

9. J. W. Davidson on the Home Front¹

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James (Jim) Wightman Davidson (1915–73) died young. He was then the foundation Professor of Pacific History at The Australian National University (ANU). The first step in that direction was an MA degree (with first-class honours) from Victoria University College, in 1938, on the strength of a thesis on Scandinavian settlement in New Zealand. In those days, the royal road to academic success was a second degree from Oxbridge or London, and Davidson applied for one of the two postgraduate travelling scholarships that were allocated to New Zealand. He had done well in his studies but not well enough and one of the scholarships went to a history student from Christchurch, Neville Phillips (see Chapter 10 in this volume), a Christchurch journalist who was a complete unknown to Davidson and his lecturers at Victoria College. The setback shook Davidson to the core and he was more than happy, in the circumstances, to be appointed to the Centennial Atlas Project and assigned to tracing Maori tracks and waterways.² But his heart's desire was postgraduate study abroad and an eventual lectureship at a university. His persistence in applying for overseas scholarships paid off some four months later with the award of a Strathcona Research Studentship to St John's College, Cambridge; he sailed for England in late August on the *Tainui* on two years' leave of absence from the New Zealand Public Service. Neville Phillips was a fellow passenger and the two became friends.

Ever a dutiful son, Davidson sent regular letters to his parents. Within days of the *Tainui* berthing in Southampton, Chamberlain appeased Hitler at Munich, and Davidson wrote that

the last half of the voyage has left us even more unsettled than the first. The news from Europe seems to be getting steadily worse. Once or twice, however, we have thought that all was well. One night last week I had an argument lasting long into the night because I had said that I thought Chamberlain was justified in saving peace by making concessions to Germany; & then the next day we found that things were

1 I am grateful to Malcolm Underwood, the Archivist at St John's College, Cambridge, for facilitating access to Davidson material at the college; to Caroline Greenwood for donating the papers of her uncle (Miles Greenwood) to the National Library of Australia; and to Jill Palmer for facilitating access to the Lilburn Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library. Niel Gunson, Barrie Macdonald, Gerald Hensley and David Hilliard, all of whom knew Davidson, usefully commented on this chapter, as did Malcolm McKinnon, John Crawford and Ian McGibbon.

2 Malcolm McKinnon, 'The Uncompleted Centennial Atlas', in William Renwick (ed.), *Creating the National Spirit: Celebrating New Zealand's centennial* (Wellington, 2004), pp. 149–60.

worse than instead of better. I still feel there is hope of averting war, but even in that I do not get much support. However it will be satisfactory to be on land & at least have more news of what is actually happening.³

Two days later, he admitted that he left New Zealand never expecting ‘so soon to have to regard war as such a matter of fact possibility’. British destroyers were everywhere in the English Channel and further surprises were in store in London where a war seemed to be almost in full swing: trenches in St James Park and Hyde Park, men in khaki wherever one looked, preparations for the evacuation of children to the countryside, gas masks issued to one and all ([e]ven animals are remembered & gasproof kennels have been devised’); and by night ‘the ceaseless raking of the skies by searchlight looking out for enemy planes’, and people on air-raid duty. It crossed his mind that leaving New Zealand might have been the height of folly.

When World War II arrived, it complicated his life and caused anguish. But the war also provided opportunities: it was the ‘making’ of Jim Davidson in providing the springboard to his future career, and brings to mind the words of another New Zealander, John Mulgan, who remarked that ‘[i]t is a sad commentary on human values that war which has accustomed us to death should have brought with it so full and rich a sense of life’.⁴ Davidson’s anti-war and anti-militarist convictions, which translated into appeasement, might have got him into trouble, yet he greatly benefited from being where he was and doing what he did during World War II. Not least he was eternally grateful to have avoided being called up for combat duty.

The immediate problem was homesickness, despite being met at the railway station in London by his former New Zealand school mates Miles Greenwood and Douglas (Gordon) Lilburn. (Greenwood was studying drama at the Old Vic and Lilburn was studying composition at the Royal College of Music under Vaughan Williams.) But Davidson soon settled into his new life. He enrolled as a PhD student at St John’s College, Cambridge (on his twenty-third birthday: 1 October 1938), decided upon his thesis topic (‘Trade and Settlement in the South Pacific, 1788–1840’)⁵ and got on with his research, mostly in London archival repositories. He also joined in the round of college life and made lasting friendships. Such was Davidson’s conviviality and yearning for intelligent company that at one stage he lamented that it would be better for his work ‘if I were among people I shunned & disliked’.⁶ But he made steady enough progress

3 Davidson to his parents, 25 September 1938 (addendum of 27 September), Davidson Papers, National Library of Australia [hereinafter NLA], MS 5105, box 64. There are two sets of Davidson Papers; the other is in the ANU Archives, Series 57 [hereinafter ANUA 57].

4 John Mulgan, *Report on Experience* (Oxford, 1947), p. 148.

5 The topic transformed into: ‘European Penetration of the South Pacific, 1779–1842’, PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1942.

6 Davidson to Greenwood, 4 November 1939, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805.

and had a reminder of his potential when a revised version of his earlier thesis on Scandinavian settlement in New Zealand won the Walter Frewen Lord Prize of the Royal Empire Society for 1938.⁷ He did the usual student things of going to the theatre, cinema and art galleries (often in the company of Greenwood or Lilburn), having afternoon tea with his supervisor, overseas travel to France and Ireland, and looking up his British relatives. He was leading a fulfilling life, as he told Greenwood:

This week I have walked; on Thursday I heard a most brilliant lecture by Eileen Power, of London Univ., on the 'Eve of the Dark Ages'; last night the history club had a sherry party to which I went to meet delightful people & duly met several; in the coming week we have the Pro Arte Quartet [of Brussels] playing Beethoven's Sonatas. My work is equally entertaining, & the time for dinner rapidly approaches. My nostalgia [for New Zealand] is but slight.⁸

Nonetheless, Davidson maintained his connections with New Zealand, above all sending regular letters to his father, mother and sister in Wellington. They, in return, provided family and local news (almost none of their letters survives, unfortunately—only his to them), including a steady flow of newspaper clippings. From time to time, too, his father sent locally published books necessary for Davidson's thesis work but unobtainable in England.

All the while the clouds were gathering over Europe and the prospect of hostilities was more real. Davidson's letters home are largely silent about Hitler's aggression, apart from concerns immediately following the Munich Agreement. Perhaps he did not want to unduly alarm his parents but more probably he did not wish to alarm himself. He had

a tremendous revulsion against volunteering for any service which involves the destruction of human life. I would volunteer for hospital work, ambulance work, stretcher bearing, or something of that sort, which was concerned with saving life. — But as I say I don't expect war. However, you now know how I feel, & how I would act if anything did happen.⁹

7 J. A. Williamson, Report on the essays submitted for the Walter Frewen Lord Prize, 1938, enclosed in the 'Minutes of the Imperial Studies Committee, Royal Empire Society' (Cambridge University Library). Davidson's successes were trumpeted back in New Zealand: 'Honours at Cambridge', *New Zealand Free Lance*, 28 August 1940, p. 6.

8 Davidson to Greenwood, 27 November 1938, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805; also Maxine Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889–1940* (Cambridge, 1996).

9 Davidson to his mother, 3 May 1939, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64. The reluctance of many soldiers during World War II to shoot to kill is perhaps not generally realised. After 1945, the US Army broke down such qualms, with target practice at bullseyes being replaced with simulated battle conditions and shooting at human-like pop-up targets. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* [1947] (Norman, Okla., 2000), ch. 6 ('Fire as the Cure').

Davidson's refrain is that he expected the continuation of peace and he steers clear of such disagreeable realities as the German occupation of the Sudetenland, *Kristallnacht* (the 'Night of the Broken Glass'), Hitler's Reichstag speech against the Jews, the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the German 'Pact of Steel' with Italy. There is not simply a disbelief that war might happen but also a definite sense that if one wished hard enough it would go away. He stuck to his guns to the very end. Even with the Russo–German Pact in August 1939 and with war just around the corner, like many people, he continued to hold out hope that hostilities might still be averted. Having experienced one major war in their lifetimes there was an emphatic sense in some quarters that another had to be avoided at almost any price. A case in point is the pacifist and feminist Vera Brittain, whose fiancé, beloved younger brother and numerous friends had been killed in World War I, resulting in her authorship of *Testament of Youth* (1933), a classic memoir of the human sufferings of World War I on soldiers and civilians alike. During World War II, she suffered again—this time for her pacifism and anti-war publications, which affected both friendships and her literary standing.¹⁰ It is easy to see why many people were anti-war, just as it is easy with hindsight to be scornful of appeasement. But as M. D. R. Foot argues, anti-war sentiments of whatever stripe failed

to tackle the argument that there are some kinds of armed villain who can only be stopped by brute force. Once the Nazis had tricked their way into power in highly industrialised Germany, and bluffed their way into re-creating armed forces that they had been banned from having by treaty, there was bound to be war.¹¹

The dreadful sense of foreboding following the Russo–German Pact was realised on 3 September when Britain and France declared war on Germany following the Nazi invasion of Poland. Davidson was staying in London at the time on a research visit and immediately volunteered as an Air Raid Warden. He reassured his parents that he had sufficient funds and asked them to 'try to worry as little as possible, because I know that worrying & feeling you can do nothing about things can be much worse than...any of our experiences will be'.¹² Even then there was guarded, if quixotic, optimism that the German people would rise in revolution against their Nazi overlords—a view shared by many Britons¹³—and

10 Paul Berry and Mark Bostridge, *Vera Brittain: A life* (London, 2001); also Jill Ker Conway, *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on autobiography* (New York, 1998), pp. 82–3. Richard Overly, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the crisis of civilization, 1919–1939* (London, 2009), pp. 345–56, analyses popular pacifism and anti-war campaigners in Britain and their varying responses to the advent of World War II. Anti-war attitudes generally are discussed by Peter Calvocoressi, *A Time for Peace: Pacifism, internationalism, and protest forces in the reduction of war* (London, 1987), ch. 8.

11 M. D. R. Foot, "'War is a condition, like peace...'", *Literary Review*, (June 2008), p. 28.

12 Davidson to his mother, 3 September 1939, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64.

13 Ian Kershaw, *Making Friends with Hitler: Lord Londonderry and Britain's road to war* (London, 2004), p. 299. Indeed, two days after the declaration of war, the RAF dropped leaflets urging Germans to rise against

his assurance of a widespread belief ‘in our capacity to wear [Germany] down if revolution does not come; & most people are inclined to imagine war will not be too long’.¹⁴ Two months later, he told Lilburn: ‘The Communists are fools, but as they are for the moment right one must support them. They are the only section in England which would give us another Munich.’¹⁵ At the other end of the spectrum was the Australian historian W. K. Hancock, at the time professor at Birmingham and later one of Davidson’s academic sponsors, who was staunch in his opposition to Nazism. Recognising that ‘a Nazi-dominated Europe...would soon extinguish the values he cared about’, Hancock found abhorrent the ‘intellectual quietism’ (his biographer’s words) of the sort that Davidson embraced.¹⁶

The obvious disruptions to civilian life, the ‘Phony War’ notwithstanding, were rationing, conscription, industry being geared to armaments manufacture, the dispersal of many civil servants and their files to remoter areas, the evacuation of children to the countryside, and the layers of restriction, regulation and surveillance that all this entailed. For historical researchers, the blackout and later the Blitz created impediments of their own. There was initial talk of the Public Record Office in London being closed for the duration; in the event, some of the material that Davidson needed was transferred to Canterbury and available for consultation—which put these archives in the flight path of German bombers during the Blitz. Another inconvenience was the early closing times of the British Museum Reading Room and the Cambridge University Library (3.30 pm and 4 pm respectively) because the big windows of the former and the glass dome of the latter could not be effectively blacked out. On one occasion, Davidson was nearly refused admission to the British Museum Reading Room because he had not brought along his gas mask. As well, parts of St John’s College were requisitioned by the state to accommodate people directly associated with the war effort. Then there were the miscellaneous dangers of being at war: in a memorable episode, the house in which Davidson was staying in London came uncomfortably close to receiving a direct hit from a German bomb.

Meanwhile, the logistics of conducting thesis research in scattered repositories had its ups and downs:

I left Cambridge on Tuesday...favoured with fog, I dashed about—B.M., R.E.S. [British Museum and Royal Empire Society]—& then went to Oxford. The first siren didn’t sound till I was in the train at Paddington. I had arranged to meet that evening a Wellingtonian, son of a friend

the Nazis.

14 Davidson to his father, 6 September 1939, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64.

15 Davidson to Lilburn, 5 November 1939, Lilburn Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library [hereinafter ATL], MS-Papers-2483-052.

16 J. H. Davidson, *A Three-Cornered Life: The historian W. K. Hancock* (Sydney, 2010), pp. 135, 140.

of Mother's, now in the R.A.F. Wednesday and Thursday were mainly spent in Rhodes House Library which proved even more useful than I expected—I hope to return a few days next vacation...Then, as on Tuesday, there was an early train on Friday morning, & a day in the BM. Sirens sounded soon after I arrived, but unexpectedly we were allowed to continue working. Then, two bombs dropped only a mile or so away (1.45 PM) & we were hustled into a shelter where we remained till almost closing time, without books, without even chairs on which to sit. And so to RES, NZ House, & the train. Four exhilarating days, they were much enjoyed.¹⁷

Occasional excitement or not, it was a grim time. The expectation that able-bodied men would enlist for the armed forces weighed heavily, especially on someone like Davidson whose anti-war outlook made him a staunch appeaser, even if he had little time for Chamberlain as a politician. His decided reluctance to enlist was endorsed by his tutor at St John's College: 'he said any application at present to the Recruiting Board by me would be "an act of unnecessary magnanimity"—so authority backs up one's inclinations towards passivity. He was very insistent that I should continue with my work.'¹⁸ Davidson's supervisor, Professor Eric Walker, was equally adamant that he continue with his thesis rather than enlist. Moral support was also in abundance from his New Zealand friends and kindred spirits Miles Greenwood and Douglas Lilburn.¹⁹ At their respective boarding schools they had been in a minority of 'aesthetics', interested in artistic pursuits and creating their own little haven amongst a philistine environment of 'hearties' for whom rugby and physical prowess were the defining qualities. Lilburn later condemned 'this arena of bullying little bastards—oh God, I hated them, and they hated me'.²⁰ Greenwood, Lilburn and Davidson were part of a small support group of expatriate New Zealanders, united in their leftist leanings, aesthetic interests and revulsion to war (as distinct from pacifism) that strongly inclined them towards what one historian has termed 'the [British] Labour Party's doctrinaire antimilitarism'.²¹ Greenwood expressed his feelings in verse:

17 Davidson to Greenwood, 3 November 1940, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805.

18 Davidson to his mother, 10 October 1939 (addendum of 11 October), Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64.

19 Greenwood (1913–92) was with Davidson at the Hereworth School in Havelock North, which was a feeder for the elite New Zealand secondary schools, such as Wanganui Collegiate and Waitaki Boys' High School. Greenwood went on to Collegiate and Davidson to Waitaki, where he was in the same year as Lilburn (1915–2001).

20 Douglas Lilburn, 'Notes towards "Memories of Early Years"', Lilburn Papers, ATL, MS-Papers-7623-025.

21 Phillip Norman, *Douglas Lilburn: His life and music* (Christchurch, 2005), pp. 78–9; Ernest R. May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's conquest of France* (New York, 2000), p. 172.

Then die, but die in vain, for slaughtering
 Has never yet eradicated wrong.
 Watch, if you will, the ocean waves that bring
 Their watery legions, endless and strong,
 To pound & battle with the myriad miles
 of our earthly litteral [sic]: and wonder.
 See not the waves, but visualise vast files
 of soldiers, time's players in war's plunder
 of life. They fight a foe not of their race,
 A thing inhuman, drear & oversized
 In might. They fight an understood disgrace,
 And in their dying scorn what once they prized.
 The earth is no man's, & man has unity
 as has the ocean to eternity

20th October 1939²²

Davidson made his views known to his parents, telling them that although he expected sooner or later to formally contribute to the war effort, he was 'quite unable to offer my services for any job requiring the taking of human life'; he was relieved to receive his father's approval.²³ Whatever George Davidson's views on the war itself, he was doubtless relieved that his son was removed, for the moment at least, from active combat. Certainly, the gangly Davidson was neither robust nor physically coordinated, and he lacked any inclination for frontline duties. Asthmatic and prone to catarrh, he would have made a hopeless soldier and was no doubt aware of it.²⁴ His other concern was that his eventual contribution to the war effort would be in accord with his 'capacity & character'.²⁵ There were other matters of temperament—notably, his disdain for mindless authority, as he saw it. Typical of this was his disparagement of the intelligence section of the War Office for being infested with

nonentities punishing criticism whenever it shows its head, sticking to all the old notions of button-polishing and floor scrubbing because it is easier to keep men employed that way than to think out intelligent training for them, and trying to create round them an atmosphere of

22 Untitled poem, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805.

23 Davidson to his mother, 30 October 1939, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64.

24 As was the American historian J. H. Hexter, 'who never learned to march in step, and while he was attempting to negotiate an obstacle course, he blew out a knee'. William Palmer, *Engagement with the Past: The lives and works of the World War II generation of historians* (Lexington, Ky, 2001), p. 72.

25 What could happen to people who were unsuited to army life during wartime is indicated by Julian McLaren-Ross's autobiographical story 'I Had to Go Absent (with commentary by Paul Willetts)', *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 June 2008, pp. 13–15. On the other hand, many artistic types and 'aspirant economists' from Central Europe were initially assigned to the Pioneer Corps as unskilled labourers in wartime Britain and only later were 'more rationally employed in the armed forces'. Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A twentieth-century life* (London, 2002), p. 167.

Prussian respect for discipline combined with unbridled Hun-hating. The only hope seems to be that the rank & file wait for the revolution—almost.²⁶

Of course, Davidson's wish to avoid, or at least to delay, becoming involved in the war machine was widely shared. Peter Calvocoressi, who became an intelligence officer at Bletchley Park, recalls:

In the autumn of 1939, twenty-six years old and recently married, I had even less wish than most people to rush off and risk my life. I was content to evade the conflict between family happiness and a wider duty by accepting the current orthodoxy which said that one should wait one's turn to be called up in an orderly manner and when required.²⁷

For the moment, it was a matter of Davidson getting on with life the best he could, of pursuing his thesis work in the face of restricted library hours and the dispersal of documents, and waiting for a better day. His views on war remained unchanged, and he told his father:

I cannot help sticking to my original viewpoint that our making [war]—in the attempt to save Poland—was a tragic mistake. How much does it seem at the moment we are likely to be able to help Poland, or Czechoslovakia, or the rest of Europe? And even if in the end we do so how much greater even than our highest estimates is the cost going to be? If we win freedom for a continent of starved mothers, war-shattered fathers, & stunted & ricketty [sic] children, was it worth it? I cannot for a minute believe it was, but now there is no retreat. We can only continue. The most tragic part of it is apart from the suffering at the moment & in the years to come that if in the end we succeed as fully as we hope & the Nazi government is destroyed even then, I believe all over Europe the leaderless & unfed multitudes whose freedom we desire will probably hate us more than they hate the Germans. Not quite normal because of their suffering they will not be able to see beyond & to recognize the greater oppressor, Germany, the ultimate cause (apart from human folly & selfishness) of their suffering...I wish I could believe, as I think you do in many things, that suffering refines & purifies, acts as a beneficial discipline; but I can't.²⁸

The war, in Davidson's view, would result in senseless slaughter and achieve no positive results. Very likely, Davidson's anti-fascist attitudes, which he embraced in the politicised ambience of Victoria University College, were overridden by

26 Davidson to Lilburn, 14 June 1942, Lilburn Papers, ATL, MS-Papers-2483-052.

27 Peter Calvocoressi, *Top Secret Ultra* (Sphere edn, 1981), pp. 7–8.

28 Davidson to his father, 5 July 1940, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64.

his anti-war sensibilities, and probably reinforcing this was a lingering belief from his Wellington student days in the ideals of the League of Nations as arbiter of the global order.²⁹ One cannot have it both ways—being both anti-fascist and anti-war. But at no point did Davidson find that his senses were dulled by the seemingly interminable condition of war, leading to feelings of fatalism and a ‘desire to put off making decisions as long as possible in case something or other turns up’.³⁰

It would get worse before it got better, not simply with the ending of the Phony War and the onset of the Blitz, but in Davidson’s personal fortunes. A recurring source of uncertainty was his two years’ leave from the New Zealand Public Service, which was insufficient time to complete a PhD thesis even without wartime distractions. More ominous was his father’s declining health, which Davidson first knew about in January 1940. George Davidson was a staid and genteel manufacturer’s representative and his son was already anxious that recent tariff restrictions in New Zealand were hurting his father’s business. Now there were health concerns, which made Davidson feel apprehensive because Lilburn’s father had died after a long illness in July 1939 while his son was abroad. As 1940 progressed, George Davidson’s health remained an underlying worry and in October there was a scare when he was diagnosed as having a blood clot near the heart. Jim Davidson went frantic with worry at the news and wanted to return to New Zealand. The danger seemingly passed but George Davidson died suddenly on 6 February 1941.

It was such a sad letter that Davidson wrote home. Distraught and disconsolate, he tried to gather his thoughts and express his emotions:

It is now evening (9.30) & the cable still seems as bleak as it did when I first looked at it this morning. I don’t seem to be much nearer [a] fuller understanding of it, or nearer an answer to the incessant questions—why, why had it to happen? Only gradually I seem to be relating to the past, & remembering how even in the darkest moments when I knew fully Dad’s condition I thought of how both our Grandfathers had lived to be well over 80, and hoped & felt sure there were many happy—if enforcedly quiet—years ahead for Dad. And then came the happy day when I received my first letter from him again—with a few typing mistakes. Then they came regularly & seemed no different to those he had written before he was ill. The mistakes in typing had disappeared. The news always seemed to be getting brighter...

29 See J. C. Beaglehole, *Victoria University College: An essay towards a history* (Wellington, 1949), ch. 8; Stephen Hamilton, *A Radical Tradition: A history of the Victoria University of Wellington Students’ Association, 1899–1999* (Wellington, 2002), pp. 77–8.

30 Frances Partridge, *A Pacifist’s War* (London, 1978), p. 148 (entry for 27 October 1942).

Somehow I can't altogether regard death as a tragedy for those who die, though I am so fond of life. Yet I did so want to bring a little more happiness to Dad before death came to him—to be with him again, & to show him by my work here & afterwards that I had made some use of the opportunities which he had laboured so hard that I might have, and to make him feel able to be fairly sure that come what may I ought to be able to see that you & Ruth would not suffer too much, materially, if he should die.³¹ But it has come too soon and too suddenly; there is a war on, & in the turmoil in which we live I couldn't be with him before he died or with you in the sad days that follow...I do wish I was with you tonight.³²

Part of Davidson's devastation was that he had not been close to his father in recent years, nor had their relations been entirely cordial (which might explain why Davidson usually wrote separate letters to his mother and father). Like the spent arrow, there were now feelings of unassuaged guilt that he had not done more to mend fences following the rejection of his father's intellectual and parental authority. It only made matters worse when his father's letters continued to arrive for some weeks afterwards, and these coincided with the worse bombing raid to date in the vicinity of Cambridge.

To further disturb Davidson's peace of mind was the matter of his leave from the New Zealand Public Service. He wrote to Joe (later Sir Joseph) Heenan, the Under-Secretary for the Department of Internal Affairs, asking for six months' extension. When it became clear that this was insufficient, Heenan made the extraordinarily generous gesture of extending Davidson's leave-of-absence 'for the duration of the war and, you may take it, such further period as may be necessary to enable you to make up your mind whether you will be coming back to New Zealand'. He went on to say 'the more I see of the work you are doing in England, the more I realise the improbability of your ever coming back to us. The British people have a habit of knowing a good man when they see one and not letting him go.'³³

Had Davidson returned to New Zealand after two years, he would almost certainly not have completed his PhD thesis and in likelihood he would have had to settle for a lower degree, either an MA or an MLitt.³⁴ He would have

31 The late Ruth Davidson told me that her father did not much like his job but did so uncomplainingly to provide his family with a decent standard of living. Interview, 13 January 1999, Canberra.

32 Davidson to his mother and sister, 7 February 1941, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 64. Davidson refers to a letter he wrote to Miles Greenwood earlier in the day, which unfortunately is not among the Greenwood Papers ('The letter to Miles was, in a way, an effort to see whether I could trust myself with a pen'). An obituary to George Davidson appeared in the *Evening Post* [Wellington], 8 February 1941, p. 11.

33 Heenan to Davidson, 13 April 1942, Heenan Papers, ATL, MS-Papers-1132-048.

34 The Australian historian Manning Clark, who returned home from Oxford in the face of impending war, had great difficulty in finishing his MA thesis, on Alexis de Tocqueville, while holding down teaching

returned to the New Zealand Public Service and he might well have been appointed to a lectureship at his alma mater when an opening occurred in 1948.³⁵ He would certainly not have become the Professor of Pacific History at the ANU but he might, had he remained in the Public Service and ended up in the Department of Island Territories, have been involved in the decolonisation of Western Samoa—upon which his reputation largely rests. With greater certainty, we can say that he would have chafed under the prevailing wartime restrictions, for New Zealand displayed greater severity towards dissent and disaffection than other outposts of the British Empire.³⁶ Davidson had already experienced from afar this environment of compulsion and intolerance. When the war broke out, he wrote an article for the New Zealand current affairs magazine *Tomorrow*, saying that planning for postwar reconstruction should start right away in order to avoid the mistakes that beset the aftermath of World War I.³⁷ The following year, the provocative *Tomorrow* became a casualty of wartime censorship. When the censors opened his parents' mail and cut out the 'offending' portions, he complained to the Wellington morning newspaper that the excisions seemed to relate not to sensitive wartime information but to what might be construed as being critical of the Government.³⁸ He flattered himself that his intervention would make a difference but the Prime Minister felt that the generally conservative press never gave the Labour Party a fair hearing and he was not about to restrain the censors.³⁹

Meanwhile, Davidson had to survive in wartime England. His immediate concern was 'to avoid combat service without declaring himself a conscientious objector': by this time he had 'become too skeptical of the nature of conscience'.⁴⁰ His father's death created financial as well as emotional difficulties, and took him down a road he might otherwise not have ventured. As well as his scholarships, Davidson had relied on an irregular allowance from his father, which now dried up. As he explained to his college tutor, he was reluctant to impose financially on his mother in the circumstances. The point was that his mother would need

positions, despite having completed sufficient documentary research. Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Posterity: The life of Manning Clark* (Melbourne, 2011), p. 219. The scope and complexity of Davidson's work, together with his research being incomplete and the unavailability of source material in New Zealand, would likely have precluded the completion of the thesis had he returned home beforehand.

35 See Davidson to his mother, 17 June 1948, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 65.

36 Nancy M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War: The home front* (Wellington, 1986), chs 5–7, 18–19; David Grant, *Out in the Cold: Pacifists and conscientious objectors in New Zealand during World War II* (Auckland, 1986); J. E. Cookson, 'Appeal Boards and Conscientious Objectors', in John Crawford, (ed.), *Kia Kaha: New Zealand in the Second World War* (Auckland, 2002), pp. 173–98.

37 J. W. Davidson, 'The Present War and the Future Peace', *Tomorrow*, 5:25 (1939), pp. 778–80.

38 *Dominion*, 3 February 1940, p. 16; 5 February 1940, p. 6; 6 February 1940, p. 6 [Editorial]. The matter was also raised in the *Evening Post*.

39 Nan Taylor, 'Human Rights in World War II in New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 23:2 (1989), especially pp. 116–19; Andrew Cutler, 'Tomorrow Magazine and New Zealand Politics, 1934–1940', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 24:1 (1990), pp. 22–44.

40 Davidson to Lilburn, 5 June 1941, Lilburn Papers, ATL, MS-Papers-2483-052.

every penny from his father's estate, and while he was provided for in the will by way of an insurance policy, it would not mature for a number of years.⁴¹ Thus he applied in early 1941 for a British Council-sponsored teaching position in Africa. His College tutor wrote a favourable testimonial, and provided Davidson with a copy. The following day, the tutor wrote a private and confidential follow-up to the effect that Davidson lacked 'the appearance of forcefulness and drive which you might wish your lecturers to show'—to which the British Council expressed its gratitude, saying that such confidential letters 'are particularly helpful'.⁴²

Blessing in disguise or not, Davidson remained in England for the duration. His mood was not improved by what he regarded as the brazen deceit of British propaganda, writing to Lilburn about the 'melancholy triumph of being proved right in disbelieving' but in terms that show some false impressions:

There is much more I should like to say on many things—the propagandist lies, for instance; and one doesn't have to come in very close contact with people in the forces to know how considerable they sometimes are...it is absurd, & might be catastrophic, to try and delude ourselves that there is a big split in the Nazi party or even that Hess believes Germany will lose the war. He believes, I imagine, that she can win only at great cost—but that is very different. Again those suggestions by intelligent people—dons & such like—that Germany is brutally reckless of human life: where is the evidence? To fling Churchill's words, or something like them, back to him, has ever so much been won with the loss of so few? What do we gain by refusing to see that the German forces are being used with magnificent skill, with daring and imagination, certainly, but quiet without recklessness? War is brutal—you won't expect me to deny that—but is efficiently conducted war more brutal than inefficient.⁴³

Davidson was seemingly purblind, almost wilfully ignorant, to what one historian has described as 'the new Germany created by will, force, and genocide'.⁴⁴

His immediate financial predicament was resolved by a renewal of the next instalment of his scholarship. To the rescue came his supervisor, Eric Walker (the

41 George Davidson's estate realised £7015 15s 11d. He also had an insurance policy (for an undisclosed amount) with two-thirds of this going to Jim Davidson, presumably when it matured in 1951. George Wightman Davidson's probate papers, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), AAOM 6030, 1941/2779. Until then it appears that Davidson received nothing from his father's estate. See also Davidson to his mother, 12 April, 22 September, 21 October 1953, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 66.

42 Bailey to British Council, 19 February and 20 February 1942; British Council to Bailey, 24 February 1942, Davidson's Tutorial File, St John's College, Cambridge. Bailey was Bull Professor of Law at Cambridge University.

43 Davidson to Lilburn, 5 June 1941, Lilburn Papers, ATL, MS-Papers-2483-052.

44 Reba N. Soffer, *History, Historians, and Conservatism in Britain and America* (Oxford, 2009), p. 181.

Vere Harmsworth Professor of Naval and Imperial History at Cambridge), who recommended him to Margery (later Dame Margery) Perham of Nuffield College, Oxford. 'Miss Perham', as Davidson always called her, was directing a major project on colonial legislatures in Africa and Davidson was recruited to write the volume on the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council.⁴⁵ He effectively went part-time on his thesis and alternated between Oxford and Cambridge. Working in another area was a useful comparative exercise but he found it taxing to be constantly shifting mental gears between Africa and the Pacific.

Davidson spent the first half of 1942 completing his PhD thesis whilst maintaining the pretence that the Northern Rhodesian project was ticking along. The thesis, on the 'European Penetration of the South Pacific, 1779–1842', was submitted in May and Davidson satisfied his examiners the following month at the *viva*. Being called up for active service was again in the air and he viewed the prospect of joining the 'arrogant' Army, even in a non-combat role, with unconcealed dismay. Then it emerged that he was still technically a student until actually graduating in October. In other words, he had a four-month reprieve to find alternative work that would be counted as contributing to the war effort. The immediate worry, however, was that Davidson no longer had income from scholarships. Margery Perham wanted him in her stable and made strenuous efforts to get the necessary funding. Uncertain that Miss Perham could do so, he committed himself to a job with the Admiralty—and no sooner had this happened than Miss Perham did find the money.

She was very disappointed, but Davidson was 'overjoyed'. The Admiralty position not only removed 'the gloomy prospect of service in the ranks of the army'.⁴⁶ It meant that Davidson was right-hand man to Raymond Firth, the author of *The Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori* (1929) and *We, the Tikopia* (1936), who had been seconded from the Department of Anthropology at the London School of Economics (LSE). Davidson and Firth were soul mates. They had met the previous year and Firth was highly impressed with Davidson's ability and potential. Mutual regard deepened into a lifelong friendship that was very evident to me during the Firths' stay at the ANU in 1972–73. The Admiralty work was based at the Scott Polar Institute in Cambridge and involved the compilation of a series of volumes (variously known as the 'Admiralty Handbooks' or the 'Naval Intelligence Handbooks'), which would provide

45 Margery Perham's 'Studies in Colonial Legislatures' project is discussed by Richard Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: The last lost cause?* (Basingstoke, UK, 1986), pp. 284–5.

46 Davidson to his mother, 13 July 1942, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 65. Davidson's delight was soon tempered by delays in the confirmation of his appointment and questions over the scope of his duties, which turned out to be onerous.

broad-ranging information for British naval operations. Firth was in charge of the small team responsible for the Handbooks relating to the Pacific Islands,⁴⁷ and he recalled Davidson's contribution in terms of high praise:

Jim was my right-hand man as editorial assistant. As well as his almost encyclopedic knowledge of the field, he was meticulous in his control of detail, with the keenest eye for error—the best proof-reader I have ever known. He was also a pleasure to work with, as you will know from his sceptical, humorous, witty approach to people.⁴⁸

But it was arduous work. As well as authoring or co-authoring some 600 pages for the Handbooks,⁴⁹ Davidson was in charge during Firth's frequent illnesses and there were times when he wilted. In reply to Miles Greenwood's inquiries, he wrote:

'Burdens of work', you say, do they multiply? Well, yes. For I was not quite out of bed [with illness] when Firth went down with bronchitis, for the fourth time in as many months...[and] he has thrown over the editing of our current volume. I do it, in addition to as much of my own writing as I can't farm out (& I can farm out very little). Of the remaining two members of our team, who were formerly kept up to the mark by Firth & now have to be by me, one is about 35, temperamental, & extremely sensitive to criticism of work which he knows, but hates to admit, is frequently inaccurate & inadequate. So there are difficulties...

All this, I can see, is not very lucid; but I don't feel lucid—garrulous, rather. Perhaps it is a reaction against the inescapable pedantries of editing.⁵⁰

Nor did it help that he had his own health problems. The frequent fogs affected his throat and lungs and there were recurrences of his asthma and catarrh. But at least he had the satisfaction of referring to the 'unmilitary ways' of the Naval Intelligence Division, just as he delighted in the informal manner that his Home Guard contingent carried on. The real problem, however, was his continuing commitment to the Nuffield project. The Northern Rhodesia book became a monkey on his back and his peace of mind was not improved by Miss Perham's suggestion that he write a short history of Northern Rhodesia as well. On one occasion, he lamented that every spare moment of his time was being spent finishing his manuscript for Miss Perham; on another he confessed that it was

47 Naval Intelligence Division [of the British Admiralty], *Pacific Islands* (Geographical Handbook Series), 4 vols, [no place of publication], 1943–45.

48 Personal communication, Raymond Firth, 30 September 1997.

49 R. Gerard Ward, 'Davidson's Contribution to the "Admiralty Handbooks"', *Journal of Pacific History*, 29:2 (1994), pp. 238–40.

50 Davidson to Greenwood, 26 February 1944, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805.

[r]egrettable that one should attempt two things at once, but really [the] activity is unceasing. I have been trying to find a moment to write for long, but without avail. Daytime & evening I am either at the Polar Inst. or else [at my lodgings] writing (I refuse to do that without solitude).⁵¹

This 'seemingly unending problem', as he described the Northern Rhodesia work, persisted into the following year and in the same breath he heartily hoped that Miss Perham would be off to Jamaica so that her letters of inquiry would become less frequent. It was just as well, he wryly commented, that the authors of other volumes in the Nuffield project were as tardy as him.⁵²

Davidson was clearly overworked, as was almost everyone else serving on the home front. It is true there was no invasion but the strains of everyday life included rationing and too much to do on not enough sleep. As well as having joined the Signal and Intelligence Platoon of the Home Guard, Davidson at one point was marking Oxford and Cambridge School Certificate papers to augment his income. To cap it off, Firth urged him to collaborate in an official civil history of World War II, under the general editorship of W. K. Hancock.⁵³ The offer was attractive but his workload was too much as it was and he pulled out, telling his mother that he simply 'hate[d] the thought of going on & every minute of my time having to be allocated to one job or another'—but also telling Lilburn that, despite the loss of income, persisting with the project meant that 'the majority of my time would [have gone] into doing work useful but not entirely of my own choosing'.⁵⁴ Another way of looking at it is that he had ample employment in areas that suited his skills and temperament and which led to professional advancement, whereas in the early days of the war it did cross his mind that he might 'be forced into doing [something] stupidly out of accord with my inclinations'.⁵⁵ Nor was Davidson alone in such attitudes. The historian A. J. P. Taylor also knew that he was not soldier material; he too joined the Home Guard, as well as lecturing for the Ministry of Information, broadcasting for the BBC and writing guidebooks for future British occupying forces.⁵⁶

They were indeed a strenuous four years. His father's death impelled a search for paid employment that, in turn, opened up opportunities. One of those

51 Davidson to his mother, 27 November 1943, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 65; Davidson to Greenwood, 19 April 1944, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805.

52 *The Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council* was finally published in 1947 and favourably reviewed in academic journals. It was the first of Davidson's three books.

53 J. M. Lee and Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy: Organisation and the planning of a metropolitan initiative, 1939–1945* (London, 1982), p. 257 n. 1; Jim Davidson, *A Three-Cornered Life*, ch. 6 ('The Civil Histories').

54 Davidson to his mother, 26 September 1945, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 65; Davidson to Lilburn, 11 October 1945, Lilburn Papers, ATL, MS-Papers-2483-052.

55 Davidson to his mother, 6 September 1939, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 65.

56 Kathleen Burk, *Troublemaker: The life and history of A. J. P. Taylor* (New Haven, Conn./London, 2000), pp. 170–1.

opportunities was the ambience of Oxbridge and especially the ‘quite remarkable chances of meeting people’ as varied as visiting missionaries from the Melanesian Mission, scientists who had worked in the Pacific and colonial administrators from Africa, in addition to other academics, such as Margaret Mead and Reo Fortune on separate occasions. In 1943, he applied for a Fellowship at St John’s College with Hancock as one of his sponsors. He had never been so nervous about anything since waiting for his MA results, and was shocked to miss out. The disappointment gnawed at him for months afterwards.⁵⁷ He was successful the following year but lecturing duties to army cadets and colonial service probationers only increased his workload. On VE Day, the twenty-nine-year-old Jim Davidson had come a long way since entering the war as a PhD student of less than one year’s standing. He probably would have agreed, given the rigours and privations of the home front, that he had lived among a ‘brave and stalwart people who suffer[ed] from what their leaders [had] set in motion; it makes one realize how lucky Britain was to have got through the Second World War and how much was owed by so few to so many’.⁵⁸

Even so, Davidson had a ‘good war’. Whereas the war was an impediment to budding academics who saw active service (such as Neville Phillips), Davidson was able to find work within the domestic war machine that was directly relevant to his craft and calling. His work was highly regarded and it resulted in a fellowship at St John’s College in 1945, a lectureship in the Cambridge History Faculty in 1947, then being shortlisted for the Beit Professorship of the History of the British Empire at Oxford in 1948, and finally recommended by Hancock and Firth for the Foundation Chair of Pacific History at the nascent ANU, an appointment he took up in December 1950.⁵⁹ One of the reasons he was appointed was because he had practical as well as scholarly credentials. That is, in 1947 and again in 1949–50, he had been assigned by the New Zealand Government to help prepare the trusteeship of Western Samoa for eventual self-government: ‘we wanted someone who would go and make a report on Samoa... You see we had no people of any academic qualifications ourselves’.⁶⁰ Although the Western Samoan assignments had nothing directly to do with Davidson’s wartime experiences—and he hardly mentions the place in his PhD thesis—his work for Margery Perham imparted a scholarly interest in the problems of

57 Doug Munro, ‘J. W. Davidson and W. K. Hancock: Patronage, preferment, privilege’, *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 4–5 (2005–06), pp. 39–63 (especially pp. 42–8).

58 Lindsay Duguid, ‘Stop to Dress’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 July 2008, p. 26.

59 Firth to Oxford University Registrar, 21 May 1948, Firth Archive, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics and Political Science [hereinafter FIRTH], 8/1/18; Firth to ANU Vice-Chancellor, 25 January 1949, and 6 July 1949, both in FIRTH7/5/1; Davidson to his mother, 23 May 1948 and 6 July 1948, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, box 65; Davidson to W. K. Hancock, 19 March 1949, Hancock Papers, ANUA 77/12; Davidson to Firth, 21 March 1949, FIRTH8/1/18; Firth to Hancock, 25 March 1949, Hancock Papers, ANUA 77/15.

60 Sir Alister McIntosh (interviewed by F. L. W. Wood and Mary Boyd, 2 December 1975), ATL, OHColl-0163/1 (typescript: ATL, 80–413).

colonial government, provided a disciplined focus for his sympathy towards indigenous self-determination and gave intellectual reasoning for his conversion to a 'participant historian'. By kindling an interest in *contemporary* colonial affairs, his African research provided the springboard to becoming an academic who sought a life of action as much as of the mind. The numbers of scholars who came to, or returned to, Cambridge after their war service—whether at the front or at home—also had a bearing. They were greatly influenced by their war service and frequently enough studied related subjects or wrote about their wartime vocation (Harry Hinsley's work on Bletchley Park, for example), and they almost invariably had an altered outlook on life. They influenced Davidson in a more general sense by providing confirmation that his growing notion of the scholar-in-action had merit. Then it transmuted—or as Ronald Hyam has suggested, Davidson 'represented the apotheosis of "participant history"...for in his case it came to displace the primacy of the academic role'.⁶¹

Indeed, it did: the only book Davidson published during his tenure at the ANU was *Samoa mo Samoa*, his classic account of Western Samoa's long road to sovereign independence, in which he himself played a part.⁶² His departmental colleague Harry Maude thought this unremarkable because he 'always felt that the Samoans came first in [Jim's] affections'.⁶³ Although Davidson established a pioneering school of Pacific History at the ANU, many colleagues regretted his slender publication record—or what one described as 'the extreme difficulty of getting anything out of him in the research way'.⁶⁴ Nor did it help that his love of fast cars, his disregard of the University House dress code and a general exuberance encouraged detractors to mark him off as ANU's senior *enfant terrible* and to doubt his seriousness of purpose. Those closer to him usually begged to differ, not least his PhD students, who found him a superb thesis supervisor.

Despite numerous publication casualties, there is a sense that Davidson developed in a quite different respect—from a position of indifference to one of principled concern. Before the outbreak of war, he expressed no moral outrage at Hitler's activities, in contrast with the Oxford historian Hugh Trevor-Roper. Then a student, Trevor-Roper had visited Germany in 1935 and, in the words of his biographer, was 'nauseated by what he witnessed, revolted by the inflammatory

61 Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 495; also Doug Munro, 'J. W. Davidson—The making of a participant historian', in Brij V. Lal and Peter Hempenstall (eds), *Pacific Lives, Pacific Places: Bursting boundaries in Pacific history* (Canberra, 2001), pp. 98–116 (especially pp. 104–5). Davidson's major statement on participant history is 'Understanding Pacific History: The participant as historian', in Peter Munz (ed.), *The Feel of Truth* (Wellington, 1969), pp. 25–40.

62 J. W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne, 1967).

63 H. E. Maude to Derek Freeman, 9 January 1982, Maude Papers, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, MSS 0003, series J.

64 John Passmore (interviewed by Stephen Foster, 17 May 1991), ANUA 44/20. Passmore was Professor of Social Philosophy at the ANU.

rhetoric and appalled by what he saw as the abject conformity of the German people'. Three years later, he was 'ashamed of his country's spinelessness in the face of blackmail' over Czechoslovakia.⁶⁵ Davidson, in contrast, seemed unconcerned that the Munich Agreement meant a 'grave injustice' towards Czechoslovakia that 'deeply sullied Britain's name and moral standing'.⁶⁶ At no point does Davidson seem to have acknowledged that massive erosions of civil liberties and assaults on human rights were integral to the Nazis achieving and maintaining power—although he would probably have seen things in a quite different light had he, like Trevor-Roper, actually visited Germany. Neither did Davidson engage with the prevailing view in 1939 of his own generation in Britain—that an expectation of getting killed in the upcoming war did not prevent the thought 'that war would have to be fought, would be won and could lead to a better society'.⁶⁷ Seemingly, Davidson's only concern was that war did not eventuate—in contrast, say, with the Oxford historian A. L. Rowse, who, in the 1930s,

saw the folly of pacifism and disarmament and the self-deceiving feebleness of appeasement. Contemptuous of the lazy indifference of Baldwin and the National Government, [Rowse] was enraged by the idiocy of Left Wing intellectuals such as G. D. H. Cole and R. H. S. Crossman, whose gifts made idiocy a sin.⁶⁸

Davidson would feel unease were he still alive to read the present chapter, but would probably say that he was reacting to the situation as it seemed to him at the time.

Soon after the inevitable declaration of war, he wrote to Miles Greenwood:

I find very few who do not share my opinion that we stand little chance of coming out of this war—or of bringing Europe out of it—any better than we & they went in, or even thou [sic] they could come out of it now. To-night Mr Chamberlain speaks, but with the best intentions in the world he will express a decision which—with ever increasing certainty—I believe is mistaken & wrong. *One does not fight because one sees injustice, but because one believes one can put it right: if one can't... well one doesn't.*⁶⁹

65 Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The biography* (London, 2010), pp. 40, 68.

66 Kershaw, *Making Friends with Hitler*, p. 252.

67 Eric Hobsbawm, 'C (for Crisis)', *London Review of Books*, 6 August 2009, pp. 12–13.

68 Richard Ollard, *A Man of Contradictions: A life of A. L. Rowse* (London, 2000), p. 103.

69 Emphasis added. Davidson to Greenwood, 13 October 1939, Greenwood Papers, NLA, MS 9805. This is remarkably similar to what Chamberlain said to his sister on 20 March 1938, a good six months before Davidson arrived in Britain: 'You only have to look at the map to see that nothing that France or we could do could possibly save Czechoslovakia from being over-run by the Germans if they wanted to do it...Therefore, we should not help Czechoslovakia—she would simply be the pretext for going to war with Germany. That

The last sentence entails a stance at variance with Davidson's later words and deeds, and his wartime attitudes themselves are out of character with everything else about Davidson—for the one thing that he could be counted upon as an ANU professor (and as a constitutional adviser in the Pacific Islands) was to fight hard for what he believed, whether it be upholding academic freedom, criticising government foreign policy, standing watch over humane liberal values or advancing the rights of Pacific Islanders. One might say that Davidson's comment on Chamberlain on the one hand, and, on the other, his view of the futility of war, is hardly to be compared with fighting against injustice in a colonial setting or standing up for academic freedom; and it is worth remembering that the New Zealand Government initially took an appeasing stance towards Nazi Germany.⁷⁰ But the sense remains that the younger Jim Davidson transformed into a sturdier older version. No-one at the ANU would have questioned Spate's observation that the older Davidson was 'a bonny fighter' who took 'delight in combat for a cause'.⁷¹ Some would say that he was too abrasive for his own good, although others realised 'that behind a combative facade he was the kindest of colleagues'.⁷² Not surprisingly, his pro-appeasement stance was not something he talked about in later years and those who knew Davidson at the ANU had no idea that he embraced such attitudes—as well they might not because they contradict other aspects of his life and thought.

Perhaps, then, the greatest single influence of the war on Davidson—even more so than giving intellectual reasoning to his notion of participant historian—was to impress upon him that you fight because you *do* see an injustice, whether or not you believe you can put it right. In that sense, Davidson repudiated his wartime stance.

we could not think of, unless we had a reasonable prospect of being able to beat her to her knees and of that I see no sign. I have therefore abandoned any idea of giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia or the French in connection with her obligations to that country.' Quoted in Kershaw, *Making Friends with Hitler*, p. 221.

70 John Crawford and James Watson, "A Most Appeasing Line": New Zealand and Nazi Germany, 1935–1940', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38:1 (2010), pp. 175–97.

71 O. H. K. Spate, 'And Now There Will Be A Void: A tribute to J. W. Davidson', *Journal of Pacific Studies*, 20 (1996), p. 22; also Spate to A. J. S. Reid, 11 April 1973, Spate Papers, NLA, MS 7886/7/4/2. Spate was Foundation Professor of Geography at the ANU.

72 Geoffrey Sawyer (Professor of Law, ANU) to D. A. Low (Director, Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU), 10 April 1973, Davidson Papers, ANUA 57/96.