

The Wars of British Succession

C.P. SNOW is a novelist deeply conscious of the passing of time. In *Their Wisdom* (1974) takes us to the British House of Lords during the Common Market debate. Historian by training, Lord Ryle makes a bad speech. 'It was a muddled historical disquisition. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this country had been lucky beyond the limits of luck (so earlier on had the Venetians been, that old echo wouldn't stop recurring, though he kept it to himself). During the last hundred years, the luck had run out. At the peak of the country's power our predecessors, including predecessors in this House and the other place, had shown preposterously little foresight—not for want of being told. Now we were back in something like our natural power position—but with historical legacies lingering over and imperial debts to pay. So we had to make the luck for ourselves, carve out a realistic position. Of the possible choices, none of the others was now realistic—except Europe, it was left as the only choice.'

Lord Ryle's implication is that Britain's role in the world is, and properly should have been, a modest one, but that in a 'lucky' period, facing little competition, its role was allowed to expand beyond reasonable limits. Lord Ryle's argument may be imagined. The luck ran out. When it was challenged, Britain's empire could not be held together: indeed it was impossible seriously to try. Yet its existence provoked a challenge; it did not disappear without more than one struggle. And its disappearance not only left Britain itself with many imperial debts and legacies and few options: it left the rest of the world scrambling for what it had relinquished.

My own readiness to fill out this speech reflects my interest in the history of Britain and its empire and their place in the world over the past two hundred years. That interest has, of course, been related to my research and teaching commitments. The former have concentrated my attention on British policy in Southeast Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The latter have led me also to study, though more on the basis of secondary sources, the origins of the world wars, especially the first. Conclusions drawn from both these fields help me to enlarge Lord Ryle's topic, though wide as these fields are, conclusions drawn from

1 C.P. Snow, *In their Wisdom*, London, 1975, p.151.

them also risk narrowing it.

So far as Asia at least was concerned, Britain did not in fact act so irresponsibly as Lord Ryle seems to suggest. Not only were his predecessors 'told': they took some notice. The risk of an unlimited expansion of Britain's responsibilities was recognized, not only among critics of the governments of the nineteenth century, but within those governments.

When I began to study imperial Britain in Southeast Asia, my concern was to explain Britain's intervention in what became Malaya and its acquisition of Burma. But it is just as important to explain why Britain's territorial responsibilities in Southeast Asia remained so limited. Britain did not use its power to create a formal empire in Southeast Asia. It tolerated the continued existence of the Spanish empire in the Philippines and the Dutch empire in the Indonesian archipelago; it accepted in a kid glove sort of way the venture of the White Raja of Sarawak. Empires always need collaborators among those whom they rule: here informality and indirection were conspicuous in the extreme.

There were specific reasons, of course, for tolerating the continued existence of the Spanish and Dutch empires: it was better to have Spain and the Netherlands established along the route to China than to have more powerful European states. Spain and the Netherlands were, too, states whose independent existence and friendship were imperative for Britain in Europe. 'I believe the policy of Mr Canning's treaty [of 1824] was much the wisest', wrote Lord Wodehouse at the Foreign Office in 1860, 'viz to leave to the Dutch the Eastern Archipelago. . . . The general intention of Mr Canning was clearly that we should not acquire territory in the Archipelago south of Singapore. . . . It seems to me in many respects very advantageous to us that the Dutch should possess this Archipelago. If it was not in the hands of the Dutch, it would fall under the sway of some other maritime power, possibly the French, unless we took it ourselves. The French might, if they possessed such an Eastern Empire, be really dangerous to India and Australia, but the Dutch are, and must remain, too weak to cause us any alarm.' Wodehouse had adduced another argument against occupying Sarawak, the question then at issue. 'Can it be doubted,' he asked, 'that it is impolitic to add to our already enormous Asiatic territories?'² Wodehouse used a specific argument against taking on an additional responsibility in Southeast Asia, but he also used a general one. Many nineteenth-century British statesmen indeed believed, like Wodehouse, that Britain must avoid further commitments, and not only in Asia. The 'Imperialist' phase in British history is perhaps rather a short one, and might even be regarded as belonging to a period of comparative decline rather than to a period of abounding strength. By the end of the century the British faced rivals in the game of empire-building, and that was an argument for building

2 Memorandum, 18 August 1860, F.O. 12/28, Public Record Office, London.

more firmly yourself, though it was also an argument for compromising. By that time, indeed, the British Empire was too vast, too heterogeneous, too casually collected, to be held together: 'a mass of plunder', as one historian has put it,³ perhaps over-emphasizing the element of purpose in its acquisition.

The loss of the empire took place rather rapidly, in fact more or less coincidentally with the undergraduate and graduate life of a historian born at the height of the Depression, whose father had been born in the year Queen Victoria died. Such events affect the context in which a historian looks at the past, 'exogenous' factors modifying his interpretation as much as, or more than, 'enogenous' factors like the opening-up of archives or the publication of new monographs.⁴ For Lord Ryle, a public figure, they prompted a particular approach to Britain's political future. For the somewhat younger historian, they promote at least three lines of historical approach. Naturally they affect one's concept of British imperialism. Not only does the empire demonstrably vanish quickly: one begins to wonder how far it ever existed; to point to the elements of caution rather than flamboyance; to take notice again of Cobden and Bright, but also to wonder whether aristocratic England did not substantially share their view that Britain's role as a world power must always be temporary and limited. In Cobden's analysis, British society was dominated by an aristocratic-military complex whose position was sustained in part by popular and successful imperialist ventures overseas. 'As a people, we have failed to respect the rights of property in weaker communities. No conqueror ever returned to our shores, after enlarging our territorial sovereignty, without a triumphant welcome: and no questions are ever asked as to our right to the conquered territories. The advocates of the rights of the Aborigines constitute I fear at present but a small minority of the public, but the severe burdens which Caffre wars and other similar retributions are bringing upon the tax payers of this country will sooner or later, if higher motives should fail, bring the majority of the people to the opinion that even in our dealings with Caffres, Dyaks or New Zealanders, honesty and justice are the best policy.'

The Economist in 1858 criticized the Prime Minister, the Conservative Lord Derby, for failing to take up the offer of Sarawak which the White Raja had made. Derby's spirit was 'too narrow': 'Lord Derby appears to attach far more weight to the conciliation of Mr Bright and his supporters, in dealing with a very important question of Eastern policy, than to the unanimous voice of that influential body of opinion for which last spring he appeared so anxious to find some organised channel of expression' in regard to the government of India, the great cities of Liverpool,

3 M. Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, Cambridge, 1975, p.70.

4 The adjectives come from H.L. Wesseling, 'Dutch historiography on European Expansion since 1945', in P.C. Emmer and H.L. Wesseling, eds., *Reappraisals in Overseas History*, Leiden, 1979, p.122.

5 Cobden to Sturge, 8 January 1852, Add. MSS 43656, f.239, British Library.

Manchester and Glasgow. But if *The Economist* thought that the aristocratic Derby followed Cobdenism too closely, it was itself against needless imperial expenditure and multiplication of imperial responsibilities. 'There is a moral frugality which is at the root of all pecuniary frugality; and no nation which is lavish of pledges and promises which it may be unable to redeem, can have any grasp at all of the first principle of a true State economy.'⁶ Though in some respects the opponent of Cobden, Palmerston was himself against indiscriminate and extensive British intervention: he believed that backward countries could be induced to transform themselves, rather than succumb to European rule, by blandishment, a little bullying and a few lightning blows.⁷ The burden of India lay heavily upon all British statesmen and upon the establishment as a whole. *The Times* warned against making China 'another India'.⁸ The crown lay heavily upon the Queen herself. 'No one feels more strongly than I do about India or how much I opposed our taking those countries and I think no more will be taken, for it is very wrong and no advantage to us. You know also how I dislike wearing the Koh-i-noor.'⁹

Empire was often acquired reluctantly and haphazardly and even occasionally in a fit of absence of mind: the Cocos-Keeling Islands were indeed acquired in error as a result of a naval commander's mistaking his orders to acquire another island also called Cocos.¹⁰ Empire acquired reluctantly and haphazardly was never strongly organized, and colonies of settlement quickly obtained substantial powers of self-government. Such an empire was difficult to hold together when the conditions that favoured its creation changed. If one accepts that the empire was reluctantly acquired, it becomes easier to understand its speedy loss. But undoubtedly the imperial theme impressed our grandfathers and fathers if not our youth. It required a new myth to displace it, that empire was only assumed in order to give it away, and that just as Britain was better than others at acquiring empire, it was better also at disposing of it. That myth helped Britain to adjust to the situation after the second world war, or perhaps rather after some point in 1946 when the major decision was taken to leave India. But, as Lord Ryle might have said, it did not point the way to a positive role for the future: giving empire away is a terminal activity in more ways than one.

The second line of approach that these events suggest relates not to those who rule, but to those who, formally or informally, were ruled. The destruction of imperialism in general, or the displacement of one empire in particular, does not destroy the dependency of small upon

6 *The Economist*, 4 December 1858.

7 R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, London, 1961, p.5.

8 N.A. Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office*, New York, 1948, p.125.

9 R. Fulford, ed., *Darling Child. Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1871-1878*, London, 1976, p.111.

10 N. Tarling, 'The Annexation of the Cocos-Keeling Islands', in *Imperial Britain in South-East Asia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1975, pp.258-65.

great, nor poor upon rich. That dependency takes new forms, forms perhaps still less responsible than the forms of the nineteenth century, forms of hegemony that seek the delimitation of responsibilities with less anxiety than nineteenth-century imperialism. Countries once dependent on the latter, furthermore, are often poorly equipped to deal with the former. In a sense, independence might be won too easily, as a result of the collapse of the British imperial system; and power might be transferred to an ex-colonial élite, tempted to rule in the old colonial way, landed with colonial frontiers and with the task of trying to cope with expectations aroused in a struggle for independence really won for them by others. A specialist in European history may point to Italy as the European country most worthy of study for comparative purposes by specialists on the emerging countries of Asia and Africa. Italy secured its independence substantially as a result of the struggles of other more important powers. It was then faced with the task of turning what had been a geographical expression into a state, and, a still more difficult task, into a nation.

The third line of approach is linked with the previous one. What made the destruction of empire possible was not so much British attitudes—they made it acceptable—nor the attitudes of the ruled—whose success was sometimes out of all proportion to their potential: it was, of course, a shift in the relative strength of the major powers of the world.

One's views on origins, cause, responsibility, must depend not only on evidence, but also on viewpoint. But there can be no doubt of two things: that World War I was related to the crucial question of the shifting distribution of power in the world at large; and that German publicists and politicians, like the neo-Rankeans, Tirpitz himself, were aware of what was at stake. The British Empire—though trumpeted by Elgar with a significant, if personal, sense of nostalgia, of the passing of all human creations—could not survive indefinitely. Perhaps indeed, despite its caution, Britain had acquired too large a share of the world's resources. Certainly, change was at hand. The real question, from the turn of the century if not before, was: who would succeed to the power that Britain had acquired? The inability peacefully to resolve the question makes the first world war in some sense a war of British succession. It was indeed not a simple question. In a sense, like other questions of international relations, it was a moral one: where law does not prevail, responsibility must, or force will. Britain may have been clinging to too much for the content of others:¹¹ certainly it could not hold it all. As far back as 1879 the American navalist, Shufeldt, had observed that beyond England the British Empire had 'in itself no intrinsic strength'. The British navy was

11 C.E. McClelland, *The German Historians and England*, Cambridge, 1971, p.211, argues this way.

formidable only in home waters. Elsewhere, it could no more protect British interests or British colonies 'from an enemy than from a stroke of lightning or the shock of an earthquake'.¹² But, though acquired reluctantly or haphazardly, how could the empire be disgorged responsibly? Must there be a scramble for the inheritance as a sick man declines? As the Germans perceived, the emergence of the United States, and also of Russia and Japan, posed problems for the British, but also for themselves. The Germans' aim was to ensure their claim to the succession before it was foreclosed by the claims of others. The answer of the British was not only to develop their weapons, but—what they have been doing ever since in more ways than one—to live on their wits; or, should we rather say more politely, to draw on the resources of diplomacy. The vastness of U.S. potential largely determined the outcome, but the readiness of the British to concede to American demands in the Caribbean and South America and in the Atlantic, by contrast to their attitude to Germany in the North Sea and the Atlantic, helped to determine the outcome.

In East Asia, the position was less clear. There, as Britain declined, Japan and the United States were the most important powers. The British alliance with Japan from 1902 had been designed to preserve the status quo, but in fact, of course, it had, as the Japanese wished, undermined it in an indirect way. Yet while American interests in East Asia were far less important to her than her interests in the Americas, Europe and the Atlantic, the outcome of the struggle for succession in East Asia remained obscure.

The first world war itself represents Germany's desperate reaction to the changing distribution of power in the world, in particular the shift from Britain to the United States, but it failed finally to decide the question of British succession. Other empires collapsed first, Habsburg, Ottoman, Romanov. The vast increase of American and Japanese power had been associated with the defeat of Germany. The diminution of British influence was less obvious. Indeed Britain's empire grew in extent as it sought to grasp at the energy supplies of Persia and Mesopotamia. Lenin and Sun Yat-sen were fighting British imperialism still in the 1920s and Hitler was casting his eyes on the British empire in a way the publicists and politicians of Wilhelmine Germany would have appreciated. The point was to get in at the right moment, but not to precipitate its falling into the hands of others. The strategy of the second world war, the second war of British succession, was clear: the tactics might vary from those of the first.

Studying British policy in interwar Southeast Asia, one may be struck by the at times almost uncanny perception of Foreign Office comments on the situation in the region. Early in 1935, for example, R. Allen

¹² Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Gunboat Diplomacy and the Old Navy, 1877-1889*, Westport and London, 1973, p.104.

wrote: 'Apart from a war in Europe, which would keep His Majesty's Government occupied, the most dangerous situation would seem to be one in which Japan felt able to count on Russian quiescence while America . . . was on such bad terms with Japan as to make her nervous about her supply of oil. This is to look far ahead.'¹³ A prescient remark, though the time scale was awry. One might also observe that accurate analysis did not lead to positive policy, but perhaps that is a little unfair. Great Britain recognized the importance, for example, of the 1932 revolution in Thailand and tried to get on good terms with the Promoters of the coup. It recognized the significance of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and tried to contact President Quezon who, rather alarmingly, spoke about joining the British Commonwealth. Maybe the policy of the British towards Malaya or even Burma, which was made by other departments less alive to change than the Foreign Office, was less realistic, and certainly the making of British policy towards Asia as a whole was highly departmentalized. But of course there was a real limitation on what the British could do, especially in East Asia and in regard to China and Japan, as the work of scholars like Ann Trotter, W.R. Louis, Bradford A. Lee and Aron Shai has shown.

Since the first world war or before, what happened in East Asia had been determined, not by Britain, but by the relationships of the United States and Japan. It was not clear which of these powers, if either, would inherit Britain's imperial position in the Far East. Interwar, the British in East Asia, even more than elsewhere, had to live on their wits, but diplomacy was now less useful. The Americans had destroyed the alliance between Britain and Japan at Washington, and the British could hardly risk making a deal with Japan in face of American disapproval of any step that would appear likely to undermine the independence of China. The alternative to a deal with Japan was to rely fully on the United States, but the United States was not fully to be relied upon. Isolationism and anti-imperialism were combined, as were, even more strongly, an over-estimate of British power with a belief in British decline. The object of the British Government over the twenty years between the wars was to maintain its prestige, concealing from others, and perhaps from the British people too, the weakness the British leaders felt. Sir Alexander Cadogan was to write in July 1940: 'We lived on bluff from 1920-1939, but it was eventually called. Until we have made ourselves strong enough to maintain the position that we then aspired to hold, we shall have to play for time, which is neither dignified nor comfortable.'¹⁴ As the Foreign Office had seen, the climax was a conflict between the United States and Japan which Britain could do little to influence, but which spelled disaster for the British Empire, if not the end of imperialism. At the Foreign Office, F. Ashton-Gwatkin had observed in 1921: 'The result

13 Memorandum, 16 February 1935, F.O.371/19354 [F1234/231/23].

14 Memorandum, 27 July 1940, F.O.371/24708 [F3633/193/61].

of a further upheaval, such as a Japanese/American war, might be most unwelcome to us and the Dutch.¹⁵ The upheaval came, and it was directly related to the one in Europe. The two crises that Allen contemplated in 1935 coincided.

Both Japan and Germany desired to alter the status quo in the 1930s. As with Japan, so with Germany, there were only two ways for the British to act: to compromise, or to rely upon the United States, though neither of course could be done without cost. The 'appeasers' are of contemporary interest not simply because more documentation is now available about them, but for reasons similar to those that make the little Englanders of contemporary interest. Only peace could save the Empire, Chamberlain maintained, the sick man of the world, as Hankey described it; or, as Henderson declared in 1939: 'the sooner . . . we . . . cut our coat to the measure of our cloth, the better it will be for the British Empire.'¹⁶ In Europe, the British veered towards appeasement until, perhaps the decisive moment in the story, the fall of France in 1940. That Britain then sought victory when perhaps it should have admitted defeat, and that Britain continued to seek victory depended not only on having installed Churchill as Prime Minister some weeks before the French crisis, but also on the acquisition of American resources (without lend-lease Britain would have been bankrupt in 1941); even ultimately upon American entry into the second war as into the first. American resources were forthcoming in the Atlantic though actual American entry into the war was, curiously enough, precipitated in the Pacific.

The Japanese were, however, reacting to the war elsewhere. Not only might the Germans, victorious in Europe, emerge with a claim to the British Empire, formal and informal, for instance oil-rich Netherlands India. Above all the mobilization of American power at new levels in response to the European war, in particular the authorization of a two-ocean fleet in 1940, might cut off Japan from its share in the succession to British power, the resources of Southeast Asia. The European war had at first appeared to offer Japan a great opportunity; but by prompting the mobilization of latent American power it presented Japan with a challenge. The Japanese felt that they had to go to war. As Admiral Nagano put it on 6 September 1941: 'The government has decided that if there is no war, the fate of the nation is sealed. Even if there is war, the country may be ruined. Nevertheless, a nation which does not fight in this plight has lost its spirit and is already a doomed country. Only if we fight until the last soldier will it be possible to find a way out of this fatal situation.'¹⁷ Or as Tojo put it on 5 November 1941: 'If we enter into a

15 Memorandum, 8 September 1921, F.O.371/6696 [F3600/901/23].

16 Quoted in Cowling, p.289.

17 Quoted in J.W. Morley, ed., *Japan's Foreign Policy 1868-1941. A Research Guide*, New York, 1974, p.98.

protracted war there will be difficulties. The first stage of the war will not be difficult. We have some uneasiness about a protracted war. But how can we let the United States continue to do as she pleases, even though there is some uneasiness? Two years from now we will have no petroleum for military use. Ships will stop moving. When I think about the strengthening of American defences in the South Pacific, the expansion of the American fleet, the unfinished China Incident, and so on, I see no end to difficulties. . . . I fear that we should become a third-class nation after two or three years if we just sat tight.¹⁸

Failing to defeat the British, or secure the succession to them, Hitler had attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. The year before he had given Halder a possible explanation for this step. 'The Führer is very much preoccupied with the problem of why England does not wish to come to terms. He sees the answer . . . in the fact that England still has some hopes of Russia. He therefore expects that he will have to compel her by force to make peace. But he is reluctant to do this. Reason: if we crush England by force of arms, the British Empire will fall to pieces. But that would be of no advantage to Germany. We should spill German blood only in order that Japan, America and others might benefit.'¹⁹ This may have been simply what Hitler thought fit to tell Halder, and certainly an attack on the Soviet Union was implicit in *Mein Kampf*, but it was in keeping with a tradition in German policy: it was a new strategy for securing the inheritance of the British. The objective evaded Hitler in 1940; he attacked Russia in 1941. The Japanese hesitated: should they join in the attack upon Russia or should they pursue their objectives elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia? Their answer was to concentrate on the South, in an attempt to ensure their share of the world's resources as major changes in the distribution of power were beginning to occur.

War came in the Pacific with Japanese attacks on Malaya as well as on Pearl Harbor. The British could not stop them. Churchill perhaps even welcomed them as ensuring American entry into the war against Germany. But even victory could come to Britain only at great cost: Britain might be on the winning side, but it would become an offshore debtor of the United States. And perhaps Churchill did not fully realize this. Hence again, perhaps, his bitterness in the later years of the war. 'What do you want me to do? Get on my hind legs and beg like Fala [the President's dog]?' he asked Roosevelt at the second Quebec conference.²⁰ Nor could Churchill reconcile himself to the loss of the Empire which was certain to result from the world conflict even though the successors would not be Germany or the Japanese. 1939 was necessarily the prelude to the end of the British Empire, though many of the British thought they were

18 N. Ike, trans. and ed., *Japan's Decision for War*, Stanford, 1967, p.238.

19 Halder's diary, 13 July 1940, quoted in J.M.A. Gwyer, *Grand Strategy*, III, 1, London, 1964, p.50.

20 Quoted in C. Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, London, 1978, p.388.

fighting the war to preserve it. Britain could win the war only by losing the Empire. Amid world violence, the sick man must die.

My recent work on some aspects of wartime planning for post-war Southeast Asia testifies to the Prime Minister's lack of realism, but also to his dominance over the making of British policy. That helped to prevent the formulation of appropriate policies towards Thailand and Burma for example. The Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, was a Conservative; but he believed the Prime Minister's views on colonial policy were out-of-date: 'I felt that he disliked any country or people who wanted self-government in any shape or form. . . .'²¹ Dorman-Smith himself wanted to take account of the need rapidly to advance Burma towards Dominion status. Yet even he was out-of-date by 1945. Not only had a paramilitary nationalist organization secured substantial control over Burma in the course of the campaign to destroy the Japanese: Dorman-Smith's programme was also unrealistic because the British simply could not afford it. He wanted Britain to set up a model Burma, a working democracy, something the British could be proud to have created. It was not clear that the Burmans wanted it, but it was clear that the British Treasury could not provide the resources he needed. The British also recognized that to remain in Burma would not only be costly, but might become impracticable: they had begun to doubt by late 1945 the continued loyalty of the Indian army on which they relied. The decision to withdraw from India itself marked a decisive stage in the abandonment of Empire in Asia. Only Malaya—the dollar earner—seemed worth a major struggle.

'While all other empires of the developed world were dismantled,' writes Paul Dukes, 'those of Russia and America remained. . . . Perhaps most important, locked in the dangerous embrace of the cold war though they were, the emergent super powers were tacitly cooperating in the break up of the other empires to their common advantage.'²² The Soviet Union and the United States were the successors of the British Empire despite, or because of, all that the Germans and the Japanese had done to avoid this outcome.

The implications of the post-war decisions of the British took some time to become apparent. The phase extended into the 1970s and included the withdrawal of British power from the Middle East and the renaissance of Islamic political power. Some of the characteristics of the phase are, however, clear enough. For the British, the pride in an old role, or nostalgia for an imagined one, is combined with the failure to find or even the lack of desire for a new role; but the habit of living on one's wits—on borrowed time, as in the interwar period, on borrowed money, as in the second war—dies hard. The ex-dependencies on British hegemony face new forms of dependency and the legacy of a colonial heritage

21 Narrative by Dorman-Smith, MSS.Eur. E.215/32, India Office Library, London.

22 Paul Dukes, *October and the World*, London, 1979, p.66.

that sometimes came to them almost too pat. Lastly it is apparent that the redistribution of power in the world at large, though in the long term it transferred power from the one great super-power of the nineteenth century to the two great super-powers of the latter half of the twentieth century, was precipitated by great powers not quite of the first rank: by Germany and Japan, who felt excluded from an adequate share in world-wide decision making and were unwilling to be dependent on the decisions of others.

There are perhaps lessons to be drawn from this phase, it would seem, by those who direct world affairs, by the British, and by the ex-colonial countries, lessons a historian may try to teach. But there are lessons too for the historian in the practice of his own craft. He is affected by 'the spirit of the age'; he is affected by the passage of time that he chronicles. His attitudes and his use of sources are bound to be modified as a result: he should be aware of this and indeed welcome it.

'Ryle sat down, dissatisfied, not over-concerned about the effect of a speech, but feeling that this was worse than most. . . .' After the debate he and Lord Hillmorton walked down Whitehall, past Downing Street, once, 'at one privileged time', perhaps the most important street in the world. It would not be so again. 'All that, those two had accepted long ago. . . . You didn't overstay your welcome, or pretend for ever that you were stronger than you were. And yet . . . there was regret somewhere in their mood. . . .'²³

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