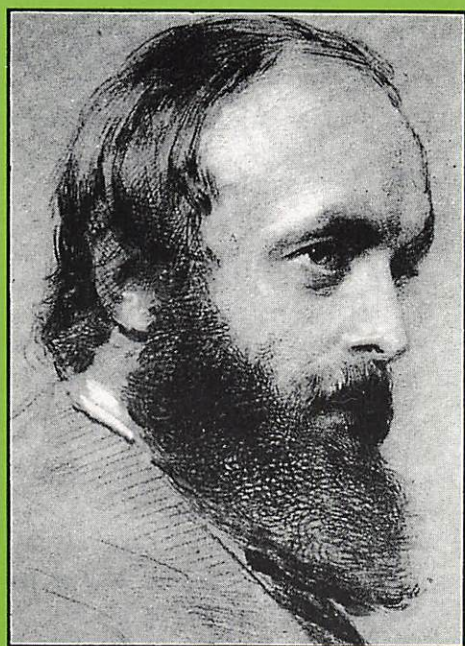


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The Third Marquess of Salisbury
1830 - 1903

Conservatism at its Highest

Eric Ericson

**Is There Any Hope for
Russia?**

Mervyn Matthews

A University Rescued

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Who Inspects the Inspectors?

David Hyams

Political Responsibility

Christian Atias

The Truth in Art

David Matthews

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'Ripeness is all', said Edgar, contemplating the childishness of Lear. We live in a society that regards childhood as a state of edenic innocence, which has sentimentalised the throes of adolescence, and sought to transfer original sin in its entirety to the 'authorities', whose unwanted burden relieves the young of guilt. The very idea of maturity, and of the painful striving that is needed to acquire it, is dismissed as a stuffy relict of discarded inhibitions. The important thing for youth is to 'enjoy', in the peculiar intransitive use of that verb which is current in America.

But fulfilment, both of the individual and of the political organism, requires self-knowledge; and self-knowledge is purchased at a price. This is the lesson of Titian's great 'Flaying of Marsyas', discussed here by David Matthews. When our spiritual leaders cease to discomfort us with truth, it is to art that we must turn for it. How much modern complacency about sexual liberation could survive the full experience of those three Titian masterpieces in the National Gallery — 'Venus and Adonis', 'The Slaying of Actaeon', and 'The Chariot of Bacchus'? The great artist does not judge, because he does not need to. He leads us to the point where *we* cast judgement, confronting the truth of our condition, and inescapably aware that, like Belshazzar, we are weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Juvenile crime follows inevitably from the habit of sentimentalizing youth. But sentimentality always knows what it is up to; the fabricators of excuses are aware that punishment is the only rational response to crime, and that the habit of lenience is the true cause of delinquency. Even *homo economicus*, not much given to ideas of justice and retribution, sees the point — and, as Barrie Craven and Brian Dick argue, he would support a system of punishment at least as severe as that which appeals to the retributive conscience. Why, then, do our politicians refrain from taking the initiative? Why do they oppose juvenile crime with words only, and not with deeds? One answer is suggested by Christian Atias: the failure of politicians to take responsibility, even while remaining 'in charge'. The democratic minister monopolizes decisions in his field of competence, denying the people, in the name of the people, any voice in them. At the same time, he knows that his authority derives from the votes

of cowards like himself, and not from any transcendental dispensation. How unfair, therefore, that he alone should take the blame!

There is another explanation of the habit of lenience, which is democratic man's growing lack of confidence in his judgement. Fearful of laying down the law when every law is no fault, he takes to cultivating a posture of 'sensitivity', imagining that the failure to judge is the highest form of sympathy. The result is the peculiar and increasingly influential state of mind described here by Charles Sykes. This state of mind only *appears* to be a form of toleration; for no observer of the 'politics of feeling' can fail to notice the fury with which its acolytes turn on those who refuse to join the congregation of wimps and weepers. Once suspected of a robust judgement, and you find yourself anathematised — often cast out from your position and censored into silence (witness the fate of Manuela Freihofer — see page 11).

The habit of speaking one's mind is not always to be encouraged: much depends on whether one has a mind in the first place. In the case of Philip Larkin, there is no doubt in the matter, and this outspoken critic of modern life is duly defended in these pages from the criticisms made here six months ago by Keith Jacka. If conservatism is to find a poetic voice in the new conditions, it must surely take its inspiration from Larkin, whose clarity, sincerity and undeceived perception show us how judgement may still be cast, even in a world of ambiguities.

A far cry from the melancholy realism of Philip Larkin is the romantic idealism of Russell Kirk, whose seventy-fifth birthday last year was the occasion of justified celebration in his native America. Eric Ericson's tribute reminds us that, in the forty years since the first edition of Kirk's *Conservative Mind*, no other American intellectual has remained so undeviatingly loyal to conservatism, not as a practice only, but as a philosophy of the human condition, founded on perennial truths. As David Hyams reminds us, these truths are not automatically passed on; only by a collusive effort will the next generation receive the knowledge, culture and wisdom that are the pre-requisites of civilised life. But can that which should be spontaneous and taken for granted, be passed on by a conscious effort? That is the real question of education today.

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Conservative Journals: *Magyar Szemle*

In November 1992 a group of Hungarian intellectuals re-launched *Magyar Szemle* (Hungarian Review), which had been forcibly shut down following the Nazi occupation of Hungary in 1944. Founded by a Prime Minister, Count István Bethlen, the journal was the major forum for intellectual and political debate between the wars. The revived *Magyar Szemle* wishes to acquire and deserve the intellectual prestige of its predecessor. Its self-declared mission is to awaken Hungary from the inertia, spiritual confusion and stupor that are the legacy of communism, and to achieve the 'quality revolution' which was demanded by the novelist László Németh in the thirties.

The journal draws its contributors from established figures, as well as from members of the former underground and the ex-patriate communities. Its authors include university professors, Members of Parliament, clergy, critics, writers and professionals from many fields — all united by a broadly liberal-conservative stance towards socialism and state planning, and by a desire to revive the national culture as part of the universalist culture of Europe. Like most serious pub-

lications in Hungary today, it devotes considerable attention to the Hungarian communities in neighbouring states and to the problem of minority rights — which remains *the* problem of Central Europe. But its articles cover a remarkable range of themes, from iconography to the market economy. The issue for November 1993 contains an interview with a thanatologist on 'knowing how to die'; an account, by the eminent Japanese calligrapher, Hasunuma Tajko, of the traditions of Japanese writing; a penetrating study of Witold Gombrowicz by László Fábián; a study of the God Mother icon from Vladimir; an historical analysis of the Edict of Torda, so decisive for the development of Central Europe — as well as mainstream articles on social and economic reform, the market economy and the condition of minorities.

The chief editor of *Magyar Szemle* is Gyula Kodolányi, poet and philosopher, who has retained, following the tragic death of Dr Antall, his position as chief advisor to the Prime Minister — pending the outcome of elections which take place in May.

Magyar Szemle is available from Gyulai PAL U14, 1085 Budapest, price 85 florints per issue. It appears monthly.

Is there any hope for Russia?

Mervyn Matthews considers 1994 in Russia

There is no doubt that a real miracle has occurred over the territory of the former Soviet Union, despite all the attendant problems and currently deteriorating situation. The militaristic giant which threatened West Europe for decades has been transformed for the time being at least into a gaggle of quarrelsome states with divergent interests, weak economies, and an unprecedented readiness to cooperate with the outside world (in return, of course, for substantial foreign aid). The countries of Central and East Europe are at last free of stringent Soviet control. In Russia itself Soviet forms of oppression have been removed, or substantially reduced, and the absurdities of Marxism-Leninism have been swept from the state edifice. Most of the emergent republics have ended up with regimes which, though strongly centralised or nationalistic, are no longer directly subservient to Moscow; most claim to respect western-style freedoms.

Russia, of course, remains the central element in the scheme, the dominant power in the area and the main focus of interest for West Europe. Another miracle — the rapid development of the Russian Federation into a politically healthy, economically acceptable partner — is probably too much to hope for, at least in the foreseeable future. Political and economic stabilization will inevitably be a long, messy business. Uncomprehending Western statesmen may nevertheless wish to throw vast quantities of their taxpayers' earnings into the bottomless Russian barrel.

I shall address here not the on-going turbulence, but the substantive changes in Russia which are, in all probability, long-term or permanent, and which give us some hope of an essentially improved relationship with that coun-

try. As a former sovietologist, I regard any change in Russia with a sceptical eye: but the reforms so far give grounds for genuine (though cautious) optimism. If any tendency to moral balance exists in this world, (it may not) seven decades of appalling communist governance should indeed be followed by something better. The most distinctive gains, considered at the beginning of 1994, may be listed as follows:

1. For those concerned with individual liberty, freedom of speech and freedom of communications are an apt starting point for analysis. The Soviet Union had one of the most stringent systems of censorship in the modern world, beginning with Lenin's "temporary" Decree on the press promulgated two days after the Bolshevik take-over. The Gorbachev law on the press and the media which came into force on the 1st August 1990 explicitly banned censorship as such, and was a real milestone in the history of the Russian people. True, glasnost had already undermined the old system, but with this law most of the restrictions on negative news items, unflattering social statistics, and adverse public comment were legally abolished. The censor's office was transferred to a commercial operation, offering editors protection against inadvertent breaches of the remaining rules on military secrets.

The government has continued to interfere, and state relations with the media are by no means unclouded. The communist leaders of the August, 1991 coup immediately banned newspapers which they considered to be hostile; Yeltsin did more or less the same thing when he gained control a day or two later. He ensured that his own people were in charge of the central TV stations. After the events of October, 1993 he again temporarily closed sev-

eral newspapers. During the electoral campaign he and his associates issued threats against opponents who used TV time to criticise the draft constitution and him personally. Relations between the government and anti-Yeltsin newspapers have been exceptionally bad, and newspapers have suffered sharp falls in circulation due to economic factors, while most have lost their traditional government funding.

Nevertheless, the media in Russia has been profoundly transformed for the better. The proof of the pudding is in the eating: opposition voices were heard clearly during the election campaign, and strongly influenced the voters. It is very unlikely that censorship of the old variety could be reimposed. In a broader, cultural sense, the benefits of abandoning Marxism-Leninism can hardly be over-emphasised. Philosophy, history, economics, politics, and religion, may now be studied normally: literature and the arts are no longer stultified by the doctrine of socialist realism.

2. The new freedom of expression naturally led to the removal of state-imposed taboos on virtually all social problems. Apart from discussion of public policy, there is much information on poverty, crime, the failures of the educational and social services, environmental disaster, major accidents and many other topics. Relations between the sexes can now be openly considered, while soft pornography for good or ill made an early appearance. Criticism of élitism and CPSU-style benefits has developed into a genre of its own. Emigration, hitherto virtually unmentionable, has attracted enormous public interest and even engendered its own newspaper. Social problems are discussed with considerable sympathy for the victims,

and criticism of official reactions.

The flood of legal and statistical documentation provides unprecedented possibilities for serious analysis both at home and abroad. Most publications of this kind were banned or severely restricted after the late twenties and early thirties, but decrees passed in 1989 and 1990 stated that all significant legislation had now to be in the public domain. The federal statistical office has moved from the inadequate and often misleading annual compendia to monthly and quarterly bulletins which are both objective and depressing. It is difficult to imagine important social problems again being concealed from the public.

3. Particular mention should be made of the freedom to travel abroad. The closed frontier policy was a cornerstone of communist rule. Even after de-stalinisation in the mid-fifties only officials and individuals grouped into "tourist delegations" could cross Soviet frontiers. "Fleeing abroad" and "refusal to return from abroad" were state crimes punishable by ten to fifteen years' imprisonment. With perestroika this restriction was quickly relaxed and the May 1991 statute on Entry and Exit at last gave citizens the formal right to travel abroad. Even in 1990, according to official statistics, a total of nine million did so. The main obstacle to travel is now economic. Association with foreigners has been completely de-politicised, and Russians have no hesitation in making friends. The 1993 Constitution gives citizens (for the first time since 1932) the right to reside where they will in Russia, though this is still a contentious issue in large towns.

4. Freedom of religious belief and practice, together with the exercise of private charity, also seem assured. Under Soviet law all religious activity had been heavily restricted: churches were banned from overt proselytizing, educational and charitable work. Most of these limitations were removed by a law on the freedom of conscience passed in December, 1990. Problems have remained, not least in the relationship between Russian Orthodoxy and the Ukrainian Uniate church, and the rights of foreign missionaries. The Russian

Orthodox church remains a conservative force, and charitable activities have shown a tendency to turn bureaucratic. Yet further state-directed oppression of religion seems highly unlikely.

5. Work is a central part of most people's lives. Under the terms of the 1936 Constitution Soviet citizens were *obliged* to toil for the good of society, and unemployment as such was not recognised. For many years the worker could not leave his job without the permission of the management, and failure to work could (under laws passed as late as 1959 and 1970) entail prosecution. The collectivised peasantry had no explicit right to leave either their farm or their village. The gradual "demilitarisation" of the labour market, starting in the late fifties, is now in effect being completed with the recognition of unemployment and the abandonment of the former collective farm rules.

6. One recognises, of course, that the new Constitution is far from ideal. Some observers believe that too much power has been concentrated in the hands of the President — he outlines policy, appoints the head of government, puts forward the names of judges for the Constitutional Court, and can after certain preliminaries disband a recalcitrant Duma and call new elections — in procedural terms it is difficult to impeach him. The interests of the regions appear to be sacrificed to those of the centre, and constitutional amendment is difficult. Nevertheless, the new text is an enormous improvement on its four Soviet predecessors. Apart from the removal of Marxist-Leninist clap-trap and the rigid communist state structures, there is a well-developed section on human rights, together with guarantees on the separation of powers, multi-party democracy, freedom of economic activity, and the prohibition of statist ideology.

7. Important changes are afoot in the legal sphere. The concept of a politically independent judiciary is certainly easier to stipulate than achieve, but achievement is easier in a multi-party system. Liberal norms of court procedure have been written into the Constitution: hearings have to be open (except

as allowed by law), there is a specific presumption of innocence, a guarantee of active defence for the accused, and hearing by jury. One may reasonably expect improvements in the working of the lower parts of the system. The short history of the Constitutional Court (in a sense the highest in the land) has, alas, been disappointing: in October, 1993 Yeltsin actually closed it down as a reaction to its call for his impeachment. Possibly, in less tense circumstances, it will operate more effectively.

The Criminal Code has been rewritten. The old concept of "anti-Soviet activity" (the notorious article 70 in the Russian republican version) was abandoned as early as April 1989. The unhealthy emphasis on state (i.e. political) crimes and associated lengthy sentences have gone. The Civil Code is also being revised to legalise trade (formerly banned as "speculation") and guarantee the inviolability of private property.

Another important change, is the massive reduction in the power of the secret police. Certainly, until December, 1993 the KGB remained largely unreformed: even so, perestroika and the collapse of the USSR removed most of its central functions. "Anti-state" activity was much more narrowly defined: there were no more "dissidents" in the old sense of the term: the censorship did not have to be policed: the informer network was all but useless; "speculators" could no longer be persecuted. At the same time the new foreign policy undermined the concept of "capitalist encirclement" and made the surveillance of foreigners almost pointless. In December, 1993 Yeltsin abolished the old structure and decreed the establishment of a new, smaller intelligence service. One can be somewhat optimistic about this change.

8. Russia has developed a vigorous, if contentious, political life. Eighty nine parties and movements registered for the December, 1993 elections, and 13 blocs were allowed to contest them. The largest parties will evidently form voting blocs in the Duma, and will at least allow different policies to be voiced. Their activities, good and bad,

may be subject to government pressures, but the principle of plurality seems secure for the immediate future. Admittedly, two political coups, the shelling of the national parliament building, 164 officially admitted fatalities, the imprisonment of opposition leaders, and much personal vilification do not make an auspicious start for a constitutional republic. Even so, in the awful context of Soviet history, these are relatively small matters. Political activities are vastly freer and more flexible. Yeltsin's relations with the Supreme Soviet were strained, but did involve a few attempts at compromise.

The December elections, though they attracted less than 55% of the electorate, were apparently fair; in any case, they produced a result quite at odds with what leading politicians had hoped for. Despite disappointments for the reformist, western-orientated groups, Russia has advanced a long way from a system which for forty years or so ensured that not one of the fifteen hundred or so deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet ever opposed a motion, or abstained. A Duma with a large minority of reformists is better than a Supreme Soviet with none.

9. Capitalism has surely come to stay. The Soviet state aimed to control all financial transactions: legal commercial activity was restricted mainly to the peasant market and personal services in health and education. Wealth formation was extremely difficult even for the administrative élite. The emergence of an open financial market, private business and commerce mean that economic factors are destined to play an important social and political role: indeed, communism had to suppress such activities precisely in order to survive. Another trammel has been cast off. The development of the private sector has been impeded by supply problems, the fear of making people unemployed, and bureaucratic resistance: officials at all levels have been unwilling to privatise sectors which they formerly controlled. There has been a tendency to retain old structures under new names. However, by the autumn of 1993 some 32% of the labour force was employed in the pri-

vate sector, as compared to 9% in 1985. In the spheres of trade, catering and public services 70% of the enterprises were privatised: some 21% of the public housing stock destined for privatisation had actually gone into private hands. On the other hand, of medium-sized and large productive enterprises (which were predominantly in federal control) only 16%-22% were privatised. The new Russian capitalism is far from healthy. As a consequence of the uncertain economic situation it is all too often what Max Weber called "speculative" — a get-rich-quick variant, seeking high profits, unsure of the future, and not too interested in attracting a good, long-term clientèle. Frequently it is harassed by the mafia. At the same time the principle of complete state control has been effectively scuppered, even if progress is slow.

10. Positive changes are taking place in the structure of society. Prominent amongst them is the birth of a new post-communist élite, with its own business contingent. This class is likely to be influential, and its appearance augurs well. The Russian élite is still, in the main, poor by western standards, but it is profoundly capitalistic in orientation and is already developing overt, western-style aspirations. It hankers after an opulent life-style, contacts abroad and some foreign schooling for its children. The fact that it is drawn from former bureaucrats, CPSU members, the Soviet intelligentsia and covert "speculators" is probably inevitable. All élites adapt to survive, and it would be naive to expect the Russians to do otherwise.

At the other end of the social scale the most exploited figure in Russian history — the peasant — is moving into the last stages of emancipation. We have already mentioned his freedom of employment and movement. Nationalisation of the land in 1917 robbed him of his traditional dream of ownership. Since the collapse of the USSR a battle has raged over the right of peasants and agricultural workers not only to acquire, but also to sell, use and bequeath land at their discretion. Farm managements and rural councils, anxious to preserve existing structures

of authority, have frequently impeded registration of ownership. The debate has been clouded by the need for massive agricultural subsidies, and the relative inefficiency of under-capitalised smallholdings. In practice state and collective farms have tended to re-register themselves as associations or cooperatives. By the autumn of 1993 only about 5% of all agricultural land had been given up to individual private farmers, and the average holding was only about 40 hectares. But the legal framework has changed fundamentally, and the way is being opened for the eventual emergence of a class of independent farmers.

A more questionable change is the increasing social differentiation, as the contingent of poor people swells, living standards fall, and the new élite establishes itself. But this is not, in itself, a threatening development: Russian society, like every other, has to find its own optimum configuration, with acceptable social distances between extremes. The Russian people have never lost their tolerance of inequality, and the Soviet egalitarian ideal was bogus, anyway.

11. Foreign policy deserves a detailed discussion in its own right, but the main benefits accruing to West Europe can be easily summarised: Russia has effectively surrendered control over the Ukraine and eleven states in Central and East Europe. It has withdrawn its support for a number of unpleasant régimes in the third world (not least Cuba). Many important problems still smoulder: NATO enlargement, defining the Russian "sphere of influence", the fate of the CIS, nuclear armaments, relations with the Ukraine, the Kuriles, and the Crimea. But the old purposeful drive to undermine the capitalist West has been replaced by a need to maintain far more complex, often amicable, diplomatic relationships. The Soviet army has been cut back from about five to just over two million men, and its aggressive capabilities reduced. Presumably, there is a commensurate reduction in spying. Our defence capabilities should be cheaper to maintain (though we may be fairly sure that any saving will be squandered in other ways). The United

Kingdom will have more time to consider the policies of its recalcitrant neighbours across the English and Irish channels.

Russia's concern with the West must now be heavily qualified by problems on its new frontiers (particularly the Baltic and the Caucasus). There is also the matter of internal non-slav minorities who are disaffected and have aspirations to greater independence. Despite the divergence of views in the Russian government and legislature, we can expect cooperation where none existed before, and a more flexible foreign policy.

12. Perhaps the most important dimension remains to be mentioned. I believe that these astonishing developments have had a significant impact on the thinking of the younger, and to some extent middle, generations. (I have in mind people in the politically active part of the population). Contrast the wholly restrictive conditions under which their fathers, and indeed grandfathers, lived: for some three generations few people had any expectation that one-party rule would collapse, or that some sort of freedom would come to Russia in their lifetime. No one ever saw any overtly anti-Soviet comment in print, or criticism of a current leader. No one (or very few) ever witnessed an anti-government demonstration on the street, let alone on film or television. It was hard to discern from official media how easy life could really be under advanced capitalism.

The situation has been transformed: the public at large has had about six years' practice in critical reaction. Despite a lowish turn-out for the December elections, opinion polls show considerable public interest in questions of the day. This should bode well for the preservation of the political freedom in the future. One would want to believe, as the Russians say, that a significant change has occurred in political thinking.

The positive factors must not, of course, be allowed to obscure the huge political and social problems which now face Russia. Given all the media coverage, few people in the West can be unaware of them:

1. The political outlook is at best

stormy and has deteriorated since the December elections. The divergence between policies proposed by leading politicians is wide, and a spirit of confrontation reigns. Nationalistic feelings are stronger than expected. The electoral successes of the three main conservative or extremist parties - the "Liberal Democratic Party of Russia" (in fact a fascistic group headed by Vladimir Zhirinovski) the "Communist Party of the Russian Federation" (G. Zyuganov) and the "Agrarian Party of Russia" (M. Lapshin), at the expense of the reformist "Russia's Choice" and other groups — can only have negative implications.

The conservative parties have a good deal in common: they seek the retention of a strong state, a foreign policy less pervious to Western influence, and assertive protection for ethnic Russians in the Federation and beyond. They favour (to a greater or lesser degree) the restitution of the old USSR. Among the nationalists there is a burning concern with the minutiae of Russia's territorial integrity: relations with some internal minorities, particularly in Tatarstan and Chechnia, are likely to deteriorate, and even Siberia is straining for more autonomy. The nationalists wish to exert continuing pressure on the Baltic states. Together they have a small majority in the State Duma (the alignment of forces in the Council of the Federation is less clear) and a more antagonistic foreign policy may result, especially if Western donors lose patience with Russia's failure to repay debts or with the misuse of foreign aid.

The silver lining behind these dark clouds, in the longer term, lies in the basic incompatibility of the various conservative forces, and in the stimulus they may provide for unity among liberals and reformers. It would appear that new anti-conservative alliances are already forming. While he is in power Yeltsin will evidently continue to exercise some westernising influence, though he will need to over-ride democratic practice and apply the patently inordinate powers which accrue to him under the Constitution.

2. The post-Soviet impoverishment of the population is a national tragedy.

When perestroika started, average Soviet living standards were held to be a little over 20% of those of the USA, though in my opinion this was too generous an estimate. Estimates of changes since then display an unnerving elasticity, but between 1990 and 1993 Russian gross national product probably fell by about two fifths, and 1994 is likely to see a further (though possibly decelerating) decline. By August, 1993 over a third of the population received less than the minimum income stipulated by the Ministry of Labour. Prices are lower in Russia than in America, but the fact that the minimum was set at just under 25,000 roubles, or about \$22 a month, gives some impression of the gap. Living standards in Russia are thought to have fallen back to what they were ten or even twenty years ago.

3. Inflation has reached dangerous levels. The former, Soviet leadership admitted only marginal inflation, and in the last years of the regime the rate was indeed low: a figure of around 8% per annum was postulated by one foreign observer. Although, after perestroika, the government continued to operate various price controls, inflation rocketed: between 1990, for example, when the currency was still fairly stable, and August, 1993, the average monthly wage rose from 297 to 65,408 roubles, i.e. a factor of 220. In 1993 the average monthly inflation rate was about 20%, though another terrible leap was anticipated in January, as the Duma assembled. A deceleration to 5-7% a month which was hoped for by the end of 1994 seemed unattainable.

4. Economic pressures and inept government policy have brought about a massive budget deficit and pushed the country into enormous foreign debts. Authoritative estimates of the deficit for 1993 have varied considerably, but on the 11th November the finance minister Boris Fedorov declared, no doubt with some justification, that the figure for 1993 would be 22.2 trillion roubles, or 14% of the gross domestic product. In October, 1993 the foreign debt was reported by the news agency Interfax to be \$80 billion dollars, which (if simple arithmetic can be applied in

this sphere) worked out at about \$540 or (at January 1994 rates of exchange) over one year's average wage for every man, woman and child in the land.

5. Numerous "lesser" social problems lie behind those I have discussed here: unemployment is expected to rise to 18 or 19 million this year. Long-term changes in crime levels cannot be measured because reliable statistics were not published for over sixty years: but since perestroika crime has both intensified and developed a much more organised character. A high proportion of small private enterprises is in the thrall of local crime syndicates. The militia apparently have hundreds of mafia groups on their books. Corruption, endemic in an economy that was highly administered and bereft of consumer goods and services, has blossomed. Some 16% of the country was recently declared to be in a state of ecological disaster.

The fall in state revenues has meant a marked deterioration in educational provision: overcrowding in schools is getting worse and the intake of students has dropped. Both facilities and supplies have deteriorated, while educational workers have been hard hit by inflation. Much the same can be said of the health services. In 1992 the number of births actually fell, population "growth" was negative, and the outlook for 1993 was no better.

The question is not, of course, whether Russia will continue to be a problem for the outside world, but rather how the old problems have changed or eased. The facts considered here suggest that despite the present dreadful situation Russia has (from our point of view) improved considerably. There have been palpable long-term, if not permanent, improvements. Yet in practical terms we must, of course, look forward to association with a large, poor, and difficult neighbour for many years.

Some national states have pulled themselves out of worse messes, including post-war desolation and third-world poverty. The inhabitants of Russia can in principle do the same. On the other hand, they seem to have a remarkable tolerance of misfortune, and we are justified in doubting their ability ever to govern themselves (to judge even by our own modest standards). We may perhaps draw comfort from the fact that in December nearly half of all eligible voters failed to turn up at the ballot-box: in some circumstances an indifference to politics can be encouraging.

Inside Russia, the traditional arguments about attitudes towards the West will continue along the old Slavophile and Westerniser lines. Close ties with the West are inevitable. The problems facing Russia are so great that it would

be utter folly for the West to pour in vast amounts of aid. The IMF has so far been reasonably circumspect. Benign cultural and political impregnation is by far the most promising path for us to choose. Such influences probably triggered perestroika — when the appropriate political and economic conditions had developed. Proper monitoring by Western scholars will always be important, for politics is a matter of alternatives and post-communist Russia, with all its warts, is a far more attractive neighbour than its predecessor. A good start has been made in integrating Russia into the modern civilised world.

Note:

My analysis was based on journalistic sources, my own recent observations, and official statistics, primarily the series "Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie rossiiskoi Federatsii (yanvar'-sentyabre 1993), Ekonomicheskii obzor", (no. 10), Goskomstat Rossii, Moscow, 1993, and Statisticheskii press-byulleten', (no. 9) 1993, same publisher; also the newspaper "Ekonomicheskie novosti Rossii i sodruzhestva", no. 23, December, 1993.

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The Larkin Debate

Geoffrey Stone, Michael Tatham, and Jim McCue challenge Keith Jacka's view of Philip Larkin

Certainly Larkin's letters reveal him an unlucky and deplorable person — pro-Nazi parents who left him vaguely pro-Hitler even by mid-war, and refusing war service at Bletchley where he might have been both useful and even happy in a depressed way. A typical Larkin

beginning. But we have to do what we can with what we get, as in the Eliot anecdote: 'Mr Eliot, I don't like your poems'. 'Nor do I, but they are the only ones I can write' — bleak literal truth on both sides. Larkin was what he was and his experience was according, and as a good poet he wrote as exactly in

accord with experienced reality as he could manage. To do this requires courage and Coleridge's 'musical delight' and Larkin either had it or grew it by persistent effort. The extractable 'meaning' of a poem is only a part, sometimes a small part, of the whole and exclusive attention to it is more

typical of politically correct journals than the *Salisbury Review*.

If Larkin is writing good poetry from 'one of the outer regions of hell' then morally this puts him well above most of us, in fact gives us an extremely inspiring example. Again, to take the bleakest human condition and make a good poem from it places Larkin as the sort of person who in the Gulag makes a fine sculpture from a desperately needed bread ration. Humour — a common Larkin element, usually anti-L, sometimes missed — is another courage-characteristic, as in his lines on the toad, work:

Give me your arm, old toad;
Help me down Cemetery Road.

The sardonic self-condemning clarity of 'The difficult part of love' and 'Selflessness' (both quoted by Mr Jacka) has and means to have at least a skull's grin about it; and the 'lost sheep' passage in the Creed in a new translation. 'Naturally the Foundation' is simply misread — 'poet' for 'persona'.

Larkin (and, one notices in surprise, his fellow-poet Eliot) their moral and literary critics seem prefigured in the Icelandic poet Scarpheddin who, burning to death, drove his axe deep into the oak beam trapping him, to preserve its edge from spoiling in the fire.

'And some deemed he died well, and some not'.

Larkin was not a nice man. Nor was Scarpheddin. And you? me...?

Geoffrey Stone was a Lecturer in English

I am sure it isn't necessary to admire a writer's character before commenting on his work, but it probably helps to enjoy the stuff and to be in some sympathy with what he is saying. If the vision he offers is something you can't stomach and *garbage* seems an appropriate critical term then I should have thought the attempt scarcely worth making.

When Keith Jacka tells us that Philip Larkin was a coward he is not really telling us anything very useful. It is the sort of term which it is probably better

to use very sparingly; how very few of us — in my experience — are not cowards much of the time. Perhaps if Larkin was not an obviously heroic figure he had some of the courage — not of the courageous, but of those in pain.

Among the many things that appear to have annoyed Jacka is Larkin's capacity for pessimism. He stands condemned for his 'lack of faith', his 'indecision' (and so, of course, he is 'stupid... timorous, suspicious') and for taking the view that 'life is a long sequence of boredom, disillusion, failure' and that all intelligent people know that all those consoling expectations of a happy ending are sheer codswallop. What seems to me puzzling about this at the end of the 20th Century is that anyone capable of thinking about life at all should not have found themselves worrying about the way things have gone:- the collapse of education and values; the total unimportance of the individual; the loss of national identity; the alienation from our roots; the divorce between sensual pleasure and self-awareness; the near certainty that at the end of life we all face personal extinction... Just in the most general terms I should have thought Larkin was quite definitely on the ball.

Turning to specifics, it must surely be obvious that the title *The Less Deceived* — taken from a phrase in one of the poems in the volume — has nothing to do with gnosticism (however vaguely updated) but merely refers to the fact that things are not always what they seem. In this particular case the point is that the wretched girl who has been drugged and raped (an episode taken from Mayhew) is less deceived about life than the selfish phantasiast who imagined he would achieve some sort of fulfilment by raping her. Ironically, in view of Keith Jacka's theories about gnosticism and superior minds, it is the ignorant and humble slumdweller who is the least misinformed about the situation.

There is a similar and really quite baffling misunderstanding in Mr Jacka's account of *The Whitsun Weddings*. It is not that Larkin the detached observer is setting himself up as supe-

rior to the newly married couples or their humble relatives except in the purely factual sense that he *is* educated and middle class and they are not. (And I agree with Jacka that there is certainly a case that Larkin is making his readers aware of 'the ignorant futility of their lives'). Larkin is an observer of how things are — he is not trying to be politically correct — and it is the accuracy of his observation that enables him to capture the slow movement of the train south through the East Anglian countryside so brilliantly — just as he also depicts the bucolic simplicities of the wedding parties. This is how life is. But there is more to it than this. Because Larkin stands outside the weddings and looks in, he sees what the separate couples of newly weds cannot see — they are too excited and caught up — namely that not only is this experience of a summer afternoon a shared experience.

And someone running up to bowl —
and none
Thought of the others they would never
meet
Or how their lives would all contain this
hour.

But that their apparently individual and isolated weddings are really part of something greater than themselves

this frail
Travelling coincidence; and what it held
Stood ready to be loosed with all the
power
That being changed can give. We slowed
again,
And as the tightened brakes took hold,
there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming
rain.

Keith Jacka's almost unbelievable response to the strangely optimistic beauty of this poem is to sneer at Larkin's remarkable powers of observation ('And envisioning it all is the omniscient one') and to offer the opinion based, God alone knows on what, that 'All this conviviality is mere theatre; behind the curtain is a pit of doom.'

After that nothing is entirely surprising. Nevertheless it remains a little curious that Jacka should imagine there to be any advantage in comparing some extremely indifferent verse by Housman

(perhaps a more sensitive comparison would have been with Arnold's *Dover Beach*) with Larkin's cerebral and rightly celebrated *Church Going*. Neither, of course, is it critically appropriate to approach any discussion of the poem on the basis that Larkin was little more than a rather badly informed Sixth Former — 'it is no good being bored or uninformed about the institution which for a thousand years was the main container for the growth of intellect and sensibility in the West'. Leaving aside the question of whether the Church was quite the good thing that Jacka would have us believe — and even if it was it doesn't follow that it still has a useful role in the 20th Century — there is the possibility that in adopting a tone of apparent philistinism Larkin was actually mocking — yes mocking — the semi-educated conceit of contemporary man. What I think does come through in the poem is not only the tragedy of our situation in losing our religious certainties, but Larkin's assertion, beyond the sense of comedy and ruin, that what is here —

Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground
Through suburb scrub because it held unspoilt
So long and equably what since is found
Only in separation —

...
A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised and robed as destinies.

This, if I have read it correctly, is a profound and memorably phrased evocation of what religiously well-disposed but unbelieving man or woman might be capable of feeling. It is nothing to do with 'the poet's absorption in chronicling his vagaries of mood' or any other such nonsense as the remarkable sentence:

If you *are* bored or uninformed (and content to remain so) there is a danger that your indifference and ignorance will sometimes lead you into writing just such erratic, thick-skinned verse as that quoted above.

In conclusion to what is already too long, it is scarcely surprising that in such a largely hostile article Keith

Jacka appears not to have noticed one of Larkin's most attractive qualities: that is his ability to take a sad truth about human existence and somehow redeem the fact that ultimately we are all in much the same boat and the boat is sinking. What I mean can be seen at its elegiac best in that slight but very lovely poem *Afternoons*. Here Larkin notices the young mothers in the recreation ground and sees that they are already — and rightly — diminished by the experience of living.

...
Before them, the wind
Is ruining their courting-places
That are still courting-places
(But the lovers are all in school),
And their children, so intent on
Finding more unripe acorns,
Expect to be taken home.
Their beauty has thickened.
Something is pushing them
To the side of their own lives.

Michael Tatham taught English in both state and independent schools

So the letters, the biography, the reviews and the knives are out. We know all the reasons to feel superior to Philip Larkin. Sad, solitary, racist pervert, he can't possibly have said anything we need attend to. The commentators Bryan Appleyard (in *The Independent*) and Peter Ackroyd (in *The Times*) have told us how he frittered away his "minor talent" in a series of eccentric choices: becoming a librarian "somewhere in Shropshire", living on "the distant planet of Hull", not going with the literary current, not publishing enough. This was to be expected, but to find a man who said he adored Mrs Thatcher and supported the Black Papers being attacked for his beliefs in *The Salisbury Review* (by Keith Jacka, September 1993) comes as a surprise.

Larkin's readership remains large and devoted. For many he is the poetic voice of the middle England of his generation, expressing its rituals, its politeness and fears, its ambivalence about progress and its occasional transcendent feeling that life is more than we can explain. His critics think in their narrow terms of "unfortunate

prejudices", but Larkin's poems find words for the complexities of deep feelings. "High Windows", for instance, has a charged, envious unease about 1960s promiscuity: could

going down the long slide
To happiness, endlessly

be quite so frictionless as it looked?

Because Larkin's values are far from those of literary London, he is sneeringly dismissed as a "provincial grotesque". Perversely, Andrew Motion's *Life* is welcomed as a major publishing event, while Larkin's life and books are diminished as "mean and boorish". As T.S. Eliot wrote in 1935, long before the advent of political correctness, "it is more difficult today to be an individual than it ever was before"; but Larkin defiantly took his own stand. His critics, on the other hand, share an easy orthodoxy: "rancid and insidious", "dreary, predictable, damp", "a minor poet". If Philip Larkin is a minor poet, what, please, is Peter Ackroyd?

At Oxford, Larkin thought he would be a novelist — that better paying thing — but he slowly recognised and nurtured his true skill, which was for packing memorable words with wistful precision. Poetry came with great difficulty, and he found he could not force it into being. His central achievement is contained in just three volumes, for in his first collection, *The North Ship*, he has yet to clear his throat.

The poems that do speak clearly each say something definitively. The mixture of intrusiveness, foolishness and loss that an agnostic feels in church is not just described but distilled in "Church Going". The last line of "MCMXIV" gives lapidary permanence to the British folk-memory of the first world war: "Never such innocence again". What was worth fighting for then is worth holding onto now, yet Larkin sadly documents the disappearance of England —

The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.

This poem, "Going, Going", beautifully ends not with the auctioneer's hammer blow, "gone", but with a half-

rhyme reprieve: "I just think it will happen, soon." One last chance: Going... going ... soon. Such fogey sentimentality could hardly have anything to say to the brave Maastricht generation, could it?

Larkin knew what he was doing, in his life and his writing, and it is impertinent to denigrate his deliberated choices as though they were inadvertent mistakes. Repeatedly he looks in upon and turns away from other lives, but when he picks up his pen, all his faculties are engaged, including his sense of humour. Money reproaches him:

I am all you never had of goods and sex.
You could get them still by writing a
few cheques.

This rhyme is richly comic because while aurally exact it looks less than perfect: one can merely pay for sex, but it is best when its echo is not money, but love. Yet the attraction is powerful, and it took self-knowledge not to prostitute himself. Larkin outstares the temptation — and the condescension of conformists like Appleyard and Ackroyd — because he had a greater satisfaction: his art.

Larkin wrote from conviction, when he had something to say, not according to a career plan. He didn't have an agent advising him that it was time to do a novel, or finding him a big subject and a bigger advance for a biography. He didn't write for the papers to in-

crease the sales of his books, and he didn't write presumptuous books from scant knowledge in order to increase his standing with the papers.

He knew that others saw him as "one of those old-type *natural* fouled-up guys", and accepted this as his destiny. This is no excuse to misrepresent him, as Keith Jacka does, for instance when he reduces the pained ironies in

The difficult part of love
Is being selfish enough

to the grotesque paraphrase "he confesses himself incapable of love". The poem is about a balance of selfishness and unselfishness: "May you always do for others and let others do for you", as Bob Dylan sings. Larkin's problem was as much with letting others do for him as with doing for others. But the way he wrote about this was itself a loving, nurtured gift, which Jacka refuses, like a child smashing a Meccano set because it isn't a model railway.

Larkin believed that life is miserable. Jacka treats this as an unforgivable breach of faith, and refuses to engage with it: "the two poems are not worth analysis"; "[he] insults us by expecting to take this garbage seriously". He comes from a different direction from the newspaper orthodoxy, but falls into the same trap of condemning writings which are remarkable for their candour and — as everyone agrees — technical mastery,

because the author does not share all of Jacka's beliefs. For Jacka, simplistically, it is essential to allow man "some dignity". But much of what Larkin published is ambivalent precisely about matters of dignity and indignity, vulgarity and polite form.

Ackroyd and Appleyard write as though the letters and the biography have discredited him ("the latest revelations") — as though a man who projected himself as sober and dignified had been revealed as a hypocrite. But this is because they are deaf to irony. A Coleridgean meditation begins, "Groping back to bed after a piss". Is this a man hiding behind a persona?

Motion writes about the poems as beautiful flowers "growing on long stalks out of pretty dismal ground". But a poem about an Old Master painting looks behind the exquisite surface of one of the most refined of societies — 17th-century Holland — and sees there all the drunken and farting lasciviousness of the human comedy: "Jan van Hogspeuw staggers to the door ... Dirk Dogstoerd pours himself some more". The spew and turds are right there, where Chaucer would have them, in the verse. But Larkin's wit is to put this picture of seething life into that most ornate of frames, a sonnet. What an old master he was.

Jim McCue works for The Times

The Death of Education in Switzerland

(*Salisbury Review* September 1993)

As a result of this article about the 'reforms' of progressive educationists in the Zurich canton, Manuela Freihofer's superiors have threatened to terminate her employment. One of them suggested that she should write a letter saying that she had written this article in "a state of mental derangement". She refuses to do any such thing. *Salisbury Review* readers are familiar with such tactics and would support Frau Freihofer's courageous stand in defence of genuine education. The 'reforms' have only been going for about a decade, but already they seem to have made considerable headway in a country which has been regarded as the embodiment of order and integrity.

The Flaying of Marsyas

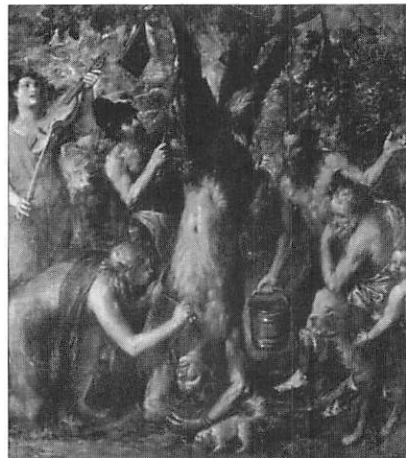
David Matthews sees Titian's painting as a Metaphor of Transformation

In an essay in his collection *Along the Road*, Aldous Huxley describes a visit to Borgo San Sepolcro to see what he believed to be the greatest painting in the world: Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection*. To single out one picture from the relatively small number of supreme masterpieces is a matter of personal taste. While acknowledging the claims of Piero, I would give the supreme accolade to a painting which spends most of its life in an equally obscure European gallery, in the Archbishops' palace at Kromeriz, near Brno in the Czech Republic, but whose travels to major cities over the past ten years have brought it to the attention and admiration of many more people than can have seen it during the previous 300 years: Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas*.

The Flaying of Marsyas is one of Titian's last paintings: it dates from the 1570s when he was in his late 80s, and it was in his studio when he died. It shows the freedom of his later style, when according to Vasari he would spread the paint with his fingers as well as with a brush. His free technique here anticipates Rembrandt, Turner, the Impressionists and even the Abstract Expressionists: the bottom left-hand corner in isolation, for instance, looks rather like a Jackson Pollock. Critics who claim that it is unfinished have perhaps misunderstood the need of some great painters in their late works to use the mastery of technique they have acquired in order to break free, almost to improvise in paint (I am thinking in particular of Monet as well as Titian here).

On the face of it, this is a horrifying painting. Marsyas, a satyr, is being flayed as a punishment for losing the musical competition with Apollo that he rashly initiated when he challenged

the god — who was, of course, the supreme master of the lyre. As the myth tells it, Marsyas discovered one day a reed pipe, an *aulos*, which had been discarded by Athene because the other gods had laughed at her when she puffed up her cheeks trying to play it. Marsyas picked up the *aulos*, learned how to play it and became so confident that he challenged Apollo to a musical



duel. Midas, the figure in the bottom right of the painting, was appointed judge. According to some accounts Apollo won because, rather unfairly, he resorted to playing his instrument upside down, which Marsyas could not do. In any case, Apollo was judged to be the winner, and Marsyas received the punishment that Apollo decreed. One version of the myth, however, has a satisfyingly redemptive end, for, it tells, Marsyas' blood became a river, on the banks of which reeds grew. Men cut pipes from these reeds so that Marsyas' music continues.

Marsyas played the *aulos*, but Titian shows his instrument as panpipes, *syrinx*. Both instruments were

associated with Dionysus; both came from Asia, unlike the purely Hellenic lyre; both were therefore slightly suspect at first (and were disapproved of, for instance, by Plato in his *Republic*, as was the cult of Dionysus itself, for good reasons, as Euripides' *Bacchae* makes clear). Apollo, in the painting, plays the *lira da braccio*, a Renaissance precursor of the violin. At least I'm assuming that this is meant to be Apollo, for the figure on the left who is carrying out the flaying must also be Apollo — he wears a laurel wreath. I'm inclined to think, in other words, that Titian gives us two representations of Apollo.

If you look carefully at the flaying, you will see that it is being very lovingly carried out. Marsyas is smiling. The whole painting in fact radiates a sense of calm, as if this is a healing process taking place, rather than an act of brutality. And this is indeed what it is. We should note how, for instance, the musician Apollo's bow parallels the knife that the man with the hat holds; and what I noticed first about the painting — and which led me to compose a piece for oboe and string quartet based on it — is how music plays the strongest part in the redemptive process: it is the music that Apollo is felt to be playing that radiates the deepest sense of calm, and contributes most to the profundity of the whole composition. Notice too how Apollo's violin almost touches Marsyas's panpipes, and how Apollo seems to look towards them in particular: in this way, the two instruments are brought together.

I want to quote here a passage from Edgar Wind's book *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. He says: "The musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas was therefore concerned with

the relative powers of Dionysian darkness and Apollonian clarity; and if the contest ended with the flaying of Marsyas, it was because flaying was itself a Dionysian rite, a tragic ordeal of purification by which the ugliness of the outward man was thrown off and the beauty of his inward self revealed." Marsyas represents the pure Dionysian aspect of art, which must be tamed by the blending of the Apollonian aspect with it. From that union, Titian seems to be saying, true art, true wisdom, will come. So that, therefore, what appears at first to be a portrayal of a particularly cruel act of torture becomes, instead, a metaphor of transformation, and of ultimate harmony.

Marsyas' ordeal is watched over by figures representing the three ages of man: the child, the two personifications of Apollo in their youthful maturity, and the old, wise man, Midas. This is a theme that Titian had taken over from his master Giorgione, and which was the subject of several of his own paintings (for instance the early painting of that title in the National Gallery of Scotland and a middle-period painting such as *The Vendramin Family in Adoration* in the National Gallery in London). All these figures are witnesses to the act of transformation that is taking place. Their disposition around the figure of Marsyas suggests, of course, the iconography of a crucifixion, with its traditional attendant figures. This must be intentional. In fact what this painting really and very profoundly represents, I believe, is no less than a Renaissance alternative to the portrayal of the crucifixion.

What the crucifixion implies, what Christianity implies, is that man is helpless unless he puts his trust in God to redeem him; but *The Flaying of Marsyas* suggests that man can advance from a lower to a higher state himself, by learning from his mistakes. This is in accordance with the Greek idea that self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom; it also comes near to the Buddhist idea of man working out his own salvation himself, with diligence. I would suggest that in our present time this image of Titian's has more to say to us, as a myth for our lives, than the crucifixion. It was al-

ready obvious in the sixteenth century that the new Renaissance vision of man had made the Christian doctrines of the atonement and of salvation either through the church or through faith alone, intellectually untenable. This is a dilemma which the church has still to solve, and which I cannot pursue here. Instead, I should like to discuss some other implications of this painting, in particular in relation to music.

Titian's art, like all great Renaissance art, is one of Becoming rather than of Being (I hesitate to use these Hegelian terms, but they are still the best available). As opposed to the Medieval artist who presents us with an icon, a static moment, the virgin and child outside time, Titian gives us processes of change, allegories of the getting of wisdom. (The getting of wisdom, I might point out in parenthesis, is a subject of little concern to contemporary painters.)

We are at a point in our history where the idea of continual progress, which originated in the Renaissance's countering of Medieval Christianity's static view of man, is being strongly challenged by those who see that it may well lead to the devastation and indeed the total destruction of the world. As a reaction to this destructive idea of progress, some are now advocating an anti-progressive ideal, which takes many forms. In some areas of the arts, for instance in music, there are those who largely reject the past 500 years of so-called progress and wish to return to pre-Renaissance ideas of simplicity and non-development. I'm thinking of the minimalists, and of such composers as Pärt, Górecki and John Tavener.

As a general artistic attitude, I believe this is mistaken. The whole idea of rejection of the past has stemmed from our current immature ideas of progress, in particular the idea of inevitable change, change for its own sake, instead of for the acquisition of self-knowledge and wisdom. The Renaissance vision of man as a creature of nobility in harmony with nature and the gods, allied with a perfect balance of the sacred and the secular, the corporeal with the spiritual, and with an emphasis on human love as the key to

all knowledge, has not found a superior replacement. The Romantic ideal which developed from it and which replaced the idea of harmony with an arrogant conception of man as a god himself, in control of subordinate nature, has failed, together with its accompanying philosophies, including communism. We would do well to reconsider the Renaissance ideal if we wish our civilization, which owes so much to it, to survive.

In music, the transformation from music of Being — the polyphonic masses of the Middle ages and early Renaissance — to that of Becoming happens at almost the same time as Titian and in the same city of Venice, and pre-eminently in the music of Monteverdi. The opening of Monteverdi's greatest work, his *Vespers*, is itself a symbol of that transformation: first comes the plainsong invocation, like an exultant farewell to the Medieval world; then the pure joy of the discovery of the triad as a sound in itself; finally the use of the dance rhythms to impel the triadic harmony forward. Yet through this music of Becoming, grounded in the secular rhythms of the dance, Monteverdi achieves moments of pure, transcendent Being, as at the very end of the work where the repeated *Amens* tumble over each other in ecstatic fulfilment. In all the greatest post-Renaissance music the process of Becoming brings about a state of Being, as supremely in Beethoven's late quartets, where the *stasis*, the suspension of time, that he achieves in his slow movements could not have happened but for the *dunamis*, the dynamic motion that has preceded it. A good example is the E flat Quartet, op.127, the slow movement growing out of the tension and relaxation of the first movement; the end of the finale a wondrous moment of pure being as the culmination of an energetic sonata allegro. Beethoven almost never begins in a state of stasis; when he does, as in the C sharp minor Quartet, it is to move away from it, and then back again, and finally into very troubled waters indeed in the finale. But what has come before the finale makes it seem only one aspect of a whole which

must be explored, or else life would not be complete. Altogether this piece provides a metaphor for human experience and for the attaining of wisdom that is as all-encompassing and as profound as *The Flying of Marsyas*. I would suggest there is a strong affinity between these two works which are perhaps the supreme masterpieces of Western art.

In Beethoven's late quartets, as in the music of the Renaissance, the forms of the movements more and more approach the dance; and that is what we, as composers today, can chiefly learn from. Music has largely withdrawn into a static state, not one of enlightened contemplation — though there

are exceptions — but rather one of frozen, terrified inertia. Music should once again find its appropriate dance forms, though where these are to come from is a problem that every composer must face himself, and for which there are no obvious general solutions. It may be necessary to look outside Europe, to cultures where the connection of music with life — as in India or Africa — has not been so obviously lost, or debased. I am more and more convinced that the renewal of Western music must come from an influx into our European musical language of non-European ideas — as Messiaen, for instance, has already shown. In reconnecting itself with the dance, and with

the elemental language of music that we encounter in folk music throughout the world and, although in a crude and often debased form, in our own contemporary Western popular music, music in the West may recover its former, necessary function to move, to sing and even — despite the appalling course of recent history which has cast its shadow on so much 20th-century art — to be joyful.

David Matthews is writing a large scale choral and orchestral work for the Huddersfield Choral Society

The Ideology of Sensitivity

Charles Sykes is politically incorrect on campus

When *Newsweek* magazine reported on what it called the new "Thought Police" on America's university campuses, it described academia's new rage — "political correctness" — as "strictly speaking, a totalitarian philosophy." Nothing escaped its attention; nothing was too trivial for its ministrations; no one was immune.

From the reading lists peppered with ideologically approved Third World writers to a disciplinary apparatus poised to stamp out the slightest offence to the sensibilities of designated political and ethnic groups, campus opinion was smothered in a paternalism that would have been the envy of any college chaplain of the 19th century. Struggling to place all of this in some sort of historical and philosophical context, *Newsweek* reported that politically, "PC is Marxist in origin, in the broad sense of attempting to redistribute power from the privileged class (white males) to the oppressed masses." But even as the magazine sought to trace PC's lineage, the inadequacy of categories of political philosophy was obvious.

Despite the usual paraphernalia and rhetoric of left-wing politics, the peculiarly claustrophobic atmosphere of campus life often seems less like Big Brother than *Big Nanny*. The focus of Big Nanny, after all, is on "sensitivity," which is not a political term at all, nor one that is terribly helpful in sorting out the relationships of various economic classes.

Instead, "sensitivity" is a transplant from the world of culture and psychology, in which taste, feelings and emotions are paramount.

Political correctness turns out to be a form of the larger transformation of society reflected in ascendancy of psychological over political terminology. What began as the attempt to politicize psychology (and psychologize politics) had led to the swallowing of each by the other and the emergence of a new form of therapeutic politics.

I should clarify here what I mean by the therapeutic culture. In general, the term refers to the psychologization of modern life profiting therapists, support groups, and new ailments du jour. But it has a larger implication as well: the substitution of medical standards

and terminology for what had traditionally been moral, ethical and religious questions. As a society we have grown far more comfortable with saying someone is sick than with saying they have done evil.

Therapeutic politics is an equally radical departure. While it remains ostensibly concerned with moral issues, it does not primarily concern itself with what is just or unjust; or even with whether something is true or untrue. These considerations are not irrelevant. But they are overshadowed by concern over "self-esteem" and "feelings." In the therapeutic culture, all of us are trembling on the verge of confusion and anxiety. But for the politics of victimization, the new ethos has been a windfall. Psychic frailty has replaced class as the focus of a new politics. Armed with the new political/therapeutic categories and heirs to four decades of the endless laboration of grievance and psychological fragility, victims could be transformed from capable citizens in need of fundamental legal rights into frail psychological growths, easily blighted by the slightest gesture, facial expression, or word

that they might find uncongenial. Consider this:

If the distinctive format of traditional liberal education was the patriarchal and phallogocentric Socratic dialogue, the model for the new order is the therapeutic workshop and consciousness-raising session. Such approaches do not seek debate or a reasoned balancing of rights, but an embracing of victims, often accompanied by the coached acknowledgment of guilt.

The results, predictably, have been dramatic.

Once "feelings" are established as the barometer of acceptable behavior, speech (and by extension, thought) becomes only as free as the most sensitive group on campus will permit. One of the central dogmas of the new victimist politics is that only members of a victim group are able to understand their own suffering.

Some post modern political theorists, including Harvard's Judith Shklar, argue that traditional conceptions of justice are inadequate because they fail to take into account "the victim's version." Shklar argues that "the sense of injustice should assume a renewed importance" in political thinking, "for it is both unfair to ignore personal resentment and imprudent to overlook the political anger in which it finds its expression."

But at its extreme, this view turns injustice into a subjective experience and denies the validity of objective and shared understandings of equity and justice to which victim and non-victim can appeal. Abolishing such norms makes contentious issues irresolvable, as each group is trapped within its own experience and sense of grievance. Not only does this accelerate the balkanization of ethnic groups, it also creates a protective barrier that hermetically seals off one group from another.

Because only a victim could really understand their plight, any criticism or questioning from non-victims is rejected out-of-hand as an act of disrespect and (of course) insensitivity. One direct product was what Bard College President Leon Botstein would call the "culture of forbidden questions."

The fear of hurt has trumped the search for truth.

This is not to suggest, however, that all of the concern is misplaced. In particular, the anxiety of minority students is very real. Any student going to college in a strange town, facing unknown challenges, is prey to feelings

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of self-doubt, loneliness, fear and confusion. Minority students are no different, except that they face even greater pressures. Many of them tend to suffer from feelings of exclusion or "competitive rejection" when they arrive on campus, and many of them experience considerable anxiety over the quality of their academic preparation.

As colleges and universities have escalated affirmative action programs, their dilemma has been compounded. While denying that they are practising favouritism, elite schools have in fact admitted minority students with substantially lower test scores than their white counterparts. For many of those eagerly courted minority students — who have been repeatedly assured that they have been admitted strictly on their merits the reality of academic life often comes as a cruel shock. Roughly two-thirds of black students who enter higher education eventually drop out before graduating.

Because it is politically impossible for the institutions of higher learning to acknowledge their racial sleight of hand — and thus confront the educational inequities among their students honestly and openly — many have turned instead to symbolic politics. It is easier to "celebrate diversity" than to admit that their school's academic

standards have been bent; it is easier to blame "racism" than to reallocate scarce resources. Dinesh D'Souza describes the process:

Eager to prevent minority frustration and anger from directing itself at the president's or dean's office, the administration hotly denies the reality of preferential treatment and affirms minority students in their conviction that the real enemy is latent bigotry that everywhere conspires to thwart campus diversity. As the Harvard political scientist Harvey Mansfield puts it, 'White students must admit their guilt so that minority students do not have to admit their incapacity'.

This is the climate for the sensitivity revolution.

Mum's the Word

"Sympathy," remarks essayist Pico Iyer, "cannot be legislated any more than kindness can." Iyer obviously will never be a college president. Universities and colleges have rushed to create new bureaucracies to "protect" and shield victims from further victimization — whether it be an Indian symbol at Dartmouth College, a student who sings "We Shall Overcome" in a "sarcastic" manner at Southern Methodist University, or expressions of such proscribed attitudes as "ageism" ("oppression of the young and old by young adults and the middle aged") "ableism" ("oppression of the differently abled by the temporarily abled"), and "lookism" (the "construction of a standard of beauty/attractiveness") at Smith College.

The University of Arizona has taken a similarly expansive view of sensitivity. Its "Diversity of Action Plan" expresses concern over discrimination against students on the basis of "age, color", ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, Vietnam-era veteran status, socio-economic background, or individual style." When John Leo, a columnist for *U.S. News & World Report*, tried to find out just what the university meant by "individual style," he reported that "diversity specialist" Connie Gajewski explained that this category would include nerds and people who dress

differently. 'We didn't want to leave anyone out,' she said." Indeed.

Not to be outdone in their zeal, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee officials have handed out a list of 49 "Ways to Experience Diversity," which urges students to "Hold hands publicly with someone of a different race or someone of the same sex as you" and to "Go to a toy store and investigate the availability of racially diverse dolls."

The University of Connecticut has banned "inappropriately directed laughter"; Duke University's president has appointed a watchdog committee to search out "disrespectful facial expressions or body language aimed at black students"; while Smith College's malediction upon "heterosexism" includes the crime of "not acknowledging their [gays'] existence."

Even that citadel of tradition, William & Mary has succumbed to the mood of the times. The alma mater of Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe has issued guidelines to non-sexist language insisting that terms such as "kingpin" be changed to "key person".

At Harvard, sensitive professors at a re-education seminar have joined in a chorus of therapeutic concern for the sensibilities of their students. One professor has argued that faculty members should never "introduce any sort of thing that might hurt a group." He recognized the implications of his comments for a professor's freedom to teach, but "the pain that racial insensitivity can create is more important," he insists, "than a professor's academic freedom." Or, he could have added, a student's.

At the University of Michigan, students have faced discipline for suggesting that women are not as qualified as men in any given field; one student was actually brought up on charges of sexual harassment for suggesting that he could develop "a counselling plan for helping gays become straight."

Officials at New York University Law School recently bowed to pressure and cancelled a moot court hearing on the question of custody rights for lesbians, after PC cadres complained that "Writing arguments [against the right of lesbians to win custody] is hurtful to a group of people and this is hurtful to

all of us."

At times, this new paternalism has gratuitously extended the status of victimhood to individuals who feel they are doing quite all right without being liberated or otherwise protected. At the University of Minnesota, for example, cheerleaders have been banned from performing at UM games on the grounds that it fosters "sexual stereotypes" demeaning to the dancers. Said one of the cheerleaders: "We feel we're intelligent enough to know when we're considered objects." The sensitivity police did not agree in their conviction that the real enemy is latent bigotry that everywhere conspires to thwart campus diversity.

In part, this shift from substance to form can be traced to the civil rights movement's shift in emphasis from

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combatting discrimination to fighting "racism." Although apparently a subtle shift in nomenclature, the new focus on racism abolished the distinction between private and public acts and between conduct and attitudes. It meant, according to Julius Lester, "in effect, that the opinions, feelings, and prejudices of private individuals were a legitimate target of political action. This was dangerous in the extreme, because such a formulation is merely a new statement of totalitarianism, the effort to control not only the behavior of citizens, but the thoughts and feelings of persons." But the shift in civil rights cannot fully account for the new politics of "sensitivity", and the metastasis of

offended groups. For that we need to look to a broader cultural shift.

Ego Uber Alles: Self Over All

On one level, the push for sensitivity is little more than the age-old fight for human dignity, the demand that all individuals be treated with respect and rational sympathy. To be against sensitivity is thus to risk being against good manners or hostile to an attitude of "caring." The opposite of sensitivity, after all, is boorishness. So the arguments in favour of "sensitivity" have moral weight and they deserve to be taken seriously. But it is the nature and the tragedy of victimism to take legitimate concerns and distort them for self-indulgent ends.

The victimist distortion of "sensitivity" is the insistence that it is not enough to behave correctly — one must be attuned to the feelings of others, and adapt oneself to the kaleidoscopic shades of grievance, injury and ego that make up the subjective sensibilities of the "victim." The relationship between individuals and groups is not mediated by mutual respect or principles of justice, but must now be recast solely in therapeutic terms — the avoidance of injury and offence, the need to sacrifice for the self-esteem of the other. Superficially, this resembles Christian charity, but as a series of demands and mandatory obeisances it is something else altogether.

The essence of naked egotism is imposing one's likes and dislikes and the subtle prejudices and whining annoyances of the self on others. Society exists to put limits on the desire of the ego to make itself the centre of the universe; and maturity could once be defined as the child's gradual recognition that his or her emotions, demands and sensitivities are no longer absolute.

"Sensitivity," however, (and please note the quotation marks here) transforms the self — especially the aggrieved self — into the imperial arbiter of behavior. Everyone now must accommodate themselves to the sensitivities of the self, whose power is based not on force or even shared ideology, but on changeable and per-

haps arbitrary and exaggerated "feelings." This is the historic (if not logical) culmination of the development of inner-directed man into anxiety-ridden other — directed man and later into psychological man. David Riesman had written that inner-directed man had relied on an internal gyroscope, other-directed man had taken his lead from emotional radar. But the mechanistic metaphors are now obsolete. Sensitive man is neither a gyroscope nor a Mdar. He is a raw nerve, frequently inflamed.

Big Nanny Is Watching

Despite its psychological pedigree, "sensitivity" has proven to be a powerful political weapon. By redefining ideology in non-ideological terms, it has provided a pretext for sweeping changes in American universities, but also in the larger society, by radically changing the standards of equity and evidence. Here again, Brown University has set the pace. All minority students have been assigned to the school's Third World Transition Program (a rather eccentric name for a program designed for black students from New Jersey). In a description of the program, journalist Pete Hamill notes that

It is race-driven; it assumes that non-whites are indeed different from other Americans, mere bundles of pathologies, permanent residents in the society of victims, and therefore require special help. 'They're made to feel separate from the first day they arrive,' and 'they stay separate for the next four years.'

In this atmosphere the scope of victim protections goes far beyond simply punishing undergraduates who yell "nigger" in the dormitory. Few schools have so eagerly embraced the metaphysics of victimism and the therapeutic ethos of stamping out "insensitivity" as has Brown, which has hired sensitivity "expense" and consultants to minister to the prejudices of its unenlightened undergraduates.

One consultant hired by Brown is Donald Kao, who openly acknowledges that his goal is to convince his audience that America is a racist soci-

ety in which "privileged" whites have established arbitrary norms of acceptable behavior. Nor is his goal merely to encourage tolerance. Kao's "standard of gauging one's behaviour" is far more demanding. "If you are feeling comfortable or normal," he insists, then you are probably oppressing someone, whether that person is a woman or a gay or whatever. We probably won't rid our society of racism until everyone strives to be abnormal."

Having acculturated minorities to their oppressed status, Brown insists on preternatural alertness for signs of racism — which, by definition, is everywhere. "It is both subtle and overt," a university publication announces. "Racism is encountered through our language, actions, non-verbal communications, institutions, access to privilege and educational processes." No one at Brown, it declares, is "immune." But, like guilt, potential victimhood is also an equal opportunity affair. Individuals are protected against slurs on the basis of such characteristics as "race, religion, gender, handicap, economic status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, or on the basis of position or function." (It is unclear whether the ban on ridicule "on the basis of position or function" applies to jokes about "dumb jocks" or rich fat boys.)

Significantly, Brown's policy has not been framed as a ban on improper activity; it is cast in the form of a right of victims "to live in an environment free from harassment." The importance of this distinction lies in the fact that the right to be free of "harassment" can be enforced even when there is no intent to harass or demean. Banned activities include, "inappropriate verbal attention, name calling, using racial-ethnic epithets, vandalism and pranks." More explicitly, students are warned: "If the purpose of your behavior, language, or gesture is to harass, harm, *cause psychological stress or make someone the focus of your joke*, you are engaged in a harassing manner. It *may be intentional or unintentional and still constitute harassment*." [Emphasis added.]

It is not, I think, an exercise in over-scrupulous legalism to point out the

inherent contradictions in that statement. In one sentence harassment is described as *the purposeful* infliction of harm ("If the purpose of your behavior...is to...cause..."); but the very next sentence renders it meaningless by declaring that even "unintentional" acts may constitute harassment as well.

Brown's administrators have unintentionally but graphically revealed the slippery nature of such policies and the near-impossibility of crafting equitable policies that are grounded on purely subjective judgments. This becomes even more pointed when Brown describes the "effects" of harassment in purely therapeutic terms. In almost every case the alleged damage is purely subjective — a matter of "feelings" and impressions — rather than a matter of actual or demonstrable harm. The listed effects include "Loss of self-esteem"; "a vague sense of danger" (rather than actual danger); "a feeling that one's personal security and dignity have been undermined"; "denial of opportunity, privilege or right"; "feelings of impotence, anger and disenfranchisement"; "withdrawal" "fear"; "anxiety"; "depression"; "a sense of embarrassment from being ridiculed." Almost by definition there is little or no defence to a charge of such harassment. If the victim insists that he or she experienced "anxiety" or "embarrassment" because of something someone said, proof is beside the point. Lack of intention is no defence. Sensitivity demands belief.

In the late 1980s, the University of Michigan adopted a sweeping "speech code" aimed at wiping out racist, sexist, homophobic and ethnocentric slurs. Students were warned that they could be suspended or expelled for any act "verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status." Because the policy was so broad — and vague — it raised the obvious question of how it would be enforced. How would students know exactly what stigmatized someone on the basis of, say; "Vietnam-era status" or "ancestry"?

Most important of all, what sign of

proof would be needed? The university's answer was direct: None. (It also raised questions of how it could be reconciled with the First Amendment. A federal judge later invalidated the policy.)

"Experience at the university," a university publication explained, "has been *that people almost never make false complaints about discrimination.*" [Emphasis added.] That specifically included any alleged incident for which there were no witnesses, the school said. If it was one student's word against another's, the accused was presumed guilty. Michigan's policy did more than simply invert normal standards that require accusers to shoulder the burden of proof. It enshrined the doctrine that issues of victimism could and should be judged on radically new terms — further breaking down the distinction between fact and fabrication.

In March 1990 a black student at Emory University reported that she had been the object of a campaign of racial harassment. The nineteen-year old freshman reported that her room had been ransacked, racial slurs written on the walls, and said that she had received death threats. Her allegations received national media attention after she reportedly curled up in the fetal position and refused to speak.

Emory's president — the episode clearly on his mind — penned an article for *The New York Times* denouncing "renascent bigotry," and using the incident as a justification for his schools' sweeping ban on any "conduct (oral, written, graphic or physical) directed against any person or group ... that has the purpose or reasonably foreseeable effect of creating an offensive, demeaning, intimidating, or hostile environment."

But the episode of "renascent bigotry" never happened.

After investigating the allegations, officials determined the episode was an elaborate hoax on the student's part, designed to divert attention from her alleged cheating on a chemistry test. When asked for his reaction, however, the head of the Atlanta NMCP said: "It doesn't matter... whether she did it or not, because of all the pressure these black students are under at these

predominantly white schools. If this will highlight it, if it will bring it to the attention of the public, I have no problem with that."

At Emory, the metaphysics of victimization finally transcended the mundane world of reality and fact.

But if "sensitivity" demanded belief, it also demanded the opposite, depending on the racial or gender identity of the perpetrator. It turns out that insensitivity is not always insensitivity; and only someone with a reliable and up-to-date political scorecard can tell for sure.

Gayatri Spivak, a professor of English and cultural studies at the University of Pittsburgh, argued, for example, that it is unreasonable to expect minorities to practice the sort of tolerance demanded of white students. "Tolerance is a loaded virtue," he explained, "because you have to have a base of power to practice it. You cannot ask a certain people to 'tolerate' a culture that has historically ignored them at the same time their children are indoctrinated into it." His position was echoed by a group of professors at the University of Michigan who declared: "Behavior which constitutes racist oppression when engaged in by whites does not have this character when undertaken by people of color."

Similarly, one of the authors of Stanford's speech code argued that its ban on offensive language would not apply to black students. By definition, they were incapable of "insensitivity". In the same way that the guilt of whites as universal racists was simply assumed, the innocence of blacks was axiomatic.

According to Professor Robert Rabin, whites did not need any protection from abusive language because they did not have a history of being discriminated against. Only those who have been victims of oppression needed to be shielded from offensive words, he said. Calling a white a "honky" is not the same as calling a black a "nigger". This was essentially the same argument advanced by Stanford Law Professor Mari Matsuda in a 1989 law review article in which she argued for anti-racist speech bans because freedom of speech should be understood as

an instrument to help members of powerless groups. The emphasis on group rather than individual rights is crucial because it locates constitutional protections not in one's citizenship, but in one's status on the victim hierarchy. Under Matsuda's doctrine, critic David Rieff noted, "a rich woman would presumably be protected by the First Amendment but a poor white man (unless gay, or disabled, or otherwise 'disenfranchised') would not."

As interpreted in the light of victimist politics, the Stanford policy embodied what Nat Hentoff called a "new sliding scale of permissible expression" that was completely dependent on comparative victimhood. Given their history of oppression, Hentoff wondered, shouldn't Native Americans get even more protection than blacks? Was a slur against an Italian-American to be punished more harshly than being offensive to a Presbyterian? Given the history of anti-Semitism, Hentoff wondered whether Jews would "get special leniency when they insult members of other religions?"

The question was not entirely frivolous.

Once status was determined by the degree of one's victimhood, every nuance of oppression became crucial — one's rights now depended on the constantly shifting scorecard of aggrievement. This is not a trivial distinction; there is a vast difference between basing rights upon respect and linking rights to personal inadequacy.

Restoring Common Sense

This is a distinction that most Americans can understand. And this brings us to the fourth and final point in our attack on the politics of victimization: Common sense. It is always a mistake to underestimate the reservoirs of good sense that have survived the various attacks of political, cultural and therapeutic élites. Simple native good sense has already experienced a modest comeback of sorts on college campuses, where the more lugubrious and heavy-handed aspects of political correctness have foundered on their own absurdity.

Common sense can certainly go a long way toward making distinctions between a bungled pass and an act of rape; between greed and "compulsive shopping syndrome"; between victims of racial discrimination and victims of "motorism", or "sizeism"; between the genuinely handicapped and the "chronically late"; and between bad luck and acts of social victimization.

In short, Americans need to lighten up.

The politicized culture of victimization often confuses mere difference with inequity and oppression, while common sense reminds that difference is, well, often just being different. Most of us can tell the difference between making a mistake and being victim-

ized between excelling and oppressing someone. All of us experience unfairness and injustice, but that does not mean we need to turn them into all purpose alibis.

Most important of all, our common sense and the human tradition it reflects reminds us that we are all fallible, all beset with human foibles and limitations. At some level of our being, we all know that something is required of us, however much we may try to shake it off. Instinctively and rationally we know our responsibilities; we know that we are not sick when we are merely weak; we know that others are not to blame when we have erred; we know that the world does not exist to make us happy.

At the end of one of his novels, Saul

Bellow has his character Arthur Sammler, survivor of the concentration camps and eternal witness to the follies of his fellow men, sum up the life of a dead friend by declaring that in the end, "he did meet the terms of his contract. The terms which, in his innermost heart each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it — that we all know, God, that we know, we know, we know."

This article first appeared in *Imprints*, and appears by kind permission of Hillsdale College, Michigan.

Charles Sykes' latest book A Nation of Victims was published by the St Martins Press.

Trnava University

Jessica Douglas-Home observed a British politician of whom we could for once be proud

Earlier this month amid mauve and ermine gowns and red dresses of Rectors, black maroon-piped robes of bishops, and the more sombre suits of ambassadors, John Patten took the lectern on stage in a tiny theatre in Slovakia. He was speaking at the anniversary of the founding of Trnava University. This new institution, resuscitated from one that existed in the 17th and 18th century, now offers study in free conditions. At its inauguration last year it committed itself to restoring genuine higher education, and to overcoming the effects of the Marxist/Leninist nonsense administered to students in state universities during four decades. The day had started with a procession of Trnava town dignitaries, professors and eminent persons, to attend Mass in the 17th century Cathedral beside the University. Few visitors from outside Slovakia would have understood the

symbolic significance for Slovaks of the presence of the British Minister of State, and the appreciation it engendered.

"Without free universities there can be no national freedom...Universities have the crucial task in the new independent states of central and eastern Europe... of producing those people who have the necessary understanding as well as the intellectual ability to make the democratic institutions of government work.... You may be surprised if you knew how interested my colleagues in government and the universities of Britain are about developments in your university. You have some measure of that interest in the letters of support it has received from such eminent academics as Karl Popper and Isaiah Berlin. That interest should not surprise you. Independent universities are a sign of a healthy society and the world watches their development with great interest."

Applause greeted almost every sentence of John Patten's half-hour address. For the University had not received the open endorsement of a Minister of Education since its official opening. It is a strange piece of modern history that has placed a British Minister on a platform where a Slovak Minister should have been.

Only a year ago Slovakia's first independent university was on the point of being closed. During the ensuing months, retaining Trnava University was seen by many Slovaks as vital in the establishment of free enquiry and scholarship and the overthrow of communist teaching, still firmly entrenched in all educational institutions despite the overthrow of the tyranny in 1989. For fifty years there had been no choice for students except to attend the state universities, largely staffed by apparatchiks, appointed to their positions for party loyalty rather than knowledge of their subject.

In early 1992 Dr Hajduk had been endorsed as Rector by President Havel after the Slovak parliament had agreed to the founding of an independent university. Following the June elections and the victory of the Communist-turned-Nationalist Vladimir Meciar, the federal state broke up. Old Nomenclature Ministers were swiftly put back into place. Ministers of Culture and Education wished in turn to reinstate their friends. Dr Hajduk was not their man; moreover an independent university was deemed to be a threat.

Officials declared that Trnava was "part of a conspiracy to denigrate the independent state of Slovakia" and "had been accompanied by many errors which violate academic principles". This return of communist newspeak shows just how badly the Slovaks are in need of the kind of education that Trnava provides.

But Dr Hajduk held his ground, refusing to be intimidated or replaced either by Minister Kovac, a former communist party leader, or by his successor Minister Harrach. In consequence the government decided that Trnava should be closed and that the 200 students would be sent to the state-run universities. Public demonstrations

ensued. Students, teachers and citizens of Trnava, and of the Slovak capital Bratislava, turned out in force to support their new university. Its special Catholic character and its emphasis on high ethical standards had struck an important chord, not only with the students but with the population at large.

Meciar's government is now suffering a decline, with only 15% of the electorate's support in the polls. This, together with the attention paid to Trnava by the European Community and by academics from Britain, Holland, Germany and America, has induced the government to let the issue rest — for the time being at any rate.

The low standing of Meciar's government, and the shakiness of the coalition which holds it in power, also means that others with determination to create democratic institutions can now follow in Trnava's path. Much is amiss in Slovakia today. The privatisation programme has ground to a halt, defunct industries have not been closed, money has been squandered on completing the disastrous and unpopular Gabčíkovo dam project, the Lustration law has not been applied, large sums have been used to set up all

the trappings required by a new nation state — a new army, a new police force, a new currency and new border controls — and a foolish arms race has begun with Hungary. Nevertheless, there are healthy signs of an emerging middle class. Nor need Slovaks feel they have been abandoned in favour of the Czech Republic, with its more forward-looking government and energetic culture. Recognition and help has come from the EBRD, the IMF, and the World Bank. The British have programmes offering assistance all over the country, initiated by the government Know How Fund, the Westminster Fund, the Soros Foundation and the Jan Hus Foundation. The effort to produce an educated generation has begun, and watching John Patten showered with flowers by his grateful audience I felt proud that the British are playing a prominent part in it.

It was especially gratifying to learn that, two days after John Patten's visit, the Government unfroze the University's bank account.

Jessica Douglas-Home is Chairman of the Mihai Eminescu Trust.

Alternatives to Maastricht

Mark Baimbridge and Brian Burkitt consider Britain's future relations with the European Union

The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and the simultaneous collapse, in substance if not in name, of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) has put the future of the European Union (EU) (the post-Maastricht title for the former European Community (EC)) at the crossroads. The present Government's

desire to be 'at the heart of Europe' is a meaningless aspiration until the character and objectives of this 'Europe' are defined. Currently alternative scenarios for EU are being canvassed; it is essential for the future integrity and prosperity of Britain that the case for each is objectively scrutinised, and that the Government clearly articulate

its optimal strategy supported by a tactical programme to achieve it. Such hard-headed thinking has largely been absent from Britain's dealings with the EC over the thirty-two years since we initially applied for membership.

Alternative Scenarios for EU Development

On September 28th 1993 the Prime Minister set out his ideas on a desirable framework for EC cooperation for the foreseeable future in *The Economist*. Although careful to leave long-term options open, Mr Major decisively rejects any moves towards immediate closer integration. He concedes that a still fashionable view amongst Continental politicians is that recent problems caused by the Maastricht process towards economic and monetary union (EMU) require the intensification rather than suspension of the Treaty's provisions. In his words, his fellow heads of government continue 'to recite the mantra of full economic and monetary union, as if nothing had changed'. Fortunately Mr Major rejects such an impractical vision: he argues that, 'it does not carry the hearts and minds of the electorates of Europe ... (who) believe that decision-making in the Community must be brought closer to the people, not taken away'. Such a sentiment can provide the basis for a coherent British policy designed to preserve the EU as a free trade area between independent nation states, provided that Britain's rulers possess the required political will. However, such a beneficial policy will not emerge automatically despite the strength of the arguments in its favour and despite the problems engendered by policies designed to foster closer integration.

Although it wishes to avoid federalist pressures, the Conservative government is sadly pursuing an ambiguous path. Thus British Conservative members of the European Parliament currently belong to the European People's Party (EPP). On 13th November 1992 it adopted a Basic Programme which runs counter to Mr Major's admirable sentiments in crucial respects.

For instance, the Basic Programme incorporates the following proposals: (a) the EPP calls for the gradual, but resolute, transformation of the EC into a genuine political union based on a federal model (paragraph 201), (b) the Union must be given all the means necessary for the achievement of its objectives and the implementation of its policies. It will therefore be given a federal-type budget (paragraph

212);

(c) The EPP will remain very vigilant and ensure that intergovernmental action does not eventually take over from Community decision-making (paragraph 218),

(d) the EPP is in favour of the emergence of a genuine European executive power, independent of the Council, which will hold legislative power together with the European Parliament and become a Chamber of States (paragraph 231);

(e) any increase in the European Parliament's powers must not be at the expense of the EC Commission (paragraph 237),

(f) implementation and extension of the Social Chapter must be guaranteed (paragraph 253).

Detailed argument is hardly needed to demonstrate that all of these proposals, and much else contained in the Basic Programme, directly contradict Mr Major's view of the future of the EU expressed in his article of 25th September. We should ask therefore whether the Conservative MEP's adherence to the EPP Basic Programme will be revoked before the Euro-elections in June 1994. Such a question is not a mere debating point, because the contemporary balance of opinion within the EU renders it imperative that the contradictions in the Government's approach to future European integration decisively resolved.

The EU after Recent Currency Turmoil

The collapse of the ERM during July 1993 in its fixed parity form as a precursor of EMU was both predictable and desirable. Its design, with restrictive fiscal convergence criteria and narrow bands for currency movements, was profoundly deflationary, especially after German reunification. The breakdown of the old ERM has left a vacuum in the future direction of the EU despite the ironic simultaneous ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

In this situation, so far from the triumphalist Euro-federalist mood surrounding the signing of that Treaty in December 1991, it is tempting for the British government to be complacent. Many current trends reinforce its con-

viction that its case against any meaningful European Union has triumphed, so that we can confidently remain 'at the heart of Europe' whilst simultaneously contriving to make that heart beat even slower. Thus the kernel of the Maastricht Treaty, progress towards EMU, has been at least retarded and perhaps fatally weakened. At the special summit in Brussels on 29th October, there was no talk of a single currency across the twelve or sixteen member nations within the political lifetime of their incumbent leaders. That is a great change from the Treaty against which the UK negotiated an opt-out clause. It is accompanied by scepticism amongst EU finance ministers concerning the Delors proposals to raise investment from 19 to 24 per cent of EU output, with public investment as the trigger, in an attempt to halve unemployment. Brussels sources indicate that Delors' last stand will find support from few member governments. The December EU summit declarations are likely to express worthy aspirations but will contain few positive policy proposals.

Other stances of the British government also attract wider support than before. Deregulation of labour markets is one of them, and the attempt towards giving subsidiarity a practical definition, under the aegis of the European Court, is another. Moreover, enlargement could achieve a further UK ambition. If the EU can be extended into an institutional arrangement covering sixteen countries, it is probable that the changes to the structures of decision-making currently being pursued by the British government, most of them designed to diminish the momentum behind federalism, will come closer to being inevitable. These include retaining the size of the 'blocking minority' vote and refusing to increase the number of Commissioners.

However, current British optimism rests on fragile foundations. Optimists should re-read the Maastricht Treaty, which is now in force. If even a third of it, let alone one half, is effectively implemented, the gloss will soon disappear from the contemporary 'British triumph'. Nor should it be forgotten

that UK diplomats and politicians of all persuasions have consistently underemphasised the strength and persistence of the Continental impetus towards integration. Indeed, while Mr Major claims that recent events support his approach, the majority in the EU are beginning to recommence pressure for full federation. As the 29th October summit gathered, Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand affirmed their relaunch of an 'unstoppable' EMU. In this spirit the French and German governments launched a joint paper on 2nd November on how to establish the economic convergence required to inaugurate both a new ERM and ultimately a single currency. It included proposals to tax international currency speculation, novel measures for organising central bank intervention, and a scheme that constructs a 'broad anchor' including the franc, guilder and mark around which a new European Monetary System would hang. If the Maastricht timetable is taken as the policy benchmark, such ideas may begin to bear practical fruit before the Treaty's 1999 deadline.

Britain's Optimal Policy Response

In face of the current flux, UK policy makers must frame their strategy around the assumption that many of the EU's current leaders and bureaucrats possess a firm determination to push for ever closer integration despite setbacks, which is unlikely to diminish in the future. Consequently the process of implementing the Maastricht provisions will gradually force member nations to make a conscious choice between pursuing federalism and choosing independence. This development will provide a window of opportunity for the British Government, providing that it possesses an overriding policy objective, the membership of a free trade area without an underlying federalist intention, and a firm political will to achieve this.

As the European Union contemplates expansion to Austria and those Scandinavian countries willing to join, it will become clear that the unity laboriously constructed at Maastricht

is unworkable. Perhaps during the entry negotiations with Finland, Norway and Sweden, but certainly by 1999, the Union will face a far-reaching decision, to give up enlargement or to endorse formally a multi-track 'variable geometry' Europe. The Commission's view is that 'variable geometry' would offer second-class membership to those unable or unwilling to accept federalism. However, some of the richest counties involved, including Nor-

***Although it wishes to
avoid federalist
pressures, the
Conservative
government is sadly
pursuing an
ambiguous path.
Thus British
Conservative
members of the
European Parliament
currently belong to
the European
People's Party (EPP)***

way and perhaps eventually Switzerland, are likely to opt for a greater benefit, lower cost outer tier. When this occurs, the option of joining a free trade area on the fringe of a federal Europe become increasingly attractive to Britain and other members such as Denmark.

The UK and the EU would both benefit from such developments; if the British Government perceives an acceptable non-radical alternative to staying within a federal Europe, it will be less likely to obstruct federation. Nor should an independent Britain fear isolation in a world irrevocably dividing into three giant blocks — North America, Europe and Asia. Such a vision belongs to Orwellian nightmares, not to a rational appraisal of likely and future trends. More significantly, powerful nations such as China,

Japan and Russia possess geopolitical motives for preventing such a global carve-up. Underlying trends are also counter-indicative; technology is making distance less important, while the end of communism is bringing countries together into a single world trading system rather than separating them into geographically and ideologically defined cartels.

In future, medium-sized countries like Britain, Canada and Switzerland should have more scope to live in peace and create their own prosperity through trade. They will feel less economic pressure to join political federations. Paradoxically Britain's greater scope for freedom would provide its federally-minded neighbours with the opportunity to proceed with their schemes should their next generation of political leaders continue to desire them (and should their increasingly reluctant people continue to acquiesce). However, these prospects for an independent, prosperous future will be achieved only through a strategy of political leadership and education. Now is the time for the Conservative Party to take a historic lead in these matters.

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Through a Class Darkly

David Hyams holds the Inspectorate and its appointees responsible for Britain's Educational Decline

Appportioning the blame for the decline in Britain's schools has been a hard-played game for some years. A thoroughly professional hatchet job by the head teachers' union has meant that all the blame has been heaped upon classroom teachers. The heads have diverted attention from their key responsibilities for the failure of the system. The inspectorate too, has denied responsibility, despite a manifest involvement. They should both be reminded that the school system is like a tree: it dies from the top.

The inspectors, both HMIs and LEAs have been and are the true harlots of the system. They have exercised a powerful influence with little responsibility. They promoted their own educational ideals and views on curriculum development and determined teaching methods. They enforce their ideas and practices through their influence on appointment and promotion.

In 1976, Robin Auld QC outlined one of the dilemmas of the inspectorate in his report on the William Tyndale affair, when he said "The Authority (ILEA) Inspectorate, in common with the inspectorates of most other authorities, does not regard its prime function as being the inspection or checking of the quality of education provided in the Authority's schools. The Inspectorate sees its main role as being the giving of advice and support to teachers in schools."

What kind of advice is needed? *The Times Educational Supplement*, as long ago as 14th July 1978, reported on a survey of performance in primary schools which demonstrated teachers' ignorance. It went on to quote the then chief HMI for primary schools, Norman

Thomas, "In one area — science — I would have to say that children in most primary schools are hardly at the starting line. And in art, craft, geography and history the foundations are often too shaky to bear much in the way of superstructure ... In these areas, what is frequently lacking is a teacher with confidence based upon knowledge".

Having analyzed the problem, what action did the inspectorates take to remedy it? Surprisingly, there was little emphasis on knowledge but instead attention was paid to the style of teaching. Thomas spoke of both the subject and topic approach to teaching. However, even at that time, the balance had already begun to tilt against subjects which were to become so diluted that some disappeared almost entirely from the curriculum. The distinctive qualities and values of certain subjects were airily dismissed; topic work, using a child-centred approach and so-called 'discovery' learning, became the vogue.

This approach, with its rejection of the Gradgrind style of teaching, is superficially attractive because it suggests that a large element of the sheer grind, essential to learning, can be removed.

There was nothing new about this conceit for it was the essence of the Plowden report. Now, however, it was to be rigorously adopted and ruthlessly enforced. Although one of the virtues of the English schools' system was meant to be its tolerance of diversity, the advocates of this method would admit to no argument; it was zealously introduced with all the fanaticism of the converted. The inspectors were able to ensure that these ideas and teaching methods were introduced

through their influence over the appointments of head and deputy head teachers; and by their use of their camp-followers, the advisory teachers. The flaw in the system is its hopeless circularity: a teacher is promoted to head on the recommendation of the inspector, who is, more often than not, an ex-head; thus a self-perpetuating oligarchy is established, with a massive investment in self-advancement and the defence of self-interest. The inspector gives professional advice to the board of governors when they are appointing a new head. It takes a valiant board of governors to ignore the advice of the professional educationalist. Teachers who challenge the inspectors' current orthodoxy are not likely to be recommended. That orthodoxy has meant, in recent years, a clear preference for teachers of a "liberal" disposition, with an "informal" teaching style. If, in addition, they are fluent in the current educational liturgy, the inspectors will overlook intellectual and managerial shortcomings.

This development produced a style of headship and a "hidden" curriculum which has proved unwelcome to many parents. The curriculum is the ethos of the school and the styles of teaching approved by the inspectors, whose function is to guard what is their own. When the head is criticised, the inspectors adopt the role of "nanny". The head who proves inept and incompetent can rely on the support of the inspector who recommended the appointment. Inspectors are not likely to be objective judges of the quality of the performance of their protégé. The new methods were adopted and control of the appointments was used to see them through and ward off criticisms.

The way that topic work and child-centred learning have been used denied learning and the curriculum any proper structure. There has been a lack of method and continuity; no discipline in learning and a lack of rigour. The curriculum has been characterised by random and patchwork learning. Those who couldn't teach it, didn't. The pace was generally too slow as well; for the other catch phrase of this style of teaching, was that "children work at their own pace". This, in fact, meant little graft; no hard learning and no pursuit of excellence. Discovery methods become ends in themselves. As long as the children are active they must be learning. The whole idea was summed-up in the banal phrase "I do and I understand". Curriculum became all fashion and very little content. Skills and concepts were to be developed in the vacuum; the inspectors were satisfied on their occasional flying visits, if the children were on the move and pictures were on the wall.

Parental concern at the quality of learning and standards of education were easily brushed aside by the professionals. David Walker's article in *The Times* of 13th August 1982, pointed out the difficulties facing those people, and in particular parents, who wished to criticise work and standards in schools. He said:

There is a sanctified alliance between civil servants who run the Department of Education and Science (who include the symbolically powerful inspectors); education officials and, not least, the education unions...

He continued

The alliance at work is seen in the near veneration accorded Her Majesty's Inspectors... Education standards for the inspectors have to do with professional judgements by trained educationalist, little to do with the visible performance by schools or the sharp judgement every parent with a school-aged child can make of a school's effectiveness.

It was more difficult to dismiss the comments of the new Chief Inspector of Schools, Eric Bolton. The London Standard of August 4th 1983, reported him as saying that some teachers had indeed got the wrong message about the values of encouraging their charges

to do their own thing. He murmured something about certain schools in the recent past where classes "were like a permanent infants' cocktail party."

Attention to this vivid comment was diverted away as some authorities now began to introduce a whole series of new initiatives. Anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-classism became education's new liturgy. Contentious in content, crude in character, it nevertheless soon found sets of inspectors who were prepared to introduce these controversial policies in a zealous fashion. A new layer of tension was introduced into schools, bringing new and difficult conflicts for the class teacher to cope with. It all seemed to prove that the further removed from the classroom are the educationists the less they are aware of the pressures on the classroom teacher. One teacher, in his

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frustration, was moved to emit a *crie de coeur* in a letter to the ILEA staff paper 'Contact':

I think an ideal initiative would be for Heads, Advisors and Inspectors to have a class teaching schedule. In this way, their sights would be kept on realistic, practical and objective practices, rather than high-flown verbosity which leaves many dedicated class teachers bewildered and unhappy, and very wary in case they are not being fashionable enough.

This teacher's frustration was echoed in the growing discontent of parents. A trickle of criticism grew to a torrent from respected professional sources. A series of reports came out in the late 1980's which served to show the poor state of learning in the schools' system, even in the primary sector, which so many had held to be the best of English education. *The Sunday Times*

of March 20th, 1988 reported that "English school children know less science than their contemporaries in other countries, according to the latest study from the International Association for the Evaluation Achievement ... At the age of ten they are behind children in 11 other countries ... Nearly two-thirds of English primary schools in the survey scored less than Japan's lowest scoring school. At 14, the picture is depressingly similar..." In *The Daily Telegraph* of 10th July 1989, a Birmingham University survey found that most primary teachers interviewed felt that they were not equipped to teach the National Curriculum science; they did not understand what it involved and had little confidence in their ability to meet the required standards. The HMI's report of October, 1989, on science teaching merely confirmed this abysmal situation: "Two-thirds of science lessons in primary schools are substandard, with the result that many children go to secondary school with a 'superficial experience of science' school inspectors reported yesterday", said *The Times* of October 10th, 1989. The HMIs said that science teaching had improved since the 1970's but it could hardly have become worse for they admit that then "science was almost unknown in primary schools". Why was the science teaching in primary schools was found to be so bad when the HMIs had known of its poor state back in 1978? The schools' inspectorate cannot shirk its responsibilities for the poor state of science teaching as, obviously, it had done little or nothing to improve the position over a decade. Being in a position to know and doing nothing creates a responsibility for the consequences.

At the same time the teaching of maths was being castigated. *The Daily Telegraph* of July 25th 1989 reported that the Schools' Inspectorate had said that maths teaching in a quarter of primary schools is still poor. In three-quarters of the schools pupils' performance was rated only as adequate in many aspects of maths. It was judged good in some areas of the subject in only one primary schools in three. A major reason must be that fewer than

four per cent of teachers in schools inspected has studied maths as the major component of their higher education. Three-quarters of schools had no teachers with higher qualifications in the subject.

These criticisms were mild compared to the findings of the National Foundation for Education Research, reported in the *TES* of 1st September 1989: "Only one in 20 primary pupils has a proper understanding of the maths taught to them in many lessons, according to the results of a three year research study ... And one-third 'make little or no progress' in grasping the formal rules of maths. They are hampered by misconceptions, simplistic methods taught in the early years and the inability to perform basic measurements accurately, using such things as a ruler."

It was not only in maths and science that an impoverished state of knowledge was exposed: a *Sunday Times* investigation, 30th April, 1989, revealed that more than a quarter of 11 year olds could not find America or Russia on a globe; the same proportion made a mistake over France. One in six lost their bearings so badly that they could not even identify the United Kingdom. These findings were not surprising for *The Guardian* of 30th August 1989, was to report, "Four out of five primary schools in England and Wales do not teach history or geography to any significant degree, according to a survey by the independent schools' inspectorate to be published in October. "Eric Bolton, senior chief inspector, said in a BBC Radio interview on August 29th that 80% of the schools interviewed did not teach the two subjects "discernibly". This was only a taster of the criticisms of the actual report, which found that "History lessons are sub-standard in two out of three primary schools, while three-quarters of the schools give inadequate geography lessons ... Standards had improved only marginally since the inspectors had investigated history and geography teaching in the mid-1970's." (*The Times* of 20th October 1989.)

A week or so previously, *The Times* of October 12th had reported an equally

damning study: "Researchers at the South Bank Polytechnic, London, blame the increasing habit of celebrating non-Christian festivals in primary schools for helping to give children 'a false and exotic' picture of 'straw huts and spears' in Africa and Asia... they also criticised the fashionable method of teaching through projects and call for a return to formal geography lessons devoted to specific countries." There must be something amiss with a practice capable of offending multiculturalism and the academic tradition at the same time.

If the Schools' Inspectorate knew of the deplorable state of history and geography teaching as far back as the mid 1970's, why had they done so little in the meantime to improve the posi-

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tion? Or was it that their solution was fundamentally flawed? Their report has an air of detachment suggesting their absolution from all responsibility.

A key to these teaching problems and poor standards was suggested in a survey by the ILEA, research and statistics branch in 1988. *The London Evening Standard* on 23rd September 1988, said: "one in four pupils starting at London's comprehensives this term could not read well enough to cope with lessons, according to an ILEA survey.... Despite six years in primary school they were so bad at reading that they were classified as 'problem children.... Experts predict that by next Spring 18 per cent will be semi-literate and struggling in class". According to the Director of the British Dyslexia

Association they were right. He was reported in *The London Evening Standard* of January 10th 1990, as saying: "At present between 10 and 15 per cent of children do not leave school fully literate ... We have to apply the right methods and some additional resources in infant classes... Reading, writing and spelling have to be taught." He was critical of the implicit belief in the National Curriculum that "children do not need to relate sounds to letters, which is a vital part of the process of learning to read: All teachers are told is that children should 'play with language'."

It is little wonder that the HMIs had had to sum-up the dismal position in their first report on educational standards in February 1989, by saying that a fifth of our children get a generally poor deal and that the majority are not sufficiently stimulated. In the face of these criticisms the reaction of senior educationists varied from *mea culpa* to truculence. *The Times* of 12th July 1987, reported that Bill Stubbs, then chief education officer of ILEA, had told the Society of Chief Education Officers that they had, over the years, been too pre-occupied with administration and budget problems to pay enough attention to what was taught in schools. He remarked that the professional in education had failed to win the argument "but re-assured the critics that the school curriculum was safe in their keeping".

Just over a year later in *The Daily Telegraph* of September 3rd 1988, David Hargreaves, chief inspector of ILEA, was reported as saying that the Government's national curriculum and plans to publish schools results would help raise standards which were a "national disgrace". He added that the curriculum had to be imposed on a reluctant profession because educationists had "failed to seize the opportunity to put their own house in order, though they had ample warnings for over a decade". Further robust criticism of the system and methods of teaching came from the new Leader of the ILEA, Neil Fletcher: he suggested that education "as currently provided does not stretch children enough to provide them with the essential skills needed for

survival in the modern world. New teaching methods and modern aids were failing working class children who were massively under-achieving. If new teaching methods were not delivering the goods to working class kids they must be looked at and ultimately rejected."

Politicians had debated education issues for a decade but now the Government acted. It could not do otherwise in view of the evidence coming from respected educational research foundations on the state of the schools, the quality of teaching and the standards being achieved. The reaction of the professional to the profound initiative of the National Curriculum varied. *The Independent* of 8th December 1988, said: "Jim Rose, the chief HMI for primary education, has already acknowledged that the national curriculum must become the whole curriculum." This degree of realism failed to penetrate the minds of some of his professional colleagues. Val Jenkins, first chief inspector of the newly created Tower Hamlets education authority, was reported in the *ILEA NEWS* of March 20th 1989, as saying: "There is a danger that schools will view the National Curriculum as a whole curriculum, while other subjects go to the wall. 'It will be the inspectors' job to see that they are retained. **We must mediate the national curriculum, even manipulate it**.'" Some staff at the Institute of Education of London thrust their heads into the sand and complained that the National Curriculum was a "folly of unprecedented proportions", an anachronism, a "bureaucratic curriculum, concerned with efficiency" ... Another pamphlet, to which members of the staff of the Institute contributed, condemned the Government's plans to raise the standard of teacher training as "more suited to the 'concept of quality control' in production management."

It was the Government, however, that seemed to be proved right in its concern for national standards when the first set of results from the National Curriculum tests were published in December 1991. They showed that more than a quarter of 7 year olds in

England cannot read independently; add or subtract single features in their head or spell simple words such as man, car and hot.' These tests were only confirmed by further reports and research. A *Sunday Times* test in maths, conducted in nine countries with 7 year olds, resulted in children in England and Wales coming seventh.

In an international comparison of maths and science performance, carried out by the Centre for the Assessment of Educational Progress, involving 20 countries, but excluding both Germany and Japan, English 9 year olds came 11th in maths and 5th in science. A study by the NFER "confirms evidence of a national decline in reading standards between 1987 and

At present between 10 and 15 per cent of children do not leave school fully literate ... We have to apply the right methods and some additional resources in infant classes... Reading, writing and spelling have to be taught

1991 ... the decline may be concentrated more heavily in working class and deprived areas.' This contrasts starkly with the HMI's view, for Eric Bolton, then Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, had written to the House of Commons Select Committee, examining reading standards "... in our 1990 report we make the comparison of our most recent findings with those that the HMI found in the National Primary Survey in 1978 and from inspection findings since that time. The picture that emerges from that is not one of an overall decline in standards of reading."

The HMIs were concerned however, about standards in other areas. Their fourth annual report said, "As in previous years, HMI finds that standards

are poor or less than satisfactory in a third of schools, but the proportion rises to almost half of the lessons for seven to eleven year olds in inner city areas ... Primary teachers, particularly those of 7 to 11 year olds, may fast be reaching the limits of their expertise and be unable to teach the nine subjects of the national curriculum and religious education in sufficient depth...' The debate on primary teaching practices was now reaching such a pitch that the Secretary of State appointed a group of three leading educationists to examine those practices. They looked at a wide range of research findings and concluded that the data showed "some evidence of downward trends in important aspects of literacy and numeracy... Whatever else they do primary schools must get their policies and practices right for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. ... To reject subjects on the grounds that they are inconsistent with children's views of the world is to confirm them within their existing modes of thought and deny them access to some of the most powerful tools for making sense of the world."

Robin Alexander, a member of the team who had prepared the report, had, in 1991, in his evaluation report on Leeds City Council Primary Needs Programme, severely criticised the dogmatic concept of 'good practice'; which was used by inspectors and advisors for the cultivation of orthodoxy: "Good primary practice must cease to be presented as an uncontentious absolute. It is highly problematic, conceptually and empirically, and must be treated as such. It is misleading and inappropriate to act as though a consensus exists (or should exist) and doubly inappropriate to expect conformity to a particular version of it."

"The Authority should abandon its role of definer, arbiter and keeper of 'good primary practice' ... Class teachers should no longer be expected to conform to models of good practice. The authority is in reality the Inspectorate. However, Jim Rose, another of the 'three wise men' had since the mid-1980's been overseeing, as chief HMI for primary education, the publication of a series of documents, illus-

trating what Her Majesty's Inspectors considered to be 'Good Practice' ideas which reinforced the concepts of topic work, child-centre education and discovery methods. These documents, backed by the full authority of the HMIs, came down to the classroom teacher, via the head. They also provided a potent focal point of any training course, run by the HMIs or the local inspectors and advisors. It would be a brave teacher who resisted or ignored them.

Whilst all of this was being weighed by the frontline teachers, the HMI's issued another report recommending certain aspects of French education, one of these being whole class teaching. French teachers' blackboard work was "exemplary". "The French teachers provided a salutary reminder of a teaching method which many teachers might reinstate for the benefit of their pupils."

"Pencil-and-paper tests form such a regular part of the teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy that pupils regard them as normal rather than a cause of anxiety". As the tenor of the advice from the HMIs changed, so does that of the head teachers, who themselves were promoted for following the advice of the various inspectors. David Hart, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, has suggested that "the children who have reached the age of 9 ... ought to be mature enough to benefit from subject based teaching and to achieve the maximum of their potential ... as a result of being taught by specialist teachers. Indeed it may be advisable to go further in those last two years, and introduce the concept of streaming or setting."

On the other hand, this would be a complete turnabout in primary practice for "the primary profession which has been openly hostile to subjects." "Returning to subject-by-subject learning is soul destroying for any age..."

With all this contradictory advice, with tactical and strategic confusion among the officers, it is not surprising that teachers have become confused, dispirited and cynical. An undue amount of criticism has been heaped upon their performance and the re-

sponsibility and blame has been laid upon them for the decline in standards, whilst the officers have in the main escaped with little criticism. The educational establishment cannot help the problem of the decline in educational standards in our schools because the educational establishment is the main problem. The inspectors' monopoly in the definition of professional competence is more of an attack on democracy than any of the Government's changes. The inspectorates were allowed to become dangerously unaccountable, enjoying an immunity from public scrutiny, though the Audit Commission report of October 1989, "Assuring Quality of Education" shone a light in some dark corners. The Commission found that "Inspectors/advisers ... are poorly trained." That "few services have clear aims related to the objectives of the LEA. "Many authorities have little idea of how inspectors and advisers are spending their time." The report stated that "the essential element of monitoring is direct observation of teaching and of pupils and students' learning." It found, however, that some inspectors spent only 3% of their time on this task. "The tasks on which individual members of inspection and advisory services use their time were often selected haphazardly." A major influence on the use of the inspector's time was the "personal professional interests of individual advisers."

The pertinent point about advice and inspection had been made in 1976 by Auld. This fundamental question had not been addressed by the inspectors in 13 years. The physicians could not heal themselves. Even the educational establishment began to entertain doubts as to the untrammelled powers of advisers and inspectors. Hilary Steadman, senior research fellow of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, commented: "Certain methods have been promulgated by some local authority advisers, who then influence the appointments of heads. There is no promotion for teachers who disagree." Such an exercise of power would turn many trade union officials green with envy.

Further worries about the role and

character of the inspectorate, in the face of proposed changes in the education system, were now surfacing. The 1988 Coopers Lybrand report on the Local Management of Schools (LMS) considered it almost inevitable that inspectors would be involved in providing "advice on the overall management of the school" which would shift the emphasis of their work "more towards the inspectorate end of the spectrum..." John Turnbull, then county education officer for Hereford and Worcester, asked "How realistic is it to expect an inspectorate largely recruited from the ranks of serving teachers to acquire .. those extra skills needed to advise a headteacher on the overall management of the school?"

If it is difficult for those recruited from the secondary school, how much more difficult will it be for those inspectors in the primary sector, recruited on the class teacher, head teacher — inspector ladder? Promotion does not endow competence nor make one immune from educational lunacy. Some teachers remember the enthusiastic implementation of the Initial Teaching Alphabet; a foolish idea was kept going beyond all reason.

The Government recognised that with its radical reforms of the education system, the implementation of the National Curriculum and the introduction of LMS, there would have to be changes in the various inspectorates. Here the Government was supported by the HMIs who had long recognised the deficiencies of the local inspectorates. Baroness Perry, a former HMI, said, in the House of Lords "... how we longed to have some impact on the working methods and standards of the local inspectorate in LEAs". Baroness Blatch said, in the same debate, "There are only nine local authorities which HMI now suggest have strong and effective inspection systems only a third have systems likely to yield reliable outcomes..."

However, even the HMIs were surprised by the extent of the changes proposed by the Government to the character and role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate in the Education (Schools) Bill. Education's vested interests called in the Establishment to defend their

position in a last ditch stand against the Bill in the House of Lords: glowing references were forthcoming. "Her Majesty's Inspectors are recruited because they were first-class schoolroom teachers or experienced and highly competent heads, (Baroness Blackstone). It (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) has been a centre of excellence. It has a high reputation in terms of preserving standards, (Lord Ritchie). "During my time I never came across what one might describe as an incompetent HMI, " (Lord Dormand, a former LEA education officer). "...our schools' inspectorate is far too precious to be largely replaced as the Bill suggests. Its impartiality, its expertise is a feature of our educational system, which many other countries envy." (Lord Glenmara, a former head teacher and Secretary of State for Education).

Lord Pearson succinctly put the case for reform, "It must be pretty obvious to most people by now that our publicly funded education system has failed and is continuing to fail too many of the children who are forced to attend it. Much of the blame for the tragic state of affairs must fall on local education authorities and on Her Majesty's Inspectorate. I am afraid that it is now clear that governments of both parties placed far too much trust in those bodies for many years.... The Bill is to be welcomed. It proposes to open up and let some fresh air and light into two secret gardens of our state system of education; namely, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and local education authorities advisers and inspectors."

Under the terms of the Act, the Chief Inspector of Schools will have a responsibility for the registration, training and monitoring of "registered inspectors" who will conduct regular inspections within guidelines laid down by HMI. Schools will be obliged to arrange such inspections every four years. Tenders will have to be invited from two registered inspectors for the inspection of the school. LEA's can continue to offer inspection services to their schools provided that they have inspectors who can meet the requirements of the registration imposed by the chief inspectors. Every inspection shall be conducted by a registered in-

spector with the assistance of a team. The Act further requires that one member of each inspection team be someone without professional experience in education. Each inspection is to be preceded by a meeting with the parents. When the inspection has been completed, the inspector has to prepare a report and a summary. A copy of the summary must be available to the

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parents and the public. The Authority to whom the inspectors have reported is then required to produce a written statement of the action which they propose to take in the light of the report and the period within which they propose to take it. These constituted the main points of the Education Schools Act. However, there had been one little noticed amendment to the Bill; an amendment with important philosophical implications and one which may have important psychological overtones for the character of the inspectorate. The use of the phrase 'good practice' was eliminated from the Bill. Lord Skidelsky moved his amendment with surgeon-like debating skill. "I find the phrase 'good practice' objectionable in itself. It easily degenerates into best practice.... That suggests that there is a unique, privileged practice which is accessible to experts and no one else and which is based on scientific principles of one kind or another. I am afraid that as applied to education it is simply not true, though it is a common delusion that it is... much of

what is called good practice is simply current educational fashion masquerading as scientific authority which is largely spurious ... a phrase which is philosophically suspect..."

The Act exists now but the Government cannot afford to relax for vested interests and entrenched powers will not give ground, power and influence easily. They will retrench. They will test the reins of power which they will still hold and they will try to regain their influence which has for the present diminished.

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) — the body that has replaced the HMI — estimates that it will need between 1500 and 2000 registered inspectors. "Most of those who have so far been trained have, in fact, come from HMI, from local authority advisory teams or from university departments of education." One former senior HMI argues: "The Act in no way suggested that inspection was a completely amateur activity. If there is expertise involved, it can only be found through HMI and local authorities.' Local authority inspectors will feel the pressure for they will have to compete for tenders to inspect and they will need to earn an income to justify their existence. However, they will retain powers with which they can exert an enormous influence on the teaching system. They will have a large say in the design and character of in-service training courses for teachers and those attending their training courses, will receive favourable references for promotion. The avenues for the promotion of fashionable orthodoxy are still open, thus there needs to be an examination of the role of the inspector in the training and promotion links.

If the Government is anxious to give rights, responsibilities and choices to the parents, it must investigate ways of making local authority inspectors more accountable to them and it must widen the circles of those to be made accountable. Around 20% of the schools in this country are under the control of the churches. The Diocesan Boards have their own inspectors/advisors but at present the inspectors are accountable to only a handful of people; be they local politicians or Diocesan

Board representatives. If parental power is to be an element of Government thinking then the inspectors should be brought before the parents and made answerable. There must be a mechanism of direct communication between the parents and the inspectors. The annual governors and parents meeting is a legal requirement. This structure could be used to introduce the idea of the local authority/diocesan inspector meeting the parents. Consumer consciousness and assertiveness are a good means of ensuring accountability. Parents may not have the expertise but they know what values they want to implement. Having to justify their actions to the customers might rein-in the inspectors' flights of imagination and keep them in touch with the realities of both the classroom and the world. It would be a method of keeping the upper echelons, and hence education, attuned to the society in which they and it exists.

To prevent a tendency to ossification in the thinking of the local inspectorates the inspectors should be employed on term contracts; and if one was being really severe, they should be required to return to the classroom for a period before a contract could be renewed. They would be kept in touch with the realities of the classroom and it would burnish their teaching skills. Nobody would like to accept the services of a surgeon who had not operated regu-

larly and managed an operating theatre but had merely observed and handed out advice.

The same condition should be applied to those ex-HMIs keen to arise Phoenix-like as registered inspectors. A period of classroom teaching would allow them to dust-down their distant classroom management skills, apply them to the new conditions, and appreciate the startling new perspectives that have developed since they left the classroom. There would be a large number of experienced teachers, currently in the classroom, who would be willing to tutor these ex-HMIs. The

Their powers have been diminished a little by recent legislation, but this process should be a beginning, not an end

loosening of the monopolistic control of the professional should be extended. Head teachers should be employed on a term contract basis and tenure should be removed. At present it is almost impossible to remove an incompetent head. Governors feel morally bound to defend their appointment, as they possess few powers to effect a dismissal. The local education authority inspectors, who have great influence over the

appointments of heads, will only defend their own judgements.

The power of the inspectors and the professional in education increased over the years to the point where they claimed a monopoly of competence. They became the collective allocators of values in the education system. The legitimacy of their position was based in part on an unquestioning belief in their effectiveness. The faith in their ability came into question in the face of the damning evidence of a decline in school standards. Their claim not merely to an authoritative voice, but a monopoly of competence, was a cause of and led to a degeneration of their intellectual and philosophical position. They lost intellectual integrity failing to defend the knowledge, hard-won insights and philosophical arguments of the very subjects which they had studied. They lacked the moral courage to re-examine their initiatives and admit to their mistakes in the light of the evidence of the decline in standards.

Their powers have been diminished a little by recent legislation, but this process should be a beginning, not an end. There is a strong case for the further diminution of the power of the professional in education. That would give more power to the consumers.

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Crime and Punishment in an Erehwonian Society

B. M. Craven and B. W. Dick explain how crime pays in Britain today

The headline in the Guardian newspaper "Riot Puts Despair on the Agenda" is one which would be expected in a culture such as that described in Samuel Butler's 19th century satirical novel 'Erewhon'

which portrays a society where values are turned upside-down: the guilty are innocent and the innocent, guilty. This state of affairs has arrived in the UK. The Guardian article reports the despair of the criminal rather than the

despair of innocent victims. When houses are burgled the householder is deemed guilty of not spending enough on security devices. When elderly people are mugged they are guilty of walking the streets alone. When women are

raped they are accused of wearing provocative clothes. Owners of stolen cars are guilty of being able to afford expensive cars and of not spending large sums on security devices. Jimmy Young on the eponymous 'prog' stated recently that it was absolutely disgraceful that manufacturers did not make motor cars more secure against theft — as if this could be achieved at no cost to the motorist. Another punishment for innocent car owners was suggested by Tony Baker of the Association of Brokers and Insurers when, on the same radio show, he stated that manufacturers of quality cars, attractive to thieves, would be penalised by having such cars placed in higher insurance brackets. The clear message is that those who can afford such cars are offending those who cannot afford them, provoking them to acts against the car which symbolise unequal distribution of income and wealth. Similar arguments can be advanced for muggings, ram-raiding, pilfering and white collar crime. Indeed whenever incidents such as these occur all kinds of 'experts' are sought in order to explain that they were really caused by the victims.

But perhaps society needs to redirect its thoughts and stop worrying too much about causes. Perhaps the issue is not, as sociologists claim, one of a deprived section of the community envying the 'greed' and affluent lifestyle of the middle classes, but one of opportunities for crime which are propitious in an Erewhon culture. This is not a new perspective but it could be understood, especially in Erewhon, by treating all crime as a business activity which is likely to be committed by people from all sections of society when the opportunities arise. Crime as a business is certainly increasingly worthwhile. Over recent years there has been a substantial increase in notifiable offences recorded by the police. Annual increases in excess of 20% have been recorded for vehicle thefts, theft from vehicles, burglary (non-dwelling) and burglary (dwelling). By comparison, violent crime has risen only slightly.

The rapid increase in crime over recent years has been consistently in-

terpreted by professional explainers. Community workers, social workers, psychologists, clerics, probation officers, police officers, local MPs and assorted media pundits have variously supported the view that criminal behaviour is a cry for help caused by unemployment and grinding poverty, lack of parental responsibility, being 'have nots' in a society of 'haves', or living in communities deprived of social capital.

The criminal is a victim of society. The Archbishop of Canterbury in a speech to a conference of Anglican headmasters in Chester on 19 September 1991 gave clear expression to this view when he stated "... human wrongdoing is inextricably linked to social deprivation, poverty, poor housing and illiteracy."

This sentimental approach to criminal behaviour has failed to arrest the rise in crime, and indeed has almost legitimised crime as acceptable social behaviour. Furthermore, it has also introduced an inverted morality exemplified by the uncle of a youth killed in a stolen car which the police had chased who stated that "they were ram-raiders, not joyriders ... professionals on their way to a job" (*The Daily Telegraph* 14 September 1991).

Some social scientists argue that the increase in crime is more apparent than real because we are now better informed of committed crime and also because there are now new criminal offences such as insider trading, unmuzzled pit bull terriers and date rape. These arguments are not convincing when set beside the increases on insurance premiums for cars and household contents.

Perhaps it is time to adopt, with more confidence, a different approach to criminals both in terms of judging their behaviour and in formulating punishments for them. The social science of economics offers an interesting alternative approach to that of sociology and psychology; disciplines which have clearly failed and which appear bereft of new ideas.

Gary Becker, the 1992 Nobel Prize winner, has set out to explain human behaviour and actions in economic terms. His theory assumes that indi-

viduals are rational beings. The term rational is used in a very specific way to describe consistency of individuals' actions in the pursuit of objectives. It does not mean that society has to approve the individuals' objectives; but it does assume that individuals attempt to maximise their personal utility: that is their well being or satisfaction. They do this in respect of any activity by weighing up the costs and benefits (subjective and objective). The theory predicts that if the benefits accruing to some form of activity outweigh the costs, that activity will be pursued. By the same token, it predicts that if the costs outweigh the benefits the activity will stop. In this sense for example the English football fanatic abroad is acting rationally when he sets out on a trail of drunkenness and violence; he is maximising objectives that give satisfaction to him. That most of the rest of us deplore his behaviour does not detract from this. It is the consistency of his behaviour given his objectives that counts. In this approach to crime we can ignore causes.

Crimes will be committed if the benefits exceed the costs; moreover the greater the difference the greater the incentive for criminal behaviour. The benefits of the crime of theft result from the value of articles acquired. It is not surprising that the biggest increases in crime since 1979 are in the Tory shires. Many older people remember times when they could go out and leave the front door unlocked and nothing would be stolen. Such people forget that in those times most people had little worth stealing; the age of the consumer durable and the stolen getaway car had not arrived. Many people are perplexed by reports of crimes being committed for trivial sums of money. They do not realise that there are subjective returns which arise from taking on the police, challenging society and the approbation of peer groups.

The cost of a crime is the punishment which follows conviction, weighted by the probability of being caught. Currently in the case of most crime, of which 95% is 'non-violent', the probability of being apprehended for many minor offences is close to zero. When the trends on punishments are exam-

ined the figures show that over the last decade the numbers sentenced for indictable offences fell by about 20% and that all of this reduction occurred in the Magistrates' courts. The figures also indicate that the costs of crime in terms of the type of sentence imposed have fallen sharply. The number of fines issued has fallen by about 40% and the average time spent in prison has diminished by about 30%. In addition past and present governments have found new resources to make life more tolerable and less unpleasant for the criminal. No one should be surprised that in the same period there was a similar general increase in offences.

The economic approach to social behaviour suggests two basic policy prescriptions to reduce crime. The prescriptions owe nothing to a preoccupation with causes; indeed they ignore cause altogether. First, the chance of being apprehended has to be increased very significantly and second, the punishment of the criminal once caught must be appropriately severe. In this way the cost of criminal behaviour can be made to outweigh the benefits. To catch more criminals will require more police effort. This need not necessarily cost anymore, since savings could be made by disbanding the caring professions such as the probation service; a service that produces minimal benefits (except to those working in the service) at great cost to the tax-payer.

The question of recidivism will of course be raised. Many convicted criminals return to crime after release because they cannot get a job. Employers are reluctant to offer employment to someone with a criminal record. This reluctance could be overcome by a taxpayer financed insurance scheme which would reimburse those employers who suffered as a consequence of employing an ex-criminal. On the cost side of the equation the punishments for criminal behaviour will have to be of a severity that (combined with the very much increased chance of apprehension) makes criminal activity an unat-

tractive form of behaviour.

These changes in policy will be difficult to enact in an Erewhonian culture. The extent to which our society has adopted upside-down values can be seen in its views of the police. During the past few years there have been a few well publicised cases of maladministration by the police which resulted in guilty verdicts being overturned in the Appeal Court. At the cost of overstating the argument, some think that the prisons are packed with innocent people as a result of the perversion of justice by the police. These cases of miscarriages of justice have forced the



police to be very careful not to bring about the conviction of an innocent person. As a consequence, whilst the number of crimes in the latter part of 1992 increased nationally, the number of prisoners decreased. The number of cases heard in the Inner London Magistrates Courts fell by between 10% and 15%. Similar statistics are to be found in Kent, Doncaster, Scunthorpe and Hull. (*Independent* 31, January, 1993). The Home Office policy of encouraging the police to caution rather than prosecute offenders led to burglars and others, who the public would expect to go to court, not being pros-

ecuted. That the Home Secretary has recently reversed this policy may indicate that the lawful majority are approaching the limit of toleration towards the Government's approach towards crime. Another good example of how the Erewhon attitude now pervades our mentality is evident in the 'crime prevention' campaigns. These reach us through television, articles by the police in local newspapers, exhibitions and so on. The public are exhorted to turn their homes into fortresses by the use of complicated locks, reinforced doors and windows, sophisticated alarm systems (inside and outside) and large ferocious dogs. This is done at enormous cost to the private citizen and of course if he does not do it he is scorned. If he is burgled he is vilified as casual, incompetent and deserving of what has happened to him. This is Erewhon in all but name; the costs of crime are visited upon the victim rather than the criminal. The objective of society should in fact be to remove the need to protect the innocent by making the costs of criminal behaviour to the criminal so high that he will desist from it.

Lastly the Schumpeterian notion of waves of innovation should be recognised as important in the strategy to deal with crime. As the technology used by the police has improved and the resources employed in crime detection have increased so there is a need for the criminal to become more cunning.

Therefore, with the same level of cost (punishment) any reduction in crime or any increase in the detection rate as a consequence of greater resources can only be expected to be temporary.

There would probably be broad acceptance of this logic. But the practical consequences of accepting it are likely to offend many. Nonetheless if society is serious about treating crime effectively then some very unpleasant policy options must be considered. These options are likely to be too controversial to be politically and socially acceptable to Erewhonians.

First there must be a correction of the

current habit of giving too great a benefit of doubt to the accused. The more society wishes to avoid punishing the innocent person the more it must be prepared to allow the guilty to go free. The corollary is that if society wishes to increase the probability of not allowing the guilty to go free it should recognise that more innocent people must be punished. It is perhaps ironic that Erewhonians will find this logic attractive.

Second, the present policy of building more prisons should be resisted not just because they do not deter but because they are so expensive that they punish the innocent tax-payer. When custodial sentences are given, confinement conditions must be made much more of a deterrent (even brutal) than at present. They should not be squalid or degrading but such that the habitual criminal should be treated with much less sympathy. It is not surprising that present custodial sentences do not deter given the undoubted improvement in the quality of lifestyle for most prisoners.

Third, the punishment for habitual criminals needs to be visible. The public must be given some sign to convey information that dealings with such

people carry above normal risk. The punishment must also be one where the costs are borne as much as possible by the criminal rather than the taxpayer. When considering non custodial sentences Saudi Arabia offers an interesting, albeit, extreme alternative to fines, community care orders and bindings over. It employs what Erewhonians would find unacceptable, amputation of a limb. This punishment is seen as appropriate and just for the culture of the country. In Saudi Arabia there is much evidence that property and persons (and especially women) are considerably more secure than here. We must find the equivalent acceptable punishment for our culture. Whether this is achieved by an enforced stay on a deserted island off the mainland or electric shocks or something else; it is an ineluctable conclusion if crime is to be tackled effectively.

Fourth, it will have to be recognised that criminality amongst juveniles should become an extended family responsibility. This is a proposal already receiving consideration.

In conclusion, if society wishes to deal with crime it must recognise that the professional explainers have inverted principles and have failed to

provide a solution. We can reduce the level of crime if we want to do so but we have to face the consequences of the decision to do so. The cost of criminal behaviour, its price, has to be raised until crime is squeezed out of society. The principle is exactly analogous to that behind the raising interest rates (painfully to many) in order to squeeze out of society the socially and economically ruinous force of inflation. If society does not raise the costs of crime then it is revealing its preference for the level of crime that exists. Unless society is prepared to recognise and accept that crime should be treated as any other commercial activity then it should accept with equanimity the inevitability of increasing crime figures and not despair when 'increased resources' fail to produce the desired effects.

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The Wicked Eighties

Fiona Bulmer offers a revisionist view

The nineteen eighties are getting a bad name. The chroniclers of our time, disproportionately on the left, have decided that if they couldn't prevent the eighties from happening at the time they can make sure that the period is recounted as a warning to children: greed, braces and mobile phones, icons of a new demonology.

A picture is painted of some grim amoral world where no one cared about anyone and where we were all bent on doing each other down. Yet this bears no resemblance at all to the experience

of those of us for whom the eighties constituted our formative years. For us it was a period marked by a fundamental optimism, by a belief that individuals could manage their affairs without interference by the state, by a sense that everyone had the potential to succeed, and that our success would have wider benefits. Such idealism, even if it occasionally needs to be tempered, is surely a laudable and ethical starting point.

The values of that period, and there were values, focused on the individual rather than the collective, the respon-

sibility rather than the excuse. Hence the self-appointed guardians of our moral conscience, John Smith's Christian soldiers, hold up their hands in horror and scream selfishness, calling for the re-nationalisation of the moral life. In the ethical framework of these 'moral guardians everyone has evil at their heart, an evil which has to be bullied out of them by an all-knowing state manned by those who knew better. Life is a zero sum game: everyone's achievements must be at someone else's expense. The possibility that another's success might rub off on you,

or that you as an individual, might be pursuing a different yet compatible success, and that your aims are not mutually exclusive, is unimaginable in this dark world. The doctrine is simple: give a man a mobile phone and he will pass by a road traffic accident on the other side.

But it is obvious that it is only the individual who can be moral or immoral, only the individual who can act according to a set of values. It is only individuals who can be compassionate. Committee care is merely an excuse for dereliction of duty.

This leads us to one of the most dangerous features of socialism, both ancient and modern, namely paternalism, which is the indoctrination of the individual into believing that he cannot help it, that he knows not what he does; that it is society's fault, and therefore that he does not have to take responsibility for his actions. That is the hallmark of a permissive society: not a belief that anything goes but that you do not have to take the consequences of anything; that the state, dressed up as 'society', will pick up the pieces and say it wasn't your fault; that the individual can be neither praised nor censured. Society relieves us of our moral burdens, and guarantees that no individual is ever to blame. According to the culture of the left, individual success is distinctly unsavoury, and probably unethical; people who do well should not be encouraged, since that would be divisive. In the new model Labour Party, talk of class war may no longer be obligatory: nevertheless, it is assumed that people who get on ought to keep quiet about it. The successful undermine the egalitarian vision; they have deviated from their natural state, which should be one of collective despair. The Labour Party cannot accept that success is a prime motivator; doing well, doing better is a legitimate aspiration and the resulting inequality should be an object not of envy but of applause from the moral community. It is not success which produces inhumanity but the denigration of it and the fostering of a culture in which it does not matter what you do, since whether you are good or bad Father Christmas will

come to the rescue.

One of the reasons why the Conservative Party of the eighties struck a chord, and why it won elections, was because it did not devalue aiming high. That is why the trendy left want to denigrate that period, to label it as a failure, for it demonstrated the falsehood at the heart of their vision of society. It demonstrated that egalitarianism, however dressed up, is neither practical nor popular; it therefore threatened the position of the leftists as the self-appointed guardians of society with a monopoly of moral righteousness, a moral class, whose fundamental tenet seems to be 'thou shalt envy thy neighbour's success'.

As David Willetts puts it 'they (socialists) say that they want to help the mass of working people, on the other hand the liberal left intelligentsia show no respect for the values and aspirations of working people'. (*Modern Conservatism* p.21) In fact they still lose no opportunity to deprecate those values and aspirations. One such aspiration is ownership, once again regarded with disfavour by the moral guardians; the government encouraged people to buy and so it is the Government's fault if anything goes wrong. There is no such thing as individual responsibility even over your own property. If anything is likely to lead to the moral decline of a nation it is the propagation of such a view.

Ownership gives people a stake in the community in which they live. It gives them a territory to look after and so binds communities together through the sum of individual interests. Remove the individual interest and you remove the common interest. That is why there are no riots on privately owned housing estates.

Without ownership and its responsibilities, people do not care and do not take care. Hire cars take a beating that people would not impose on their own vehicles, rented property is abused or neglected because the users have no stake in the item's long-term future. Artificial stakes such as deposits have to be demanded. Ownership is an easy way to ensure that people take trouble and that they care for their environment. They have to take responsibility

for their own actions and live with the consequences; for the costs fall on them.

Ownership is linked by the socialist imagination to materialism, another charge against the eighties. Yet it is the socialist who is obsessed by material values. Only a materialist can adopt the politics of envy and the politics of confiscation since it is a paradigm of materialist thinking to believe that no-one should have anything which you do not have and therefore that it is better that neither of you should have it.

The socialist's materialism stems from the belief that money makes everything better; that the true solution to all problems is to apply liberal doses of money. If people are unhappy, if they mess up their lives, the cause is simply 'underfunding', or a lack of resources — the culprits being those who, thanks to their energy and industry have enjoyed a measure of success.

The socialist, whether modern or old-fashioned, promises to make life easy. That is a very alluring promise, but it is also a dangerous one for the moral health of the nation. The gullible believe it, and then are disappointed because fairy tales don't come true. It is not easy to acquire a house or a car even with the state handing out donations. And because people have been told that it is their right to have these goods they become frustrated when they are not readily available. Some people then think they are justified in taking what they have been led to believe is their right. This attitude is encouraged by the apologists for instant gratification; and it is one reason for the growth in crime.

The true materialists, the real grasping hands, can be found on the left. Their motto is 'what do we want?' and 'when do we want it?' — 'Now'. The eighties preached the reverse of this, namely 'there is no such thing as entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation' (Mrs Thatcher, 31st October 1987).

Socialists are all too keen to blame the present ills on the philosophy by the government of the nineteen eighties. It is undoubtedly true that there is a lack of moral responsibility amongst

a significant minority of the population. However, that must stem, in part, from decades of politicians, parents and teachers preaching rights without responsibility, advocating something for nothing, and holding forth the ideal of instant gratification. The values which should be put in the dock are those of politicians who parade envy as

a legitimate aspiration; parents who claim to be unable to take responsibility for the latent criminality of their children; and teachers who publicly humiliate the successful pupil in the interests of equality.

In the eighties the work ethic, a culture of independence and the concept of individual responsibility saw a

fragile resurgence. With those values the child of the eighties might grow up to be a more successful adult and a more ethical one — if the nineties allow him.

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Conservatism at its Highest

Edward Ericson celebrates the work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Václav Havel and Russell Kirk

The greatest events of our historical moment are occurring in the former Soviet empire.

These events signal not only the end of our century — which, in quantitative terms at least, has outstripped all others in manifesting man's inhumanity to man — but also the end of the whole modern era to which the Enlightenment gave normative shape. What Edmund Burke inveighed against two hundred years ago we now see collapsing of its own dead weight. History books will, I believe, some day say that the twentieth century began in 1917 (or maybe 1914) and ended in 1991 (or maybe 1989). They will say that the Enlightenment's utopianism which began in high hope with the doctrines of progress and human perfectibility, came to its crashing end with the totalitarian brutalities of the Soviet experiment in the centrally planned society.

The best witnesses to the great events of our day are to be found among those who experienced first-hand the depredations of communism and lived to tell the tale. Similarly, the keenest interpreters of the nature of communism, and indeed of the twentieth century as a whole, are to be found among those who have come out from under the rubble. For me and for many, the greatest of all these is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. To his name I would

now add that of Václav Havel, first President of post-communist Czechoslovakia.

As we commemorate forty years of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, we recall its long list of worthies: Burke, John Adams, Randolph, Tocqueville, Disraeli and Babbitt. Were Kirk to have composed his list now instead of then, and gone farther afield than Britain and America, he might well have included Solzhenitsyn and Havel. In his new book, the *Politics of Prudence*, Kirk lists ten modern events "in which the conservative cause retained or gained some ground." One of them is the change of residence of Solzhenitsyn, about whom Kirk says, "Solzhenitsyn's denunciation of the tyranny of ideology did more to dispel illusions — although not from everybody's vision — than did any other writing of our time."

What is that fundamental quality in Kirk which we also find in Solzhenitsyn and Havel? Meaning in human life lies ultimately in the transcendent realm, and we properly understand the nature of human beings and human society only as we locate their source in the transcendent. In Kirk's elegant formulation, from the opening pages of *The Conservative Mind*: "conservatives believe that a divine intent rules society as well as conscience, forging an eternal chain of right and duty

which links great and obscure, living and dead." Later in the book, when enumerating the chief problems facing conservatives, he mentions as the first one "the problem of spiritual and moral regeneration: the restoration of the ethical system and the religious sanction upon which any life worth living is founded." This, he says "is conservatism at its highest..."

It is through spiritual perception, normally employing religious categories, that we apprehend transcendent meaning. Religion is resolutely out of fashion among our intellectuals. They emphasize instead, the primacy of politics and resort to immanent political, economic and social categories of analysis for their final word. The race, class and gender claque which is so shrill among our cultural pacesetters focusses upon those contingencies of our being which are inherently of only secondary importance to us. Kirk would have us keep our eyes fixed on what binds human beings together: on our commonality, on our universal and fixed human nature.

Solzhenitsyn and Havel understand and share this vision with Kirk. All three reject ideology. The word is used very loosely today to refer to any set of ideas that a person holds. Alas, even some conservatives use it to describe their position. But when they do, they sell their souls. It is always a virtue to

use words accurately and precisely. All three thinkers would accept Kenneth Minogue's definition of ideology as "the propensity to construct structural explanations of the human world." Minogue uses the word ideology "to denote any doctrine which presents the hidden and saving truth about the evils of the world in the form of social analysis."

Kirk said forty years ago, "An intelligent conservative feels that the ills of the world cannot be cured by any single ingenious system of improvisation or any solemn political contrivance." The first chapter of his new book is entitled *The Errors of Ideology*. Ideology is an inverted religion, it "is the disease not the cure". Thus, he specifies, "the ideologues who promise the perfection of man and society have converted a great part of the twentieth century world into a terrestrial hell."

Havel describes ideology as "a specious way of relating to the world. It offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality, while making it easier for them to part with them." Its "primary excusatory function is to convey the illusion that the system is in harmony with the human order and the order of the universe."

Solzhenitsyn's enmity toward ideology is most forcefully expressed in his 1973 Letter to the Soviet Leaders: "Cast off this cracked ideology... Let us all pull off and shake off from all of us this filthy sweaty shirt of ideology which is now stained with the blood of those 66 million that it prevents the living body of the nation from breathing. This ideology bears the entire responsibility for all the blood that has been shed."

The great problem with ideology is that it imposes upon people a system which is, in Havel's words "built on lies." One recalls that Solzhenitsyn's final words to his countrymen as he was being forced into exile in 1974 were entitled "Live not by Lies". In an abnormal society where falsity permeates everything, there is, says Havel, only one way for individuals to get along with their daily lives: they "must live within a lie. They need not accept the lie. It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it." In

such straitened circumstances, says Solzhenitsyn, "the absolutely essential task is not political liberation, but the liberation of our souls from participation in the lie forced upon us."

But wherein lies the root of the Great Lie of our age? Here both Havel and Solzhenitsyn turn, unfashionably, to religious categories. For Havel, the fundamental mark of this century is "a great departure from God which has no parallel in history. As far as I know, we are living in the middle of the first atheistic civilisation." Solzhenitsyn concurs: "Atheism is the core of the whole Communist system." He remembers those elders of his childhood who explained "the great disasters that had befallen Russia" by asserting simply, "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." So he continues: and if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century, here too I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: "Men have forgotten God". Every calamity of the century stems from "the flaw of a consciousness lacking all divine dimension."

If ideology is chiefly what our three thinkers reject, what they chiefly embrace is the concept that in my book *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World*, I have called the moral universe. Here is what Kirk in his new book articulates as the very first conservative principle: "The conservative believes that there exists an enduring moral order. That order is made for man and man is made for it: human nature is a constant, and moral truths are permanent."

Solzhenitsyn, whose Christian faith is by now well known, has the same starting point. Thus he describes himself as a writer who "acknowledges a higher power above him and joyfully works as a common apprentice under God's heaven." This kind of writer will subordinate politics or economics to the more universal and eternal questions, such as "the laws of the history of mankind that were born in the depths of time immemorial and that will cease to exist only when the sun ceases to shine". Moreover, he declares, "... the state structure is of secondary significance. That this is so, Christ himself

teaches us. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" — not because every Caesar deserves it, but because Caesar's concern is not with the most important thing in our lives." And if the state oversteps its bounds? "When Caesar, having exacted what is Caesar's demands still more insistently that we render unto him what is God's — that is a sacrifice we dare not make."

"Politics is the art of apprehending and applying the Justice which is above nature." Kirk's idea is illustrated in a section of Solzhenitsyn's August 1914. Varsonofiev, an old sage, speaks as the author's mouthpiece when he tells some young students: "The laws for constructing the best social order must be inherent in the structure of the world as a whole. In the design behind the universe and in man's destiny." When one of the students suggests that "justice is an adequate principle for the construction of a good society." Varsonofiev replies: "Yes, indeed!... But not the justice we devise for ourselves, to create a comfortable earthly paradise. Another kind of justice, which existed before us and for its own sake." Justice is just one of the full panoply of moral principles which are built into the universe. It is God who made this moral order as it is; and it is true for all persons, whether or not they acknowledge that it is so.

That Havel shares this conception of the moral universe is all the more noteworthy for his being unable to embrace unreservedly the Christian faith. On the other hand, he says, "I can try to live in the spirit of Christian morality," and he admits to "an affinity for Christian sentiment and I'm glad that it's recognisable." What he is very clear about is that there is a "higher responsibility, which grows out of a conscious or sub-conscious certainty that our death ends nothing, because everything is forever being recorded and evaluated somewhere else, somewhere above us, in what I have called "the memory of Being", an integral aspect of the secret order of the cosmos, of nature, and of life, which believers call God and to whose judgement everything is liable."

Thus, when Havel tries to explain the very heart of his "presidential

programme", he says it is "to bring spirituality, moral responsibility, humaneness, and humility into politics and, in that respect, to make clear that there is something higher above us, that our deeds do not disappear into the black hole of time but are recorded somewhere and judged." This is hardly the usual vocabulary of politicians. But it squares with Kirk, who writes ... "Providence is the proper instrument for change, and the test of a statesman is his cognizance of the real tendency of Providential social forces."

In the *Politics of Prudence* Kirk provides a quotation from Solzhenitsyn which he describes as the essence of the conservative principle: "Our life consists not in the pursuit of material success but in the quest of worthy spiritual growth. Our entire earthly existence is but a transition stage in the movement toward something higher, and we must not stumble or fall, nor

must we linger fruitlessly on one rung of the ladder... The laws of physics and physiology will never reveal the indisputable manner in which the Creator constantly, day in and day out, participates in the life of each of us, unfailingly granting us the energy of existence; when this assistance leaves us, we die. In the life of our entire planet, the divine Spirit moves with no less force: this we must grasp in our dark and terrible hour."

Of all the strands in the conservative movement, Kirk is right to ally Solzhenitsyn most closely with the cultural conservatives, or traditionalists.

If my emphasis on things spiritual is discomfiting, I can only reiterate that this way lie the routes to the heart of Kirk's vision. Shorn of this emphasis, even conservatism will tend toward programmatic ideology. I believe that there is a wide audience today for this

kind of vision, for it is universal, not provincially American. The most eager listeners may be in those parts of the world that have borne the full brunt of our terrible century. Solzhenitsyn and Havel, luminous witnesses though they be, are far from alone. Indeed, we in the comfortable West have much to learn from those in the devastated East. A conservatism which listens to them will be an enriched conservatism which will have a future. It will hold firm to what Russell Kirk calls the permanent things. And it will speak to the deeper longings of humanity.

Eric Ericson is a Professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan and the author of *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision*.

In Charge but not to Blame

Christian Atias explores the Moral Bankruptcy of Today's Politicians

"I was the person in charge; but I am not to blame." Mme Georgina Dufoix, a government minister, said this about her personal responsibility for the contamination of haemophiliacs with AIDS-infected blood. What sort of times do we live in, and what are we to make of our society, or our political culture and our public standards, that a minister of state can say she was in charge but in no way responsible for thousands of deaths caused by the work of her department?

The question manifestly connects with the links between ethics and morality on the one hand, and economics, law and politics on the other. In this case, after due consideration of some of the medical evidence, the liability of the various services involved was "rationally" determined. Particular stress

was laid, apparently, on the economic aspects of the matter. That the minister feels able to say she was in charge but not to blame is a fact particularly rich in meaning. It is worth dwelling on.

We live in an age which likes to search out people in charge of things and speculate on their exact responsibilities. Moreover, every language always has its own set of elevated words. These identify noteworthy periods in a nation's history. They express its deepest and most perdurable thoughts. The French word "responsable" ("in charge") is surely one such word.

It is a word evoking both men and events, geniuses, lesser and greater moments, victories and glittering recoveries. It also reminds us of cowards, traitors and mediocrities as well as

shameful episodes, defeats and unexpected reversals. Henry IV and Francis I were in charge. In another sense, so was Bazaine, (French General of the Franco-Prussian war) responsible as he was for the loss of an army of 180,000 men. Napoleon and De Gaulle were in charge, too, taking responsibility as much for the Civil Code and the Constitution as for notable victories.

When we speak of these men we use an old feudal term ("responsable") signifying the debtor of a specified rent. From the fourteenth century onward this came to mean someone who must give an account of his actions. In the eighteenth century it was to acquire a political denotation. André Maurois was thinking in this latter sense when he said that the man in charge is neither loved nor detested. He is the boss,

that is to say he bears responsibility. Someone in charge has a responsibility both for a past to which he contributed and for a future which he wanted in some way to shape.

In the second place, should we not ask whether such people in charge, responsible as they are both in law and before the bar of history, can really remove themselves from all sense of moral culpability? If we do think that they can, we must surely regard the catastrophes apparently caused by their actions as in reality inevitable. Yet, both in the way nations picture themselves and in the history of thought, the idea of being in charge and responsible implies victory over such fatalism. Vigny wrote to this effect in his *Destinies*, when he stressed that to remove the idea of an otherwise fatal drift of events is to leave unanswered the question of responsible human agency. And in the same context Paul Valéry insists that "the idea of responsibility carries its own form of determinism", a causal linkage, since "our acts follow us only on condition that we follow ourselves".

In the third place we should note that the breaking of the natural link between political and legal responsibility and moral culpability, is a sign of the times. It reveals a fundamental change in political sensibility. Why, after all, do certain people go into politics? They want to get things done; and they seek social recognition. The trouble is that these two motives are inherently contradictory. Each one simultaneously entails and excludes the ideas of personal responsibility and guilt. They both entail the notion of responsibility because there is no such thing as significant political action unless its results are up for judgement. They both entail the possibility of guilt because there is no social recognition without selective discrimination. On the other hand, political life tends to dilute responsibility because action is always indirect and effected through many layers of delegation, while the very institutionalisation of politics we are speaking about confers an extraordinarily privileged status on anyone who has any involvement at all in political life.

The decline of political responsibil-

ity is as sad as it is frightening. We should strive ceaselessly to reverse this trend.

Our political figures are losing the sense of responsibility and reality alike. They are cut off from society and from history, isolated in space and time. This is why they play at being sorcerers' apprentices, magicians whose plans and programmes can remake the world from scratch, refashioning men and women, children, society, morality and economy. Their isolation makes them lose all sense of responsibility.

Irresponsibility and Isolation in Space

The decline of responsibility is born from neglect of the various communities, social groups of a more or less coherent kind, to which every man belongs. The irresponsible man in charge feels isolated. He prides himself on being his own master, indeed in charge of the world, because, whether deliberately or not, he takes no notice of the social bonds he tears up, nor of the communal solidarity he destroys, nor of the delicate balances overturned by his policies and actions. This is historical change of the most profound kind.

When they are people of distinction, our politicians knew that being in charge meant being capable of wrongdoing. They were themselves an untrammelled élite, selected from the best members of the various natural constituencies, such as villages, towns, professions, associations and the religious, as well as political parties proper. In such a setting information circulated naturally. A kind of natural apprenticeship took place, based on experience and such as to nurture intuitive abilities. These politicians or at any rate the best of them, knew that men have the potential for mediocrity, small-mindedness, lack of foresight and weakness.

Our people in charge have become irresponsible as their jobs have become relatively secure. These jobs are managed according to newly acquired principles learned under identically programmed conditions. Such individuals are no longer capable of exercising real responsibility. They all

parrot the same things; they all know each other and stick together. The most adroit have mastered the lessons their masters taught them. They know how to put on a show and get themselves talked about. They have forgotten, however, one of their basic roles, namely the safeguarding of institutions. Faced with catastrophe or tragic events, they speak of "malfunctions". They do not know how to shield institutions by sacrificing themselves, in order that the legitimacy of the institutions itself be upheld. The state can go to the wall as far as they are concerned, provided they have a chance of re-election. Totally isolated in today's world, they have forgotten about the world of yesterday and tomorrow.

Irresponsibility and isolation in time

The decline of the sense of responsibility is bound up with ignorance of what links us to the past, of the continuities which furnish us with a history which helps us frame our future. The man who refuses the legacy he owes his fathers will prepare nothing of worth for his children. The man of irresponsible outlook sees himself without past or future; he blithely neglects his ancestors and descendants alike. Being without roots, he has no valid projects to accomplish. He makes do with short-term actions, sometimes of a spectacular sort, but never with any moral weight.

The responsible politician breathes life into institutions. The irresponsible one expects them to provide him with the fortitude he lacks. He drains them dry. The former engages in reform rarely and in the personal sense modestly, but on an inspiring scale and in a way calculated to last. The second rectifies the bad laws his peers have made and messes about with the institutions he has bent to his own advantage in his search for political survival. The responsible politician is the very pillar of such institutions, which wither away when they are required to protect irresponsibility. The responsible politician also knows how to own up to his errors and faults. He does not give up on his policies. If he does go down, he does it alone, hoping to safeguard his

agenda and its future beneficiaries. He accepts that being properly in charge means accepting moral responsibility.

Those who are merely in charge are easy to identify. It is their ruthlessness with regard to other people which picks them out for the historian. There are no worse purgers and inquisitors than recent traitors and new converts. They are not likely to find themselves guilty when it is so much easier and convincing to put other people in the dock. They can place their victims at the front of the stage where the skilfully manipulated play of light and shade can cover up the deepest guilt, highlighting only the vicious anathemas carefully cast on other people at adroitly chosen moments, by the true culprits.

Politicians are now isolated in the world, socially as well as historically. They are losing all sense of their duties. They can recapture this sense, only if they take cognisance of what they owe alike to ancestry and posterity. They need a proper sense of the moral universe in which everyone has his responsible place.

The Renewal of the Sense of Responsibility

In late twentieth century France we no longer know how to energise our élites. This is because French political administration stands in need of a profound renewal in which the sense of responsibility and guilt can be re-established. Politicians can be responsible only on two conditions. What they have lost and what politics demands, is

first of all a sense of history and secondly a feeling for freedom.

Political life is punctuated by electoral accountancy rather than informed as it should be by the long view. Because we have the time to learn what only time can teach us, we have to accept the idea of risk, risk advisedly embarked on.

There are cases of the blindest risk which no reasonable evaluation of the known circumstances could justify. Properly speaking it was not reasonable for Louis VII to expose his tiny army to the military might of his vassal Henry II Plantagenet, in order to succour the beleaguered Raymond V, count of Toulouse. Nor was it reasonable to decide to move a whole army by taxi (during the First World War). Such risks can be taken only with the long view in mind. They require the sense of history, with all the hopes history sustains, the alternatives it makes possible, the obligations it imposes and the choices it alone can justify.

These risks are often enormous and cannot be taken by anyone without a developed sense of justice and hence of risk. The risks called for today, if we are not to be found guilty before the court of history, for not attempting the impossible in order to escape the unacceptable, are vast, rash, even mad. Those capable of running such risks must have a profound feeling for liberty.

Responsibility is the complete opposite of fatalism, "Socrates...", put to death for his ideas, when he could have

avoided death, and ... facing the end with the smile of the sage, submitting to injustice but not partaking in it.... (J. de Romilly) embodies liberty and responsibility alike. Closer to our time, De Gaulle, when he made his great speech of June 18th, 1940, again combined responsibility and liberty. For France and for himself he took a risk. The freely chosen act he accomplished was utterly unreasonable. His words might indeed have been met with the utmost derision. This is a risk De Gaulle was prepared to take, knowing as he did that the situation called for a demonstration of moral grandeur. The freedom which can commit irreparable damage is the same one which can accomplish unimaginable things, of immeasurable value. The outstanding quality of the person who is genuinely in charge is this ability to act freely. Through an act of Olympian grandeur he transcends the boundaries of the unthinkable and the ridiculous.

Those who think they are in charge but never to blame, are by contrast impotent. Yet we French, and France herself, are greatly in need of moral leadership. The very survival of our people, the durability and historic longevity of our civilisation, depend on our ability to choose our élites and rally behind them.

Translated by Dennis O'Keeffe

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Notes on Reviewers

Nigel Ashford is Principal Lecturer in Politics at Staffordshire University and co-editor of *Public Policy and the Impact of the New Right* (Pinter).

David Edelsten is Hunting Correspondent of *Country Life*.

Dick Hodder was Professor of Geography at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Ray Honeyford is a freelance writer.

A.W. Purdue is a Lecturer at the Open University.

Raymond Tong is a freelance writer. His *Selected Poems* will be published by Robert Hale Limited in July.

Editorial

Recent scandals have created the impression that the Conservative Party is as corrupt, undisciplined and seedy as the New Model Labour Party which has made such a spectacular contribution to Tory success. When we examine the case, however, we find that there is only one real charge that can be made against the Tory leadership, which is that it contains people as mediocre as those whom it strives to govern. The faults for which high ranking Tories are currently denounced are simply the common habits of the British people — habits which are so contagious that the Royal Family too has begun to acquire them: fickleness, sexual laxity, a loss of belief either in objective moral values or in the dignity of public life. Against the background of such defects, hypocrisy hardly deserves to be singled out as a major failing. La Rochefoucauld famously described it as the tribute which vice pays to virtue; at any rate, we can be sure that if hypocrisy were abandoned by the British, who have always been so skilled at it, virtue would now receive no tribute in this country at all. We have witnessed the progressive demoralisation of our collective life; and the media pundits who scoff at our faithless and fornicating leaders are by no means the least to blame for habits which they share, and which they have until now gleefully advocated in the name of liberation. How else are people to respond to the current wisdom, that the world is nothing but a kaleidoscope of 'cultures', none of which has any objective claim to our endorsement?

Disappointment with the Conservative Party reflects the deep recognition that the fate of our country and the fate of Toryism are inextricably connected. People look to the Party to represent the things that

endow our corporate life with legitimacy and permanence. If those things vanish from the people, then they will vanish from the Party. The government must therefore ascertain whether, and to what extent, our nation has lost its moral fibre, and whether there might remain some parts of it in which the will to renewal persists. Lady Thatcher's success was due to her ability to touch upon the hidden but living roots of national feeling, and to invite into the conservative fold a new generation of Britons, who sought to make the best of modern conditions without jettisoning their historical identity. She represented not only social mobility, but the enduring frame that gives sense to it. Mr Major's unpopularity is due to no economic or political crisis, but to a failure to find the social roots of his Party's politics. The moral sap is there, but must be looked for; a policy of lopping off rotten branches makes no sense, if you allow people to believe that everything else is rotten too.

If the Conservative Party has been identified in popular feeling with an idea of our country, it is because it has been perceived as something other than a collection of yuppies and career politicians. It is because it has remained visibly a part of the web of traditional institutions — the Crown, the Common Law, the Churches — which have stood above expediency, and defined our society not as a means to creature comfort, but as an end in itself. It is because it has represented some remnant of the rural life that preceded the great conurbations, and which remains an icon of our national character. It is because it has stood for individual freedom, the right of the British people to frame their own laws, and the defence of the realm. In short, the Tory Party has stood for tradition against innovation, for country against town, for home against abroad, for the

individual against the state, and for pride against submission. By standing for those things, it helped to reinforce them, and to inspire the British people with the sense that they belong together, not merely so as to grab what they can of a cake provided by the central government, but through a common destiny which defines their rights and duties. The Tory Party represented and inspired some of the moral strength which has been so evident a characteristic of our country in modern times. If people now denounce its moral posture, it is because they remember its traditional character and role, and wish it to regain them.

But is it necessary for the Tory Party to be the mediocre thing that it is fast becoming? We think not. The Party's popularity will continue to decline, just so long as it is perceived, like the Labour Party, as a collection of parasitical 'interest groups', rather than as a symbol of our national loyalty. On all issues in which the Party could reassume its historical mission, however, it has recently insisted on throwing the opportunity away. The craven surrender of sovereignty at Maastricht; the ridiculous overtures to the IRA; the failure to pursue a policy of law and order or to increase the cost of crime; the winding down of the armed forces; the recourse to high taxation; the refusal to defend the values of country life in face of urban savages and advocates of 'animal rights' — all these indicate a loss of confidence, beside which the Party's moralistic rhetoric is bound to appear no more than hollow sloganising. The time has come for the Tory Party to *think*, not about the present only, but about the future and the past. Policies improvised by Downing Street advisors have no real credibility, when they are uninformed by culture, philosophy, or historical awareness.

Letters

Sir,

I would like to congratulate you on your recent issue dedicated to Africa, which was an inspiration and encouragement to us all.

At last those of us who care and are fighting for a better Africa are comforted by the fact that there is a journal prepared to listen, not be intimidated and to report the truth about Africa, however unfashionable it might be.

We thank you again

Sarah Cluriva
London N16

Sir,

The historic criticism of rates (There has to be a better way, *SR* Sept. 93.) applies equally to the Council Tax and still to the business rates. They are not related to ability to pay, the valuations are not consistent, business rates are unfair because they are not related to profits or benefits and they are taxation without representation. Business rates also reduce local accountability and, if high, can reduce employment. In addition local taxation is imposed by local politicians elected by only a minority of the electorate, the majority of whom do not bother to vote in local elections.

This situation surely requires the abolition of local taxation and its replacement by a per capita grant. Already Government grants account for 43% of local government revenue, with 34% coming from fees, charges and rents and 23% from local taxation. A per capita grant would need to be different for each type of authority — metropolitan area, county and district but they could dispose of the grant as they now dispose of revenue raised by local taxation. However, the level of grant could be related to the performance of the efficient authorities and thus force all to be efficient.

A Conservative government is naturally reluctant to adopt this solution

because it would require an increase in income tax but the overall burden would reduce as local authorities were forced to be more efficient.

Gordon Line,
Shoreham by Sea,

Sir,

In your September number Mr James Bogle is entirely correct about several important points. Mr Bogle is right in saying that clericalism helps to explain the clamour for women's 'ordination' and in saying that women cannot be priests, no matter who pretends to do what to them. He is also right in implying that orthodox members of the Church of England ought to leave that Church immediately. Experience in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere shows that no matter what assurances are given, traditionalist parishes and dioceses will be picked off one by one by the modernists and that bad will turn to worse in the Church as a whole. It is impossible to remain a pure cup of water in a dirty puddle. If the ordination of women is heretical and schismatic, then to remain in communion with bishops and a Church that formally teaches and approves it, is to approve it oneself implicitly, whatever one's private opinions or preferences may be.

Opposition to the so-called ordination of women is, however, hardly sufficient reason for becoming a Roman Catholic. On the one hand, if papal claims are true, then one should be a Roman Catholic whatever the Church of England may do or not do. On the other hand, if Rome is wrong in denying the basic Anglican belief that nothing should be taught as necessary to salvation that cannot be read in Scripture or be proved thereby, then the lunacy of the Church of England in no way makes Rome right. The English Roman Catholic hierarchy has understood this point well and is not

encouraging Anglicans to convert solely because of opposition to priestesses. Mr Bogle appears to have given his bishops' statements on this subject insufficient weight in forming his advice to others.

Mr Bogle is mistaken if he believes, that 'Anglican Use' parishes in the United States are virtually a United Church or Rite. At present the Anglican Use is permitted as a pastoral indulgence in very limited settings in only a few places and there are no guarantees that this Use will be tolerated beyond one generation. English developments suggest that nothing more generous will be offered to former Anglicans there. At present the English Roman Catholic Church seems to be offering former Anglicans even less than the few crumbs given them in the States.

Happily there is a genuinely Anglican, Catholic alternative to the heresy of the Church of England (or of the Episcopal Church in the United States) and to the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Churches. That alternative is the Anglican Catholic Church, which is represented in England by the Right Reverend Leslie Hamlett. Several dozen Church of England clergy already have joined Bishop Hamlett or will when the ordination of women canon is promulgated.

Finally, Mr Bogle appears to think that the Eastern Orthodox Churches are the same as the Oriental Orthodox. However, the Eastern Orthodox Churches are Chalcedonian Christians in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople. 'Oriental Orthodox' is the name properly applied to the non-Chalcedonian Churches of the Copts, the Ethiopians, Armenia, Syria, and the St Thomas Christians of Malabar.

Mark Haverland, Georgia, USA

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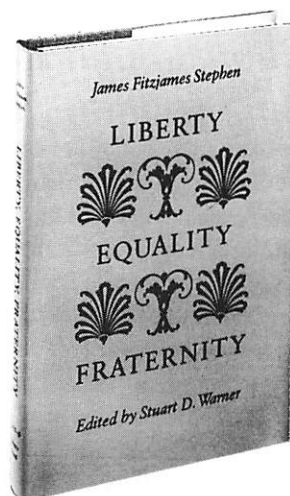
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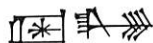
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'Every Man Thinks Meanly of Himself ...'

David Edelsten

A History of Warfare by John Keegan — Hutchinson £20.00 1993.

This book is in part an act of homage by a man of high intellect to men of action: John Keegan has spent much of his working life explaining their profession to soldiers. In 'The Face of Battle' (Cape 1976) he established a new and convincing theory of the nature of the impact of armed combat on participants at the tactical level, and of the historical significance of that impact. Now he stands back and tells us how war fits into history and pre-history, arriving at three tenets: Clausewitz was wrong; "a world ... without armies would be uninhabitable"; modern man needs to re-learn the restraint practised by his primitive ancestors.

I can make no pretence of disliking this book. I was captivated, as I believe most readers will be, by the Introduction, and more or less enthralled until reaching the Conclusion, 392 pages later. However, I do not recommend those who do not have to do so to read the book at a sitting. It can just as well be taken as a book of essays, and digested slowly. The five principal chapters, 'War in Human History', 'Stone', 'Flesh', 'Iron', and 'Fire', are separated from each other by shorter 'Interludes' treating transcending topics. It is a successful scheme, and comes off better than the bald chapter titles promise.

Clausewitz, a figure otherwise handled sympathetically by Keegan, is dethroned. Have we not all at one time or another parroted his most famous dictum; and have we not all, in doing so, had a suspicion of its glibness? Hiroshima provided the *reductio ad*

absurdum, but we have had to wait for this book to tell us so.

Clausewitz was a man of his times, a child of the Enlightenment ... Had his mind been furnished with just one extra intellectual dimension ... he might have been able to perceive that war embraces much more than politics: that it is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself.

There we have it; war is not an extension of politics, it is a cultural thing, far older and far more basic.

The indispensability of armies, civilized armies, is a theme that permeates the book. Keegan admires the military, in the endearing way some scholars always have. I find it impressive that this love affair has survived their many years of co-habitation at the Royal Military Academy, where unfledged, callow would-be subalterns arguably go through the most unattractive phase of an army officer's life-cycle. But we must acquit him of special pleading, and his case was made before we had the practical daily evidence on our TV screens of anarchy 'below the military horizon' in Bosnia.

Those who remember with gratitude, as I do, this author's cool percipience during the long anxious days before battle was joined in the Gulf War, when, amidst all the frantic and misleading tick-tack of ex-ministers, he calmly told us what the odds really were, will not lightly accuse him of romanticism. But I cannot follow him in believing that we have anything to learn from the built-in limitations of some forms of primitive warfare. The

argument is beguiling, but unconvincing. He would have us believe that the ritual and ceremony that limited bloodletting in, for instance, Aztec warfare, during their 'flower battles', has some pertinence to our future survival in the nuclear age. You may take a similar lesson from your dog, when he avoids a mauling in a scrap that he cannot win; but I do not think that it has strategic or historical application — that sort of thing is surely way past the ratchet of developing human behaviour?

The range of this book is astonishing, the descent to practical detail a recurring delight, and unlooked-for connections throw shafts of light. We learn of the extraordinary importance of the eggs of the sooty tern to Easter Islanders, we have sketched for us a genealogical connection between the Napoleonic garrison of Prussia and the Golden Horde; and we find ourselves all but actual hoplites, so real is the description of phalanx tactics (but would someone please tell me what I am supposed to do with my spear when I use my sword?).

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of correcting so consummate a scholar, this Balliol man, my on occasion pedagogue. He means 'ferret' not 'squirrel' on page 302 — you must buy the book to discover how either creature might have a place in a history of warfare — and he must have been nodding when he wrote 'poisonous intoxication' on page 385 (why didn't someone at Hutchinson pick this up?). But this is a book of outstanding originality and interest.

The Future for British Universities

Nigel Ashford

Impostors in the Temple: American Intellectuals Are Destroying Our Universities and Cheating Our Students of Their Future. Martin Anderson, Simon & Schuster, 1992, \$22.

British universities are going through a period of great upheaval, largely imposed from above, and usually by the government in a version of central planning for higher education. I predict that the unintended consequences will be far greater than the intended ones, and that they will be far more negative than positive, with both students and faculty dissatisfied.

While American universities are obviously very different from British ones, they provide some useful clues as to the likely direction of ours, and they confirm my worst fears. Martin Anderson provides a searing indictment of US colleges, with the most prestigious often the worst. He is in a unique position to comment on these developments due to his location at the interface between policymakers and academics: with, but not in, academia. After experience in academia, he was in charge of academic liaison for the Reagan campaigns, was head of President Reagan's Office of Policy Development, and is now Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, located at Stanford University but independent of it.

He identifies the necessary qualities of academics as high intelligence, a scholarly temperament, and a love of teaching, and fears that "most of them don't like to teach, few of them do important research and writing, and at least one or two aren't very intelligent" (p.37). Academia has been transformed by two developments: the explosion in the number of students and the dominant role played by government funding. Even private colleges obtain an average of 20% of their funds from government and, as every British university knows, receiving any form of government support is a threat

to independence.

A Carnegie Report concluded that "on far too many campuses, teaching is not rewarded and faculty who spend too much time counselling and advising students may diminish their prospects for tenure and promotion" (p.45). Many academics will recognise that phenomenon. This creates a 'contempt for teaching' and what counts today is "research and publishing and certain kinds of administrative work" (p.49). Unfortunately Anderson gives little attention to the latter and is too keen to blame the demise of teaching on the former alone. I also disagree with him that most academics do not enjoy teaching; rather, they respond to the incentive structure which discourages effort in teaching. The 'publish or perish' syndrome leads to the use of teaching assistants, usually graduate students, described as 'children teaching children'. The consequences are that: most lower level class students never come into contact with their professors; grade inflation where a degree becomes "more a certificate of attendance than a badge of achievement" (p.59); students taking longer to complete their degree (with only 20% completing within four years); and the failure of over half the doctoral candidates to complete.

The Glass Bead Game was a parody of intellectuals by Herman Hesse, in which they became obsessed with a game, divorcing themselves from reality. Anderson views the writing of prestigious journal articles as another game: they are not read by other academics, are frequently too mathematical to be understood, and are written in such a way as to be inaccessible to the general reader. One professor claimed that the formula for publication was that "[a]cademic writers should: not

pick an interesting topic, not challenge existing beliefs, not obtain surprising results, not use simple methods, not provide full disclosure, and not write clearly" (p.101). The problem is, Anderson states, that "the highest value is trivial, irrelevant publication and the lowest value is teaching" (p.103). He ignores the valuable teaching role of many publications, but so does our own Higher Education Funding Council, with the low status they attribute to textbooks.

The longest chapter is on the intellectual hubris or arrogance which leads to widespread corruption. Professional corruption involves plagiarism and fraud, which Anderson believes are more widespread than generally recognised. Political corruption found in the political correctness movement, illustrated by the opposition of Stanford faculty to locating the Reagan library on campus. Personal corruption exists when sexual attraction is accompanied by abuse of authority, illustrated by the case of a Stanford professor who committed suicide after it was discovered that he was molesting the son of one of his graduate students — the university then honoured him with a special medal. Institutional corruption includes a cartel in the provision of financial aid, academic credit for athletes, and defrauding the government with research 'overheads' such as a yacht and flowers for the university president. The University of Wisconsin at Madison under Donna Shalala, now Secretary for Human Services, was one of many universities forced to return funds.

Anderson concludes by blaming the trustees, whom he describes as guilty of "incompetence, timidity and neglect" with no knowledge of what ac-

tually happens within their institutions. His ten point agenda is: 1) prohibit student teaching 2) no reward for spurious research 3) change the PhD system 4) end tenure 5) recognise the difference between teachers and researchers 6) return to the four year degree 7) take sexual harassment seriously 8) ban political discrimination 9) stop athletic corruption and 10) attack institutional corruption.

Unfortunately his programme will

not solve the problems he identifies. The basic problem is, as he notes on page 14 and then ignores, the university is a semi-socialist state. Charles Rowley characterises it as "producers who don't sell, customers who don't buy, and owners who don't control". A market-oriented regime would encourage students who want to learn, enable teachers to be rewarded while allowing those who want to be primarily researchers to continue, and above

all allow for the development of a diverse set of institutions to satisfy students and faculty, as suggested in Sir Douglas Hague's IEA pamphlet *Beyond Universities*.

I do not believe that the state of British higher education is as bad as Anderson describes the USA. However the pain of recognition was too frequent. I saw the future and I don't want to march towards it.

Dangers from the Mosque

Dick Hodder

Some to Mecca Turn to Pray: Islamic Values in the Modern World. Mervyn Hiskett, Claridge Press, 1993, £12.95.

In view of current fears about the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and expansionism to the western democratic way of life, this is a most important and timely book. Mervyn Hiskett's study of Islamic values in the modern world is a powerful and persuasive piece of writing on two levels. The first part of the book provides an authoritative, succinct and immensely readable understanding of what Islam is, and what its historical, cultural and social achievements have been. Without such knowledge, Hiskett argues, nobody can be expected to understand why Islamic fundamentalism poses such a threat to us in the West. Those who wish to know why Muslims think and act as they do will find here an admirable summary of just about everything they need to know. Hiskett ranges widely and confidently over his material: from Islam's historical origins to its several modern expressions; from the place of women in Islam to the extended family; from the Islamic mind to its achievements in Arts and Letters; from Islam's political culture to its concept of theocracy. In addition, he examines the Islamic reaction to the colonial experience and Islam's attitude to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Throughout all these chapters Hiskett reveals a deep sympathy, even affection, for the Muslim way of life, and the problems with

which Muslims are faced in the modern world.

In the later chapters of his book, however, Hiskett is concerned to point out the dangers that Islam poses for us in the western democracies. He devotes a whole chapter to the Salman Rushdie affair and explains why the publication of *The Satanic Verses* caused such offence to Muslims. He believes that Rushdie's book should be banned 'on the grounds of its extreme discourtesy'; but, more significantly, he uses the Rushdie affair as an example of how Muslims feel justified in arguing that their own law, based on divine revelation, should take precedence over the man-made and secular law of Western democracies.

Whatever values lie within Islam — and he admits there are many — Hiskett believes that Islamic fundamentalism, as expressed in the West, is incompatible with, and inferior to, our own way of life and must therefore be resisted. It is contrary to all the principles on which our freedoms are based.

Hiskett's recommendations about how to counter these dangers from Islam will not please everyone. He is a self-confessed post-Christian, academic secularist of a strongly conservative turn of mind. He argues against encouraging such public manifestations of Islamic triumphalism as the building of mosques — an argu-

ment that has been given some support by recent (1994) events in Luton. He argues against giving special treatment for Muslims in education. While Muslims should certainly share in the British state education system, this must not be allowed to become a stepping stone on the way to setting up a theocracy. And in view of demographic trends which might easily result in the Muslim percentage rising to significant levels in Britain, Hiskett argues that restrictions should be placed on the immigration of dependents of Muslim families already here. For the spread of Islam in the West can so easily be achieved by Muslim immigrant communities of recent origin propagating Islam by a combination of deliberate activism and passive demographic pressures. Hiskett advises the Government to abandon the policy of integration and to seek instead to allow the spontaneous processes of cultural assimilation to run their normal course. Hiskett believes strongly that the policy of integration can never be effective in blending Muslims in Britain into the mainstream, post-Christian, secularist culture.

This is a thought-provoking and sometimes very moving book, written with utter conviction, passion, balance and judgement. It is sympathetic but never sentimental or bigoted; and it is throughout courageously realistic.

Always the Conservative

A. W. Purdue.

The Great Melody. A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke. Conor Cruise O'Brien. Sinclair-Stevenson 1992, £22.50

Edmund Burke. The Enlightenment and Revolution. Peter J. Stanlis. Transaction Publishers 1991.

Edmund Burke. Pre-Revolutionary Writings. Edited by Ian Harris. Cambridge University Press 1993.

Was Edmund Burke a liberal or a conservative? The Burke of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* certainly seems conservative enough; that book has been seen as a seminal text for a political philosophy which hardly needed to be articulated before the challenge to the assumption of tradition as the guiding principle in human affairs made by the Enlightenment and then by the French Revolution. The Burke of *The Cause of the Present Discontents* and the Whig politician, who challenged the legitimacy of the protestant ascendancy in Ireland, supported the demands of the American colonists and demanded the impeachment of Warren Hastings, does not fit so easily into the conservative tradition. Conservative theorists have tried to reveal the essential conservatism of the Whig, while liberals conversely have had to claim that Burke's attitude to the French Revolution was entirely consistent with his Whiggish liberalism, his support for the Glorious Revolution and his sympathy with the American colonists.

This is, of course, an argument between those to the right of the political centre, between conservatives and moderate liberals. Conor Cruise O'Brien quotes Marx's comment on Burke as, "the man who is held by every party in England as the paragon of the British statesman" but even in Marx's day radical liberals like J.S. Mill were outside such a consensus, while all those, whether socialists or liberals, who approve of the French Revolution and revere Paine's, rather than Burke's attitude towards it, are necessarily hostile to Burke.

Perhaps the question is misguided;

for Burke was a practical politician as well as a theorist; and he was, of course, a Whig, which is a political attitude notoriously difficult to define in terms of general principles rather than specific issues. Burke was concerned with specific issues and much of his political philosophy was expressed in writings concerned to further a partisan viewpoint of the day. To what extent can we find a continuous and coherent philosophy underpinning his writing?

Conor Cruise O'Brien has no doubts about Burke's consistency or that it was a Whiggish liberal consistency. His Burke is firmly in the Whig-liberal tradition and is suspiciously like his biographer, who not surprisingly approves of him. O'Brien is that unusual combination, a Whiggish Irishman, whose own career has some parallels with Burke's in that he has moved, in the world's eyes, if not in his own, from left to right: from leftist liberal positions in Irish politics and at the United Nations, to sympathy with such an unfashionable cause in politically correct circles as Ulster Unionism. He is concerned to defend Burke from charges of inconsistency and political opportunism.

O'Brien's title is taken from a phrase of Yeats's:

American colonies. Ireland France and India
Harried and Burke's great melody
against it.

He sees "a profound inner harmony within Burke's writing and speeches on the four themes". Burke's target was the abuse of power.

In *The Great Melody* we are played the tune of an unreconstructed Whig

interpretation of the reign of George III: the attempt to restore the political power of the crown, the double cabinet *et al.* It's a good tune and O'Brien plays it well. He has a point. Namier was a reductionist in his concentration on the socio-economic positions of individuals and his explanation of their political decisions in terms of such positions. He took, O'Brien alleges, the *fantasia* out of history. O'Brien puts it back in with a vengeance, not only in his willingness to fill in the gaps left by a lack of documentary evidence -- "Then as now many of the most important things didn't get written down" -- but in his determination to see his hero as always consistent and ever principled.

Conor Cruise O'Brien's attitude to Burke is rather like Burke's attitude to Marie Antoinette; his sword is unsheathed at the smallest slight to his paragon. This is a pity because he has written a sparkling book, which brings out the importance of its subject's Irish origins and catholic background, and which, had it been less hagiographical, would have done such to confirm Burke's importance and integrity.

Peter J. Stanlis and other American writers on Burke have fixed upon the term the Moral Natural Law to describe Burke's philosophic outlook. Stanlis easily demolishes the view that Burke was a utilitarian, though he was certainly an empiricist. Burke's guiding principle was *prudence* by which, Stanlis argues, he meant "the ultimate and constant consideration that every statesman is morally obliged to give, under the Natural Law, to the national and local circumstances that distinguish persons from one another". This

natural law was very different from the natural laws of Hobbes or Locke, being rather derived from the natural law of Aristotle and of the Scholastics. One wonders, however, whether the term does not give a rather secular tone to principles Burke derived from revelation. As Ian Harris points out, it was over revelation that Burke quarrelled with the Deists who believed that the information required for salvation they believed that the information required for salvation could be collected by natural means by which they meant reason, and he was concerned, "to employ God in explanation, whether of man's aesthetic perceptions, of the social order, or of morality".

Few politicians and no successful politician can afford to be all principle. Burke was a man on the make in British politics and, though he was no venal opportunist, he had sometimes to follow the Rockingham line. Yet, as Ian Harris argues in the introduction to his excellent edition of Burke's pre-revolutionary writings, "Burke's sense of the general provided the presuppositions of his particular views". But what was his sense of the general? In a debate with Sir Isaiah Berlin in which O'Brien contests the latter's views of Burke as a reactionary thinker, Berlin queries whether Burke believed in "human rights, as opposed to British,

American, and Iraqi rights". In a sense Berlin is correct. Burke was famously opposed to the claims of general principles in political affairs and argued that abstract liberty was not to be found. His approach is a combination of the theological and the historical. The conditions and character of a particular society were the result of both God's providence and the common experience of a people over time. He was fundamentally opposed to the contemporary notion that reason could devise workable human institutions: "It is not possible to create as improved constitution out of whole cloth, out of purely rational abstract concepts".

O'Brien's residual loyalty to liberal icons makes him claim that Burke was a man of the earlier Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of Montesquieu and Locke. However, Burke's opposition to Deism and belief in Revelation would appear to rule this out. Moreover, he rejected Locke's interpretation of the 1688 Revolution, though he found much to admire in Montesquieu's *D'Esprit des Lois*. Certainly Burke detested the hostility of Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists to Christianity, hated the utopianism of Rousseau and abhorred the French Revolution. As Ian Harris argues, Burke's reaction to the Revolution was so intense because of its egalitarianism, its disregard for

the rights of property and its disdain for tradition: "It was the destruction of the proper order of things at the hands of people who lacked the character to govern well". This was surely a conservative reaction; but it was the conservative reaction of a Whig. Only those who cling to an interpretation of British history by which the Whig became the liberal tradition can claim Burke to have been a liberal. The French revolution was the parting of the ways, not just for the Foxite and the Portland Whigs but between liberals and conservative reformists -- even if party labels were not to mirror this divide for another century. Conservatism evolved not just, or even primarily, from Toryism, but from the consensus against the revolution. But Burke's conservatism preceded the French Revolution. As he argued in his speech on the Reform of Representation in 1782: "I look with filial reverence on the constitution of my country, and never will cut it in pieces and put it into the kettle of any magicians, in order to boil it with the puddle of their compounds, into youth and vigour. On the contrary, I will drive away such pretenders; I will nurse its venerable age, and with lenient arts extend a parent's breath."

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Homosexuality — the truth of it

Ray Honeyford

The Sexual Dead End Stephen Green, Broad View London 1992. £9.95.

This well documented book tells the truth about the typical homosexual's condition, life-style and sub-culture. It vividly illustrates the power of a well organized interest group, supported by the liberal consensus which dominates our intellectual life and a media system hungry for sensation and novelty, to establish and maintain a massive public lie. The success of the homosexual lobby in winning support for its own highly distorted view of itself has been a triumph of public relations, as the adoption of the word "gay" was a propaganda triumph for those American homosexuals who first coined it. The power words possess for transforming and distorting our perceptions has rarely been more dramatically demonstrated.

What is the truth about the homosexual experience? Two meticulously supported chapters make the reality clear. The first, about homosexual culture, refers to the promiscuity of many homosexuals. Their lives are typically devoted to the sexual search; and *pace* liberal apologists, permanent, committed relationships are much rarer than among the sexually normal. The homosexual search is directed at finding the youthful ideal — a futile enterprise, since, by definition, the genuinely masculine personality functions in accordance with the natural order, and so aims at a relationship with a woman. Sex for homosexuals, since it has no meaning beyond itself, is reduced to a form of entertainment or recreation — a shallow and meaningless fling, endlessly repeated and never assuaging that appalling emotional isolation which is the lot of so many inverts. The homosexual haunts the gay pubs, clubs and gyms, where, until age supervenes, he may cultivate his narcissistic body-building. To bolster his threatened self-

esteem in a society which relentlessly links sexuality and reproduction — an imperative from which his condition is bound to exclude him — he vociferously claims distinguished homosexual forebears. And he patronises an art which is indistinguishable from what normal people perceive as pornography. His creative heroes are the egregious and talentless Gilbert and George or the Aids victim Robert Mapplethorpe, whose grotesque and revolting images have acquired a public purely because they are 'controversial'. After the search for a sexual nirvana which does not exist, the homosexual becomes the victim of his own mythology, and retreats into a lonely and despairing old age.

This is not the destiny of all homosexuals. There are some who live out their lives in dignity, restrict their sexual preferences to the private domain, and contribute to the public good. But the picture I have given, sustained by Stephen Green's detailed research, is entirely typical. A vivid but heart-rending reflection of the price the individual pays in opting for the culture of homosexuality is found in the diaries of the murdered playwright, Joe Orton, and the biography of the painter Keith Vaughan, who finished up making love to a machine, and who preferred the certainty of a self-inflicted death to the agony and confusion of a homosexuality which never came near to meeting his deepest needs.

Homosexual culture is appalling, but the threat to physical health is perhaps more immediately alarming. Green unflinchingly outlines the ills to which homosexual flesh is heir. Homosexual promiscuity and practices carry enormous risks of a whole range of diseases apart from Aids. Studies by the UK Health Education Authority

have shown that homosexual males are fourteen times more likely to contract syphilis than heterosexuals, and lesbians are nineteen times more likely to do so than normal women.

It is impossible to encounter these realities without feeling outraged by those fashionable and irresponsible "sex educators" who insist upon telling children and adolescents that this tragic condition is "just another life style". I would challenge the collection of left-wing intellectuals, media propagandists and assorted sociologists who protested about Clause 28, (whose sole purpose was to prevent the promotion of homosexuality in schools) to read this book, and to ask themselves whether they would be happy to see their own children drawn into the homosexual life style.

This book shows that the law of unintended consequences flourishes in the political classes. Even those who supported the Sexual Offences Act 1967 did so in the knowledge that homosexuality is a curse. Leo Abse, a leading proponent of reform, spoke of "... the preventive action which might possibly save a little boy from the terrible fate of growing up homosexual". Lord Longford spoke of homosexuality as being "utterly wrong". But such people supported reform on the grounds that it would remove the fear of blackmail, encourage homosexuals to seek treatment, and generally create a stronger community effort to protect the young. They were wrong on all counts. Homosexual men and women were soon publicly identifying themselves as gay, and were demanding to be recognised on their own gay terms. This had not been the intention of Parliament.

What had been the 'love that dare not speak its name' rapidly became a highly

organised movement determined, not only to procure public approval, but actively to seek converts, not least among the young and vulnerable. The political left has adopted, and openly supported with public money, the homosexual movement as an integral part of that minority politics meant to replace un-reconstructed socialism. And a Conservative Prime Minister has felt obliged to receive, in a blare of publicity, a homosexual campaigner — in order to display his liberal credentials.

Perhaps the most shocking feature of this disturbing book is 'its demonstration of a link between homosexual activism and paedophilia. Contrary again to received liberal opinion, the molesting of children is an increasingly declared homosexual option. The author quotes chapter and verse from homosexual intellectuals, and provides official statistics, to show that paedophilia is being openly canvassed in homosexual circles. The unholy alliance between the anti-family lobby and homosexual activism has meant that the ultimate taboo is now being violated. This should not surprise us. Once normal limits which make civilised life possible, and which give protection to the young, are discarded, then anything is possible.

How does society educate the young about the realities of the homosexual condition without creating a hostile

backlash against individual homosexuals? How do we convey the responsibility which homosexual activists bear for the transmission of Aids, while allowing individuals to maintain their dignity and right to a compassionate response? "On the pastoral care of homosexual persons" issued by the Vatican in 1986 could be the basis for a moral approach to the issue. This document stresses the fact that we are all sinners, that homosexuals are no less the children of God than the rest of us, and that Aids sufferers, whatever the cause of their illness, must be given the best care and support. However the Vatican states unequivocally that homosexual behaviour is immoral. It is this principle of practical love combined with a commitment to moral reality which should guide our approach.

The present government's policy on Aids prevention has been a disaster. It has involved the transfer of huge sums of public money to homosexual organisations who proceed to issue pornography to their homosexual supporters. This process, far from encouraging awareness of the public health risks, emphasises homosexual solidarity, and gives deep offence to the general public, which is footing the bill. The policy has also meant the diversion of resources from other, far more common illnesses. In 1989 the state spent £50.00 in relation to each

death from heart disease, which claimed 197,721 victims. At the same time it spent £289,756 in relation to each death from Aids, which claimed 533 victims.

This government also misrepresents heterosexual behaviour in relation to Aids. As detailed statistics presented by Green make clear, there are three groups whose behaviour is strongly associated with Aids — intravenous drug users, bisexuals, and, overwhelmingly, homosexuals. Relentless attempts by the Department of Health, the Health Education Council, the sex education lobby, and organised homosexuality to indict the sexually normal in the production and transmission of the Aids virus have been shown to be false. The risk to heterosexual persons who engage only in normal sexual intercourse is nil, unless they are promiscuous and have relationships with bisexuals or intravenous drug users. The truth is that celibacy before marriage and fidelity after it are the best and the healthiest policy. That is the message we should be giving to the young — instead of which we have the spectacle of a government minister advising schools to give out free condoms to sixth formers. Perhaps the biggest betrayal of conservative values inherent in this government's policy is its active and publicly funded support of the condom culture.

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The New Poetry

Raymond Tong

The New Poetry edited by Michael Hulse, David Kennedy and David Morley, Bloodaxe Books, 1993, £7.95 pb., pp 352.

When in 1962 Al Alvarez produced his Penguin anthology, *The New Poetry*, he emphasised the importance of poets remaining “immune to the disease so often found in English culture: gentility”. Thirty years later, surveying this attractively produced anthology with the same title, it is quite evident that there is no longer any need to fear this disease and that immunity is now complete. Whatever the defects of the fifty-five poets included, all born after 1940 and all becoming known to many poetry readers during the 1980s and the early 1990s, they are certainly never guilty of old-fashioned English gentility. This is to be expected, for such gentility was the product of a bygone society, a civilised and largely homogeneous society, in which civility and trust could usually be taken for granted. Today in a troubled, much less civilised, multicultural society, in which civility and trust have been considerably diminished, the diseases to be faced are much more difficult to assess. Poets particularly, struggling to express their reactions and beliefs, cannot fail to be troubled by the rapid transition, by the confusion and complexity all around them. Certainly they have never been more beset by the feeling of living in the limbo produced by the ending of past literary, political and historical periods. In no previous anthology can the prefix “post” have been more in evidence than in this Bloodaxe collection. Besides the inevitable post-modernism, which apparently poses post cognitive questions, many of the poets are clearly much concerned with post-romanticism, post-industrialism and post-imperialism. However, the most immediate and significant “post”, post-socialism, is never mentioned.

A very useful aspect of this anthology, which has a special commendation from The Poetry Book Society, is that the introduction clearly outlines the aims of the editors in making their selection. We are told, for example, that “*The New Poetry* highlights the beginning of the end of British poetry’s tribal divisions and isolation, and a new cohesiveness”. We are also informed that “in the absence of shared moral and religious ideals, common social or sexual *mores* or political ideologies, or any philosophy on the conduct of life, plurality has replaced monocentric totemism”. Although to many people such a situation would seem to suggest a country labouring under enormous cultural disadvantages, for the editors such pluralism “signifies health as opposed to further decline”. Unlike W.B. Yeats they are not at all apprehensive that “the centre cannot hold”. On the contrary they emphasise that “a multicultural society challenges the very idea of a centre.” While they seem generally delighted that they live in a period when “Britannia has long ceased to rule the waves”, they make it quite clear that their challenging multicultural society is British and that the poets included share a multicultural British identity. They are equally clear about the centre to be challenged, for which alternatives must be found. Perhaps quite predictably it is the centre produced by the English majority, what they coyly describe as “the real or imagined English centre”.

One of the most irritating aspects of *The New Poetry* is the obvious dislike, occasionally verging on hatred, of England and the English majority. While this is perhaps most obvious among the Afro-Caribbean poets, it is

also in evidence in the frustration of a few English poets, as well as sadly in the work of one or two Scottish poets. To take one example among many, Linton Kwesi Johnson, who writes in a Creole “non-standard dialect”, has characteristically contributed a poem entitled “Inglan is a Bitch”. It is perhaps rather repetitive and distinctly unattractive to those who value standard English, but its message is fairly clear:

Inglan is a bitch
dere’s no escapin’ it
Inglan is a bitch fi true
is why wi a goh dhu ’bout it?

Equally disgusted with the country and the people around him is Peter Didsbury, who comes from Lancashire. Sick of England in his English garden, in a poem called “Back of the House” he recalls in fairly typical verse the pride of many post-colonial Englishmen and finds that the aptest image for the demise of past British superiority is

the blasted elm, that rocks to your fingers
and threatens to fall. It would lie across
half of the garden. I estimate its height
and step that far away, before I go.

Of course it is quite understandable, with so many Scottish people seeking a Scottish Parliament, that one or two Scottish poets should be less than enthusiastic about their English neighbours. However, it is surely very difficult to accept the idea of “a new cohesiveness” when reading Liz Lochhead’s “Bagpipe Musak, Glasgow 1990”. Although she is one of the more interesting poets, she gives a clear warning in lively verse that “we’ll tak’ the United Kingdom and brekk it like a bannock”.

There can be little doubt that the

editors are being unduly optimistic in believing that cultural plurality will somehow produce cultural cohesion. Each of the many cultural groups represented inevitably clings to its own authentic national and cultural identity and each, it would appear, is busily endeavouring to undermine the restraining effects of English national and cultural identity. Whatever good intentions are involved in seeking to produce a new multicultural British poetry, it simply cannot be claimed that it will produce any real sense of cohesion. There can, of course, be no such thing as "British poetry". Since every poet must inevitably, by the very nature of his art, be the product of his own authentic national culture, the poets living and writing in the British Isles must remain Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Nigerian etc., as well as Scots, Welsh, Irish and (it must be said) English. It is therefore entirely inaccurate to talk of a British poet, and even more unsatisfactory to talk of a Black British poet. By using "black" in this context it is surely implied that besides Black British poets there are also White British poets. Yet clearly poetry has nothing to do whatsoever with the pigmentation of a poet's skin. Certainly most poetry-readers would scorn all poetry labelled "white". They can therefore hardly be expected to appreciate poetry described as "black".

Many people will welcome the fact that by making a selection to argue the virtues of pluralism many poems are included that would not otherwise appear in an anthology covering the British Isles. For example, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill's poems are written in Irish Gaelic, while the poems of Grace Nichols, Fred D'Aguiar and David Dabydeen are sometimes in English and sometimes in Caribbean dialect. Although, rather illogically, no Scottish Gaelic poetry is included, the contribution of Tom Leonard is in Scots and that of W.N. Herbert in both Scots and English. Undoubtedly the inclusion of poems not written in standard English adds to the variety of the contents. But equally it means that there are some poems which are virtually incomprehensible to the majority of

readers. Fortunately, there are a few poets included who would surely find a place in any such anthology, no matter what the editors were trying to prove. For example, Kit Wright, Stephen Romer, Liz Lochhead, David Constantine, Matthew Sweeney, Carol Ann Duffy, Michael Hofmann and Simon Armitage, all of whom contribute at least one outstanding poem.

The largest category of poets included are the Postmodernists. For those who may be interested to know what qualifies a poet for this label, *The Poetry Review* recently provided a recipe for writing post-modernist poems. Apparently the poet should "take assorted cultural bric-a-brac, preferably from very remote times and places, assume dandyish posture, free associate like mad". From the evidence of these poems, he or she should also add a good deal of ironic bombast, a sprinkling of passionate intensity, a few media techniques and a willingness "to take on any subject". Mixing all these ingredients together one might well expect a lively outcome. In general, however, the recipe proves to be rather disappointing. Although the poems are fairly wide-ranging and sometimes possess a good deal of verbal energy, there is often insufficient commitment to the poet's craft. There are very few memorable lines and only rarely is true poetry apparent. While it is obviously not essential to have rhyme, metre or formal stanzas, it is certainly very necessary to have that elusive and vital quality which distinguishes poetry from mere verse and from prose.

We are told in the preface that compiling this selection involved reducing a list of over 250 poets to the 38 men and the 17 women finally included. Moreover one of the aims of the editors was to show how the main poetry action has moved away from London and Oxbridge into some of the other cities of the British Isles. In this respect they have been largely successful, for while they have included a few distinctly cosmopolitan poets, only ten of the contributors were born, or now live in London or Oxford. However, in order that the three editors could agree on the poets to be left out and those to

be included they obviously had to have fairly rigorous criteria. Such criteria were particularly important in relation to their opposition to mainstream Englishness, as well as to their support for what they consider to be the socialist/liberal virtues of pluralism. Unfortunately this rather rigid committee approach has resulted in a feeling of poetic regimentation, in a sense of orthodoxy rather reminiscent of a communist literature policy. There is no room here for anybody from the awkward squad.

Sophist's Corner

No privilege can be seriously claimed any more for Great Literature, and this for a one simple, basic reason. No one has ever succeeded in demonstrating why one work (all right, *Hamlet*) is better than another (a novel by Jeffrey Archer).

To study the text of popular culture ... is surely more democratic ... this new combined study would be more objective. It would be less prejudiced.

The Death of Literature.
Antony Easthope on cultural studies.

British Council's *Literature Matters* September 1993.

In Short

Seeds of Evil. Lenin and the Origins of Bolshevik élitism Robin Blick. Ferrington, London 1993. The Bookshop, 35-37 Great Ormond Street, London WC1.

One myth very dear to the Left is that of a kind and constructive Lenin who was succeeded by the wicked and destructive Stalin who destroyed the benevolent infant Bolshevik regime. This book ought to be read by those with any lingering adherence to this myth. Lenin systematically constructed the most malign apparatus of state tyranny the world had yet seen. Ironically it was his own party comrades like Martov, Axaelrod, Plekhanov and Kautsky who perceived that within his ruthless methods lay the seeds of evil. Martov, the founder of the Mensheviks, remarked that 'one day you will understand the crime in which you are taking part.' Kautsky regarded the Bolshevik regime as Tartar Socialism. Hilferding saw the USSR as the first totalitarian state in modern history that paved the way for the emergence of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Rosa Luxemburg was perhaps Lenin's fiercest critic, and accurately prophesied the path that communist societies would take: 'public life falls asleep'. Most Western intellectuals chose to ignore or excuse Lenin's oppressive system — the notable exceptions being Bertrand Russell and George Orwell, who recognised that the evil was well in place before 1923.

MC

Where East meets West: Turkey and the Balkans. Institute of European Defence and Strategic Studies, St George's House, 14-17 Wells St, London W.1 P 3FP £5.

During the Cold War Turkey was a vital but undervalued ally of the West. Since the collapse of communism she has hoped to become a full member of the European community, though economic difficulties and the Kurdish is-

sue have delayed this process. However Turkey has developed ties with the former Communist states and was instrumental in setting up the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSECO). She also hosted a summit meeting of the former Turkic republics of the Soviet Union. The author insists that these activities do not presage neo-Ottomanism and thinks the West should appreciate Turkey's constructive role in the security of the area by hastening admission to the EC. But Dr. Winrow also argues that Turkey cannot be expected to remain permanently neutral about the Moslems in Bosnia. Turkish public opinion is now much more articulate and various pressure groups have been organized to lobby politicians. He warns that the problems of the minority populations in Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece might precipitate Turkish intervention in the Balkans. The West must ensure that the Balkan cauldron does not boil over.

MC.

NATO The case for Enlargement. Published for the Windsor Group by IEDSS. St George's House, 14-17 Wells St .W.1

This study cogently presents the evidence for admitting Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and perhaps Slovakia to NATO. The stability of these countries would be enhanced by their membership, providing security against possible resurgent Russian ambitions and ensuring that their own programmes of reform progress well.

An international system which had endured for forty years disappeared without a war. Yet there are great dangers in the unprecedented speed with which it occurred and a prudent Western strategy is essential. Ironically a Russian Westerner, Sergei Blagovolin, has produced better arguments for the eastern expansion of NATO than NATO themselves. At present Russia cannot fill the vacuum

in Eastern Europe. Only NATO can do that and, at the same time support Russian stability. The usual reason given for not expanding NATO is the fear of inflaming Russian imperialist tendencies and weakening Yeltsin. However, a weak conciliatory policy would increase rather than decrease such tendencies. Certainly the "partnership" for peace proposed at the recent meeting at Travemünde certainly did not satisfy Eastern European aspirations. There is no time to lose in pursuing a more robust policy, particularly in view of the deteriorating situation in Russia.

MC.

The Empire Strikes Back: the 'Creative Subversion' of the National Curriculum. David Marsland and Nick Seaton. Campaign for Real Education, 18, Westlands Grove, Stockton Lane York YO3 OEF.

This pamphlet depressingly demonstrates the Conservative government's total failure to reform Britain's educational system and to rescue it from the Marxists who seized it in the sixties. Only recently we have endured the spectacle of an Education Minister abjectly surrendering to the teachers' unions. The National Curriculum was a brave attempt to restore standards, essential if we were to maintain any kind of competent economic performance. However, despite good advice from those who shared the government's aims, it appointed bright Marxists of the sixties who were in positions of influence in the eighties and who, of course, had caused the cultural revolution in the first place, instead of people like Marsland and Marks. Marsland and Seaton let the wreckers speak for themselves. Their remarks leave no doubt about the subversive intentions of the educationists and the far from impartial civil servants. Whether anything can be salvaged from the disaster remains to be seen.

MC

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