

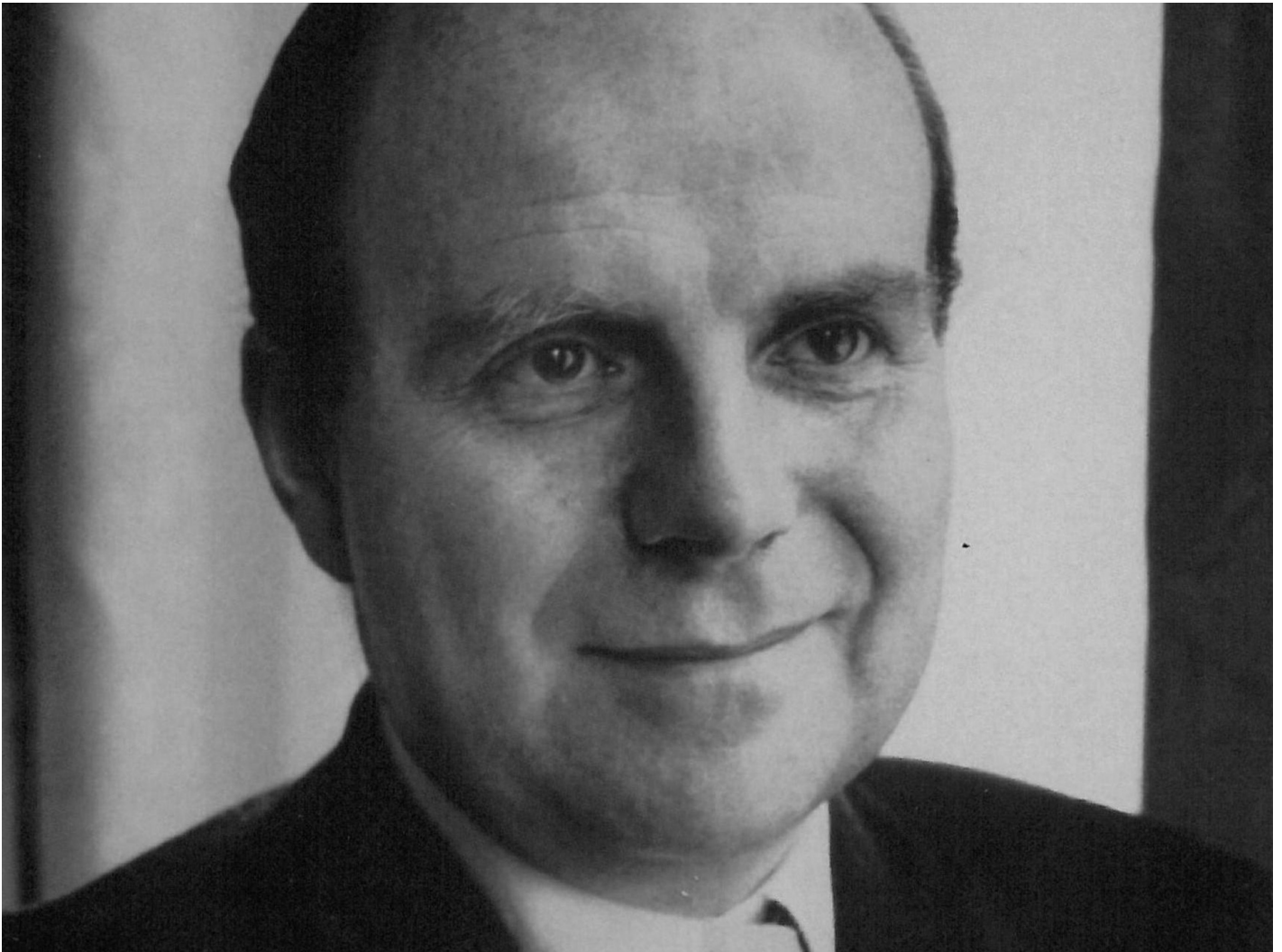


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Iain Macleod and Decolonisation Transcript

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Iain Macleod and Decolonisation

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Ladies and gentlemen, this is the second of six lectures in the series, "Making the Weather", about post-war politicians who did not become Prime Minister, but who arguably had more impact on life in Britain than those that did.

My first lecture was on Aneurin Bevan, the creator of the National Service and, in my view, a great advocate of democratic socialism. Today's talk is on Iain Macleod, who was responsible for the rapid pace of British decolonisation in Africa, as well as being a great exponent of one-nation Toryism.

Like Bevan, Macleod was basically a man of government and showed similar political courage. In addition, he showed great physical courage because his life was greatly impaired by very serious illness; he was, for much of his life, a semi-cripple.

Bevan and Macleod were political opponents; indeed, Macleod first rose to prominence by parliamentary attack on Bevan. But, as perhaps often happens in politics, they respected and liked each other, and were friends, and they often went to rugby matches together. They also both shared a love of poetry. They were both very good at memorising poetry, which perhaps partly explains why they were both such good speakers.

I tried very hard to find a tape of Iain Macleod speaking and I am afraid I have failed. You will have to accept my word for the fact that Macleod was a very fine speaker. He once compared himself to Edward Heath, Leader of the Conservative Party in the late-'60s and Prime Minister in the '70s. He said it was a paradox. Heath was a keen musician, almost of professional standard, with a strong sense of rhythm and harmony, but with no sense of rhythm of words - he had a tin ear. Iain Macleod, on the other hand, was not the least bit interested in music or painting, but had a very strong sense of the rhythm of words, perhaps derived from poetry.

His background was very different from that of Aneurin Bevan. He was brought up in much more comfortable circumstances. His father and grandfather were both General Practitioners, and they were, as the name indicates, of Scottish origin. They came from the Hebrides, but Macleod's father practised in Skipton, Yorkshire, where Macleod was born. Bevan left school at thirteen and was largely self-educated. Macleod was not self-educated; arguably, he was never educated at all. There is a famous joke about someone who said, "I didn't receive any education - I went to Eton." (It was not the Prime Minister, I hasten to add, nor the Archbishop of Canterbury!) Macleod was educated at an Edinburgh public school, Fettes. There, he did no work at all, but was quite keen on sport, though he was not an outstanding sportsman. As often happened in those days with people from public schools, he got into Cambridge despite having done no work. At Cambridge, again, he did no work. His only intellectual or artistic interest was learning poetry, but poetry did not help much, given that he was reading History.

Oddly, he did not play any part in politics at university. He enjoyed himself, primarily in playing bridge and going to the races in Newmarket. His tutor once told him that he could not get a good degree by confining his activities to Newmarket and the bridge table; this proved to be correct because Macleod left Cambridge with a lower second class degree.

His only achievement at Cambridge was in bridge, and he discovered that he was a top-class bridge player. Indeed, he inaugurated an annual bridge match with Oxford, and formed the Cambridge University Bridge Club, and became, very rapidly, an international bridge player of great strength.

This led to his first job, which was with the De La Rue playing card company. He met the man who employed him through bridge at Cambridge. But, even there, Macleod was not assiduous, and he used to arrive late and sleepy - partly because he spent his nights playing bridge and poker for money. He was a professional card player, which was a very unusual beginning for a future politician, you may say. It is perhaps not very surprising, considering that his salary at De La Roue was £150 a year, but he was earning £2,500 a year playing bridge. In the late-1930s, this was a very large salary indeed!

Two years into De La Roue, he left, reportedly by mutual agreement, but he was in fact sacked. Following this, he read for the Bar, I think to please his father. Again, he was not very diligent and there is no record of him ever passing any Bar exam. In fact, he was a playboy, except at bridge, at which he became a professional. Indeed, he earned his living from it before the War, and he became, very rapidly, part of the England bridge team. Together with the other three members of the English team, he invented the Acol system, which I gather is still in use today, named after Acol Road in Hampstead.

In the late-1940s, he wrote a bridge column for The Sunday Times and judged their bridge competition, but he continued to gamble. Indeed, he left Cropford's Club one evening to address a church meeting in his constituency on the perils of gambling - with his pocket full of gambling chips!

In the 1950s, he became the non-playing captain of the England bridge team. In 1952, he published a book, which I am told is still used, called Bridge is an Easy Game. As a rather poor amateur of bridge, I am not sure I agree with that view, but it is said to be a very impressive book.

In 1952, shortly after becoming Minister of Health, he went to White's Club to play bridge, and returned home at nine in the morning, £380 richer. He would undoubtedly have been a successful international bridge player, but his career took a different path, primarily due to the War.

In 1943, having served in the Army since the War began, he was sent to staff college at Camberley. There he claimed he had a revelation: he realised that he was able to compete with first-class minds, that he was as clever as they were. This very much altered his attitude to life, and he thought that, after the War, he would go into politics.

But he had a lot of bad luck in the War. Firstly, he was injured when a log fell on his leg, which made him walk with a limp and he was in some pain. Secondly, he caught severe arthritis in his back, an illness which I believe is called ankylosing spondylitis. I gather it is an extremely painful illness, and it made him a semi-cripple. He could not turn his head very easily and his back was in great pain for much of his life.

On his first day as Minister of Health, he had to ask for a pillow for his arthritic shoulder. He once said to a Conservative Conference that he had "a minor affliction that I recommend to all aspiring Tory politicians: I find it very difficult to turn my head to the left"!

His family suffered a further stroke of bad luck, in that his wife caught polio in 1952. After that, she could only walk with sticks and sometimes needed a wheelchair.

All this possibly gave him great determination and perhaps sympathy for the underdog, but of course, all this is psychological speculation. But he did have to fight against very great odds in his political career.

Now, as I said, the War led him into politics and he joined the Conservatives. He said, "I had very ill-defined views until the War and belonged to no political party... My father wasn't very politically conscious. If anything, he was a liberal in his youth but became a Tory later."

In 1945, Macleod fought a hopeless seat: the Western Isles in the Hebrides in Scotland, a safe Labour seat.

The nomination of Macleod came about in a curious way. His father had a holiday home in the Isle of Lewis, from where the family hailed. His father was a Liberal, but he nevertheless thought that Churchill should be supported, so called an inaugural meeting of a non-existent Conservative Association in the Western Isles. Two people came to the meeting: Dr Macleod and Iain Macleod. Dr Macleod was elected Chairman, and Iain was chosen as prospective parliamentary candidate, and central office was informed of that.

It was a very good-natured campaign. Macleod was heckled by left-wing supporters, and he rather encouraged that because it gave him a chance to reply in kind. Once, when the car of the hecklers had broken down, he gave them a lift in his car to take them along to the meeting. Despite that, he came bottom of the poll, with just 2,756 votes. He said the only people who voted for him were his cousins, "But I've got a lot of cousins in the Western Isles!"

After that, he joined the Conservative Research Department in London, with other people who were going to make their name in post-War politics, particularly Edward Heath, Enoch Powell, and Reginald Maudling.

He secured the nomination for what turned out to be a safe seat in the London suburbs, Enfield West, which he won in 1950 and held until his death.

Macleod was one of the initiators of a group of Conservatives called the One Nation group, whose motto was that Britain ought to aim for an opportunity state: "Young people should have more equal opportunities of proving themselves unequal."

He followed the two-part advice given to all new MPs by the Labour Prime Minister, Attlee: "Specialise, and stay out of the bars!" I am not sure he took the second part of that on board, but he certainly listened to the first. He specialised in the Social Services, which is very unusual for Conservative MPs of those days. Most of them were interested in foreign affairs, defence, economics or agriculture, but Macleod was interested in the Social Services. In 1952, he published a pamphlet with Enoch Powell called The Social Services: Needs and Means, the basis of which was an attack on the Labour Party's idea of universal social services. He said that universal healthcare and pensions were a waste of money, and that resources should be concentrated on those who

needed it, on the deprived. He said: "There is a fundamental disagreement between Conservatives and Socialists on the questions of social policy. Socialists would give the same benefits to everyone, whether or not the help is needed, and indeed whether or not the country's resources are adequate. We believe that we must first help those in need. Socialists believe the state should provide an average standard; we believe it should provide a minimum standard, above which people should be free to rise as far as their industry, thrift, ability, and genius may take them."

He said the question was sometimes asked, "Should a means test be applied to a social service?" He believed this question should be the other way round: why should any social service be provided without a means test? Now, means-testing went against the Labour Party's view, that there should be universal services, financed by redistributive taxation. It also went against Lord Beveridge's view, that the social services should be based on the insurance principle. The main objection to it, which people like Frank Field emphasise today, is that, if you have means-testing, you discourage thrift, and that takes away the incentives for people to get out of welfare.

Despite that, he was not a Thatcherite in the modern sense, because although he believed in the free market, he thought, like many people after the War, that the state should be used to secure full employment through regional policy and selection intervention and so on. He said that he did not go as far as Enoch Powell on the free market: "I am a fellow traveller, but I prefer to get out one or two stops before the train crashes into the buffers at the terminus."

Later on, Macleod wrote a pamphlet called *Change is our Ally*, in which he attacked subsidised rents in the housing market, describing them as evil, and argued for the return of the market. He said the lack of a market led to misery and depravation, though he accepted there were those the market system could not assist and whom the state should help: the sick, the unemployed, the poor. But he also stressed the importance of voluntarism, the Big Society if you like. He said, "Voluntary effort must provide much the greatest part of the services needed for the old." The policy was attacked by opponents as "higher rents and Morris dancing".

Macleod entered Parliament in 1950. None of the young MPs gained advancement under Churchill, who was of course much older and not familiar with the newcomers. However, in 1952, Macleod had a great stroke of luck. During a debate on the National Health Service, he was called immediately after the frontbenchers and Bevan had spoken, and said: "I want to deal closely and with relish to the vulgar, crude and intemperate speech to which the House of Commons has just listened." Churchill, who was about to leave the Chamber as the frontbench had finished, heard this and remained, and Macleod then said that a debate on the National Health Service without Bevan would be like "Hamlet without with First Gravedigger" (he was going to say "Hamlet without the Prince!"). Churchill was then heard asking his Chief Whip, "Who is that?" and he replied, "Macleod, Sir." Churchill said, "Put him in the Government!" and the Chief Whip said, "He's very young, Sir." Macleod was 38. That was not a sensible thing to say to Churchill, who had entered the Cabinet when he was 33. The Chief Whip then said to Churchill, "He's too young to be eligible." Churchill replied, "He's too eligible to be too young!"

So, Macleod jumped into the position of Minister of Health, though this was outside the Cabinet at the time. He was the first of the 1950 intake to be given office, and not just junior office. It was a great surprise to him. He went to Downing Street, thinking he was going to be rebuked for something or other, only to be appointed Minister of Health. He had to look at the Yellow Pages to find out where it was before he came to office!

He had three quiet, on the whole successful, years as Minister of Health. In 1955, he was the first of his generation to enter the Cabinet, as Minister of Labour. He was appointed by Anthony Eden, who said it was "a useful training ground for a possible future Prime Minister". He remained in that position until 1959, during which time he was happy to announce the abolition of National Service, which he thought was a great intrusion on individual freedom.

In 1959, the Conservatives won a third General Election, increasing their majority from 65 to 100 under Harold Macmillan, and it was clear that Macleod was going to be given a promotion. Macmillan said to him, "Iain, I've got the worst job of all for you," and Macleod knew that meant the Colonial Office. However, it was the job he wanted, though he had never set foot in a single British colony before becoming Colonial Secretary.

It is difficult to think back to this period, when Africa was one of the very biggest issues in British politics. Harold Macmillan said, of that time, "Africa seems to be the biggest problem looming for us here at home."

The process of decolonisation had just begun. Two African colonies had become independent: Sudan and the Gold Coast, which became Ghana. Ghana was independent in 1957 and Nigeria was promised independence for 1960. But West Africa was comparatively easy to deal with because the climatic conditions there made it unsuitable for white settlers, and the traders and administrators did not regard it as a permanent home, so there was no white minority population. But in East and Central Africa, there was a very large white minority population, which was determined to resist the coming of African independence.

In Zambia, for example, which was then called Northern Rhodesia, there were 72,000 whites – they were one-thirtieth of the population. In Zimbabwe, which was then called Southern Rhodesia, there were 207,000 whites, one-thirteenth of the population. In Kenya, there was a much smaller proportion, one-ninety-third of the

population (68,000 settlers) but they were the only ones who had the franchise. In 1948, the Governor of Kenya said that the notion of Kenya becoming independent was "about as likely as the installation of a Red Indian Republic in the United States".

In the British colonies, there was considerable discrimination on grounds of colour. A future Kenyan Nationalist leader, Tom Mboya, told the following story about when he had newly qualified as a sanitary inspector for the Nairobi City Council. A European lady came in, with some bottled water, which she wanted tested for purity, and he said to her, "Good morning, madam," and she replied, "Is there anybody here?"

There had been a Nationalist revolt in the early-1950s by a group called Mau Mau. By the time Macleod came to the Colonial Office, 90,000 Africans were in detention without trial in Kenya. Shortly before the 1959 General Election, there was a scandal in the Hola Camp in Kenya, in which eleven Africans died after being beaten by white overseers.

There was a meeting of the 1922 Committee (the Conservative backbench committee) shortly after this. One Conservative backbencher asked whether it was right for the Conservative Party to assume responsibility for the use of force that was reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Of course, some of the things that happened in Kenya are only now coming to light.

Even so, Kenya was not the most difficult problem that Macleod had to deal with. His biggest problem was the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, as it was called, which comprised Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (now Malawi). These three countries had been made into a federation in 1953 by the British Government, but without consulting African opinion. The countries had different constitutional structures because Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were colonies run from Whitehall, whereas Southern Rhodesia had had internal self-government until 1923, though not complete independence. Southern Rhodesia was represented at Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conferences – it was a quasi-independent country. They were at different levels of development.

The Federation had been formed on the basis that there should be partnership between the whites and the Africans, but Iain Macleod said he was worried that the sort of partnership they were thinking of was that between a rider and a horse.

In 1957, a parliamentary delegation to the Federation was critical of the colour bar that operated there and the great disparity in standards of education and healthcare, and certainly the Africans believed that the Federation was a barrier to their political advancement.

The problem was that if, as was likely, the British Government instituted majority rule in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, they would vote to leave the Federation it would break up, which is actually what happened.

In 1959 there was a revolt in Nyasaland. The police overreacted and 48 Africans were shot dead. The African Nationalist leader, Dr Banda, was detained without trial, as were some of his associates. The Governor of Nyasaland said there had been a murder plot to kill the whites.

The British Government set up an inquiry, under Lord Devlin, a High Court Judge, who said that all this was exaggerated: "There was talk of beating and killing Europeans, but not of coldblooded assassination or massacre... We have rejected the evidence, such as it is, for the murder plot." He then said, in a really damning criticism of the Government of Nyasaland, "Nyasaland is, no doubt only temporarily, a police state, where it is not safe for anyone to express approval of the policies of the Congress Party [the main African Nationalist Party] and where it is unwise to express any but the most restrained criticism of Government policy." That was devastating, and Iain Macleod later called this the decisive moment, "when it became clear to me we could no longer continue with the old methods of government in Africa". This meant, inexorably, a move towards African independence.

Before being appointed in the Colonial Office, he wrote to Macmillan in spring 1959, arguing that if you wanted to preserve a white presence in Africa, this depended on the goodwill of the African majority. He said it followed that: "In each territory where the majority of the people are demanding self-government, the prospects of stability and happiness for the minority of groups will be determined as much by the avoidance of unreasonable delays in the transfer of power as by the specific terms of the constitution."

But still, it was unexpected that a third Conservative election victory, with an increased majority, would actually speed up the process of African advancement.

In February 1960, Harold Macmillan made a tour of Africa. When he was in Pretoria, South Africa, he made a famous speech which said that the most striking impression he had gained in his tour of Africa was the strength of African national consciousness; he said, famously, "The wind of change is blowing through the African continent."

This rather annoyed the retired Winston Churchill, who wrote to the Cabinet Secretary and asked why the

Government had chosen “to go and pick a quarrel with those chaps”, meaning the South Africans. But Macmillan was not announcing a new policy. He was recognising a reality, something that had impressed itself upon him.

Macleod said, “The thing that seemed to me odd was that the country generally – I don’t just mean the Cabinet or the Conservative Party or even Parliament, but the country generally had not grasped what seemed so blindingly simple a few years later, and that is that, if you give independence to West Africa, you cannot deny it in East Africa just because there is a white settler community there.”

Macleod acted rapidly. In Kenya, he immediately lifted emergency powers, and by the end of 1959 three-quarters of the detainees had been released. In January, he called a conference of white and black leaders in London and said, “There must be majority rule in Kenya.”

Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the Kenyan Nationalists who had been in detention since 1953, and who later became President of Kenya, was released in the summer of 1961. As was the case in Ireland, people who rebel against colonial rule are first called terrorists, beyond negotiation, and are imprisoned or detained without trial, but they end up respected citizens of the Queen, taking tea at Buckingham Palace. Kenyatta was the first of the African leaders to whom that applied.

Then, Tanganyika, which had been peaceful, was promised independence in 1964, with majority rule. It joined with Zanzibar to become Tanzania.

In Nyasaland, Macleod threatened to resign if Dr Banda was not immediately released from prison, which he was, along with the other detained Africans.

As a result, in 1960, for the first time for nearly twenty years, there was no emergency legislation in any of the territories of the colonial empire. That is very significant, because the only way you could have delayed African independence was through the use of emergency powers: in other words, executive rule and detention without trial. At a constitutional conference, it was accepted that Nyasaland would achieve its independence and it would leave the Federation, and Dr Banda became the Chief Minister of Nyasaland in 1961, and the first leader of independent Malawi in 1966. The main street in Blantyre, which was then the capital of Nyasaland, was renamed Macleod Street.

Similarly, Northern Rhodesia was also given majority rule, which broke up the Federation. It left the intractable problem of Southern Rhodesia for future governments, an issue that was not finally resolved until 1980, when Margaret Thatcher’s Government reached a settlement with the Rhodesian African Nationalists. As I say, Rhodesia was not the responsibility of the Colonial Office but of then the Commonwealth Relations Office. It was a different part of the structure.

When Macleod ceased to be Colonial Secretary in 1961, he said that, in 1945, 630 million people had lived in dependent territories of the Crown, but by 1961, this figure had dropped to 23 million were; in that very short period, decolonisation had taken place. He created fifteen independent colonies between 1959 and 1961. He said, “You must be in no doubt that you are watching one of the great dramas of history, as so many countries thrust forward through nationalism towards independence.”

He then asked: were the countries fully ready for independence? “Of course not. Nor was India, and the bloodshed that followed the grant of independence there was incomparably worse than anything that has happened since to any country. Yet, the decision of the Attlee Government was the only realistic one. Equally, we could not possibly have held by force to our territories in Africa. We could not, with an enormous force engaged, even continue to hold the small island of Cyprus. General de Gaulle could not contain Algeria. Of course, there were risks in moving quickly, but the risks of moving more slowly were far greater.”

So, that was the end of his career at the Colonial Office, after just two years.

Sadly, his career after the Colonial Office was an anti-climax. It did not seem so at first; it seemed as if he was being promoted, because he became Leader of the House of Commons and Chairman of the Conservative Party. He thought that this was a great triumph, to have won two such important posts, but things started to go wrong.

In 1961, Macleod did himself unnecessary damage by publishing his only real, large work on politics, *A Life of Neville Chamberlain*. Chamberlain had been Minister of Health in the 1920s, and Macleod saw him as a predecessor in progressive Toryism. In the preface to the book, he said that he was constantly taking up work which Chamberlain had pioneered. “He had been the founder and inspiration of the Conservative Research Department, where I worked from 1946 to the end of 1949. I was, as Chamberlain had been, Minister of Health for a long time. I was concerned, as Minister of Labour, with the ending of National Service; he, in the First World War, had been its first director.”

Of course, you must remember that in 1961, just sixteen years after the end of the War, people did not remember Neville Chamberlain as a good Minister of Health, they remembered him as the progenitor of the policy

of appeasement. It is not much of a defence of a politician to say that he achieved good reforms in the Health Service if, by his policies, he put the whole future of the country at risk, which was the view of the Tory Establishment at the time. They were very annoyed.

The former Prime Minister Anthony Eden thought of suing Macleod for comments that he had made about him in this book. He wrote to the Cabinet Secretary to say that he was very upset that this "apologia for Chamberlain's policy should be published by a Minister in office" and he said the mere fact that Mr Macleod was a member of the Government now in office, indeed the Chairman of the Conservative Party, would cause a good many people to think that the book had some sort of official authority. He said that Munich was still an issue that would divide the Conservative Party, and the timing of publication in the midst of the Berlin crisis with the Russians was particularly unfortunate. Therefore, Harold Macmillan emphasised the fact that the book had no official sanction.

Now, the book was not even primarily written by Macleod, but ghosted, and generally thought to be not very good. It did him a lot of damage, and it is odd that he wrote it because I suspect that Macleod, if he had been politically conscious in the late-'30s, would have been an opponent of appeasement. One does not know for sure, but I think he probably would have been. It damaged not only his standing with Anthony Eden, who was now retired, but I suspect with Harold Macmillan, the Prime Minister, who had been a very powerful opponent of appeasement in 1938. Indeed, Macmillan had broken with his Party in a famous by-election in Oxford in 1938 to support an anti-appeasement candidate, and would have no truck with anyone who had supported the Munich Agreement. So, it was foolish from that point of view, to annoy the Prime Minister, who he depended upon for promotion, and I suspect it was something that Macmillan would have remembered.

There were further weaknesses in Macleod's position. His dual roles of Chairman of the Conservative Party and Leader of the House of Commons were somehow incompatible. Being Leader of the House of Commons requires a consensual politician because you have to represent not just the Government to the House of Commons, but the House of Commons, including the Opposition, to the Government. You have to get on well with the other side, and this is why, in the current Government, the previous Leader of the House of Commons, Sir George Young, was rather effective: he was not too partisan and was liked and respected by the other side. But as Chairman of the Conservative Party, you are a cheerleader for the Party, and you have to be very partisan in order to sell your Party to the country. These are incompatible and difficult roles to put together. More important than that, a Minister without a departmental base is very weak in British politics.

However, Macleod was Chairman of the Party at a time when it was getting into difficulties. It was on a withdrawing tide. It had been in power for ten years and was becoming unpopular, and Macleod was blamed for what went wrong, particularly by-election losses - there had been a famous loss to the Liberals in 1962, in Orpington. These things happened much less frequently than have happened since. Nowadays, Governments often lose by-elections. That was not so much the case then.

In 1963, De Gaulle's veto of British entry to the European Community and the Profumo Affair all made the Party unpopular, and Macleod unfairly became the target. He had the responsibility, without the power to implement things.

He was also, it has to be said, very tactless as Chairman of the Party. The rules of the Conservative Constituency Associations said that no one should hold the same office in Constituency Associations for more than three consecutive years. That tended to be ignored by many people, and you got the same Chairmen - they were generally men in those days - going on and on. Macleod wrote to all Constituency Chairmen, urging them to replace Association and Ward Officers if they had held their positions for too long. As you can imagine, that did not please many veterans - after all, they were voluntary workers, giving up their time voluntarily, and were rather proud of being a Chair of this or Secretary of that. It was not a tactful thing to do, and the grassroots of the Conservative Party gradually turned against him.

He had already offended the right wing of the Conservative Party over his African policy, and this had weakened him politically. When, in the 1961 Conservative Conference, he had mentioned the 630 million people living in dependent countries of the Crown in 1945, a heckler shouted, "And you betrayed them all!"

In March 1961, there was a dramatic attack on him in the House of Lords by a great Conservative elder statesman, Lord Salisbury, who had been a Cabinet Minister under Churchill and Eden, and was a former Leader of the Lords. He used Macleod's skill at bridge to attack him: "It is not considered immoral or even bad form to outwit one's opponents at bridge. On the contrary, the more you outwit them, within the rules of the game, the better player you are. It almost seems to me that the Colonial Secretary, when he abandoned the sphere of bridge for the sphere of politics, brought his bridge techniques with him." In a famous criticism of him, he said that he was "too clever by half", and that, in the Conservative Party at that time, was rather damning. When criticised, he said, "I thought he was rather unscrupulous. I am not going to withdraw that." When Lord Salisbury died in 1972, someone wrote that he embodied the definition of a gentleman, "as one who is never unintentionally offensive".

All this meant that, when Harold Macmillan resigned in 1963, Macleod, who I think had seen himself and was seen by many as a future Leader of the Party, was not considered for the leadership.

At that time, there was no electoral procedure to choose a new Leader of the Conservative Party, and the leader was chosen on the basis of informal soundings. Informal soundings, Harold Macmillan told the Queen, led to the choice of Lord Home, who was able to renounce his title and become Sir Alec Douglas-Home. Many have suggested that the soundings were biased.

But Macleod refused to serve under Home. He clashed with him on African policy. Home echoed Lord Salisbury in criticising Macleod for going too fast: "In the United Kingdom, it took 600 years to graduate from the qualified franchise to that of one man, one vote." I suppose the implication was that Africans would also have to wait for 600 years, but he then went on to say: "Today, no one suggests such a lengthy apprenticeship." At any rate, he was not in sympathy with the policy, and Home, at one point in Macleod's Colonial Secretaryship, threatened to resign because of insufficient attention given to white settlers.

Macleod was also disdainful of his views on domestic reform: "When Home talks about unemployment, he thinks it's to do with the lack of beaters in his estate."

He was outraged that the Party could not find a Leader from the Commons, instead choosing a 14th Earl. He said that it was the first time since Bonar Law that the Party was being led from the right, and he would not have anything to do with it, so he did not serve.

He then, unexpectedly, took up a new post. He became Editor of the Spectator magazine. The first thing he did was to summon the Foreign Affairs Editor and ask him how much he was being paid; the Foreign Affairs Editor said £900 a year, to which Macleod replied, "That's nothing like enough," and doubled it on the spot. There was a fear that he would turn the Spectator into a Tory house journal, but he did not. He gave the contributors absolute freedom to say what they wanted. The Political Correspondent was a left-winger, who often attacked Heath, and when he brought his articles to Macleod for vetting, Macleod said, "Oh God, the moment I dread! Must you really say that about Ted?! Well, if you must, I suppose you must!"

He did not do his prospects in the Tory Party any good by publishing, in January 1965, an article on the so-called 'Magic Circle' (that is where the phrase comes from) which had ensured the selection of Home. The excuse for the article was a book by Randolph Churchill, praising Macmillan in the way he had handled the resignation crisis, and Macleod wrote a 4,000 word review saying this book was nonsense and the whole thing was fiddled by the Magic Circle. It was very damaging to the Conservative Party.

This was thought to be the ultimate in disloyalty, and many Conservative MPs in the House of Commons cut him out completely, refused to speak to him, and it probably ruined whatever chance of the leadership he had.

A month later, he wrote in the Spectator, in another context, "The Conservative Party always, in time, forgives those who are wrong. Indeed, often, in time, they forgive those who were right!" But whether he was right or wrong, he was never forgiven.

Now, the Conservatives were narrowly defeated in 1964. Harold Wilson won an overall majority of just three. With such a narrow defeat, you can pinpoint any one of a huge number of small episodes as the tipping point that caused that defeat. Many thought that the reason was that Macleod had refused to serve under Home and had written this disloyal article.

The day after the Election, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, normally a mild-mannered man, was found cursing Macleod in language that he otherwise rarely used! He used to bracket Macleod with Hitler, as the two men he had met in life whom he thoroughly disliked. One leading backbencher later said that no one since the War had done more damage to the Conservative Party than Iain Macleod.

After 1964, he returned to the Shadow team. When Home resigned the Tory leadership in 1965, he was still not a candidate for the leadership, as you would expect. He backed Edward Heath, though he was much closer to Heath's opponent Reginald Maudling, but he thought Heath would be more decisive as Leader. He became Shadow Chancellor from 1965.

He continued to maintain his independence of mind and voting habits, and, as Shadow Chancellor, he broke with the Tory Whip, in February 1968, to vote against Labour Government legislation curbing Kenyan Asian immigration. Now, when Kenya was given independence, in order to safeguard the position of the whites, it was said that any person who did not want to live in the new Kenya could come to Britain and would be a British Citizen. The purpose of this was to assuage the fears of the white population. However, in 1968, the African Government turned on the Asians, many of whom were prosperous businessmen, shopkeepers, and started to discriminate against the Asians (possibly out of jealousy). As a result, the Asians wanted to come to Britain. This had not been foreseen at the time; if it had, you could not have done anything about it without enacting legislation based on colour, which no British Government could do. Nevertheless, the Labour Government, passed an Act in 1968 restricting the rights of Kenyan Asians to come to Britain. Macleod said that this was quite wrong: "I gave my word about the immigrants... I meant to give it - I wish to keep it." He joined with a few more Conservatives (including a young Michael Heseltine) and some members of the left of the Labour Party (like

Michael Foot) to oppose the Bill, but it passed.

As Shadow Chancellor, he spent most of his time looking at the reform of the taxation system. Many people say that he had no real feel for macroeconomic policy or for economic management, but that will never be known.

As he told his biographer, even before the election his health had not been good. He planned to introduce no more than two or three budgets and then go to the House of Lords.

The Conservatives won the 1970 Election, and Macleod was appointed Chancellor. He made one blistering speech in the House of Commons, in which he replied to Harold Wilson's comment, "We'll be watching the Government to make sure it keeps its election promises," with, "Look who's talking, a walking wastepaper basket of broken promises and pledges!" It was a very powerful speech.

But shortly after that, he had an operation for a stomach ailment, diverticulitis, and went into hospital and was kept there for some days. The operation was successful and he came home and seemed to be recovering when he died from a fatal heart attack a few days later. He was 56 and had been Chancellor for just one month.

Now, clearly, his greatest achievement is at the Colonial Office, as he said himself in an interview recorded shortly after leaving it: "It has been said that, after I became Colonial Secretary, there was a deliberate speeding-up of the movement towards independence. I agree. There was. And in my view, any other policy would have led to terrible bloodshed in Africa - this is the heart of the argument... We could have postponed independence, but only by the rule of the gun and at the risk of bloodshed. As it was, we devolved power too quickly, but with goodwill." He then asked a Conservative Conference, "Would you have wanted the Romans to have stayed on in Britain?!"

He was sometimes criticised for allowing independence only because of riots and violence. He disagreed because Tanganyika, the most peaceful country in East Africa, came to independence much faster than the more turbulent colonies.

He argued that, contrary to Lord Salisbury, the best way to preserve the position of the white minority in Africa was to ensure that they came to terms with black majority rule: "Lord Salisbury said the pace in Africa is dangerously enough - it would be better if we went more slowly. I say the pace in Africa is dangerously fast, but it might be more dangerous still if we went more slowly... So, the anxieties of the people who live there [the whites] are very close to me, just as they are to Lord Salisbury." In fact, his brother was a white farmer in Kenya, so he did have family there. I think Macleod did more than anyone else to ensure that there was a future in Africa for the white minorities.

It could be argued that Macleod's radicalism was primarily a matter of timing and that there was not a change in policy. He said: "If you look at the words, if you look at speeches about bringing territories that were colonies towards independence, you'd find it impossible, apart from peculiarities of language, to say whether the speech was made by me or by Joseph Chamberlain... The objective was always the same, but the policy had been speeded up."

In January 1959, Iain Macleod's predecessor held a conference at Chequers with three Governors of East African territories. They said that Tanganyika could be independent by 1970, Kenya 1975, Uganda the early-'70s. In fact, Tanganyika was independent in 1961, Uganda 1962, Kenya 1963. Macleod said the objective was always the same, and always had been, to bring that country, at the right time, towards its independence. Of course, everything depends on how you define the words "at the right time". "The change of policy that I introduced in October 1959 was, on the surface, merely a change of timing; in reality of course, it was a true change of policy, but I telescoped events rather than creating new ones."

The main weakness of what he did, understandable at the time, was that he had too much faith, as perhaps we all did, in the Westminster model of government, and not enough in the checks and balances that were needed in a divided society. Anyone who mentioned the problems of minorities was seen as seeking to defend white supremacy, but sometimes, Africans who did not support the majority party also needed protection. I think that is particularly true in regard to a country that Macleod was not involved with, Zimbabwe, but also true in other countries as well.

But even if you accept that criticism, which seems to me a fair one, it seems that it is outweighed by the great benefits his policy brought both to Britain and Africa. I think he can be called the African Mountbatten because, just as Mountbatten secured Indian friendship for Britain, so Macleod secured African friendship.

He said, when he went to the Colonial Office, that he wanted to be the last Colonial Secretary. He was not. The Colonial Office was abolished in 1967, six years after Macleod left it. One of his opponents, Sir Roy Welensky, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, which came to be disbanded in the '60s, said, "For good or ill, he was probably the most powerful holder of the office since Joseph Chamberlain [arguably greater because Chamberlain helped to build the Empire whereas Macleod helped to dismantle it]. Without Macleod, we might have spent the 1960s in the futile attempt to hold back the tide of African advance," the sort of thing the

French had earlier done in Algeria, or the Portuguese were to do in Africa, or Ian Smith in Rhodesia, or the South Africans. Instead of concentrating on domestic politics, we might have got bogged down in all these African problems. Largely because of Macleod's liberal policies, every single African country willingly joined the Commonwealth and most of them felt goodwill for Britain.

At the Conservative Conference in 1961, he quoted the Prime Minister of Nigeria, who spoke of the British, "first as masters, then as leaders, finally as partners, and always as friends". That seems to me a fine tribute.

His early death was a staggering blow to the Heath Government, as great a blow to the Conservatives as the early deaths of Hugh Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevan were for Labour. Interestingly enough, Aneurin Bevan's widow wrote to Macleod's biographer in 1970, shortly after he died: "How much public life has diminished for all of us, when anyone so able and dedicated dies prematurely."

He was the frontrunner of his generation in politics on the right, and like Bevan, he sought to lead opinion and not follow it. Perhaps for that reason, he was thought too volatile and did not inspire trust. But he was a brilliant communicator and the head of the then-BBC Current Affairs Department said he was "probably the first man in the Conservative hierarchy to appreciate and understand television". Anyone who has looked at the history of the Heath Government would know that that was precisely what the Heath Government lacked, a good communicator. Heath certainly was not such a person, as the famous February 1974 "Who governs election?" demonstrated. Macleod may have made all the difference to this election, which the Conservatives lost by a whisker, partly because Heath could not present his case well and was seen by the public as unsympathetic; Macleod might have kept Heath in power, we do not know. It seems to me likely that, had he survived, he would, like Aneurin Bevan, probably have changed the history of this country even more than he actually did.

Thank you.

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