

# British Studies Series

General Editor JEREMY BLACK

## *Published*

- John Charmley **A History of Conservative Politics, 1900–1996**  
David Childs **Britain since 1939**  
John Davis **A History of Britain, 1885–1939**  
David Eastwood **Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700–1870**  
W. H. Fraser **A History of British Trade Unionism, 1700–1998**  
Brian Hill **The Early Parties and Politics in Britain, 1688–1832**  
Kevin Jefferys **Retreat from New Jerusalem: British Politics, 1951–1964**  
T. A. Jenkins **The Liberal Ascendancy, 1830–1886**  
David Loades **Power in Tudor England**  
Alexander Murdoch **British History, 1660–1832: National Identity and Local Culture**  
Anthony Musson and W. M. Ormrod **The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics and Society in the Fourteenth Century**  
Murray G. H. Pittock **Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685–1789**  
Nick Smart **The National Government, 1931–40**  
Andrew Thorpe **A History of the British Labour Party**

## *Forthcoming*

- D. G. Boyce **Britain and Decolonisation**  
Glenn Burgess **British Political Thought from Reformation to Revolution**  
J. B. Christoph **The Twentieth-Century British State**  
Gary De Krey **Restoration and Revolution in Britain**  
Jeremy Gregory **The Long Reformation: Religion and Society in England c. 1530–1870**  
Katrina Honeyman **Women and Industrialization**

*(List continued overleaf)*

Jon Lawrence **Britain and the First World War**  
F. J. Levy **Politics and Culture in Tudor England**  
Allan Macinnes **The British Revolution**  
G. I. T. Machin **The Rise of British Democracy**  
Thomas Mayer **Britain, 1450–1603**  
Michael Mendle **The English Civil War and Political Thought**  
W. Rubinstein **History of Britain in the Twentieth Century**  
Howard Temperley **Britain and America**

---

**British Studies Series**  
**Series Standing Order**  
ISBN 978-0-333-71691-5 **hardcover**  
ISBN 978-0-333-69332-2 **paperback**  
(*outside North America only*)

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

---

# **The National Government, 1931–40**

Nick Smart





First published in Great Britain 1999 by

**MACMILLAN PRESS LTD**

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and London  
Companies and representatives throughout the world

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-333-69131-1      ISBN 978-1-349-27582-3 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-27582-3



First published in the United States of America 1999 by

**ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, INC.,**

Scholarly and Reference Division,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

ISBN 978-0-312-22329-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Smart, Nick, 1952–

The national government, 1931–40 / Nick Smart.

p. cm. — (British studies series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-312-22329-8 (cloth)

1. Great Britain—Politics and government—1910–1936. 2. Great  
Britain—Politics and government—1936–1945. I. Title.

II. Series.

DA578.S63 1999

941.082—dc21

99–12190  
CIP

© Nick Smart 1999

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
<b>1. The 1931 Settlement</b>	9
The Government of Individuals	11
The ‘National Appeal’	17
These Tiresome Liberals	23
The Greatest Landslide in British Democratic History	29
<b>2. Coalition-Making</b>	37
Agreeing to Differ	41
National Government?	55
<b>3. The India Bill</b>	63
Irwinism and the Simon Report	67
Revolt: Phase One	72
Revolt: Phase Two	79
The Passage of the Government of India Bill	88
<b>4. The Middle Period: November 1933 – December 1935</b>	90
The Status of the Opposition: Labour	92
The Status of the Opposition: Fascism	98
The Status of the Opposition: Lloyd George	104
Mussolini to the Rescue	113
The 1935 General Election	119
<b>5. The Primacy of Foreign Policy</b>	122
A Pattern Established	129
A Good Year for Dictators	133
Three Kings in a Year	140

<b>6. Neville Chamberlain's National Government</b>	148
Eden's Resignation: the First of the Few	154
Chamberlain Tightens his Grip	163
Out of this Nettle Danger . . .	176
<b>7. High Tide and After</b>	184
Towards War	193
Dead in the Water? September 1939 – May 1940	205
The Norway Debate and the Downfall of Neville Chamberlain	216
<i>Notes</i>	224
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	263
<i>Index</i>	270

# Acknowledgements

Numerous people have helped in the preparation of this book. I am grateful to Professor Jeremy Black for admitting me to his British Studies Series stable, and to his colleague Dr Bruce Coleman for reading and commenting on a draft chapter.

Nearer to home many colleagues have helped. I thank my Faculty research committee for granting me a budget, and the library staff on the Exmouth campus for all their work on my behalf. The aid of Alex Palmer of Computer Services has been invaluable. I thank Sally Holmes, Robert Hole and Neil Riddell for their suggestions after reading draft material, and I remain particularly grateful to my friend Paul Lawley for his thoughtful comment and encouragement.

I received nothing but cheerful and efficient service from librarians and archivists up and down the land, and the gracious way Mrs Elizabeth Crookshank, William Beck and Viscount Boyd gave their permission for me to quote from the Crookshank, Dawson and Lennox-Boyd papers is much appreciated.

Finally I must thank Sara, Katie and Jacob for allowing me to write the kind of book I wanted to write in ideal domestic conditions. To have worked at home in their company and as a part of the family routine has been the greatest pleasure.