

1932

Geoffrey Cox Born 1910

Otago & Oriel

Journalist, writer, diplomat, television executive



Cox (at left) as a member of the Pacific War Council, Cabinet Room, White House Washington, 1 April 1943. Those around the table include Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. (Patrick Cox collection)

When Geoffrey Cox arrived at Oxford in 1932 on a Rhodes scholarship he had high expectations. But his initial reaction to the prestigious university was not as he had expected.

'Oxford had been for me such a dazzling goal – one I had hardly dared dream of attaining...I was both surprised and dismayed to find myself at odds with the place. I found it unrealistic, dangerously insulated...cosseted by a high standard of living. It was an escapist atmosphere in which, at a vitally important period of our lives, we were being withdrawn from the hard facts of life instead of being brought face to face with them.'

'It is difficult to imagine what a Rhodes scholarship meant in those days. Apart from the 1851 Exhibition Scholarship it was about the only means of getting abroad to study.'

To escape Oxford's ivory towers Cox read Marx and Freud, and travelled to Russia and Europe to experience 'the immediate matters of the day' first hand. In 1934 he visited Germany to 'see Nazism from the inside'. He worked in a German Youth Labour Camp during an Oxford vacation and later attended a Nazi Party Rally at Nuremberg.

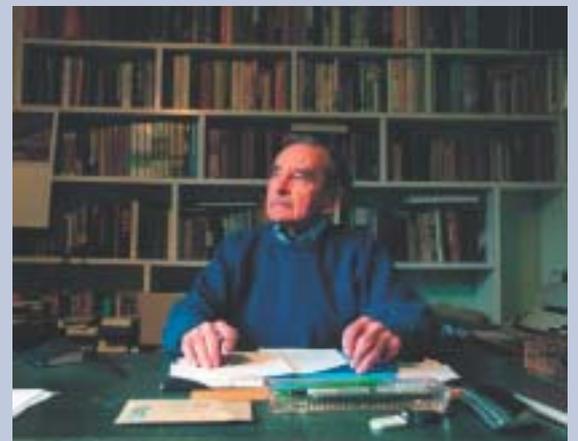
As the world moved towards war, Cox became a journalist and covered fighting in Spain, Finland, Belgium and France. When war broke out he joined up with the New Zealanders and was in the battles of Crete and North Africa. In 1942 he was seconded to the New Zealand Embassy in Washington. Returning to the New Zealand Division in Italy, he became General Freyberg's Chief Intelligence Officer.

After the war Cox returned to England and his journalism career. In 1956 he was appointed Editor of Independent Television News (ITN) and pioneered many techniques of television journalism, including the half-hour news bulletin. His extensive writings include: *Defence of Madrid*, *The Red Army Moves*, *The Road to Trieste*, *A Tale of Two Battles*, *Countdown to War*, *Pioneering TV News* and *Eyewitness* – with, at 94, a book to come.

He was knighted in 1966 for services to journalism.

FURTHER READING

Geoffrey Cox, *Eyewitness: a memoir of Europe in the 1930s*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 1999.



Sir Geoffrey Cox at his home in Gloucestershire. (Gloucestershire Press, supplied by University of Otago Magazine)