

The British Pro-German Organisation *The Link* on the Eve of The World War II¹



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The first radical right-wing and anti-Semitic subjects began to appear in Great Britain from 1919. A number of parties and movements were active in this country throughout the entire inter-war period (e.g. *Britons Society*, *The British Fascists*, *Imperial Fascist League*, *The British Union of Fascists* and others) — some organisations ceased to exist after a few years, new ones were created and membership in these groups overlapped variously.² Although their significance can be considered more marginal compared to countries such as Germany or Italy, they were also part of the political scene and the social atmosphere in Great Britain. During the second half of the 1930s, a number of organisations, in which anti-Semitism blended with admiration of German Nazism, were formed (e.g. *Nordic League*, *Right Club* and others). The list of these associations usually includes *The Link* and the *Anglo-German Fellowship*, groups which were specific because, in their words, they strove ‘simply’ to promote British-German friendship and cooperation. It is evident what this meant in the second half of the 1930s, but the question remains: to what degree did the individual members identify with the Nazi and anti-Semitic ideology and to what degree did Nazis use these organisations to promote their world opinion? Nevertheless, the effort to achieve British-German understanding did not necessarily have to be in conflict with British official policy during the period of appeasement. One of the key research questions of this study is the analysis of the perception of *The Link* by both the British establishment and the organisation’s own members.

Richard Griffiths provided the answers to some aspects concerning the membership base of *The Link* in his older works,³ and that is why I will direct most of my

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 - 2 See THURLOW, R., *Fascism in Britain. From Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts to National Front*, London — New York 2006; LINEHAN, T., *British Fascism, 1918–39: Parties, Ideology and Culture*, Manchester — New York 2000.
 - 3 GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers of the Right. British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933–9*, Oxford 1983, pp. 179–182, 307–317; GRIFFITHS, R., *Patriotism perverted. Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism. 1939–1940*, London 2010 (©1998), pp. 39–42.



attention towards analysis of archive documents made available after 2002 (this particularly concerns *Records of the Security Service* (KV), and partially also *Home Office Papers*), which should supplement and expand the perspective. More recent work on this subject includes work by James Loughlin,⁴ who examined *The Link* in the context of the conditions of Northern Ireland.

The Link was established in 1937 by Sir Barry Domvile (1878–1971). During his career in the navy, he was *Director of Naval Intelligence* (1927–1930) for three years and subsequently also *President of The Royal Naval College Greenwich* (1932–1934). He retired in 1936 with the rank of Admiral. In his own words, after the end of the First World War, when he became *Director of Plans at the Admiralty*, he came into contact with foreign political matters and started to become interested in the strategy that Great Britain should assume in this area, although reality and his beliefs diverged considerably.

Domvile believed that the only solution to the situation was amicable relations with Germany.⁵ He first visited this country in 1935,⁶ and Germany impressed him very much, as it did a number of his contemporaries. He was fascinated by the freedom he felt in all everyday matters, whether this concerned the opportunity to drive his car at any speed, park in Berlin wherever he wished, without any parking limits, or prohibition of advertising banners by roads.⁷ He felt that Germany was much better than Britain in a number of these measures, even though he admitted: 'It is true that if my name was Solomon, I should change it to Macdonald before visiting Germany, and covenant with a plastic surgeon to effect the facial alterations necessary to give me an Aryan aspect...'⁸ He quite evasively added that he was not discussing political restrictions at the time.

On this point Domvile initially differed from some of his other contemporaries, with whom he subsequently found himself in the radical right wing and his aforementioned 'excuse' is also typical. It seems that, particularly during the first years, he was not as fanatical in his anti-Semitic views or obsessed with conspiratorial theories, but rather, that he tried to trivialise Germany's anti-Jewish standpoint and find excuses for it. He essentially came to a specific ambivalent viewpoint: on the one hand, he acknowledged that Jews were not treated very nicely in Germany, but on the other, he tried to prove that they themselves were not completely innocent, as is sometimes biasedly presented in Great Britain.⁹ According to his subsequent statements, his eyes were opened by the civil war in Spain, which was to become

4 LOUGHLIN, J., Hailing Hitler with the Red Hand: The Link in Northern Ireland 1937–40, in: *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 50, 2016, No. 3, DOI 10.1080/0031322X.2016.1208860, pp. 276–301.

5 The National Archives London (TNA), Home Office papers (HO) 283/31/1, pp. 28–29.

6 DOMVILE, B., *By and Large*, London 1936, p. 233. During interrogation during the Second World War he stated that he was invited to Germany for the first time by a man called De Sager who was part English and part Swiss. TNA, Records of the Security Service (KV) 2/834, *Admiral Sir Barry Domvile called and examined*, p. 1.

7 DOMVILE, B., *By and Large...*, pp. 234–235.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

9 See DOMVILE, B., *By and Large...*, p. 246f.; GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers...*, p. 316.



the ‘next victim selected for Communism by judmas’ (i.e. a Jewish masonic plot).¹⁰ His deepening anti-Semitism apparently culminated chiefly under the influence of events during the Second World War, when he was imprisoned as a potential ‘enemy of the state’ between 1940 and 1943 and believed that he himself had become a victim of the Jewish-Masonic plot.¹¹

During his two-week visit to Germany in 1935, Domville met Heinrich Himmler, whom he described as a very charming and capable man.¹² It was he who was evidently his favourite among the leaders of the Nazi party and whom he was in closest contact with. But Hitler himself also made a great impression on him, as is clear from the diary entry that Domville wrote after meeting with him during the Nuremberg Rally in 1936: ‘then ... came the great man. No time for conversations. We shook hands — looked into alert, magnetic, honest eyes. He has a great charm of manner.’¹³ The picture of Hitler, which Domville displayed in his home (along with photographs of other Nazis), is proof of his positive attitude towards Hitler. Nevertheless, the fact that his wife was of German heritage on her father’s side may also have contributed to his interest in this country. Even though she only experienced her father as a child and never lived in Germany herself,¹⁴ they did have relatives there.

With regard to Domville’s activities to the benefit of Germany, he initially became a member of the *Anglo-German Fellowship*, established at the end of 1935. However, this organisation did not match his requirements completely, because it focused too narrowly on the interests of wealthy entrepreneurs and large business.¹⁵ In his opinion, it was only intended for a restricted group of people ‘who could afford it’, whereas he and a few others from the *Anglo-German Fellowship* felt that a movement open to everyone was needed.¹⁶ This is why Domville founded *The Link*, which was intended to fulfil these ambitions, in 1937. If we compare both groups, we can simply say that *The Link* was more open and not as elitist.¹⁷

The central body of *The Link* was the *Link Council*, whose members included Lord Redesdale¹⁸ and Professor Arthur Pillans Laurie, a chemist¹⁹ and author of the book *The Case for Germany*. The fact that Domville wrote the foreword to this apotheosis of Hitler’s Germany was used as one of the reasons for Domville’s internment during the Second World War.²⁰ History professor Sir Raymond Beazley became the vice-

10 DOMVILE, B., *From Admiral to Cabin Boy*, London 1947, p. 47.

11 GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers...*, p. 315.

12 DOMVILE, B., *By and Large...*, p. 240.

13 National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (NMM), *Domville Diaries (DOM)* 53, 11 September 1936.

14 TNA, HO 283/31/3, p. 32.

15 DOMVILE, B., *From Admiral...*, p. 64.

16 TNA, KV2/834, *Admiral Sir Barry Domville called and examined*, p. 1.

17 See GRIFFITHS, R., *Patriotism...*, pp. 35–39.

18 David Freeman Mitford (1878–1958) — father of the well-known Mitford sisters.

19 He carried out chemical analyses of paintings for the purpose of establishing their origin and age.

20 TNA, HO 283/31/2, p. 31.



chairman of *The Link* and Domville himself was chairman. Otherwise the organisation largely consisted of autonomous branches, which differed from each other quite considerably as a result. These branches subsequently carried out most of the specific activities in individual regions. The organisation's press body was the *Anglo-German Review* (AGR) monthly, the publisher of which, Cola Ernest Carroll, was also a member of *the Link Council*.

The membership base of *The Link* gradually increased. On 26 November 1937, just under three months after it was established, Domville noted to his satisfaction in the diary that the number of members had reached nearly eight hundred and on 11 December, he mentions a thousand members.²¹ On the eve of the war, *The Link* declared between four and five thousand followers.²² At that time it had over 30 branches in various parts of Britain, but there were also branches in Cologne and Düsseldorf. Partner organisations were subsequently to be established in Germany under the name *der Ring*. The first such branch was created in the summer of 1939, in what was already German Salzburg, and members of *The Link* in Britain sent a delegation of more than one-hundred strong headed by Barry Domville and C. E. Carrol in support of this event. Regarding Britain, the first branches to originate were *Chelsea, Southend-on-Sea, Birmingham and the West London Branch*. But members were able to join *The Link* even if there was no branch in their area. It was evident that anyone could join, as demonstrated by information in the AGR, according to which eleven-weeks old Sylvia Ann Jackson became its youngest member in October 1938.²³

It generally applies that the most successful organisations appeared in municipal areas. As well as London and its suburbs, we can particularly mention the Midlands, with the significant organisation in Birmingham. This, together with the *London Central Branch*, became the only organisation that had more than 400 members before the war.²⁴ However, there were different types of branches with their own regional particularities, such as Ulster²⁵ or the service towns Portsmouth and Bromley. The *Wells and District Branch*, whose members included landowners and farmers, was more of an exception.²⁶ The structure of the members varied in general and depended to a certain degree on the type of branch. In municipal areas, the local councils usually consisted of respected figures, frequently active in the local government (aldermen, councillors), as well as reverends, for instance. Officers, particularly from the navy (commanders and captains), played an important role in some areas.²⁷

Activities depended on the specific branch, but in general they consisted mainly of various meetings, as well as social and cultural events, whether these were dances, film screenings, musical evenings, lectures or discussions of impressions of Germany.

21 NMM, DOM 55, 26 November and 11 December 1937.

22 In June 1939 stands the membership at 4,329. *Anglo-German Review*, June 1939, p. 190.

23 *Anglo-German Review*, October 1938, p. 370.

24 According to the June issue of the AGR Birmingham had 465 members and London Central 419, followed by Southend with 310 members. *Anglo-German Review*, June 1939, p. 190.

25 See LOUGHLIN, J., op. cit.

26 GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers...*, pp. 309–310.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 309–310.



The Link encouraged its members to visit Germany — which the AGR promoted to a great extent on its pages — and it arranged trips to various German destinations.²⁸ Thanks to the efforts of the branch in Croydon, an invitation to visit Hamburg was arranged for the young F. W. Marsden, who would not otherwise have been able to afford a trip to Germany. He spent 14 days as a guest of the *Hitlerjugend* there. Representatives of several branches also attended the Nuremberg Congress of the NSDAP.²⁹

The Link officially profiled itself as a non-political, independent organisation to promote Anglo-German friendship, which was considered an essential condition for maintaining peace. According to Domville, there was prejudice against Germany in Britain, and in his first circular, which appeared together with information about establishment of the organisation in the September issue of the AGR, he proclaimed that in spite of these feelings, the fact is that: ‘when Mr Smith and his family have the opportunity of meeting Herr Schmidt and his family, they soon became friends.’³⁰ The application form, which could be cut out of the magazine and sent directly to Barry Domville, also appeared completely innocent. The future member signed it as confirmation that he would: ‘do my best to promote good relations between Germany and Great Britain.’³¹

To what degree members believed this is more complicated. *The Link* naturally attracted a great number of extremists and pro-Nazi sympathisers, some of whom were recruited from among the Fascists, whether it concerned members of the most important party, *The British Union of Fascists*, or smaller extremist groups and movements. However, other members were representatives of the pacifist organisation, the *Peace Pledge Union*.³² But this again also depended on the specific branch. Some of those located in inner London or Ulster can be called more extremist,³³ others less so. This fact, with regard to their autonomy, could also be used as a good excuse, as C. E. Carroll did in his letter to Sir Alexander Cadogan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He acknowledged that sometimes one or more of the organisations went too far in relation to Germany than was wise according to the *Council*, but in these cases, headquarters always pointed this out to the affected branch.³⁴ However, paradoxically, even the *Council* members expressed not only significant pro-Nazi sympathy, but also anti-Semitic opinions.

Furthermore, the Nazi ideology was certainly applied intentionally or unintentionally during trips to Germany and in speeches by various speakers, whether these were British or German. Germans also frequently appeared at meetings, whereas these were not always necessarily Nazi proponents. German exchange teachers, for example, were reputedly frequent speakers and gave their opinion on apolitical top-

28 TNA, KV5/2, *Holidays in Germany* 1939.

29 *Anglo-German Review*, September 1938, p. 336.

30 *Anglo-German Review*, September 1937, p. 403.

31 *Anglo-German Review*, July 1938, p. 272.

32 GRIFFITHS, R., *Patriotism...*, p. 42.

33 GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers...*, p. 311.

34 TNA, KV5/2, 3 July 1939, Carroll’s letter to Sir Alexander Cadogan, p. 3.



ics such as architecture or folklore.³⁵ This was naturally not always the case, and other speakers spoke about German affairs and Germany's foreign policy or directly about the Jewish problem, such as the great anti-Semitist Richard Findlay. He endeavoured to prove that Jews played a negative role in all European affairs, criticised British foreign policy and stated that the government was defending Jewish interests.³⁶ The anti-Russian, anti-communist card was also played in the line of reasoning (at meetings and in the press), in which Germany was usually presented as a barrier against Bolshevism.

Apart from meetings, ordinary organisation members were also able to gain an idea of the activities and views of *The Link* from the pages of the *Anglo-German Review*. The actual magazine only started to be issued less than a year earlier, and as its publisher, C. E. Carroll said: 'The Review has a different purpose to *The Link*, since it was created in the belief that the 'Germany's case' deserved a fair hearing.'³⁷ Regardless of this, the magazine can be considered an opinion platform for this organisation. After the establishment of *The Link*, it was used as a source of information about its activities and the leading members were frequent contributors to the AGR. Furthermore, Carroll, who was himself a member of *The Link Council*, was also one of Domville's closest colleagues.

With regard to the structure of the AGR, it presented articles on political topics — from the civil war in Spain, through the Anschluss of Austria, to the Munich crisis; the editor himself expressed his attitudes towards current issues in the *What we think* column as well. But there was space in the magazine for completely apolitical topics, even though these usually concerned Germany. The AGR had columns about new books or cultural events, but again in the British-German context. It provided regular information about events at branches and statements from the Headquarters of *The Link*. Adverts, of which a number promoted German services or products, were an inherent part of the magazine as well.

The tone of the articles and interpretations of political events was completely pro-German (pro-Nazi), and when Andrew Steward of the *Peace Pledge Union* wrote about articles in the AGR, he stated that they were 'Thinly-veiled anti-Semitism',³⁸ and he was certainly right on one hand. The magazine definitely did not express a friendly opinion of Jews. In his editorial in August 1938, for example, Carroll explained the German antagonism against Jews by saying 'they [Jews — M. S.] have in the past enjoyed too many facilities and have put their own interests before those of the State'.³⁹ In the same issue, Domville similarly wrote about how Jews are the greatest opponents of friendship with Germany and 'all the more dangerous because of their international organisation and their great power in the Press and other methods of publicity'.⁴⁰

35 TNA, KV5/2, *Confidential Memorandum on „The Link“*, p. 6.

36 TNA, KV5/2, *German Propaganda in Britain*, July 1939, pp. 3–4.

37 TNA, KV5/2, 3 July 1939, Carroll's letter to Sir Alexander Cadogan, p. 4.

38 GRIFFITHS, R., *Patriotism...*, p. 42.

39 *Anglo-German Review*, August 1938, p. 281.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 283.



On the other hand, it must be stated that possibly the most frequently used word in the entire AGR was 'peace' in connection with Anglo-German friendship. This fact could make a favourable impression on many members, particularly those who were not very interested in the fate of the Jews, and particularly on the eve of the war. In some of Carroll's and Domville's, articles we can also find statements in which they acknowledge that not everything in Germany is ideal, but they point out that ostracising this country will not improve the situation of the Jews.⁴¹ In November 1938, in relation to the Kristallnacht events in Germany, Headquarters issued a statement saying that they regret the outrage that the 'Jewish question in Germany' has caused, because it makes the possibility of mutual reconciliation more difficult. In their opinion, Britain would have a much greater chance of convincing Germany of anything as a friend rather than by criticising it.⁴²

If we observe the attitude that appears on the pages of the magazine towards the government and its policy, we can summarise that this corresponded with instances when the government's steps agreed with the standpoint of the AGR and *The Link*. This was evident in the case of the Munich Agreement, when Neville Chamberlain received a truly positive response. Some branches even sent him letters of thanks, calling him the saviour of the peace.⁴³ Government policy gave the appearance of being in full accord with the activities of *The Link* in relation to this issue. Domville's personal enthusiasm was also apparent. After his diary entries had expressed significant unease in relation to the international situation throughout September, he wrote with relief on 30 September 1938: 'feeling so happy especially at Hitler and Chamberlain's peace pact.'⁴⁴

We can certainly find many people who were simply interested in good relations with Germany among the ordinary members. S. H. Noakes of MI5 estimated the number of those who joined *The Link* with this conviction to be up to 90 percent.⁴⁵ It seems that they frequently were unaware of the possible political context of their membership, but there were also cases when some individuals left *The Link* as soon as they realised its nature. This was the case of the chairman of the *Bristol Branch*, who resigned from his post immediately after the Home Secretary expressed his accusations against *The Link* (see below).⁴⁶ An entire branch was dissolved in Leeds in the summer of 1939 after its vice-president Cecil Dixon visited Germany. His experience from this visit convinced him that *The Link* was under Nazi influence.⁴⁷ Ernest J. Chaloner of the *Chelsea Branch* reputedly resigned due to the anti-Semitism,⁴⁸ and a certain A. K. Jackson

41 Ibid., p. 283; Ibid., October 1938, p. 349.

42 *Anglo-German Review*, November 1938, p. 405.

43 *Anglo-German Review*, October 1938, pp. 370, 372.

44 NMM, DOM 55, 30 September 1938.

45 TNA, KV2/834, *Mr. Noakes called and examined*, p. 11.

46 TNA, KV5/2, *News Chronicle*, 5 August 1939, *Unpaid editor*.

47 TNA, KV5/2 *Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 1939, *Branch at Leeds Dissolved after Berlin Visit*; comp. Ibid. *News Chronicle*, 8 August 1939, "The Link" replies to Sir S. Hoare.

48 TNA, KV5/2, *Confidential Memorandum on "The Link"*, p. 5.



joined *The Link* together with his German wife, but they decided to leave after they experienced several London meetings.⁴⁹

However, while the organisation managed to maintain an impression of ‘innocence’ in the eyes of the public to some degree, the situation was different in relation to official bodies. *The Link* had been under surveillance from MI5 from its inception and was infiltrated by its agents. In 1939, this topic reached parliament, and this was the first time an official opinion was heard from a member of government. The Home Secretary, Samuel Hoare, answered a question by Geoffrey Mander MP concerning *The Link* in March 1939 by stating that its purpose is mainly dissemination of pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda.⁵⁰ Hoare answered another question on this subject on 23 June, when he pointed out how *The Link* helps distribute German Nazi leaflets at its meetings. He also informed that its activities were being monitored by the state.⁵¹

Domville denied similar accusations and in a letter to Hoare, he explained how he was only concerned with improving relations between Great Britain and Germany, which ‘is the course advocated by both His Majesty and the Prime Minister on more than one occasion’.⁵² But Hoare spoke in the House of Commons again at the beginning of August. This time, the accusation against *The Link* was of a more serious nature, because the Minister’s response indicated that the organisation was being used as a tool of German propaganda and one of its organisers was receiving money from Germany.⁵³ *The Link* responded by issuing an official statement in which it strongly denied this accusation with the words: ‘Not a penny piece has to come from abroad to support Link funds.’⁵⁴ *The Link* also said that if Hoare doubts this, he should address *The Link* directly and examine the situation and not simply malign its movement with his insinuations. However, the Minister was certainly not interested in escalating the situation, because at that time, Britain was not yet at war with Germany and expressing opinions regarding this matter outside parliament was not recommended.⁵⁵

Professor Laurie created a sensation with his efforts to put things right when he responded to Hoare’s accusation of financing of *The Link* from Germany, by explaining that there are various methods by which its members might receive money from this country, without them having to become tools of Nazi propaganda. All they had to do was write an article for the German newspapers or work for a German company. He himself admitted that he had been paid 150 pounds for the book titled *The Case for Germany*. He was unable to find a publisher in Britain, which is why he tried Germany, where *The International Publishing Company* in Berlin was willing to accommodate

49 GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers...*, p. 310.

50 TNA, KV5/2, *German Propaganda in Britain*, July 1939, p. 3.

51 Ibid.

52 *Anglo-German Review*, April 1939, p. 159; GRIFFITHS, R., *Fellow Travellers...*, p. 315.

53 TNA, KV5/2, *News Chronicle*, 5 August 1939, *Founder of “The Link” Denies Receiving Nazi Money*.

54 TNA, KV5/2, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 1939, *Link Denial of Part in German Propaganda*.

55 TNA, KV5/2, 4 August 1939, *B.2h (Mr. Sneath)*; comp. KV2/834, *Mr. Noakes called and examined*, pp. 12–13.



him.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as he added, the money for his book was in no way related to *The Link*, as this was his own personal affair. In response to a question by a reporter of the *Daily Express*, asking whether he would call the book pro-German propaganda, he responded: 'Well, I certainly don't attack Germany in it, so I suppose you would call it propaganda.'⁵⁷ This seemingly small difference was quite significant. In Laurie's interpretation, this could theoretically still concern a private initiative by someone to the benefit of another country (regardless of the questions of whether a similar book published in Germany would be financially profitable, who actually paid for the project and whether the lump sum for the book was adequate). On the contrary, the authorities believed that Germany itself was using *The Link* for its own purposes, whether or not the organisation's members were aware of this. The arguments that appear in internal reports correspond with what was briefly heard from Samuel Hoare in Parliament.

Official bodies denied the statement that *The Link* was interested in improving mutual understanding by pointing out the fact that there is no corresponding organisation in Germany, which would support the British point of view. They were not even convinced by creation of the partner group *der Ring*, as they did not believe its activities would benefit Britain. Another argument was that the *General Post Office* seized a large number of German Nazi pamphlets, which *The Link* reputedly disseminated among its members.⁵⁸ Germans at this time were evidently keen to send similar printed materials (in English), even to people who were not actually interested in them.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, an MI5 agent mentioned that during her stay in Germany as a member of *The Link*, she met with H. R. Hoffmann (from *Auslandspressestelle* in Munich) who wanted her to copy all the *German newsletters* for free at her home in Britain and distribute them further.⁶⁰ The great interest in activities and relations within *The Link* from the German Nazis in Great Britain, led by Otto Karlowa — the *Landesgruppenleiter* of the Nazi Party at the time — also seemed suspect.⁶¹ Domville was evidently in contact with Karlowa, whom the Brits deported from Great Britain before the war in May 1939, and Karlowa asked other Nazi representatives in the country to support an event planned by *The Link* (this was the first Headquarters' Party) in a letter dated 8 December 1939, with the understanding that he had promised this to Domville.⁶²

The fact that *The Link* came into contact with German "propaganda" is not too surprising. However, the accusation concerning financial support of its activities from Germany seems more significant. The *Anglo-German Review* itself naturally profited from German adverts published on its pages, but this concerned direct payments from Germany to cover the expenses of *The Link*. C. E. Carroll was in contact with members of the so-called *Dienststelle Ribbentrop*, which was the unofficial German Nazi institu-

56 TNA, KV5/2, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 1939, *Link Denial of Part in German Propaganda*, comp Ibid. *Daily Herald*, 8 August 1939, *I Got £150 For Book*.

57 TNA, KV5/2, *Daily Express*, 8 August 1939, 'Nazis Paid me £150' said Professor.

58 TNA, KV5/2, *Note on the LINK*, pp. 1–2.

59 TNA, KV2/834, *Mr. Noakes called and examined*, p. 9.

60 TNA, KV5/2, *The recent Link visit to Germany*, pp. 2–3.

61 TNA, KV5/2, *Note on the LINK*, particularly p. 2.

62 TNA, KV2/834, *Memorandum by M. I. 5 on the case of Admiral Sir Barry Domville*.



tion for foreign affairs, most frequently with a certain Hetzler. On 1 February 1939, he wrote to him: 'In the Period since I was in Berlin we have received a total about £180 from Gabler, under the new arrangement, instead of £200 a month which it was to provide. We are again in great difficulties ... The Link deficit of about £5 a week is so far covered by the Review'.⁶³ Carroll previously complained to the Germans in a letter dated 1 November 1938 that *The Link* is not 'self-supporting' and other letters were set in a similar spirit. Moreover, according to the conclusions of MI5, the Germans were aware of Carroll's plans to publish the *Anglo-German Review* from the very beginning. The question of finance from Germany was also being discussed. In March 1937, a person from *Dienststelle Ribbentrop* expressed his satisfaction over the fact that the AGR was the first newspaper published by an Englishman that presents the truth 'in our sense', in a letter to Karl Marhau from the *German Chamber of Commerce*.⁶⁴

All reports indicate that the main communication channel with the Germans regarding money certainly led through Carroll. It is evident from the hearing with Domvile during the Second World War, in relation to his interment, that even authorities were not certain whether he knew about Carroll's dealings regarding financing of *The Link*. But in any case, these two were in very close contact, and Sir Barry was similarly acquainted with Hetzler and Hoffmann. Various sources clearly indicate one more thing. Domvile and co. did encounter problems in financing *The Link*. The low membership fee of two shillings and sixpence per year made the organisation accessible to those with a lower income, but it was evidently not enough to cover costs in full.⁶⁵

Several of Domvile's diary entries indicate that the closest leadership sought a way to raise funds for their organisation. His remark about a conversation with Laurie in February 1938 is of interest, when he noted: 'He [Laurie — M. S.] has a scheme of raising money for Link. Says Carroll mistook me for millionaire'.⁶⁶ This raises the question of whether Carroll originally expected more support for his project with the AGR from a partnership with Domvile, since it was Carroll who proposed establishment of *The Link*, according to Domvile.⁶⁷ He would have been able to expand the readership base at least, because each organisation member automatically became a recipient of the *Anglo-German Review*.⁶⁸

Carroll also provides a certain financial explanation for the structure of *The Link*, when, in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he noted that greater centralisation of the branches would increase the expense of running the organisation.⁶⁹ Even though *The Link* had a minimum paid staff, it was soon evident that even maintaining an office was unsustainable, which is why an agreement was reached in the spring of

63 TNA, KV5/2, *Note on the LINK*, p. 3.

64 TNA, HO 283/31/3, pp. 7–8.

65 Furthermore, it seems as though a considerable number of members didn't pay beyond their first year. TNA, KV2/834, *Mr. Noakes called and examined*, pp. 9–10.

66 NMM, DOM 55, 3 February 1938. The question of raising money see also 8 February 1938 and 26 April 1938.

67 DOMVILE, B., *From Admiral...*, p. 64.

68 TNA, KV2/834, *Mr. Noakes called and examined*, pp. 4 and 10.

69 TNA, KV5/2, 3 July 1939, Carroll's letter to Sir Alexander Cadogan, p. 3.



1938, and the organisation moved to the *Anglo-German Review* office. The funds of *The Link* were to be used to pay the AGR for expenses for work carried out to its benefit, in the value of 5 pounds a week.⁷⁰ In February 1938, in relation to an increase in members (and therefore increased administration), a call for ‘voluntary aid in the secretarial work’ appeared in the AGR,⁷¹ and in the autumn of 1938, this monthly review published an announcement of a financial collection for *The Link*, so that it could expand its activities.⁷² However, the aforementioned MI5 agent pointed out the other possible source of income, stating that the Germans offered her the same profit as *The Link* for arranging trips to this country, i.e. 1 pound per person.⁷³ Even though she was of the opinion that the organisation must have made good money from this, which could be possible with regard to the extensive promotion of trips and the number of realised visits, Domville subsequently stated that it was he who actually paid all the expenses in the end.⁷⁴

The Link officially ended its activities at the beginning of the war. Although its membership grew and its activities continued, a rising anxiety started to become apparent from March 1939, when the Germans occupied Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. As Domville noted on 15 March 1939: ‘Hitler in Prague won’t help matters.’⁷⁵ Carroll tried to explain and justify occupation of the Czech lands in the AGR, but the situation was also complicated by the accusations raised against *The Link*, which appeared in parliament and subsequently in the press. A report from Headquarters in April stated: ‘The Link Council feel that some guidance to branches and members is necessary in these unsettled times.’⁷⁶ In the summer of 1939, the *Council* encouraged branches to refrain from holding lectures about politically controversial subjects, which could cause attacks from opponents.⁷⁷ After Hoare’s last accusation in August, which evidently gained the biggest response of all his appearances, Domville felt exhausted by the entire situation.⁷⁸ However, this did not mean that he ceased all further activities in the anti-war campaign after *The Link* was disbanded.

It is naturally difficult to ask about the personal motivation of Domville and other members. Evidently *The Link* became a promoter of German Nazi interests and anti-Semitism was present among its members. In any case, during the Second World War, S. H. Noakes of MI5 was willing to believe that Sir Barry was led to establish the organisation in 1937 by ‘none other than the highest motives’.⁷⁹ However, it was also

⁷⁰ KV2/834, *Admiral Sir Barry Domville called and examined*, p. 23; comp. NMM, DOM 55, 26 April 1938.

⁷¹ *Anglo-German Review*, February 1938, p. 70.

⁷² *Anglo-German Review*, October 1938, p. 369. The AGR gave the names of those who contributed to *The Link Fund* on its pages, but it does not seem that *The Link* raised significant funds in this way.

⁷³ TNA, KV5/2, *The recent Link visit to Germany*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ TNA, KV2/834, *Admiral Sir Barry Domville called and examined*, p. 19.

⁷⁵ NMM, DOM 56, 15 March 1939.

⁷⁶ *Anglo-German Review*, April 1939, p. 159.

⁷⁷ *Anglo-German Review*, August 1939, p. 260.

⁷⁸ NMM, DOM 56, 9 August 1939.

⁷⁹ TNA, KV2/834, *Mr. Noakes called and examined*, pp. 1, 4.



MI5 which gave Domville a 'friendly warning' that the Germans were using *The Link* as a state-controlled propaganda tool in the spring of 1939. But Domville denied this, as he had the public accusations against *The Link*. Either he did not want to believe it, or, most probably, he did not feel that he was doing something undesirable in any way by dealing with Nazi proponents. Although it could appear that *The Link* pursued the same goals as the government in its efforts to maintain peace during the time of appeasement, the main difference was manifested at the beginning of the Second World War, when their ways definitively separated.

ABSTRACT

THE BRITISH PRO-GERMAN ORGANISATION *THE LINK* ON THE EVE OF THE WORLD WAR II

This article analyses the British pro-German organisation *The Link*, which was established by Sir Barry Domville in 1937. The organisation officially profiled itself as a non-political, independent movement, which strove to promote friendly relations between Great Britain and Germany, which it considered to be an essential condition for maintaining peace. Over four thousand members joined *The Link* during its two years of existence. This article questions to what degree individual members of the organisation identified with the Nazi and anti-Semitic ideology present in Germany at the time and to what degree the Nazis used *The Link* to promote their world opinion. It also analyses the position assumed by official British bodies towards this organisation.

KEYWORDS

The Link; 1930s; Barry Domville; Great Britain; Germany

ABSTRAKT

BRITSKÁ PRONĚMECKÁ ORGANIZACE *THE LINK* V PŘEDVEČER DRUHÉ SVĚTOVÉ VÁLKY

Článek analyzuje britskou proněmeckou organizaci *The Link*, kterou založil v roce 1937 Sir Barry Domville. Oficiálně se profilovala jako nepolitické, nezávislé hnutí, které usilovalo o podporu přátelských vztahů mezi Velkou Británií a Německem, což její představitelé pokládali za nezbytný předpoklad pro udržení míru. Za období své dvouleté existence vstoupily do *The Link* více než čtyři tisíce členů. Příspěvek si klade otázku, do jaké míry se jednotliví členové organizace identifikovali s nacistickou a antisemitskou ideologií přítomnou v tehdejším Německu a nakolik nacisté využívali *The Link* k propagaci svého světového názoru. Zároveň analyzuje, jaký postoj k ní zaujala oficiální britská místa.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

The Link; třicátá léta; Barry Domville; Velká Británie, Německo

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