

A. J. P. (Alan John Percivale) Taylor:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Taylor, A. J. P. (Alan John Percivale), 1906-1990
Title:	A. J. P. Taylor Papers
Dates:	1921-1978 (bulk 1958-1978)
Extent:	5 document boxes (2.10 linear feet)
Abstract:	The A. J. P. Taylor Papers, 1921-1978 (bulk 1958-1978), consist of correspondence, typescripts, proofs, clippings, printed material, photographs, passports, and reading diaries documenting the life and works of the British historian. The materials shed light on Taylor's research and writing process, his interactions with colleagues and the public, and his administrative activities.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-4162
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: reference@hrc.utexas.edu

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1978 (R8234), 1978
Processed by:	Amanda Graham and Adam Knowles, 2006; Jennifer Hecker, 2009; updated by Kelsey Handler, 2012
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

A. J. P. Taylor, one of the most influential twentieth-century British historians, was also among the best-known public intellectuals of his day. Because of his appearances on BBC Radio and on television, he became known in newspaper headlines as the "TV Don." Taylor was also a prolific reviewer and columnist, with hundreds of pieces appearing in periodicals and newspapers including the *Manchester Guardian*, the *New Statesman*, the *Observer*, and the *Sunday Express*.

Alan John Percivale Taylor was born in Southport, Birkdale, Lancashire, England on March 25, 1906, and he cultivated the image of an outsider from the industrial north of England throughout his career. Taylor's grandfather and father were successful cotton manufacturers, and Alan enjoyed a comfortable upbringing. Taylor's father Percy, his mother Constance, and his uncle Harry Thompson were pacifists during World War I and remained active in the Liberal Party and leftist organizations long after. The young Taylor adopted his elders' left-wing views. Though he left the Communist Party after the failure of the General Strike of 1926 and became harshly critical of communism, especially in the Soviet Union, Taylor remained a leftist—albeit an idiosyncratic and independent one—all of his life. In the 1950s he was a leading figure in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), and he spoke vehemently against British military action during the Suez Crisis of 1956. Later he called for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

Taylor received his B.A. from Oxford University in 1927 and an M.A., also from Oxford, in 1932. He was a lecturer in history at Manchester University from 1930-1938, and a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford from 1938 until 1976. Despite his many achievements—including election as a Fellow of the British Academy—Taylor was denied the prestigious Regius Professorship in Modern History at Oxford in 1957; many observers felt that Tory Prime Minister Harold Macmillan awarded the position to Taylor's rival Hugh Trevor-Roper on political grounds, while others felt that Taylor was denied the Regius Chair due to his efforts to "popularize" history, his "demeaning" journalistic pursuits, and his general contrariness. Though he never became a full professor, Taylor was a highly gifted and extremely popular lecturer who spoke almost entirely without notes.

Taylor's primary area of expertise as a historian was European diplomatic history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially as it relates to the origins and outcomes of the two World Wars. His highly regarded *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* appeared in 1954. *English History, 1914-1945*, the final volume of the *Oxford History of England* and Taylor's only effort in social and cultural history, was published in 1965 and is perhaps his most popular work. In the 1977 article "Accident Prone, Or What Happened Next" Taylor describes his development as a historian. His sometimes cantankerous autobiography *A Personal History* appeared in 1983. The most controversial of Taylor's works was *The Origins of the Second World War*, published in 1961, in which he suggested that Hitler was not entirely responsible for the outbreak of World War II and that much of history is determined by accidents and mistakes. During the controversy surrounding the book, Taylor was dubbed a revisionist, a description he

eschewed.

Many of Taylor's contemporaries thought it odd that, as an avowed socialist, he would befriend and accept the patronage of the Conservative press baron and ardent imperialist Lord Beaverbrook (the Canadian William Maxwell "Max" Aitken). Taylor praised Beaverbrook as a historical writer and became the Honorary Director of the Beaverbrook Library after Beaverbrook's death in 1964. Taylor published his affectionate biography *Beaverbrook* in 1972.

Taylor married Margaret Adams in 1931; they divorced in 1951. Eve Crosland became Taylor's second wife in 1951; she and Taylor divorced in 1974. Taylor married his third wife, the Hungarian historian Eva Haraszti, in 1976. Taylor had six children: Giles, Sebastian, Amelia, Sophia, Crispin, and Daniel. Taylor died September 7, 1990.

Sources:

"(A)lan (J)ohn (P)ercivale Taylor." *Contemporary Authors Online*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com> (accessed 28 November 2006).

Sisman, Adam. *A. J. P. Taylor: A Biography*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994.

Taylor, A. J. P. *A Personal History*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1983.

Scope and Contents

The A. J. P. Taylor Papers, 1921-1978 (bulk 1958-1978), consist of correspondence, typescripts, proofs, clippings, printed material, photographs, passports, and reading diaries documenting the life and works of the British historian. The materials shed light on Taylor's research and writing process, his interactions with colleagues and the public, and his administrative activities. The largest body of papers consists of typescripts of Taylor's published works. These typescripts are accompanied by correspondence relating to the content, publication, and reception of those works. Also documented through typescripts and correspondence are Taylor's lectures and discussions, both at Oxford University and in television and radio broadcasts. Additional correspondence details Taylor's other professional activities, including his teaching at Oxford. Material illuminating Taylor's personal life is quite sparse, though what is present covers a longer period of Taylor's life (1921-1978) than do the other papers. The papers are arranged in three series: I. Works and Related Correspondence (3 boxes, 1928, 1935-1978, undated); II. Other Correspondence (5 folders, 1965-1978, undated); and III. Personal Papers (7 folders, 1921-1978).

The bulk of the Taylor papers consist of correspondence (656 letters), the majority of which (401 letters) documents Taylor's communication with publishers and colleagues as he researched, wrote and corrected his historical works. A significant amount of correspondence (255 letters) records the historian's intellectual and personal exchanges with fellow historians and notable figures. This body of correspondence also illuminates Taylor's relations with readers of his works and viewers of his television appearances. Notable correspondents include Mark Amory, John Betjeman, Alan Bullock, David Cargill, Len Deighton, Tom Driberg, Michael Foot, Murray Fox, Malcolm Fraser, John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Harris, Malcolm Muggeridge, Maurice Oldfield, William Rodgers, Hugh Trevor-Roper, and Evelyn Waugh.

Of special note are materials that document Lord Beaverbrook's life and his relationship to Taylor, though there are no letters to or from Beaverbrook. The bulk of this material consists of the typescript of Taylor's biography of Beaverbrook and related correspondence. Also well documented are Taylor's duties as head of the Beaverbrook Library.

Taylor routinely destroyed letters he received and did not keep copies of letters he sent. He is known to have destroyed diaries and typescripts. In 1978, Della Hilton, Taylor's secretary at the Beaverbrook Library, gathered and organized Taylor's available material, most of which documents Taylor's professional activities during the previous decade. These papers were acquired by the Ransom Center from Bertram Rota Ltd. in 1978 at the request of University of Texas Professor of History William Roger Louis, a student of Taylor's at Oxford. A year prior to this purchase, the Ransom Center acquired over two dozen volumes of Taylor's publications from the same dealer. These books include first editions of some of Taylor's most prominent works.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Works and Related Correspondence, 1928, 1935-1978, undated (3 boxes)

This series is primarily in alphabetical order based on the titles of Taylor's works, though some generic groupings, such as Articles and Book Reviews, are interfiled. Either the name of the work and its publication date or the generic term identifies the groupings, which are internally arranged according to the form of documents. Typescripts of Taylor's works and related correspondence compose the majority of the materials.

Most of Taylor's major works are represented in the series, with those works published (or republished) in the 1970s more fully documented. These later materials include typescripts and proofs, while earlier works are documented primarily through correspondence, photocopies, clippings, and published versions. Many of Taylor's typescripts contain corrections, though few if any are substantially revised. Taylor often typed on used paper, so that some typescripts have unrelated and unidentified writing on the reverse side. Related correspondence details Taylor's research, dealings with publishers, and reactions to reader responses.

Most of the works documented in this collection are available in published form at the Ransom Center. Taylor's autobiographical notes were unpublished at the time of acquisition, although they contributed to his 1983 autobiography, *A Personal History*.

Series II. Other Correspondence, 1965-1978, undated (5 folders)

In this series, correspondence not directly related to Taylor's works is grouped according to function and original order. Correspondence with Notable Figures is a grouping created by Taylor's secretary Della Hilton, and includes Taylor's communications with the individuals mentioned in the Scope and Contents note. General Correspondence primarily covers Taylor's communication with colleagues on topics of historical interest. The Oxford grouping includes correspondence relating to Taylor's work at Oxford University and his delivery of the prestigious Waynflete Lectures at the university. The Beaverbrook Library correspondence covers Taylor's handling of requests for materials and copyright information for the library's collection. Fan Mail includes letters from a wide range of individuals including students, workers, and history enthusiasts. Responses from Taylor to some of these letters are also contained in this group.

Series III. Personal Papers, 1921-1978 (7 folders)

Documents in this series are grouped by form and shed some light on Taylor's personal life. Photographs include portraits of Taylor and shots of him with others. There are several photos of Taylor and Michael Foot, the author and prominent figure in the Labour Party. Several photographic proof sheets are also included. Birthday Cards and Letters contains responses to an article commemorating Taylor's seventieth birthday in 1976, a copy of which is located in the Clippings re Taylor folder. The Reading Diaries shed light on Taylor's studies from 1921-25. Enclosed in one of these diaries is Taylor's membership card from the Plebs League, a group promoting working-class education. A set of passports includes photographs of Taylor at various stages in his life and records his travels to numerous countries, including at trip to the Soviet Union in 1925. The Beaverbrook Library visitors' book contains signatures and dates for visitors between 1967 and 1975. Lord Beaverbrook's 1964 birthday dinner album includes photographs and personal reflections from some attendees; though Taylor attended, he did not contribute.

Related Material

The following collections at the Ransom Center contain additional Taylor-related material: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Records; David Higham Records; C. P. Snow Papers; Derek Parker Papers; Tom Stoppard Papers; and the Constantine FitzGibbon Papers. All of these are described in archival inventories in the Ransom Center reading room or online at <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa/>, with the exception of FitzGibbon, a description of which can be found in the Ransom Center card catalog. Also, one folder of Taylor material is located in the vertical file.

Substantial groups of Taylor's letters are held in the *Manchester Guardian* collection at the University of Manchester, the Malcolm Muggeridge Papers at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, and the BBC Written Archives Centre. Many of Taylor's letters to Beaverbrook and the letters he wrote as Honorary Director of the Beaverbrook Library are housed in the House of Lords Record Office. Other letters are available in the John Betjeman archive at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, the papers of *New Statesman* editor Kingsley Martin at the University of Sussex, the Liddell Hart Centre at King's College, London, and the Sir George Clark Papers at the Bodleian Library. Correspondence also exists in the archives of Taylor's publishers Macmillan, Hamish Hamilton and the Oxford University Press. Taylor's letters to his third wife, Eva Haraszti, are published in *Letters to Eva* (1991).

Series I. Works and Related Correspondence, 1928, 1935-1978, undated

"Accident Prone" (1977), typescript, 1976; offprint from <i>Journal of Modern History</i> , March 1977; publication copies, <i>Encounter</i> , October 1977, <i>Journal of Modern History</i> , March 1977	Container 1.1
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<i>Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman</i> (1955), correspondence, 1968-1973	Container 2.8
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City of London Music Society Festival, July 4-16, 1976, typescript of program article, photocopy, undated; annual report, 1976; correspondence, 1975-1977	Container 2.11
<i>The Communist Manifesto</i> , introduction (1967), correspondence, 1963-1974	Container 2.12
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<i>English History, 1914-1945</i> (1965), correspondence, 1967-1977	Container 3.2
<i>The First World War: An Illustrated History</i> (1963), correspondence, 1967-1977	Container 3.3
"The Great Deterrent Myth" (1958), proof pamphlet, 1958; clippings, 1958; letters, 1975, 1978	Container 3.4
<i>The Hapsburg Monarchy, 1815-1918</i> (1941), correspondence, 1970-1975	Container 3.5
"How a World War Began" (1941), photocopies of articles in <i>The Observer</i> , 1958	Container 3.6
Ireland interview, clippings, 1975; correspondence, 1976	Container 3.7
"London Diary" columns, <i>The New Statesman</i> , typescripts, 1976-1978; corrected proofs, 1976-1978; correspondence, 1978, undated	Container 3.8
<i>The Origins of the Second World War</i> (1961), corrected typescript, 1976-1977; correspondence, 1968-1977	Container 3.9
"The Russian Revolution" (television lecture, 1957), booklet, 1957	Container 3.10
"The Russian War, 1941-1945" in <i>Sunday Times Magazine</i> (1978), proofs with corrections, 1978; <i>Sunday Times Magazine</i> , 1978	Container 3.11

- "The Second World War" (lecture, 1973), typescript with corrections; correspondence, 1973 **Container**
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- The Second World War: An Illustrated History* (1975), typescript, revised fragment; correspondence, 1972-1976 **Container**
3.13
- The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (1954), correspondence, 1967-1977 **Container**
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- Ten Days that Shook the World* (1977), photocopy of corrected typescript, 1977; correspondence, 1969-1976 **Container**
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- The War Lords* (1976), galley proofs and corrected ozalid process copies for publication of an extemporaneous broadcast, 1976 **Container**
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Bar Code List

- 1--059188000054719
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