union. Despite the rhetoric, MacDonald wrote friendly personal letters to the Fascist dictator Mussolini; Austen Chamberlain exchanged photographs with him and joined him in family holidays …\(^{185}\)

 Locker-Lampson’s close friend Churchill was another politician who praised Italian fascism for its ability to crush Bolshevism. When he visited Rome in January 1927, he gave a speech where he announced that, had he been an Italian, he would have been ‘wholeheartedly’ with the Fascisti in their struggle against ‘the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism’. He continued:

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\(^{184}\) *Time*, 7 Aug. 1933, p. 18.

I will, however, say a word on an international aspect of Fascismo. 

Externally your movement has rendered a service to the whole world. …

Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the mass of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilized society. She has provided a necessary antidote to the Russian poison.186

Indeed, Italy’s regime was viewed positively in 1920s Conservative Britain, and likely benefited from the country having (eventually) been an ally of Britain during the First World War, as opposed to Germany which had been its chief enemy.187 As such, ‘the Hun’, as Germans were pejoratively described, was subject to more prejudice in Britain, and members of groups such as the BEU often linked socialism with pan-Germanism, ‘in an anti-Christian plot for world domination, financed by Jewish capitalists.’188

The impact of the Nazis and the popular perception of the Second World War as a ‘war against fascism’ has led to some historical oversight of earlier admiration for Italian fascism. This has been argued by Martin Pugh, who wrote that this ‘Churchillian preoccupation’ with the Nazis has both ‘dominated and distorted’ interwar historiography, and has thus overshadowed the fact that the Italian model of fascism ‘exercised a much more prolonged and positive influence’ in Britain.189

187 Pugh, Hurrah for the Blackshirts!, p. 38.
188 Thomas, ‘Confronting the Challenge of Socialism’, p. 19.
189 Pugh, Hurrah for the Blackshirts! p. 4.
Despite this admiration, however, many also viewed fascism as distinctly un-British, or at least not appropriate for British conditions. Hence, when Churchill gave his speech in Rome, he clarified:

… in England we have not had to fight this danger [communism] in the same deadly form. We have our way of doing things. But that we shall succeed in grappling with Communism and choking the life out of it—of that I am absolutely sure. [my emphasis]

In Pugh’s words, ‘Foreign Office officials liked to see Italians as unstable people who required a dictatorial government’. The political conditions in Italy and later Germany were far more unstable than they had ever been in Britain; traditional Conservatives could admire the forces which crush a threat of Communism abroad, but recognise that such forces were not necessary in England, at least at present. Nevertheless, such admiration of an explicitly reactionary, violent anti-communist regime elsewhere undoubtably suggests that should such circumstances arise, it may also be a desirable course of action at home.

**Locker-Lampson’s Political Shift**

In April 1933 Locker-Lampson’s activities began to change quite significantly in character. Apparently unhappy with the persecution of Jews carried out by the Nazis, who had come to power in January, he wrote a public letter to Hitler:

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As a member of Parliament and former officer who has always and openly stood for Germany’s claims to military equality and territorial revision and who has been for years your sincere admirer I take the liberty of calling your attention to the fact that the decision to discriminate against the German Jews has had a most damaging effect upon the good feeling for Germany which was growing stronger and which culminated on your accession to power. We hoped to see Germany strengthened under your leadership. This action against the Jews is making the work of myself and other friends of Germany almost impossible. Forgive me, Chancellor, for these frank words of an Englishman who has often cheered you in your meetings in Germany.191

It appears that from this point onwards, Locker-Lampson’s anti-communism, though still present, was significantly sidelined by his opposition to Nazism and support for persecuted Jews. He became a staunch critic of Hitler, and engaged in a minor war of words with the man himself, as recalled in his obituary for the *New York Times*:

> [Locker-Lampson] protested against Hitler’s policies by repeated telegrams to the Nazi chief. Hitler retorted by calling Commander Locker-Lampson “a Jew and a Communist,” and the Briton, in turn, said Hitler was not a “hero” but a “Nero” with a “heart as well as a head of lard.”192

191 *The Times*, 1 Apr. 1933, p. 10.

He also appeared to have turned his back on Mussolini, whom he dubbed a cheap ‘drawing-room’ fascist at a meeting of Jewish ex-Service men at Shoreditch Town Hall in July 1933.\footnote{Western Gazette, 21 July 1933, p. 9.}

Perhaps most well-remembered during this period is Locker-Lampson’s role in providing refuge for Professor Albert Einstein at his home in Cromer, Norfolk, in September 1933, making ‘private arrangements’ to have Einstein guarded at his home for around a month until the professor was due to leave around a month later for America.\footnote{Daily Mirror, 12 Sept. 1933, p. 1} He also organised a rally for the Refugee Assistance Fund (to which he donated generously) taking place at the Albert Hall on 3rd of October, and which featured a short speech from Einstein.\footnote{Locker-Lampson, Nothing to Offer but Blood; Rubinstein and Rubinstein, Admiration and Support in the English-Speaking World for Jews, p. 88.} Locker-Lampson’s own speech at the event was somewhat peculiar; it lacked the humanitarian tone which might be expected, and rather stressed the superior intellect and achievements of Jews:

Persecution in Germany has taken a form which is really incomprehensible. Of old, persecution was understandable. Men were sometimes martyred for what was called the good of their souls. But there is no such sanction in the persecution in Germany today. The Jews have been nearly two thousand years in Germany. They have
contributed more than one other single element to Germany’s spiritual and material success.

Is that the reason why they have been expelled? Germany has not expelled her blackguards and her cut-throats; she has expelled the most civilized of her citizens. Never in the history of the world has there been this pogrom of intellect. ¹⁹⁶

He later boasted of his role as a campaigning underdog in his unfinished autobiography:

[I] Launched [a] campaigned with Duchess of Hamilton against Mussolini and espoused cause of Abyssinians, whose King received us. Offended many by calling Mussolini “the Castor Oil King of Italy” ¹⁹⁷

... Although two Prime Ministers curried favour with Adolph, I, alone among the M.P.’s [sic] attacked him. ... with every Conservative newspaper against me I organized a meeting at the Albert Hall at which Austen Chamberlain and eminent scientists spoke as well as Professor Einstein. Hitler’s subordinate later declared this the most damaging single act done by an Englishman to the Nazi cause, by focusing feeling, etc., etc. ¹⁹⁸

Locker-Lampson also became known for his unsuccessful attempt to get a bill passed in parliament in 1934 which would ban the wearing of political uniforms—aimed in

¹⁹⁶ Locker-Lampson, Nothing to Offer but Blood.

¹⁹⁷ ibid.

¹⁹⁸ ibid.
particular at Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts, also known as the British Union of Fascists (BUF). Though a degree of hypocrisy was highlighted by Lord Winterton during the debate, who joked:

My hon. and gallant Friend proposes that people should not be permitted to wear coloured shirts. I do not want to make a joke at his expense, but he himself once belonged to a blue shirt organisation, and I take it that he does not want to prohibit the wearing of shirts, whether they are blue, or red, or black, or any other colour—that, in other words, he does not wish people to go about in singlets.

Locker-Lampson was also a key campaigner in supporting Jewish settlement in Palestine, and found success with other proposed bills such as one which would make it easier for German Jews fleeing persecution to claim British citizenship. By June 1934, it appears that information about Locker-Lampson’s Blue Shirts organisation was difficult to come by, as the Milwaukee Journal noted that ‘Since March, 1932, the editorial files are strangely empty regarding the Blue Shirts of England.’

Moreover, by 1934 Locker-Lampson’s ‘Hands Off Britain’ campaign had changed its tone rather dramatically. Rebranding itself as the ‘Hands off Britain Air Defence League’, it now

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202 *The Milwaukee Journal*, 3 June 1934, p. 27.
focused primarily on air defence against Germany—the Bolshevik menace appears to have become of secondary importance. Though the Daily Worker did ridicule that:

The Commander blushingly rejects the title of “Fascist,” but the motto of [the Air Defence League] is “England Awake.” This of the Nazis is: “Deutschland Erwache!” (Germany Awake!)

He is also noted for his role in pushing for the prosecution of fanatical anti-semite and leader of the Imperial Fascist League, Arnold Leese, for his allegations made in his paper The Fascist of ‘Jewish Ritual Murder’. In 1938, the B’nai B’rith Magazine claimed that Locker-Lampson ‘had pledged to contribute one-sixth of his salary as an M. P. to Jewish relief.’ It is for these activities from 1933 onwards that he is on numerous occasions remembered as being an active anti-fascist, or at least having ‘given up fascism’.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the objectives and inner workings of the Sentinels of Empire are obscured by the lack of documentation. However, it does appear that Locker-Lampson was attempting to take his anti-communist campaigning to the next stage of populist, extra-

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203 The Times, 29 June 1934, p. 12.

204 Daily Worker, 30 June 1934, p. 4; ‘England Awake!’ was also a slogan used by the BF in its paper British Fascism, No. 19, 1 Mar. 1932, Cooper Collection MS 181/4.


parliamentary paramilitary organisation. Though Locker-Lampson never personally referred to the Blue Shirts as a fascist organisation, it was clearly viewed as such by contemporary commentators; and this view would undoubtably have been reinforced by Locker-Lampson’s earlier support for Hitler and Mussolini.

Despite their claimed membership of 100,000—a number which we can assume was almost certainly inflated—the Sentinels of Empire did not appear to make much of an impact outside of the aristocratic circles of which Locker-Lampson was already a part. Judging by the nature of the dinners held, this would seem to have been Locker-Lampson’s target audience, at least initially, perhaps for the purpose of raising funds for wider campaigning.

The perplexing and sudden change in the politics of Locker-Lampson in 1933 cannot be assessed fully, however, without an analysis of the role of anti-semitism in the anti-communist movement, and this will be explored in the following chapter.
Chapter 4:
Anti-Communism and Anti-Semitism

Locker-Lampson’s apparent ‘philosemitism’ is perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of his interwar career, given his staunch anti-communism and early enthusiasm for Hitler and Mussolini. It was not only fascists who linked communism with a world-wide Jewish conspiracy; it was a relatively common trope amongst anti-communists in interwar Britain. The most prominent of these was Locker-Lampson’s friend Churchill, who made various comments throughout the 1920s regarding this conspiracy. Most famously, in 1920 he wrote an article entitled ‘Zionism versus Bolshevism’ for the *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, explaining the link between Bolshevism and Jews:

… This movement among the Jews is not new. From the days of Spartacus-Weishaupt to those of Karl Marx, and down to Trotsky (Russia), Bela Kun (Hungary), Rosa Luxembourg (Germany), and Emma Goldman (United States), this world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilization and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality, has been steadily growing. … It has been the mainspring of every subversive movement during the Nineteenth Century; and now at last this band of extraordinary personalities from the underworld of the great cities of Europe and America have gripped the Russian people by the hair of their heads and have become practically the undisputed masters of that enormous empire.
... There is no need to exaggerate the part played in the creation of Bolshevism and in the actual bringing about of the Russian Revolution, by these international and for the most part atheistical Jews, it is certainly a very great one; it probably outweighs all others. With the notable exception of Lenin, the majority of the leading figures are Jews.208

This was not the only occasion of this type of rhetoric from Churchill. He also attacked English socialists in a speech at Sunderland in January 1920 for allegedly believing ‘in the international Soviet of Russian and Polish Jews’,209 and when his claims were challenged by a colleague, he asserted in his reply that ‘the Jews in this country would be well to admit the facts more openly than they do’.210

This demonstrates that the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory was a relatively mainstream anti-communist trope on the Conservative right. There is only once traceable occasion of Locker-Lampson making reference to this conspiracy theory, from August 1919:

The early Bolshevik excesses were followed by an orgy of misgovernment .... Until the day came when a body of Jews from some Soviet Committee entered the British Embassy, murdered Captain Cromie, and dragged Mr. Marsden and others off to prison. [my emphasis]211


211 Preface written by OLL for Marsden book, 14th August, 1919, NRO/OLL 1727/26 322X1, enclosed in letter from OLL to Mr. V. E. Marsden, Esq., NRO/OLL 1727/30 322X1.
It was also at this time that he remained in close contact with the White Army, which was conducting anti-Jewish pogroms in the Ukraine and spreading anti-semitic propaganda across Russia, condemning the ‘Jew-communist’ enemy.\textsuperscript{212} Those who expressed lukewarm support for the Whites were denounced as Jews. As Peter Kenez has concluded, ‘anti-Semitism was neither a peripheral nor an accidental aspect of White ideology; it was a focal point of their world view.’\textsuperscript{213} Similarly, Locker-Lampson did not hesitate to co-operate and provide a platform for individual anti-communists and anti-communist groups who had expressed anti-semitic views. Locker-Lampson’s comments in 1919, on top of his close links with those who consistently asserted the role of the Jews in the Communist threat, confirms that Locker-Lampson was aware of and sympathetic to this conspiracy theory, yet made a conscious effort to ignore it.

Furthermore, on at least six occasions in 1926 alone, Locker-Lampson made use of the term ‘alien’ to describe the communist threat at speeches at rallies and in articles for the \textit{Daily Mail}, for example: ‘That strike was the offspring of alien anarchy,’ ‘We leave at large the alien pimps,’ and ‘the vile aliens who were sucking our life-blood dry.’\textsuperscript{214} The use of alien in Locker-Lampson’s speech, is, on the one hand, highlighting that Bolshevism and communism are \textit{not British}—that communism and socialism do not subscribe to British values, thus they must be from \textit{somewhere else}. As he had said at a National Citizens Union


\textsuperscript{213} \textit{ibid.}, p. 176.

meeting in October 1926, ‘the [General] strike is not a British thing, but a foreign thing from Russia.’ Yet, as Sharman Kadish has highlighted, the use of alien in the 1920s was virtually synonymous with ‘Jew’. There were a great number of conservatives who viewed Bolshevism in Russia as a ‘foreign import,’ and as such ‘regarded socialism at home in the same light’. Since the 1880s ‘large-scale Jewish immigration had been accompanied by anti-immigrant hostility’ and social unrest and subversion was explicitly and implicitly linked to the ‘alien’. These were often Irish Sinn Feiners, ‘but principally … Russian Jews’. Indeed, in its early days the BF was not known for being explicitly anti-Semitic, but it still held ‘dark suspicions that “aliens” were at the root of the Red disorder.’ Locker-Lampson did not blame Jews for communist agitation in any explicit sense, but his language at the very least both exploited this idea and encouraged it.

As Gisela Lebzelter has explained, the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory was ‘a convenient subject for the conservative right which was confronted with political developments that did not suit its views – in particular the consolidation of the Bolshevik regime in Russia, and the progress of the Labour Party in Britain’. Indeed, there were many Bolsheviks who were Jews. Yet, as Lebzelter writes, ‘one could not justly deduce that Jewry as such was the instigator of the downfall of the Russian Empire’. In reality, the

217 ibid.
218 ibid.
219 Cross, The Fascists in Britain, p. 58.
220 Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England, p. 16.
political allegiance of the Jewish communities in Russia and elsewhere was ‘split from left to right’. There was, of course, little attempt made to understand why it may have been that many Jews could have been drawn to radical politics. ‘Intuitively, this was attributed not to their long-lasting oppression in Russia, but to inherent inclinations rooted in Jewish character and religion,’ writes Lebzelter.221

Explaining Locker-Lampson’s Political Shift

Despite this evidence, Locker-Lampson appears to have made a conscious effort to never directly acknowledge or engage with this anti-semitic conspiracy theory. In fact, Arnold Leese’s viciously antisemitic Imperial Fascist League (IFL) criticised Locker-Lampson’s lack of engagement in the ‘Judeo-Bolshevik’ conspiracy in a 1931 issue of The Fascist:

WHY THE I.F.L. HAS NEVER SUPPORTED COMMANDER LOCKER LAMPSON.

The “Jewish Chronicle” for the 21st November gives the text of a speech which it says the Commander had intended to make in the House on the 10th, had he caught the speakers eye. The appended extracts will show why the I.F.L. has never trusted the gentleman enough to support his “Hands Off Britain” campaign.

“Frankly, if I had to help the Jew or the Arab in Palestine, I would help the Jew.”

“What did the Arabs do for us in the War? They took our money. But the Jews in the British Empire joined up without bribes.

221 ibid., 19.
No wonder the Commander always forgets to mention the Jewish origin and nature of “Russian’ Bolshevism when he holds meetings about “Clearing Out the Reds.”

That the IFL felt compelled to explain why it had ‘never supported’ him suggests that Locker-Lampson’s campaigns may have otherwise appealed to readers of *The Fascist*. Leese would also later recall that Locker-Lampson’s Clear Out the Reds campaign ‘never once mentioned that Bolshevism was Jewish’, and made the suggestion that Locker-Lampson’s primary concern over the Soviet Union was that it had ‘confiscated the Rothschild oil wells at Baku’. Leese had on more than one occasion made this reference to Locker-Lampson’s friendship with the Rothschilds—a famously wealthy, Jewish banking family, long exploited as evidence to fuel antisemitic conspiracy theories.

Leese’s comments were driven by extreme prejudice, and he was known for deriding every fascist group in Britain as insufficiently anti-semitic. However his comments shed some light on the logic behind Locker-Lampson’s silence on the question of anti-semitism within the anti-communist movement. It is true that Locker-Lampson had for a long time been friends with members of the Rothschild family. It is also true that the Rothschilds owned many oil wells in Russia which the Bolsheviks nationalised, and as previously

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225 ‘Lord Rothschild, … and others are contributing and one supporter alone has given £10,000’, Letter to Sir Hugh Shaw Stewart, Bt. from Locker-Lampson, 11 Sept. 1914, NRO/OLL 1728/4 322X1; Hitchings, ‘Locker-Lampson: Einstein’s protector’, p. 22.
mentioned, Locker-Lampson campaigned alongside the *Daily Mail* to boycott Russian petrol and oil, ‘drawn from wells stolen by the Soviet Government from British citizens’.

As well as speaking in parliament on the issue, he lobbied organisations and town councils who were suspected of using Soviet Oil. Then, in 1928, he announced in a National Citizens Union meeting that he would raise the question of increasing tax on Soviet oil to the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, Churchill. Locker-Lampson was, after all, a socialite with many important contacts in Britain, as well as relatives in America from his mother’s side. Perhaps Locker-Lampson’s failure to entertain or denounce the ‘Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy’ theory suggests he simply didn’t wish to antagonise either his anti-Semitic or Jewish associates, both of which he would have seen as potentially useful allies.

Interestingly, the same *Time* article which at this time described Locker-Lampson as a rival to Oswald Mosley as an organiser of fascists, claimed that ‘by coming out squarely against brown-shirted anti-semitism, Blue-Shirt Locker-Lampson placed his movement in line to receive contributions from wealthy British Jews.’ It is certainly possible that the Blue Shirts would have appealed to right-wing Jews, who would have been increasingly shunned from other fascist groups which were becoming increasingly anti-Semitic at the time. However, even if it were the case that Locker-Lampson was somewhat

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227 ‘The oil, the timber and the other things which have been taken from our people in Russia and nationalised are being sold in England, and add to the credits of those trading organisations in England, which are used against us for a variety of purposes.’ O. Locker-Lampson, ‘Communist Propaganda and Trade Agreement’, HC Deb, 25 June 1926, Vol. 197, cc699-778, Hansard; *Daily Mail*, 16 June 1927, p. 12.


opportunistically trying to recruit Jews to his movement, it is still undeniable that from mid-1933, once his Blue Shirts organisation became defunct, he seemed to selflessly dedicate significant time and energy to supporting Jewish refugees for the remainder of his career.

On the other hand, Nazi anti-semitism was far from secret before Hitler came to power in 1933. It seems quite absurd to imagine that Locker-Lampson was suddenly disillusioned by their anti-semitism only when they finally gained power. Locker-Lampson had made a conscious effort to ignore anti-semitism within the anti-communist movement in Britain, and as such likely didn’t find it difficult to do the same with regard to the Nazis before 1933. One conclusion which can be drawn from his sudden repositioning as an anti-Nazi is that Locker-Lampson was content with relatively casual anti-semitism, as was common in British society, but was unsettled when an actual program of expulsion was enacted by the Nazis. On the other hand, he consistently supported the White Army despite their pogroms of Jews during the Russian Civil War, suggesting that there were other factors involved in his campaign against the Nazis.

Locker-Lampson’s creation of the Hands Off Britain Air Defence League, which pushed for military build-up in preparation for war, suggests that he viewed the Nazi Party’s policy of territorial and imperial ambitions as a threat to British imperial interests now that they had gained power in Germany. In a key part of his speech given at the 1933

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230 Spectator, 19 July 1934, p. 16.
Refugee Assistance Fund rally, Locker-Lampson made various indications of his interest in bolstering the Empire through the support of Jews and pursuit of Zionist policies:

… We have been granted the mandate in Palestine, and the working out there of a home for the Jews in that land of legend and love. So my advice tonight to Jews is this, a practical advice first of all. Learn to speak and write English. My next advice is: Be not afraid. You have stood beside the grave of every one of your oppressors in turn - the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Turks. I prophesy that you are going to prevail over your present enemy; that you will rise to glory under the banner of the British Empire; that through persecution you will build up in Palestine as never otherwise your Holy of Holies. Jerusalem will not be a business centre or a sentimental one, but a living seat of learning of the most learned race in the world.

You must make of that University the Oxford of the Orient, the Cambridge of the East, the stone which the builders rejected, the outlaw Einstein, shall become the headstone of the corner of your temple. 231

Locker-Lampson indicates here that he viewed Zionism—the creation of Jewish state—as integral to British imperial interests in the Middle East. This view is further reinforced by his earlier statement: ‘What did the Arabs do for us in the War? They took our money. But the Jews in the British Empire joined up without bribes’. 232 Locker-Lampson saw Zionism as a way to create a loyal state which would bolster the British Empire, and as such, a way

231 Locker-Lampson, Nothing to Offer but Blood.

of helping to fight German national and imperialist ambitions in the Middle East. An aggressive Germany, under Hitler or anyone else, had historically been seen by the British as a major threat to its interests and this overrode any sympathy Locker-Lampson may have had for Hitler. Moreover, Locker-Lampson’s anti-Nazi position would have been made easier to take because by 1933, the fear of communist revolution in Britain, or even as much as a Labour government, had all but disappeared.

This interaction and contradiction between Locker-Lampson’s anti-communism and nationalism draws parallels with the dilemma faced by fascists in Britain. That is, on the one hand fascism is deeply nationalistic—and in Britain’s case dedicated to the Empire—but on the other hand it is committed to the struggle against international communism and thus supports foreign fascists in their fight against revolution. This tension split the Conservative right in Britain into broadly two camps: those such as Locker-Lampson, who clearly saw German militarism as a threat to the British Empire, and others who, for example, went on to join the Anglo-German Fellowship to support the Nazi regime.

A final point to highlight is that Locker-Lampson was a man who constantly wished to lead a crusade. But, as the Daily Worker reported in 1934, Locker-Lampson’s popularity as an anti-communist had been waning:

Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, flamboyant anti-Red organiser, is losing ground to Mosley, who does that kind of thing much better.
There was a time when the Commander’s frothiest utterance was assured of big headlines in the Diehard Press. Now he has to pay for his speeches to be printed at the usual advertisement rates.233

In this regard, Locker-Lampson’s campaign could not compete with other fascist movements. His relationship with the *Daily Mail* had run out of steam, and the paper had now found a new rallying figure in Oswald Mosley, infamously declaring ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts!’ in 1934.234 As such, perhaps Locker-Lampson saw his anti-Nazi campaigning as his next undertaking from which he could make his mark.

**Conclusion**

Locker-Lampson’s apparent philosemitism is complicated, yet forces us to consider the complex relationship between fascism, antisemitism, and anti-communism. It could be said that the ‘Churchillian’ view of interwar fascism—the Nazi-centric approach—has also affected historians’ interpretation of the role of anti-semitism in the fascist movement. As Daniel Tilles has rightly highlighted, ‘the relationship between fascism and antisemitism is not inevitable, and in fact has been far from ubiquitous historically’. The Italian Fascisti was for over a decade viewed in Britain as the archetype fascist movement, and yet it ‘officially eschewed antisemitism for the first nineteen of its twenty-six years of existence’. Moreover, there were many fascist groupings in Europe which paid little if no attention to the ‘Jewish question’ throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.235

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233 *Daily Worker*, 30 June 1934, p. 4


Though Locker-Lampson clearly dedicated the later part of his career to helping Jews, his earlier actions based on anti-communism led him to work enthusiastically with those who held openly anti-Semitic views. He could not have been unaware of anti-semitic conspiracy theories and the abundance of anti-Jewish views within the anti-communist movement, but he obviously felt it was unnecessary to engage with such ideas, perhaps wishing to remain on the best side of all of his allies.

Locker-Lampson further demonstrates the point that, though anti-semitism was normally a feature of fascism, it was not necessarily fundamental to fascism in the interwar period — as fascist movements under Mussolini and later Franco demonstrated. One constantly central feature to fascism, however, was anti-communism.
Conclusion

The primary aim of this paper has been to explain the career and unravel the enigma of Oliver Locker-Lampson, and in doing to offer a nuanced perspective on anti-communism and its relationship to fascism within the right-wing of the Conservative Party.

The first conclusion to be drawn is that Locker-Lampson was a far more prominent anti-communist figure in interwar politics than has been previously recognised. He was at the forefront of organising anti-communist rallies between 1926 and 1933, which were extensively publicised across various right-wing news outlets—especially the *Daily Mail*. Furthermore, his campaigns undoubtedly encouraged vitriolic anti-communist feeling which would be of benefit to the developing fascist movement in Britain.

At the same time, Locker-Lampson was campaigning in the post-General Strike period, in which the labour movement had suffered defeat, and the fear of revolution in Britain had been abated. As Gerald D. Anderson puts it,

To some [fascism and communism] were reciprocating polarities: each tended to grow in response to the other. Fascism flourished in part because it seemed a way of preserving capitalism and destroying communism. It fostered fear of communism and exploited that fear to gain power. … [But] In places where communism was weak, such as in
Great Britain, fascism was usually never more than an annoyance.\textsuperscript{236} Fascism was tolerated in some cases, perhaps, as a possible future defense, but so long as communism remained a distant threat, fascism was not likely to gain ascendancy.'\textsuperscript{237}

In this sense, the impact of Locker-Lampson’s anti-communist activity could only be relative to the threat of communism in Britain. However, his campaigns also demonstrate the potential of the Conservative right during this time. All of Locker-Lampson’s activities, from his Clear Out the Reds campaigns to his creation of the Blue Shirts, represented how the section of the Conservative right of which Locker-Lampson was a part saw fascism as a political tool which could be put to use in the event of a revolutionary crisis in Britain.\textsuperscript{238} But, ‘so long as communism remained a distant threat,’ wrote Anderson, ‘fascism was not likely to gain ascendancy.’\textsuperscript{239}

Locker-Lampson’s previous anti-communist activities had led him to work alongside many anti-semitic and fascist figures, to create his own arguably fascist organisation, and to declare his admiration for foreign fascists. In turn, his campaigns encouraged the growth not only of the fascist movement but also of anti-semitism in Britain. On the surface, Locker-Lampson’s switch to an anti-fascist, pro-Jewish position in 1933 appears inconsistent. However, based on the archival evidence available to us, it appears that his


\textsuperscript{237} \textit{ibid.}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{238} \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{239} \textit{ibid.}
opposition to the fascism and anti-semitism after the Nazis gained power was used a product of his desire to defend the British Empire against German militarism. It could be argued that, had Hitler not been a military threat to Britain, Locker-Lampson may have shown the same lack of concern towards the Nazi’s anti-semitism as he had shown with regard to that of the Russian White Army.

The apparent discontinuity of his changing position in 1933 was surely not lost on Locker-Lampson himself in hindsight. Very image conscious and keen to be remembered as a champion of the underdog, Locker-Lampson appears to have concealed or destroyed much documentation from his interwar career in order to erase the memory of his infatuation with fascism due to its damaging implications for the memory of his later ‘heroic’ anti-fascist pursuits. He further benefits from the fact that many of the groups he associated with appear to have also actively hidden or destroyed archival material from this era.

By placing the anti-communist movement at the centre of this research, the binary politics of the right between conservatism on the one hand, and fascism on the other hand, has been shown to be less distinct than previously appreciated. The career of Oliver Locker-Lampson therefore presents us with an insight of the shifting political sands of right-wing conservatism in the inter-war years. His activities during this period demonstrate that, far from there being a brick wall between the right wing of the Conservative Party and fascism, the boundary was constantly in a state of flux, according to the political exigencies of the period. It was the renewed threat of Germany, now under Hitler, that finally ended
the right’s engagement with fascism—and many of them would, like Locker-Lampson, spend much of the rest of their lives seeking to bury their earlier admiration for fascism.
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