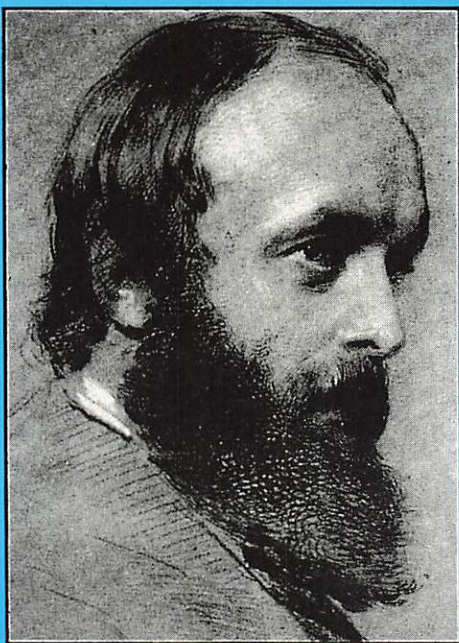


*Summer 1996*  
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# The Salisbury Review

*The quarterly magazine of conservative thought*



The Third Marquess of Salisbury  
1830 - 1903

**British Migration Policy**

*David Coleman*

**Conservatism and Daily Life**

*Keith Jacka*

**Jesus Christ Superstar**

*Alexander Boot*

**Afghanistan**

*James Novak*

**Conservatism in France**

*John Peek*

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## Conservative Journal

### *The Weekly Standard*

Founded by William Kristol, son of Irving Kristol and his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb, both of whom have made their indelible mark on the thought and policy-making of American Conservatism, *The Weekly Standard* is a courageous and energetic attempt to translate the 'Gingrich Revolution' into a *lingua franca* for American conservatives. Like all such initiatives, it has found a large and generous readership, funding, sales, and media interest, in a country where intellectual life and politics mingle more closely than we find comfortable. It has some of the fizz and high culture of *The Spectator*, though it takes politics immensely seriously, and has no doubt where it stands or whom it supports in any issue confronting the American people or their governing class. Half way through its first year of production, it has already attracted some of the most vivid and pugnacious writers from the conservative camp — David Brooks, David Frum, Gary Schmitt and Matt Labash, for example — and sustained a high level of commentary and discussion in the wake of the Republican revival in Congress.

It is perhaps not the fault of the *Weekly Standard* that

the Republican Party should suffer from the same 'succession problem' as the Tory Party. Nevertheless, the journal may not endear itself to all our readers with its staunch party-line in the face of the challenge posed by Pat Buchanan. Nor will every British conservative be impressed by the relentless attacks on the President — whose office ought to spare him from the vulgar abuse to which he is constantly subjected by the conservative press. Nevertheless, its up-beat and witty commentary on current affairs, combined with a serious and sober perspective on culture, art and literature, give a dimension to the journal which make it more than a match for any near competitor. And the idea of renewing the conservative faith with a weekly input ought surely to appeal to all of us who were raised in a Christian culture, and who were taught that truths must be uttered in the same language and the same tone of voice exactly once a week, and not departed from.

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# The Salisbury Review

**Editor** Roger Scruton  
**Literary Editor** Ian Crowther  
**Managing Editor** Merrie Cave

*Editorial address and Subscriptions*  
33, Canonbury Park South,  
London, N1 2JW  
Tel: 0171 226 7791  
Fax: 0171 354 0383

One of the most striking changes in the character of politics since the collapse of the former Soviet Union is the retreat from foreign policy, and the preference for trivial domestic issues over the larger questions of national interest. This change has been particularly noticeable in the United States, where President Clinton has staked his political future on programmes for health care and social welfare, and embarked on a foreign policy which makes no reference whatsoever to the national interest, and merely curries favour with ethnic groups at home. Hence the President's attitude towards Sinn Fein. Hence the neglect by the US government of the situation in Afghanistan — persuasively analysed in this issue by James Novak. And hence the failure by the US State Department to take measures to counteract America's most pressing problem — the mounting tide of illegal immigrants from Latin America. The theory of the 'melting pot' was fine, in the days when migrants were self-disciplined, industrious survivors, who had passed through the fires of pogrom, religious persecution or civil war, and who brought with them a respect for law and a longing for freedom which could translate at once into a new kind of patriotism. But when immigrants come from the bottom of society, attracted not by freedom but by welfare handouts, and regarding law merely as an alien system for achieving things which can be achieved more reliably by disregarding it, then the theory becomes a joke. Add to this the insistence by the liberal élite that Hispanics should retain their native language, should suffer no pressure to learn the language of the country in which they live, and be provided with everything they need to preserve their ancestral culture, and you have the seeds of civil war. The only question is *when?*

Not that our own immigration policy has been more robust — as David Coleman points out in a courageous and challenging article. The demographic character of a country can change without the loss of civil order: but only if new arrivals accept and endorse the legal dispensation to which they come. Not everybody can do this. You don't acquire the European *Rechtsgefühl* merely by coming to live in Europe. Only a tradition of secular government can produce such a thing, and this tradition has not been seen outside Europe and its diaspora. And

not always in Europe itself, as Robert Grant makes clear. Not that the Bulgarians are the worst offenders.

What are the ingredients that formed the European political experience? Surely Christianity must be counted among them: for without this strangely self-effacing creed, the idea of government by law alone would never have gained so stable a hold on so vast an area. Even if the germ of the idea was present in both Jewish and Roman civilisation, it has flowered nowhere more wonderfully than in the states of Northern Europe, as they slowly discarded their clerical robes. If Alexander Boot is to be believed, however, the influence of Christianity is not purely benign, and much of the socialist consciousness — the resentment of the 'dispossessed' — can be traced to its teachings.

This does not alter the fact that the conservatism of everyday life, praised and lamented by Keith Jacka, is really the accumulated legacy of Christian customs and Christian wisdom, and it is precisely this Christian aspect that leads John Peek to find conservatism, with both big and little C, alive and well in France. One can find many faults in the French political process, but neglect of foreign policy is not among them. Here is a country which pursues the national interest relentlessly, and with a long-term conception of how it should be done. Although it dresses its politics in modern and post-modern clothing, it is the old politics of self-advancement, pursued with impeccable realism, and with a conservative scepticism as to the nature and power of human motives. It is hardly surprising, therefore, if our feeble efforts, based as they are on no idea of national identity and no clear conception of the national interest, should make so little headway in the battle over Europe. Not once has a British Prime Minister said what needs to be said at the negotiating table — namely, that the common law of England, that incomparable tool for discovering rational solutions to irrational problems, is incompatible with the structure of European Law, and that we cannot be governed by both of them, still less by the half-baked decisions of the European Court of Justice. Look down the avenues that spread into the future, and you will see no signs of a future Prime Minister who really knows what the United Kingdom is.

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# Conservatism and Daily Life

*Keith Jacka examines the relationship*

Conservatism is an ideology, like its two main alternatives, liberalism and socialism. An ideology is a body of ideas that endures; it must span several realms: moral, economic, social, cultural; and there must be a relation to political power. Neither capitalism (economics) nor modernism (culture) is broad enough to count as ideology. Most people see conservatism as an ideology associated with those who have arrived, with those who possess power, wealth, privilege; this is the conservatism of interest. There is also the conception of a conservative temperament, as epitomised in the lines of Auden:

A childhood full of love  
And good things to eat:  
Why should he not hate change?

The usual view is that as and when interest cumulates so temperament is moulded, radical youth becoming conservative age. Popular conceptions of conservatism and ideology are good enough as half-truths; they are simpler but more consistent versions of the corresponding Marxist ones. In Marxist mythology ideology is the articulation of the collective consciousness of a class. There are connotations of bias and a tribal indifference to the needs of other groups. The word itself is pejorative, except as applied to the proletariat which, with typical Marxist incoherence, is both the bearer of ideology and yet free of limitation; also destined, in some unspecified Hegelian manner, to transcend ideology in a classless egalitarian future. Conservatives do not reject the popular conception of their doctrine, but see it as shallow and incomplete. Conservatism does not merely accept or grudgingly acknowledge the link between outlook and interest; rather it *celebrates* this link. Opposed to doctrines of equality it celebrates degree, hierarchy, and

power constrained by responsibility. Conservatism encourages the growth of a multiplicity of modes of possession, interest, concrete particularity, and its most dangerous enemy is the rootless metropolitan intellectual.

The conservatism I intend is that of Edmund Burke and his latter day disciples, rather than that of Margaret Thatcher, for all her virtues; and I shall concentrate on two questions:

Is conservatism of such small moment, of so little application nowadays as to be no more than a cry of nostalgia; does it hold at most a minor marginal place in what is perceived as the real world?

Alternatively, is it a body of ideas that has more relevance than any other extant ideology; that could, if understood, guide and enlighten many, even most of us, confronted with the problems and confusions of modern life?

I shall answer YES, with qualifications, to both questions. YES to the first question because, over the last two hundred years, the peoples of the Western World have moved from the land to the city, from agriculture and tradition to industry and innovation. Along with industry came democracy and equality; a world was created lacking all those preconditions without which conservative concepts are either meaningless or of only historical or antiquarian interest. People now forget the past and look to the future; information substitutes for memory and knowledge, and the advertising jingle displaces the nursery rhyme. YES to the alternative question because this abstract engineered world of bureaucracy, regulation and equality, this world that has been created, *does not work*.

Let me explain that last remark. By the 1980's all excuses had worn thin and it was clear that the Soviet Union, the country of scientific socialism, was

a failure. No longer did anyone expect an end to shortage of material necessities; and the immaterial goods of civilisation had apparently passed away for ever with the Tsar. Society proceeded on two levels: the official world and the functional world; between the two there was no direct connection. The official world described itself in terms of high achievement according to socialist ideals. The other world, the underworld of daily life, which it was effectively forbidden to describe, was nasty, brutish and shoddy; for most a sordid scramble to satisfy even the simplest needs: most transactions, down to the purchase of a razor blade, were likely to be illegal and semi-secret. And so a population grew up accustomed to a double life, each life with its attendant morality, sensibility and procedures: on the one hand the fantasy world of socialist propaganda; on the other hand the world of the predator, gangster, and shyster. (The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 has brought this gangster world to the surface: Moscow nowadays has many resemblances to Chicago in the time of Al Capone and John Dillinger.) It may be objected that the fate of the Soviet Union is not relevant to the future of modern Britain. Since Britain has never decisively rejected socialism and since the Soviet Union has been the twentieth century socialist flagship one would expect its fate to be relevant, but also there is empirical evidence. I shall list just five of the many parallels which make for uneasiness.

Britain belongs, each day a little more, to the European Union, an organisation founded by socialists and run on socialist principles. The EU has generated a host of bureaucratic systems, each of them prone to Soviet style corruption, and yet the vociferous British press, with all its experience of

sensational muckraking, produces no more than a trickle of criticism.

The enormous proliferation of regulation since the beginning of the second world war (under both Labour and Tory governments) has helped turn the once honest British, however reluctantly, into a nation of shifty law-breakers: traffic offences, tax evasion, and all that activity known collectively as the black economy.

There is now no distinction between manager and bureaucrat. Almost all of our institutions, at all levels of control, are run by energetic mediocrities, who all speak the same mind-deadening obfuscatory jargon, who combine to block talent, originality, and responsibility, and who steer and manipulate their organisations entirely for their own benefit, unconstrained by criteria deriving from ostensible function.

The gap between rulers and ruled in Britain is large and increasing. Whether it is National or Local Government, Church, Business or Media, the rulers are both ignorant of and indifferent to the needs and desires of those outside the club (i.e. the great majority of the population) who consequently have less and less effective representation.

Most ominous of all, there has been a decline in morality. The intense libertarian assault on traditional morality commenced in the sixties and has continued relentlessly. Two of the many effects can be summarised:

Britain used to be the odd one out, in that a high standard of morality in government and administration was expected and often achieved. It has now become much like the rest of Europe. Government, at all levels, is no longer to be trusted; it is the enemy. Deception and promise breaking by government are the rule, and generate corresponding behaviour by the governed.

A libertarian regime for the upbringing of children is unworkable. Bitter necessity compels prohibition and restraint by parents, either surreptitiously enforced or openly stated. The result of this conflict between the publicly correct and the necessary is usually either vacillation, confusion, and stupidity on the one hand, or decisiveness plus a

boundless contempt for institutional and professional proclamations on the other.

Western philosophy, according to Whitehead, is a series of footnotes to the dialogues of Plato; likewise Western science can be seen as footnotes to Newton's *Principia*, and Western conservatism as footnotes to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Simplifications, but not misleading. In each case we have the master work of a mind of extraordinary power, comprehensiveness and facility. There is a mental territory delimited, explored and described with a characteristic vocabulary, defined in an enunciation of concepts, themes, and modes of understanding.

Edmund Burke defended the English Revolution of 1688 and moreover, unlike his friend Samuel Johnson, had supported the rebellious American colonists in 1776; so it was not surprising that Tom Paine indignantly labelled him a turncoat when he published the *Reflections*; which he was not, as his whole life in politics had shown. Burke was a man of integrity, but not superficially consistent. The events of 1789 in France compelled him to confront the potentially stark contradictions between principles which in earlier years he presumably saw as compatible. Under pressure of these events he affirmed and defined himself to be (in modern terms) a conservative, not a liberal. He was at first alone in his views, estranged from friends in the House of Commons, then as now myopic in matters of Revolution and Dictatorship. He had no audience there for his vision. He was seen as somewhat unbalanced, and it was lack of a hearing from colleagues that provoked him to write the *Reflections*, by-passing Parliament in favour of public opinion.

The *Reflections* is not a well-ordered academical treatise arranged in numbered sections. Nevertheless it contains, sometimes by implication, sometimes by explanation, a coherent doctrine on the nature of man as a social and political animal, and on both preconditions and procedures for effective change, political and otherwise. A few of the elements of this

doctrine are sketched below, using quotations from Burke. Along with each item is a commentary, and everyday examples.

### **Tradition**

Burke puts it in the negative:

When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us; nor can we know distinctly to what port we steer.

I shall discuss this under two heads: traditional practice, and the word tradition itself.

Traditional Practice... is custom, observance, ritual handed down: from parent to child, craftsman to apprentice, teacher to pupil, group to individual... all that enormous range of typical ways of being, thinking, doing that makes up a culture is included here. How to shave, tie a shoelace, fry an egg, kick a football, fight with fists; how to sit at table, shake hands, mind a baby, address a policeman; how to type, write a letter of condolence, learn the multiplication table; how to sharpen a chisel, cut out a dress; how to ask for a girl's hand in marriage. To all of this conservatism enjoins a characteristic primary attitude:

Assume that what is presented is right and good, even if you don't at first understand. And therefore make the most of it; do what your elders do or advise .... observe, obey, memorise, imitate. Selecting from the list above and comparing then and now:

Shaving: When I came of an age my father gave me a cut-throat razor, a valuable implement to last a lifetime, and taught me carefully its use and maintenance. Nowadays a safety razor is cheap, and easy to use; when it deteriorates you throw it away.

Fighting: Fist fighting has gone out of favour and few boys have any skill.

Babies: Constantly updated manuals instruct in the care of babies; what is correct today may be out of date in ten years and 'ancient opinion', i.e. grandmother's advice, is usually dismissed as an old wives' tale.

Arithmetic: Very few now learn the multiplication table well. It is said that electronic calculators make memory unnecessary.

Marriage: Cohabiting now often

precedes marriage, and permission is not usually requested.

Changes have been in one direction: simplification, loss of skill, abandonment of custom. Cumulated across society this means an enormous diminution in the reservoir of patience, manual and social skill, capacity for self-discipline and responsibility.

### **Tradition: the Word**

All but a few connotations can be classified into three main subsets:

#### **Acceptable: tradition as fossil**

- ▶ Large sums of money are spent to recreate exactly Shakespeare's Globe Theatre on the South Bank.
- ▶ A few miles of old railway track in Shropshire are refurbished, along with locomotive and carriages, and the Steam Railway enthusiasts gather for their annual outing.
- ▶ Skilled technicians of the Science Museum in South Kensington spend several years constructing a computer from the original drawings of Charles Babbage, showing that it would have worked if actually built.
- ▶ Architectural historians of English Heritage go about the land ensuring the preservation of listed buildings.

All of the above is acceptable in modern Britain: tradition and history as a sideline, pursued after hours; a hobby and escape, the past as a museum rather than a living resource.

#### **Unacceptable: living traditions that retard change.**

- ▶ An old Devon farmer, the last of a long line. No one in the district knows more about nurturing the land with a minimum of chemicals, but he is not adept at paper work: fact sheets, EC quotas, Ministry regulations and tax dodges. He has a son whom he has dissuaded from following him on the land: he himself is no longer the oracle, no one any longer understands or consults him. His traditional skills are seen as quaint and irrelevant and will die with him. He retires to the town and an agribusiness takes over. You can't stop progress.
- ▶ The Sister in charge of a surgical

ward in an East End hospital. She has eyes in the back of her head: nothing occurs without her instant awareness. She knows everything about patients and staff. The atmosphere on the ward is always quiet and undramatic, nothing much seems to happen, but patients on that ward get better fast and no one dies of cardiac arrest. Such is her reputation that some prospective patients delay their operations for months so that they can be nursed on that ward; and a student nurse allocated there for training and supervision counts herself very lucky. She is in her fifties, attends church regularly and has been a nurse for thirty five years. She sees nursing as a practical craft engaging the whole person, and not a science; she is sceptical about Nursing Research. She dislikes the new regime of many-layered management, portentous jargon, and mountains of paperwork. Her own records are accurate but minimal; most information is in her head. She refuses to go on specialist training courses, maintaining that she can easily learn any new technique in a fraction of the time. Upper management dislike her and she is finally ousted when her ward is closed down in one of the innumerable hospital reorganisations. She retires to a provincial town, to her garden, her charitable work, the W.I., and her nephews and nieces.

The Sister's behaviour provokes words like reactionary, archaic, antediluvian, old-fashioned, regressive, blimpish. These unacceptable connotations are the dominant ones; they belong within the functioning mythology of our time which has its gods (as yet no goddesses) and exemplary tales; they emanate from what calls itself the REAL world, i.e. the serious world of industry, utility, finance, taxation; the world of money and power, of masses, media, and machines.

#### **Tradition and taste**

Avoiding both of the two connotations above there *is* a flourishing use of the word 'tradition' and a continuation or

revival of traditional practice:

- ▶ Gardens: so well understood that I do not need to expatiate.
- ▶ Food: very talented and clever people like Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson helped create a market for collections of recipes of national dishes, including traditional English food. Not only ingredients but also utensils were sold by Elizabeth David in her shop.
- ▶ Houses and furniture: John Betjeman, that gifted and convivial conservative, taught a whole generation to look again with affection at the buildings and productions of their grandparents. Far more valuable than all the work of English Heritage, or the Planning and Conservation Departments of Local Government, is the great energy and intelligence spent by hundreds of thousands of house owners in England who buy a dilapidated nineteenth century house and lovingly restore it ....especially the interior ....retaining, modifying, replacing, modernising exactly as Burke describes the process of reform. As expected, native high-brows of Fine Art denigrate their countrymen's achievements in the visual arts. They never mention this huge creative performance over the last fifty years. I know of no other country which compares.

#### **Past and Present, New and Old**

People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors .... we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy our property and our lives.

- ▶ Ancestors: are no longer continually present. Memories are not treasured and the dead fade into illegibility. Obvious mourning has gone and cemeteries are, for most, an upsetting necessity, to be forgotten rather than visited. They cannot compete with the shopping mall or television, where it's all happening.
- ▶ Youth and Age: The old will soon be ancestors. They have less status than youth, since experience and wisdom are seen as irrelevant and therefore valueless.

► **New and Old:** For a long time the default presumption has been that new things, ideas, experiences are superior to old. For many, and especially within organisations, this is close to an absolute presupposition, part of the mythology, and therefore the notion of testing and discriminating between new and old is literally unthinkable.

All this seems to presage a nightmare society where things and people are junked as soon as they are past marketable age. In practice matters are different. Two obvious reasons: the mythology is just that, myth, which sometimes does and sometimes does not have much relation to reality. People are not always witless and sometimes can see that a particular new entity is much inferior to what it has replaced. As for old age, simple prudence reminds one that as you treat the old so you too will be treated when your turn comes.

### **Reform**

If it ain't broke don't fix it. This is conservatism. But not everything is right and good. How do we act when faced with breakdown or contradiction? Here is Burke:

At once to preserve and to reform is quite another thing. When the useful parts of an old establishment are kept, and what is superadded is to be fitted to what is retained, a vigorous mind, steady persevering attention, various powers of comparison and combination, and the resources of an understanding fruitful in expedients are to be exercised; they are to be exercised in a continued conflict with the combined force of opposite vices; with the obstinacy that rejects all improvement, and the levity that is fatigued and disgusted with everything of which it is in possession.

The British have changed. It is clear from history and novels that there were once many in these islands of an astonishing degree of self-satisfied obstinacy. But not now. The potential may still be there, but it is inactive. The mindlessly stubborn are no longer upfront and noisily confident; the *Zeitgeist* is not with them; they dodge all improvement rather than reject it, using the techniques of evasive inertia and endless repetitive humour.

Let us test Burke's injunctions:

The old electric toaster functions erratically; finally it fails: it does not pop up the toast, which therefore burns. There are two clear alternatives: Junk it, and buy a new one. This is revolution, not reform. But mild revolution, because you replace one entity with another which does actually exist, and which you have grounds for believing will at least function. The true revolutionist would design an ostensibly better one, and junk the old before even building a prototype of the new.

Dismantle and examine the toaster, identifying all faults. Repair or replace defective parts and reassemble. This, the way of reform, is more difficult, requiring time, ingenuity and patience. Some spare parts will assuredly have to be improvised, since the modern industrial system does not facilitate the repair of small devices

### **Prejudice**

We cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more they have prevailed, the more we cherish them... Many of our men of speculation employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom that prevails in them... they think it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason; because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence. Prejudice is of ready application in an emergency; it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, sceptical, puzzled, and unresolved.

This goes to the heart of the matter, and explains Burke's relentless opposition to the world of the restless intellectual, the nomad within the city. He thought the unexamined life well worth living and would have been contemptuous of Marx's dictum on the idiocy of rural life. Unluckily for us, some time between then and now the word 'prejudice' was captured by Burke's opponent, the rationalist intellectual, purveyor of Utopia. Prejudice, for Burke, had wide application; he approved of it, and gave reasons. To the Utopian 'prejudice' has a pejorative connotation and applies to one kind of situation: the relation between two

groups (races, cultures, sexes, etc.). Where once we would have said 'racial antagonism' we are now taught to say 'racial prejudice'; if a person dislikes homosexuals, he is said to be afflicted with prejudice against homosexuals. At first sight this is confusing since, on the face of it, the words 'prejudice' and 'antagonism' are not truly comparable, the first appearing to mean a pre-judgement and the second an opposition. As with most large shifts of language there is a theory behind it, in this case the notion that all such prejudice (incorporating antagonism) arises only from false, irrational belief, which belief would alter (and the antagonism therefore dissolve) when once corrected by sound education. It is an ancient theory, never very plausible, with Socrates its first and most famous proponent. Revived by the philosophers of the eighteenth century it has now had a two hundred year run. Logic, historical evidence and personal experience all suggest that it is completely false, that man is not so easily moulded, that education has little effect on racial and other group antagonisms; but state subsidised education is now such a huge and self-perpetuating industry that we can expect the English language to be perverted and ourselves (and even more our children) to be brain-washed for a long time to come.

### **Religion**

We know ... that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and comfort.

We know ... that man is by his constitution a religious animal.

Violently condemning neither the Greek, nor the Armenian, nor, since heats are subsided, the Roman system of religion, we prefer the Protestant ... Instead of quarrelling with establishments ... we cleave closely to them. We are resolved to keep an established church ...

This consecration [of the commonwealth] is made, that all who administer in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination ...

All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awefully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one

great master, author and founder of society.

Not theology, but an exposition of what Burke sees as a healthy relation between religion and politics. How does it stand in our time?

In Burke's day most would have emphatically agreed with the first and second statements. Nowadays some would still agree, but hesitate and qualify, knowing they were going against the tide.

Few, even of the Anglican clergy, are *resolved* to keep an established church. Napoleon and Lenin have been the two main progenitors of the hideous tyrants who have proliferated in our century. Both were themselves monsters of wickedness, entirely given over to *raisons d'état*, and comfortable at the prospect of mass slaughter, as any reader of their writings will know, and each would have laughed to scorn the last statement of Burke above. In the history text books used currently in our secondary schools Hitler *is* accurately described as a monster, but Napoleon and Lenin are presented much more favourably, often with a touch of glamour.

### **State**

We have consecrated the state; that no

man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution; that he should approach to the faults of the state as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude

Try to imagine a young man, well versed in Monty Python and Rowan Atkinson, nurtured for twenty years on television satire of everything and everyone — try to imagine him showing 'pious awe and trembling solicitude' in anyone's presence. Not even a footballer or pop star, I would guess, and certainly no creature of such delegitimated status as a father.

### **Inheritance**

The power of perpetuating our property in our families is that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself. Socialists disagree, and over the last fifty years their views have prevailed in high places. With the inevitable effects: a huge growth in the profession of accountancy, used by those who can afford it to manipulate the law; the rest try to evade. It is a vicious war between government and governed, of labyrinthine hypocrisy, but much of the action furtive and concealed, and for that reason hard to assess.

Judged two hundred years later we

can say that, notwithstanding a magnificent performance, which nothing written in the mean time has surpassed in imaginative and intellectual power — in spite of this Burke's campaign has been a failure. One by one the major institutions and organisations have fallen to the anti-conservatives. Political debate is about rights and about equality; our daily lives are dominated by mechanism, either the abstract mechanism of bureaucracy or the actual machines used in factories and homes. Rights, equality, mechanism and the abstract individual: these are concepts central to liberalism and socialism, but not to conservatism. And yet this is not all. There is more going on. There is a deep unease across the land: there are so many ways in which the British remain a deeply conservative people, and the vitality and variety of private unofficial activities and institutions is very great. The future is neither dark nor predictable.

**Keith Jacka is a computer analyst.**

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# British Migration Policy: a half-open door

*David Coleman considers the policy in theory and practice*

**B**ritish immigration policy is simple. For twenty five years or more it has been: "to reduce and keep new immigration to a small and inescapable minimum." In official language, the policy is intended: (1) To allow genuine visitors and students to enter the United Kingdom;

- (2) To give effect to the free movement provisions of European Community law;
- (3) Subject to the above, to restrict severely the numbers coming to live permanently or to work in this country, but to continue to admit spouses and minor children of those already settled here, provided they

- satisfy the requirements of the Immigration Rules; and
- (4) To maintain an effective and efficient system for dealing with applicants for citizenship.

### ***British Immigration Policy in Brief***

On paper, the British is probably the

most clear and unambiguous immigration policy in Western Europe. It has the reputation, not entirely deserved, of being the most strictly enforced and interpreted. United Kingdom immigration policy is not to be understood in the US context of policies to manage and prioritize immigration streams. In the US, immigration is in general favoured by the administration and by important sections of public opinion. In the UK, and more generally in Europe, immigration policy usually means keeping people out unless there is a clear reason for admitting them. Again unlike the US, in the UK there are no quotas for immigration (with two trivial exceptions) and the level of immigration cannot be predicted from one year to the next.

Immigration policy is conceived in the context of a belief in a strong "pressure to migrate" to the UK. In practice most of this pressure comes from Third World countries, especially from the New Commonwealth (former British colonies in the Third World, and the few remaining ones which are now more delicately called "dependent territories"). The Immigration Rules, however, apply to all persons who do not enjoy the right of abode in the UK whether citizens of Commonwealth countries or of 'foreign' countries (movement from the Irish Republic, however, has never been subject to control in peacetime).

There is little support in governmental circles, or in public opinion, or even much in academic circles, for the notion that the country "needs" immigrants in general to expand the population and work force or to stimulate the economy (there are exceptions, for example a 1994 report by the Institute of Public Policy Research). The UK, like other countries in Western Europe, is considered to be "full" and to have problems of housing, crowding, race relations and unemployment which uncontrolled large-scale immigration could only exacerbate. It is of course recognized that migration will naturally arise for reasons of work, marriage and so on. Aside from asylum claimants, about 200,000 people enter each year intend-

ing to stay for at least 12 months, and about 50,000 are "accepted for settlement". Almost all the latter are people already in the country who had been given temporary leave to enter in previous years for work, marriage and so on, leading to a net population gain (apart from the uncounted flow from the Irish Republic) of about 50,000 per year. Labour needs are managed through the work permit system, which in practice attracts mostly high skilled and professional workers: about 30,000 per year, not including dependents. Apart from passport control, there have been no barriers on entry to EU citizens since 1973 and none at all on any movement from the Irish Republic for work or any other purpose. Such persons do not need work permits or visas.

In some Western countries, renewed immigration is urged to rectify actual or threatened population decline or the ageing of the population. These views are not demographically well-founded. In the UK, with over 2.4 million unemployed and one of the highest birth rates in Europe, and with a population which is not expected to start to decline until after 2030, there is little interest in such propositions. But they are sometimes favoured by liberal opinion as further arguments to relax immigration controls. (*The Economist* magazine, for example, headed on economic matters, endorses most proposals for dropping immigration restrictions, whether from supposed demographic needs or alleged economic stimuli as a result of immigration.)

Meanwhile, there is general support for further reduction in immigration. In the British Attitudes Survey of 1984, 65 percent of the respondents called for less settlement from the New Commonwealth, as did up to 45 percent of ethnic minority respondents themselves. Most who favour easier entry are moral and intellectual critics from the churches and the left, including some of the black and Asian voters, who predominantly support the Labour Party. These and other critics consider the immigration policy to be racist, both in its strategy and in its operation. The aim in 1962 in introducing controls on the entry of

Commonwealth citizens (mostly non-white), to bring them into line with the controls already applying to all other persons, certainly arose explicitly from fears that such large non-European populations could not be readily absorbed either into society or the economy, and that such large flows, already arousing hostile public opinion, would lead to racial conflict. The rules themselves, however, are strictly impartial with respect to race and ethnic origin and indeed arise simply from the equal extension to Commonwealth citizens of controls previously imposed only upon non-Commonwealth foreign citizens. Many of those who are thereby excluded are non-white people from the Third World. That is where most of the pressure for immigration comes from.

### ***The Historical Background***

Britain has never considered itself to be a "country of immigration." It has exported population, not acquired it. From the 16th century its emigrants moved, mostly to its English-speaking colonial territories and dominions, for a variety of political, commercial, religious and individual motives. Emigration grew in the 19th century mostly as a result of spontaneous individual decisions, and was later encouraged officially as one way of reducing the welfare population. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, emigration to the Dominions, which peaked in 1913, was also encouraged as a way of developing the Commonwealth as a multinational English-speaking power. Legislation to promote emigration to the Dominions was the basis of British migration policy for over thirty years, being renewed as late as 1952.

Immigration control was a relative newcomer. Controls made necessary by the wars against Napoleon were finally dismantled in 1836. For most of the 19th century, there was no "immigration problem" and foreigners (mostly from Europe) and subjects were free to come and go more or less as they wished without passports and for the most part without comment. The re-invention of control followed the novel arrival of large numbers of poor Ashkenazi Jewish migrants from

Russian Poland, a migration part economic, part refugee, which began in the mid-nineteenth century and became substantial in the 1880s. Most of the Jews congregated in the East End of London, provoking fears that housing and wages were being squeezed. Years of rather conscience-stricken political debate led to a partial form of immigration control in the 1905 Aliens Act. This act invented immigration officers with limited powers to question and refuse entry to foreign steerage passengers on various grounds. Absolute immigration control on foreigners was imposed during World War I. The 1919 Act, with its series of Immigration Orders starting from 1920, has provided the framework for immigration control of foreigners ever since. "Orders" are measures (secondary legislation) derived from legislation which, although requiring the approval of Parliament, do not require the full time-consuming process of the passage of a Bill through both Houses of Parliament (primary legislation).

In brief, in its modern guise as updated by the 1971 Immigration Act, no one without the right of abode may enter the UK without the permission of an Immigration Officer (except for all arrivals from the Republic of Ireland). Visitors may be admitted for a variety of the usual short-term reasons. In 1993, over 55 million people entered the UK (10 million of them non-EU nationals) for all purposes. This gives some idea of the scale of the problem of distinguishing those who wish to stay from the great majority who are short-term visitors. Since 1920 those entering for work, with a few exceptions, need a work permit acquired by their employers from the Department of Employment for a limited period. The terms "immigrant" or "settler" are not recognized by the legislation. Persons are given the right to remain for as long as they like by being "accepted for settlement" either on arrival or more usually "on expiry of time limit" after temporary admission as a worker or spouse or fiancé(e). EU citizens now have privileged access thanks to UK accession to the Treaties of Rome (1973) and Maastricht (1993)

and the Single European Act 1985 (effective 1993). There are no controls on emigration from the UK, although departing passengers have been required to show a passport since World War I.

Until 1962, none of the above measures applied to British subjects (nowadays known as Commonwealth citizens), only to "foreigners". British subject status conferred untrammelled right of entry to the UK, and other privileges (voting), upon all those owing allegiance to the British monarch by virtue of birth in the UK, or in a Dominion or Colony. This long-standing practice was formalized by the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914. Its provisions were continued even after the Second World War which had effectively put an end to the dream of a multi-national, decentralized world state with a common citizenship. The British Nationality Act 1948 continued the privileges of free entry (and of subsequent voting in all elections) for the citizens of former colonies which had become independent countries, even if they had chosen to become republics (e.g. India, Pakistan in 1947), unless they left the Commonwealth (e.g. Burma 1948, South Africa 1964). Citizens of the former colonies were deemed to have remained British subjects or "Commonwealth Citizens", even if their governments renounced the British monarch as Head of State. They were (until 1962) thereby exempted from the immigration disabilities of "foreigners" (or "aliens"). This led to a very confused notion of British citizenship; these privileges of Commonwealth citizen status applied to several hundred million people.

Before World War II relatively few who were not of British origin came to Britain. After the war the poor but growing populations in Commonwealth countries were mobilized by the wartime service of West Indians, Indians and others in Britain, and by cheap sea and air travel from the 1950s. The US McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, which included the West Indian immigration quota to the United States in with that of the UK and thereby reduced it to tiny numbers until 1965, diverted migration streams to the UK.

### *The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act*

As early as 1950 the Attlee (Labour) government had considered proposals to stop immigration from the West Indies, almost as soon as it had begun in 1948, because of its supposed undesirable social consequences. Such proposals were considered from time to time by the Conservative government which succeeded Labour in 1951. Controls were thought necessary to respond to public concern, to avoid friction with immigrant populations perceived as being difficult to assimilate because of differences in race, religion, language and customs. Their concentration in particular urban areas accentuated the fear that the immigrants were putting pressure on housing, jobs and schools. Unlike many continental countries, there was no official large-scale labour recruitment of guest workers to the UK. Not more than 10,000, possibly not more than 5,000 workers were recruited by various industries, mostly from Barbados.

Acrimonious debate between the parties and within the Conservative ranks delayed action until 1962 and stimulated further immigration. Popular pressure against continued immigration was countered by claims that controls were racist and betrayed the ideal of free movement in a multi-racial Commonwealth with a world citizenship. Freedom of entry had long ceased to apply to British people seeking to settle in most other Commonwealth countries. Eventually the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 imposed for the first time a moderate form of control on Commonwealth citizens, limiting the numbers allowed to enter to seek work through a generous voucher scheme (not the work permits required for aliens) and with liberal arrangements for "dependents". The Labour Party, though voting against the legislation, did not repeal it when it came to power in 1964. Instead Labour strengthened its modest provisions in their White Paper of 1965. Their new legislation in 1968 introduced annual quotas on East African Asians who had been given UK passports on the independence of various East African colonies. In 1969 the

Labour government additionally required persons seeking to enter as dependents from the Indian sub-continent to seek "entry clearance" from British officials there rather than on arrival, where claims were impossible to check. The 1968 legislation also introduced the notion of a "patrial" — a person with a long-standing strong connection with the British Isles who could be expected to have the right of abode in the UK (e.g. by virtue of having at least one UK-born grandparent) once his or her position was established.

To compensate some of its own factions the Labour Government also introduced a series of race relations acts (1965, 1976) which attempted to outlaw racial discrimination and paved the way for what has become in effect an increasingly pervasive minorities-based "multicultural" policy. This in turn has not been repealed by the Conservatives, even though they had originally opposed it. Such balanced developments have been called the "Grand Compromise" by US analysts although the term is little used in the UK and no formal deal was struck. Immigration controls are still opposed by the left. It is not Labour Party policy to repeal them, even though particular aspects of the laws or of their implementation are denounced as racially discriminatory.

### ***The 1971 Immigration Act***

Immigration policy in Britain is still defined by the 1971 Immigration Act. Then and ever since it has been described by the Government as a "firm but fair" immigration policy, intended to "control immigration from all sources on the same basis, as an essential prerequisite for satisfactory race relations." Its aim was — and remains — explicitly to limit immigration from Commonwealth and foreign countries on the same defensible footing. It abolished the special quotas and other distinctions which Commonwealth subjects had enjoyed over foreign citizens. It established the same procedure for labour migration based on work permits for all migrants (except, since 1973, from the EU). "The 1971 Act ... sought to bring primary immigration by heads of household down to

a level which our crowded island could accommodate ... in the belief that there is a limit to which a society can accept large numbers of people from different cultures without unacceptable social tensions. That remains our view."

The wide-ranging and confusing definition of British citizenship was not reformed until 1981 to bring it into line with the realities of immigration control. The Labour Government of 1974-79, which had opposed the 1971 Act in opposition, again did not repeal it when in office. It passed no primary immigration legislation but did alter the Immigration Rules in various ways which increased the number of persons accepted for settlement. But from 1977 newly married husbands were no longer being accepted for settlement on arrival but instead were given "limited leave to enter". That was intended to reduce illegal immigration through bogus marriages of convenience, a problem which has increased up to the present day.

### ***Developments in Immigration Policy Since 1971***

The 1971 Act remains in place as the basis of immigration control. Until the asylum legislation of 1993, only relatively minor changes have been made: to close loopholes, to restrict undemanding provisions on dependents, and to respond to new legal challenges (notably membership in the EU) and unexpected interpretations of the 1971 Act by the courts (especially the European Court of Human Rights in 1985). Policy has also had to respond to the new challenge of the large numbers of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants who began to arrive in the UK from the mid 1980s. For example, the Immigration Act 1988 obliged male Commonwealth citizens settled (or born) in UK by January 1, 1973, as well as subsequently, to provide adequate maintenance for their dependents before those dependents could enter. It also restricted right of entry to just one of the wives of polygamous men settled in the UK and obliged all overseas citizenship claimants to settle their claims abroad. (Once claimants for citizenship or asylum are in the UK they enjoy the support of various appeal procedures and government-subsidized im-

migrant support agencies.)

European judges have sometimes forced the government to change its rules to allow further immigration. In August 1985, for example, following a ruling in 1985 by the European Court of Human Rights, the Immigration Rules had to be changed to give the right of settlement to the husbands of wives who were settled in the UK, even when the wives were not citizens. Previously this had only applied to husbands of British citizens. This court now over-rides UK law because the UK is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, signed in November 1950, which came into force in September 1953. The Convention operates in ways completely unfamiliar to the UK justice system, there being no appeal and no ultimate determination of the law which it administers by elected representatives. To limit the damage to immigration control, the Rules were also changed to extend the "primary purpose rule" to wives as well as to husbands. This is an inquiry to establish whether the purpose of the marriage is primarily to gain entry into the UK. Wives as well as husbands now have to serve a "probationary year" after their marriage, and female fiancées as well as male fiancés must obtain entry clearance before arrival. Accession to the Treaty of Rome in 1973 required immigration controls on EU citizens to be eased. The Maastricht Treaty extended this easy entry to citizens of the European Economic Area countries as well; that is the countries of the EFTA group except Switzerland. Except for the mid 1980s, numbers of people entering from EU countries have been about the same as numbers leaving. However Section 8a of the Single European Act, effective from January 1, 1993, poses a more serious challenge to UK immigration control. The EU Commission, and some other member states, interpret this Act to mean that all member states must remove border controls for EU citizens and also for other, non-citizen residents of EU countries. The British Government has opposed any such interpretation, claiming this would wreck attempts to control the entry of drugs and terrorists as well as

unwanted immigrants to another country, whether legal or illegal, and maintains passport controls on travellers from EU and EEA countries. For the same reasons, the UK has not joined the Schengen agreements of 1985 and 1990, created between several EU countries to harmonize their immigration policies. Intended to facilitate cross-border trade, the agreement binds its signatories to abandon border controls on their common frontiers, although not, of course, on frontiers with other countries. There is no confidence in Britain in the effectiveness of Spanish, Italian or Greek immigration procedures, which under EU proposals would become, along with those of other states, the means of controlling immigration into the whole EU area from non-EU countries. Some reservations about Schengen now seem to be shared by France, which has withdrawn from some of its provisions.

Old colonial obligations, the ending of which has been so often promised, nonetheless continue to punch holes in immigration policy. The Immigration (Hong Kong) Act passed in 1991 permits the entry for settlement of up to 50,000 heads of household (equivalent to about 250,000 people), who previously did not have the right of abode in the UK, in addition to the existing 15,000 UK passport holders in Hong Kong. An unwilling UK government felt that it had to stabilize the situation in its last remaining large colony, which is due to be handed back to the communist Chinese government in 1997, even at the expense of domestic immigration policy. By granting the right of abode to the 50,000 (mostly key government employees to whom some moral debt was felt) the government hopes to persuade them to stay in Hong Kong with a guaranteed means of escape, rather than obliging them to find one permanently in Canada or elsewhere by leaving prematurely. Previous, but smaller exceptions were made in 1973 on behalf of East African Asians fleeing Uganda and after 1982 in favour of Vietnamese "boat people". The exemption from visa requirements of about 2 million Hong Kong residents in early 1996 may lead to further migration through overstaying or asy-

lum claiming. Serious trouble in South Africa may also spell serious trouble for British immigration policy. Approximately 800,000 people entitled to hold UK passports ("patrials") are believed to live there, and therefore enjoy unqualified access to the UK.

### ***Recent Pressures on Immigration Policy***

Up to the 1980s, it was believed that immigration was more or less under control. In net terms, it was still negative — inflows of Commonwealth and other citizens being more than balanced by outflows of Britons. It had ceased to be politically very salient. Labour migration was adequately dealt with in modest numbers to meet the modest needs of the UK economy. Most work permits were given to highly skilled or professional workers, as today. EU membership and the removal of most controls on entry from EU member countries had not generated large volumes of additional migration — the mediocre UK economy was not attractive to most European migrants. Immigration from the Republic of Ireland, insofar as it was known, had ceased to be a problem; indeed the net flow was temporarily reversed in the late 1970s. Immigration of dependents from the New Commonwealth was declining, although not as fast as had been forecast, and immigration of new fiancés and spouses from the New Commonwealth was still relatively modest.

This began to change from the mid-1980s. Conventional sources of net immigration began to grow again, from the New Commonwealth (especially spouses) and from work permit holders. On top of that, in just a few years asylum claims from Commonwealth and other countries have increased from 2,425 in 1981 to 44,840 in 1991, not including 28,600 dependents (73,440 in all in that year). The UK government, like the rest of Europe, believes that almost all the new asylum pressure is conventional betterment migration. Claimants' case histories show that asylum claiming is often illegal overstaying immigration pursued by other means. Acceptance rates of claimants as "Convention" refugees, 32 percent as recently as 1989, fell to 3 percent in 1992. However,

more are given "limited leave to remain" on humanitarian grounds (in 1994, out of 20,990 decisions made, 825 persons were recognized as refugees and 3,660 given exceptional leave to remain). Very few are removed or are known to have left the country. For example, in 1992 18,465 claims were rejected (including multiple claims) and only 1,346 persons were returned (7.3 percent). The small number of claimants who are accepted as 'convention refugees' is no guide to the immigration impact of asylum claiming. Most asylum claimants should be regarded as 'immigrants' in demographic terms. All are already in the country; most apparently intend to stay — and are able to — irrespective of the outcome of their claim. The whole process — especially of the generous system of appeals — is very time-consuming and must be very expensive. In 1994 20,990 applications were processed and decisions reached, and 28,620 appeals (most relating to previous years) were dealt with. The total cost is not published, but the annual cost of the Swedish asylum system in the early 90s (with a similar number of cases) was about \$1.3 billion per year.

A number of steps have been taken to try to limit these flows, similar to legislation in European countries. Visa requirements have been imposed on various Commonwealth nationals for the first time (Ceylon in 1985, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Ghana in October 1986, Nigeria in February 1987). The Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987 made airlines responsible for ensuring that passengers to the UK had appropriate documents, subject to a penalty, now £2000, imposed on the carrier per infringement. Most airlines have refused to pay the huge fines outstanding. Enforcement is troublesome for diplomatic reasons. Changes in the Immigration Rules and asylum procedures have aimed to reduce bogus asylum claiming, for example those in November 1991 directed against multiple applications and other fraud. DNA tests were introduced in January 1991 to check the veracity of dependency claims.

The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, like similar legislation

in many other countries, was an attempt to control this wide breach in immigration policy. It provides for the fingerprinting of claimants from July 1993 (to detect multiple claims), ensures that claimants are only offered temporary accommodation if they make demands under the homelessness legislation, restricts the rights of appeal in relation to asylum claims, and extends the Carriers Liability Act to transit passengers and speeds up the application process. Some of the earlier measures appear to have had some effect. The number of asylum claimants fell to 24,600 in 1992 and to 22,400 in 1993 (excluding dependents). However, the Government's restrictive policy on asylum claimants attracts much criticism from political opponents and from the churches and this led to changes being made in the Bill during its passage through Parliament. Whether for this or for other reasons, the 1993 Act itself has been a resounding failure. Asylum claims rose from 22,370 in 1993 to 32,830 in 1994 and an even higher number in 1995, 43,965. Among the major recipients of asylum claims in Europe, the UK is unique in experiencing an increase in claims between 1993 and 1995. Elsewhere, the introduction of procedures and principles which are apparently so difficult in the UK, along with others not yet proposed here, has succeeded in reducing sharply the number of asylum claims. The Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum in Geneva, however, have warned that a concomitant rise in illegal entry and overstaying is in progress.

To correct the failure of the 1993 Act, new legislation, the Immigration Appeals and Asylum Bill, is going through Parliament at the time of writing. Like the 1993 Act, it has attracted opposition from the Labour Party, from the churches and pressure groups, and violent demonstrations by left-wing activists. The Bill seeks to modify the extensive system of asylum appeals, it prohibits for the first time the employment of persons not legally resident in the UK, and it formalizes the notion of 'safe third countries' to which asylum claimants may be returned without

detailed scrutiny of their claims, among other measures.

Asylum claims, especially from persons who claim some time after entering the country on some other short-term pretext, together with short term visitors who go through a ceremony of marriage, have together rendered almost worthless the 'net balance' figures on immigration derived from the International Passenger Survey. Data from this survey (a voluntary sample of all entering and leaving at ports of entry) are an essential component of population projections and of the household projections used officially for planning and housing strategy. Being based on a voluntary sample, they are always subject to some error. But the 'switchers', who enter on a short-term pretext but remain through asylum claiming or marriage are not included in the inflow figures of those intending to stay for at least twelve months, and have created exceptional problems. Consequently it is now officially acknowledged that these data have under-estimated net immigration by about 20,000 persons per year between 1981 and 1992; by about 10,000 persons in 1981 and by about 50,000 in each of 1991 and 1992. Thus instead of a net inflow of 44,300 persons in 1989, the corrected actual net inflow probably was 91,200. Instead of a net outflow of 3,100 persons in 1993, the official corrected figure is a net inflow of 35,200.

Consequently, it is by no means clear that UK immigration policy in practice has been as 'firm' as its supporters and its detractors have claimed. Most forms of immigration to the UK have continued to rise since the mid-1980s, not to fall as promised. In various ways official statistics understate the overall demographic impact of immigration. Whether this policy, condemned by some for its apparent strictness, is actually effective is questioned by these rising trends. For many years there has been an uneasy consensus on immigration—that controls were necessary and that they were effective. For these reasons, until recently, immigration has only transiently been front-page news and has not been a major issue in

elections. The rise of asylum-claiming, and its controversial legislative response, may have changed all that.

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**David Coleman is Lecturer in Demography at Oxford University.**

## *Sophist's Corner*

European Communities Documents:

COM (95) 695

Proposal for a regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of microwave ovens in the People's Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Thailand.

COM (95) 2108

Report — small and medium-sized enterprises: dynamic source of employment, growth and competitiveness in the European Union. (1248895)

COM (95)

Decision adopting an action plan to combat cancer.

COM (95) 673

Proposal for a regulation authorising the offer or disposal for direct human consumption of certain imported wines which may have undergone oenological processes. Proposal for a regulation laying down general rules for the import of wines, grape juice and grape must.

There are around fifty of these documents a week.

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# Conservatism in France

*John Peek thinks the French more conservative than the English*

**H**ow conservative are the French? Are they more or less so than the British? And what hope does their attitude hold out for cooperation and friendship across the Channel? Having spent many years living on the south side of that seaway I have often asked myself these questions. Any attempt to answer requires one to adopt, without entering too deeply into philosophic niceties, some working definition of conservatism with a small 'c' and Conservatism in the political sense, for they are two different, though related, attitudes.

I define conservatism with a small 'c' as an instinctive, even irrational, urge to protect one's existing way of life, and resist any change in it that is not forced by external pressures. 'What was good enough for my parents is good enough for me and my children.' Such conservatism asserts that there is a wisdom of the ages, distilled through many generations, that is superior to any new, untried ideas. The conservative is fiercely attached to his family and to old family friends of proven worth and loyalty; he rarely looks beyond these attachments.

Political Conservatism has the same basic characteristics, but is more flexible, is readier to leap on to a better band-waggon to achieve its aims, inhabits a wider spectrum of thought and emotion, though is equally scornful of theory. It is, like the other kind, warm to family values, but takes that love beyond family into love of region and love of country. For Conservatives patriotism is a virtue, essential to the maintenance of a country's independence and its defence against attack.

If these admittedly simplistic premises may be allowed — and setting aside for the moment Conservatism with a big 'C' — I would judge

that the French are today a more conservative people than the British, taking the populations of each country as a whole. There are a number of reasons why this should be so. At the end of the 18th century the political revolution in France and the industrial revolution in Britain set the peoples of the two countries moving along socially divergent paths. Under Napoleon, France, with a population in 1800 of some 30 million and (as now) a predominantly agricultural country, turned its farmers into freeholders, with each one allotted a plot of cultivable land, a plot of pasture and a plot of forest. Napoleon had given them a stake in their country and the responsibility to make the best they could of it. At the same time they were almost as firmly bound to the land — their property — as if they had been villeins in a feudal system. Today, in rural France, most agricultural properties are still owned by the direct or collateral descendants of those who were given their lands by Napoleon. He had in fact done for the French peasant what Margaret Thatcher has tried to do in the 1980s: to turn Britain into a nation of home-owners.

Meanwhile in Britain, whose population in 1800 was only ten million (one third of that of France), the Industrial Revolution bred an enormous increase in numbers; such that by the end of the century Britain's population had caught up with France's at about 40 million. But these new Britons were landless factory workers, often at the mercy of heartless entrepreneurs. Coal miners, if laid off, had no other employment. It was inevitable that the right to strike and other social defence mechanisms should develop — even Luddism — such as were scarcely needed in the agricultural communi-

ties of France. Of course as France, in turn, developed industries, so her workers produced much the same social defence mechanisms, but population-wise they were still a minority by the end of the century. In contrast, farming in Britain changed from being a majority to a minority activity in the course of the century. These trends are too well known to need further analysis here. They tend to show that France, after the explosion of the Revolution, remained predominantly agricultural and conservative-minded throughout the 19th century, whereas Britain became progressively more socialist (with a small 's').

Another historical factor which has played its part is the relative insecurity felt by people living in the western end of the Eurasian landmass. France is a beautiful, fertile country but it has been invaded regularly from time immemorial. However well a country is governed it cannot always resist an aggressor. The people are in consequence chary of the gentler luxuries of socialism (revolution may have to be resorted to, of course, but soft-hearted follies are 'out'). They tend to be subject to the hard-headed constraints to virtue (i.e. conservatism) of the primitive savage, who will be murdered if he doesn't keep up his guard or starve if he doesn't behave.

Britain has had the luxury of being an island. Not successfully invaded for over nine centuries (though there was a scare fifty years ago, bringing conservative virtues well to the fore), she has been permitted by her relative security to develop the principles of democracy and liberalism to extremes not known elsewhere, except perhaps in northern Scandinavian lands. The generosity of spirit engendered by these principles is lovely to behold, especially

from foreign shores. But on the home front it tends to open up a Pandora's Box of soft-hearted follies, vices and other ills which sap morale and weaken resolve. Internationally it results in naive politicians allowing their country to be milked by the Brussels machine and outwitted by polite but devious foreign statesmen who only mean what they say when it suits them. It is impossible to imagine such phenomena among the hard-headed French, embittered by experience. This then is another conservative 'plus' for our neighbours across the Channel.

A related factor making for French conservatism is the poverty trap. Ownership of his land obliges the French farmer to exercise responsibility and (even allowing for CAP aid) self-reliance; but it does not, on average, make him rich. Only among the huge, level prairies east of Paris will a visitor to an agricultural property automatically be offered a glass of champagne. In most of the rest of France, above all in the south, farmers are hard-pressed to make ends meet. A major reason for this poverty is the tendency there has been for the properties acquired under Napoleon to be subdivided between the heirs in successive generations, into smaller and smaller economic units. To this handicap others were added. First, the original hand-out involved three kinds of plot, often separated from each other by others' lands. Secondly, improvements in farm practices and machinery since Napoleon have rendered production uncompetitive without substantial changes in land-use. (For example, slopes too steep to be worked by machine can no longer sustain vines economically, so that these must be transferred to the woodland or the pasture, and the cattle in turn grazed on the slopes.) The result is that life has been difficult for the owner-farmer; and all this takes no account of climatic and other natural disasters, such as phylloxera and chestnut-tree die-back. However, the heritage handicap has now given way, wherever possible, to an arrangement whereby one heir takes the property and the others receive compensation in cash. This arrangement is not possible in cases,

which are not rare, where the heir who takes the property has not enough funds with which to compensate his siblings. To do so, he may take a loan secured on the value of his property. But what is his property worth, seeing that previous subdivisions and the other factors mentioned above had made it unprofitable? He may do up an outhouse as a 'gîte' to earn rent from holiday makers. The government encourages him to combine with neighbours to operate more efficiently in common; but human nature being what it is, such measures rarely work. The result is a situation in which ageing farmers operate at a loss made good by the provisions of the CAP and in which their children leave the land for the city. Increasingly, farm properties are abandoned, the roof is knocked in to avoid the habitation tax and the building crumbles until some romantic foreigner (or urban Frenchman) comes across it and buys it for family holidays. This then is the poverty trap affecting the large class of French people who began life as farming folk. They are conservative because they were landowners; they are also conservative in behaviour inasmuch as they do not have the time or the resources to be anything else. They may not even bother to vote, believing all politicians to be corrupt.

Contrast this sorry situation with the story, reported a year or so ago in *The Daily Telegraph*, of a plane-load of English workers furious at having their group holiday booking at Lanzarote shifted to Tenerife (to a 5-star hotel!) because a German group had offered more than they for the rooms at Lanzarote. The newspaper thought this scandalous, but my amazement belonged to another sentence in the report which explained that one of the English party, a Newcastle bricklayer aged 26 was complaining that he had been with his family to Tenerife *four times before* and wanted to go to Lanzarote for a change! Some members of the party just went home in a huff. One would hardly regard these people as conservatives; such spoilt children could only be socialists.

The church and the educational system together constitute a further factor

making for French conservatism. Churchgoing is still the norm among the French peasantry, though the trend is downward. Twenty-five years ago in our rural region every parish had its priest; now three or four parishes share a priest who goes the rounds, and it is now mainly the womenfolk, with their children, who attend services, the men having become more sceptical. Primary schools are still run in the parishes on traditional lines; trendiness is reserved for the secondaries and the universities, but is not so virulent even at those levels as it has been in Britain, and young people seem genuinely keen on learning and obtaining qualifications. Family tightness is very marked and the priest's influence upon it is not negligible. Children are taught to be polite and godfearing; they learn the Bible stories and they help make the traditional creche at Christmas-time. Until they reach their teens, children push their faces up for a kiss from visitors — it is a pretty sight.

In Britain, since the time of the Labour governments of 1964-70, education at every level does not seem to have been devised to foster in the young good manners or behaviour, affection (or even respect) for parents, obedience, diligence or even acceptance of what is taught. Permissiveness, contestation, rejection of family values and loyalty have been the orders of the day. These were Marxist/Socialist policies and there is now a generation in its middle thirties completely brainwashed by them and sowing the same seeds in their young. This is not a conservative scenario.

The accelerating movement of younger people from the farming communities to the towns has led to an enormous expansion of urban areas in the last twenty-five years. Many of those who migrate to the towns do not find work, but would rather stay there hopefully on the dole than return to the hopelessness of farm life; these people are certainly not conservative in either sense of the word. On the other hand, those who find jobs and success in the vast numbers of light industries that have sprung up are imbued with an energy and sense of opportunity that inclines them to big 'C' Conservatism,

since this is more favourable to free enterprise. Some go even further to the Right in espousing the xenophobia of the *Front National*, a phenomenon that is on a much larger scale than in Britain.

Against this demographic background how does France's political Conservatism compare with Britain's? The first step in such a comparison must be to sort out the respective party labels of the two countries, since they do not match exactly. Beginning at the left end of the political spectrum we have France's Communist Party, very strong in 1945 as the natural repository of the sensations of humiliation and disenchantment that affected French people at the end of the war, sensations blended with admiration for the Soviets' war-winning efforts and sacrifices and by revulsion at the anti-semitism of the war years. Its support has gradually subsided in the mesh of other emotions and, following the Soviet collapse as a world power, it would scarcely now be a political force were it not for its very likeable leader, Hue. Similar admiration for Soviet Russia in Britain did not have the same political effect. The British Communist Party soon realised that under the British first-past-the-post system it had little chance of ever influencing policy by direct parliamentary action, and it therefore concentrated on dominating the trade-unions which in turn dominated (because they financed) the Labour Party. For that reason the Labour Party — or as we would now say, the Old Labour Party — has to be equated with the French Communist Party, a correlation which seems borne out by Wilson's Marxist policies of the 1960s and the Labour Party's curious habit of singing the Red Flag and the Internationale at party conferences.

Continuing round the spectrum we can liken the French Socialist Party to New Labour and the Social Democrats in Britain. The French Republican Party and the UDF correspond to the Europhile wing of the Conservative Party, and the French RPR to its Eurosceptics, leaving the *Front National* without an electable counterpart in British politics, though related ideas may lurk at the back of some Tories' minds.

It is reasonable to maintain that, on the one hand, French socialism has been less extreme in its policies than British Labour and, on the other hand, that as at least three main French parties of the Right correspond to the one Tory Party there is a richer mix of Conservative thought in France than in Britain, even though the Tories, in claiming to be a broad church, cause John Major much difficulty in maintaining cohesion. Since in France the political Left has been less extreme and the political Right more extreme than in Britain, one can fairly say that France is now, and has been for a long time past, a politically more Conservative country than has Britain — and that despite Mitterrand's (admittedly mild) Socialism and Margaret Thatcher's (radical) Conservatism in Britain since 1980. One must, of course, realise that the latter's radicalism was dictated by the need to wean Britain from the extreme atheistic, amoral socialism of the preceding fifteen years.

Thus it would seem that both big and little 'c' conservatisms are on balance stronger in France than in Britain; so that if one could imagine blending the reds of the Left and the blues of the Right together in each country, the mix would come out violet in France and purple in Britain.

It remains to relate these mechanistic assessments with what one can discern of the French character in relation to conservatism. Aside from the fairly safe assertion that it differs a lot from the British, we are here on very treacherous ground. One can say at least that throughout the spectrum from Left to Right the French are a patriotic people, proud of their country, even to the point of being a little vainglorious about it, but ashamed of past failures and humiliations and keen to do better and succeed. France's patriotism is consistent with her role in Europe, since many French people adopt a proprietorial attitude to the movement; after all, they started it, and it is organised on French lines with their language as the main working tool of the Brussels organisations. Thus they often regard the encroachments of Brussels — so irksome to the British — less as a surrender of sovereignty than as

an expansion of it. The fact that Germany is now increasingly dominating debate (the rider being ridden) is, of course, forcing a rethink of that attitude. Nevertheless, French spirits are still on the up-and-up; the renewed self-respect and confidence generated by de Gaulle has still not fizzled out. On a personal level one finds French people naturally polite, well-mannered and friendly to people they like; the avoidance of frank speaking makes rudeness rare because unnecessary. They are remarkably free of hypocrisy and affectations such as 'side' and showing off. They can be self-important, but a keen self-awareness, an ironic sense of humour and the total classlessness of French society limit the damage. French people, and above all politicians, are capable of saying one thing and doing another; but as a tactical measure designed to promote personal, or national, interests in a potentially hostile world, it can perhaps be pardoned as no worse than the feint in football. All this seems to me to be perfectly apt icing on the French conservative cake.

I would not dare to contrast the British persona with the French in any detail. However, looking at my fellow-countrymen from afar, I am struck by two features that do not match the French persona; the satanic British media together with the brash behaviour of the many who are caught in its headlights; and the at times obstinate honesty of the leading classes, born of the nonconformist conscience. Cooperation between the French and British is also not helped by the folk-memories of the two peoples, which make them natural enemies. Fortunately both are blessed with a strong sense of humour; even here there are differences, but they are complementary, for while the British tend to laugh at themselves the French are happy to join in.

**John Peek worked in the Cabinet Office, NATO and The European Commission.**

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# End Game to the Great Game ... The Beginning of Da Afghanistan

*James J. Novak considers the current situation in Afghanistan*

**S**o what's new? "They're fighting in Afghanistan, a ha, ha-ha, ha-ha, ha-ha!"

Those old enough to remember the Kingston Trio may recall the above from a song that ridiculed the then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's policy in Africa. As Dulles also gave away the jewels in Afghanistan, the lyrics have been adapted to the Afghan war, without regard to copyright or any other legal formality. I don't think the Trio would mind.

The current battle for the throne in Kabul is not merely a matter of episodic violence, but one of nearly continual reality for at least 2,500 years — albeit broken by periods of 50 or 60 years of peace. For a while united by a single religion, Islam, this is a land of multiple ethnic and linguistic groups, as well as of mountainous terrain, divided among as many tribes and clans as it has valleys or "hollows", as we say in Pennsylvania. In both places, one valley knows little and cares less about the next. In Afghanistan, where ridges are considerably higher than in the Keystone state, differences are much greater. There is always some civil war, and it finishes in Kabul. With all those valleys, there is no single Afghanistan there, and that is the problem, or part of it.

If there is a *there*, it is Kabul. But if Kabul is at war, as it has been for 17 years, that does not mean the rest of the country is.

At a Stockholm conference last June, the United Nations Development Fund (UNDF) made a valiant effort to convince donor nations that vastly increased aid in Afghanistan is essential

— far more than the tiny amounts now trickling in that are barely preventing mass starvation and epidemics. Such aid, UNDF argued, would work in Afghanistan, as more than 90 percent of the country, which is 15 percent larger than France, is not at war, and the country has received a piddling \$50 million annually, mostly in raw wheat and emergency relief materials, such as blankets and first aid supplies, with more than half of all aid going into transport or into foreign aid agencies' pockets. Given the estimated one million of Afghanistan's 17 million people killed by the Soviets, 3.5-to-5 million refugees in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, several million widows and orphans, half a million people missing one or more limbs, and virtually no remaining infrastructure, given the fact that most provincial governments are peaceful and able to maximize the use of foreign aid, and given the billions of dollars going to relatively rich Egypt, Israel, the erstwhile Soviet nations, and even to Bangladesh, aid to Afghanistan is not just puny; it is punitive.

For its efforts, UNDF saw its 1996 aid budget for Afghanistan cut by 25 percent. Meanwhile, with a logic only the inscrutable West can comprehend, the UN Drug Control Program (UNDCP) received more money for Afghanistan, which in 1994 surpassed the world's largest poppy producer, Burma, by 500 tons. And so, while Afghanistan desperately needs electric power grids, irrigation systems, fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, tractors, and related accoutrements — not to mention rebuilt roads, clean water,

adequate health services and schools — to make its economy rich enough to entice farmers away from growing poppies, the inscrutable West is investing in drug eradication programs. Lacking the wherewithal to rebuild its former real economy — mostly self-sufficient in food with such exports as natural gas, sheepskin and other hides and skins, fruits, vegetables, nuts, timber, wool, and carpets — much of Afghanistan has turned to cultivation of poppies and production of opium. Faced with their realities, can we blame Afghan farmers for growing poppies for real money, Pakistan rupees, instead of government-printed confetti, called "Afghanis"?

Why is the war almost solely in and for Kabul? Is it because Kabul is the capital? Or is it because the *feringhis*, (read 'us') have made Kabul a prize worth fighting for — because we *feringhis* only like to deal with neat entities? Is it because helping individual provinces, no matter how desperate, fouls up our webbing?

Here, too, the answer is "yes", at least in part. For nearly all international aid agencies will give only to national entities, as our boys in striped pants from foggy bottoms the world over only give to governments with which they have treaties. Legalistically it's neater. A central government is believed to be able to deliver a "quo" for our "quid". It doesn't matter, for example, that in Afghanistan, Kandahar or Ningahar provinces (and there are 20 more at peace) are ready to use foreign aid in ways that would benefit both sides. It has to be the whole place; and we thought

totalitarianism was dead.

What is the fighting in Kabul all about? Who would want that war-ravaged city now? After you take Kabul and you're closeted with your cronies and ask, "Well, what the hell are we in power for?" there's only one answer: "We're here for the money." Where does money come from? From those who want to give us aid because they want a government in Kabul. They've said so many times. It's been worth fighting for. Give us control of Kabul and some reasonable part of Afghanistan, some peace in the provinces, not real peace, just some peace, which means peace in Kabul and protection of foreigners, and the aid agencies will come panting to give us money — so we can buy equipment to build roads, machinery, trucks, electric generating plants, and other benefits from the West and East Asia to get our country moving again toward self-sustaining growth, as it was before the Soviet invasion. Soon, the World Bank, the IMF, the Swedish Committee, Japan Aid, Canadian Aid, and even USAID, and goodness knows who else will offer everything we need. What's more — those secret agencies will offer us something on the side and with that money, as the British taught us in the last century, we can buy some peace, real Afghan peace: for bought Afghans stay bought, not like American politicians. That's what the fighting is about in Kabul. Real peace, bought first with foreign gold and then, when the economy gets going, with home-grown gold. What we mean by "gold" these days is what Americans call "pork" — roads, schools, health centres, for which politicians can take credit. Aid means votes and support which is good political business.

Look at the moolah being spread around the Middle East to buy peace and the billions and billions being spent on "peace" in the former Soviet Union, and just wait for the Bosnia aid bill. Peace is big business, and whoever has Kabul monopolizes the peace business here, as the aid-givers have made clear.

Now that we have the truth out of the way, we can turn to the usual drab issues — only here we're not so serious,

just more bitter.

In the heady days of John Foster Dulles, when the Truman Doctrine was enunciated by Ike in the early days of the Cold War, the main enemy was the USSR, and we needed Francis Gary Powers to fly U-2 spy planes from our ally Pakistan, not from Afghanistan, which Britain and Czarist Russia had used as a Central Asian buffer state in their Great Game for power throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Although Afghanistan bordered the Soviet Union, we didn't need it. We had Pakistan's Ayub Khan and his

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guys in our pockets, whereas the Afghan king had rather Communist ideas. Better to declare Afghanistan out of our strategic interest and to hold the Khyber Pass from the Pakistan side, than to try and bomb Stone Age Afghanistan out of the Stone Age.

In any case, in 1957, in one of his last acts as Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles did declare Afghanistan to be outside the US defence perimeter, which proved to be a silver-plated invitation to the USSR and a warning to Afghanistan that the US was not interested in playing the Great Game. We

would send aid, and the CIA, as well as Britain's MI6, would continue playing politics, but the CIA, at least, had to talk loudly, because it did not carry a big stick; the 101st Airborne would not be hitting the silk into Kabul to back the CIA if it made a mistake. Indeed, by February 1979 the situation became so bad that when US Ambassador Adolph Dubbs was assassinated by his Afghan communist kidnappers, the US did not have the guts to let our B52s take out Afghanistan's communist-held Bagram air base.

Meanwhile, Afghan political stability, fragile at best, plunged into chaos. In 1964, liberal King Mohammad Zahir Shah, who had ruled for 30 years, ousted his cousin and Prime Minister, Sardar Mohammad Daoud, promulgated a constitutional democratic "experiment", and wavered trying to achieve reforms and retain power. Meanwhile, extremist parties of both left and right emerged, including Soviet-allied communists who ultimately split along ethnic, class, and ideological lines into factions: the *Khalq*, led by Nur Mohammad Taraki and supported by the military, and *Parcham*, led by Babrak Karmal. Before long, Afghan politics reverted to tradition.

In 1973, Daoud forced the King into exile, abolished the monarchy, abrogated the constitution, and declared Afghanistan to be a republic with himself as president and prime minister. He then wiggled and waggled, at first cosying up to and then trying to distance himself from the Soviet Union to whom he granted significant economic development and trade leverage.

Moscow-backed communists murdered Daoud in April 1978, installing Taraki, who imposed a brutal Marxist reform programme that imprisoned, tortured, and murdered thousands of the élite and intelligentsia. Clashing with Islamic traditions, the communists ignited a nationwide insurgency, and although the USSR poured in military assistance and advisors, Afghan resistance fighters (*mujahidin*) swamped the Soviet-controlled Afghan army.

In February 1979, Ambassador Dubbs was assassinated. In September Hafizullah Amin, a former prime

minister and defence minister, murdered Taraki. In December, the Soviets invaded, killing Amin and installing Karmal, the exiled Parcham leader. Though backed by 120,000 Soviet troops and about \$800 million, Karmal was prevented by the *mujahidin* from ever controlling much more than Kabul.

In 1986, the Soviets replaced Karmal (who lives in Moscow) with Mohammad Najibullah, a former Afghan police chief with a brutal record. Hanging on until April 1992, three years after the USSR was forced out, Najibullah fled to the UN in Kabul, where he waits for the *mujahidin* either to allow him to go free or to kill him.

Thus, from 1957, when Dulles wrote off Afghanistan, to 1992, when the communists were defeated, the Russians and their Afghan puppets, despite all their pretensions, followed Goldwater's line and sought to bomb the country back to the Stone Age, or out of it, as you prefer — in the course of which they murdered, maimed, widowed, orphaned, or forced into exile perhaps half of Afghanistan's 17 million people. (But the good news, according to many Western reporters, was the enlightened Soviets freed Afghan women from the conservative Muslim requirement that they be covered head-to-toe by a *burqa*.) Fortunately, Pakistan and Iran, to their everlasting glory, accepted millions of refugees, with more kindness and care than we Americans have given Haitians after embargoing their country.

The British in the 19th and early 20th centuries were far better at the Game than the Russians proved to be. As for the US, we never used our chance to play the Great Game, and though we very badly muffed our Cold War strategy in Afghanistan, we did provide aid that helped the *mujahidin* defeat the communists. Thus, we partly compensated for the 1957 blunder that Dulles made, while surely speaking on behalf of our Republican President and Democrat-controlled Congress. Dulles is not to blame, for he didn't start the Cold War, and didn't want to get involved in Afghanistan, which he didn't think was important. While America

has avoided playing the Great Game here, perfect 20/20 hindsight makes it painfully clear that our Afghan policy was not just tragic, but a shameful mistake. It should have been clear that if there were to be a Cold War, it would be fought in places like Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, as well as in Iran, Afghanistan, and other countries bordering the USSR. And Dulles could have kept the Soviets guessing. Instead, he made the error for which Republicans later blasted Dean Acheson and John Kennedy in Korea and Laos, when we wrote those countries off and then had to fight for them. By issuing the invitation, Dulles unintentionally set off the cascade of events that led to Afghanistan's current plight.

This became clear on December 28, 1979 when, after the Iran debacle in which the Shah was toppled by hostile Islamic forces, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, touching off what was termed a New Cold War, after the Nixonian/Kissingerian era of détente. In a flash, Afghanistan's strategic importance became clear. The barbarians were at the Khyber Pass, and their Indian ally, which had nuclear weapons, flanked the other side of our ally Pakistan. Suddenly, Dulles's folly was threatening the whole of South Asia.

The American response, formulated under President Carter and continued by Reagan and Bush, designated Pakistan as a supply base for *mujahidin* fighters who would be recruited from Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Coordinated with the intelligence services of NATO, Pakistan, and of some Middle Eastern nations, primarily Saudi Arabia, a strategy was devised to arm as many soldiers as could be mustered into some pattern of an army. As Afghanistan is a fragmented country, the easiest way was to recruit and organize forces along regional, ethnic, and linguistic lines. Ten major parties or armies were founded, helped to form an alliance, directed to fight the Soviet Union, and, during the decade-long occupation, given about \$3 billion in military and economic aid.

What bound them together was a combination of Afghan nationalism and religion. By far the strongest force was Islam, which can instill a loyalty

that motivates a man wearing sandals, cotton pajamas, and a vest to fight to the death in Afghanistan's desert heat or mountain snow. For Islam provides the certainty that if he dies, even obscurely, from disease, cold or gas, if he's killed by guns, artillery, mines, or aircraft, he will go straight to Heaven. Like a Christian Crusader absolved of his sins for wearing the Cross, like Israeli paratroopers who, with daggers drawn, take the oath at Massada, like the powerful pride that motivates the American Army's Fourth Armoured Division, Afghanistan's Islamic *mujahidin* were ready to charge Hell with a cup of water, if that's what they were asked to do.

"Kill Soviets" was both the byword and the strategy, according to Abdul Haq, a major *mujahidin* leader whose family left Afghanistan when Daoud staged his 1973 coup. Realizing that Daoud was riding the back of the communist tiger, which surely would turn and eat him, Abdul, like other Afghan leaders, began the *jihad* before the Soviet invasion. When the Soviets came, the US and its allies helped organize and finance a much expanded *jihad*. But since the US never quite believed that the Soviets could be defeated, the strategy was to bloody them as much as possible. For no one expected Brezhnev's death, followed by the short reign of two nonentities, the emergence of Gorbachev, and the Soviet Union's implosion. In the meantime, the American-led strategy was working better than expected. By the mid-1980s, the *mujahidin* were extracting an unacceptable price from the USSR, militarily in Afghanistan and politically in much of the Western and Islamic world. The war also had become extremely expensive in material costs and human lives and so unpopular at home that reinforcements were unavailable, and Soviet troops were being forced back into Afghan cities, where they gradually were besieged.

In 1988 at Geneva, the USSR and the US agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan, refugees were assured of repatriation without persecution or harassment, and the Soviets agreed to

withdraw by February 1989.

The *mujahidin*, who were not party to the Geneva accords, refused to accept them. So when the USSR withdrew, the *mujahidin* escalated their war against the native communists who retained power, while the Soviets aided Najibullah surreptitiously. But although the US knew of the deception, we had neither the courage nor the bitter humour to seek revenge. Keeping our end of the bargain, we cut aid to the *mujahidin*, leaving them to fight with left-over weapons — unlike Vietnam where the USSR helped its North Vietnamese clients smash the South and embarrass America.

So the war dragged on another three years — as thousands more died in trenches or on land where an estimated 10 million mines were planted by the communists (vast numbers remain) and where rockets and artillery rounds mercilessly pounded narrow battlefields in a war of attrition. This part of the war not only was unnecessary, but probably laid the seeds for the current crisis.

After the Soviet pull-out, the West made two major mistakes. One was to abide by a bad treaty (which the other side violated) which caused futile death and destruction in a war that could end only one way — as support for the communists was nil and confined to major cities where they were surrounded — a war which we prolonged by cutting military aid to the inevitable victors.

The second error was that throughout the 13-year *jihad* America had ignored the issue of Afghanistan's post-war political landscape. Then, in 1992, when a decision had to be made, an in-house spat between the US Ambassador to Pakistan and his chief lieutenant on Afghanistan led the latter to be replaced by an old China hand, Peter Tomsen. Though decent and intelligent, Tomsen did not know enough about Afghanistan to provide the leadership needed. However, with his analysis supported by diplomats in Islamabad and Foggy Bottom, American and allied, he made the best of a bad job. It didn't help that there was no real political support in Congress or the Administration for more aggressive leadership. That most Afghan

leaders still respect him is a tribute to his integrity. Many Afghans contend that perhaps the problem was not Tomsen, but the situation.

At Tomsen's urging, the US helped create an Afghan government in exile comprised of leaders of the "political parties" that had been the ethnic-based armies of the *jihad*. That these were armies, not political units, and that its leaders, with rare exceptions, were not politicians but soldiers devoid of political ideas, apparently did not impress American policy-makers. They refused to recognize that throughout the *jihad* we had financed an army that had no political programme for the post-war era. If war is politics by other means, then from the perspective of Afghanistan's future, while we had helped free the nation, we had done nothing to ease its return to self-government. All we had done was to help an army that was devoid of politics to conduct a war.

Thus, throughout 13 years of communist rule, America and her allies had not thought about creating a unified post-war vision for who would rule Afghanistan and how. Thus, when a non-communist government was needed, the worst possible alternative was chosen: a coalition of a committee of soldiers.

As anyone who understands the military mind will attest, it is nearly impossible for one commander unselfishly to subjugate himself to another. (There are two exceptions in American history: in the Civil War General Sherman submitted to the command of his junior, General Grant, and in World War II General Patton took orders from General Bradley.) Soldiers generally are prickly about their rank in the hierarchy, their ability to lead men, and their prestige. It is part of the lust for leadership that great soldiers must have.

Thus, when the *mujahidin* captured Kabul and the major city of Jalalabad (without causing mass starvation, which they could have done by blocking UN food aid) they were a committee of armies, not a government, and they lacked a single common political principle.

Some had been influenced by the

socialist-Muslim thought of Syria, Libya, or Iraq, some by the Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-Western Islamic revolution, some by Egypt's radical Islamic Brotherhood, the Ikwan, some by Saudi Arabia's Wahabi sect, one of the *jihad's* biggest financial backers, some by Maulana Mahdoodi's Jamaat-I-Islam from Pakistan, some by their erstwhile King's Islamic kingship of the 1950s, and some by the simple, native Islam of Afghanistan, which is *sui generis* to the *ulema* or Muslim thought as it developed here over 1,000 years. Moreover, some wanted some form of democracy with a respect for Islamic beliefs.

The only secular politics they had experienced was Soviet-era anti-religious Marxism of the Khalq and Parcham parties, the Kremlin stooges that so discredited secularism that it is hard to imagine a truly secular party emerging. And for this we are partly at fault, for we did not even pretend to support the war for democracy, human rights, or other Western ideals. We simply allowed *mujahidin* aid recipients to fight for their own beliefs. Indeed, we did not even make it clear that we would support only a democratic government, one that was integrated into their world economy and adhered to our sense of human rights. Nor did we provide a rallying point for the millions who could compare the communists to the West and East Asia, and wanted the good life the latter offers. (Even now, despite efforts by the US Embassy in Kabul and the US Consulate and USIS in Peshawar, in and around which most Afghan refugees in Pakistan live, America still has not created that rallying point. Neither the Asia Foundation nor the National Endowment for Democracy are active in Afghanistan — one of the places they were created to help.)

Moreover, inter-*mujahidin* blood feuds had flared during the war. Some commanders had been accused of making deals with the Soviet Union. Some, out of jealousy or spite, had executed their rivals' followers. And some just didn't like each other, because they were Shia'a or Sunni Muslims or because they were ethnically and linguistically different, speaking

Pushto, Dari, Farsee, Tajik, Uzbek, or Turkamen. After three years of fighting a single enemy, all this hastily, ill-conceived committee of *mujahidin* leaders had in common was a shared hatred for communists, a vague understanding of Islam in all its variations, and some hazy idea of government they had learned long ago in civics classes. Not only were they an army without a shared political government, but they were a congeries of armies without a shared vision. Moreover, no statesman emerged from among them, because the Western allies had never thought to nurture a government in exile before the Soviet collapse. Finally, no aid was available to help shape a government. There only had been aid for soldiers in pajamas, sandals, and vests.

As the victorious *mujahidin* marched on Kabul while the Soviets withdrew, they began fighting among themselves. Having defeated their common enemy, the various armies, formed along ethnic, clan, and linguistic lines, continued to battle. After all, war is all they knew. Though the long war against the communists had ended, the fight for power in Kabul only had begun. No sooner had a *mujahidin* government been installed, than the "betrayals" began again.

To resolve differences, the *mujahidin* created a 51-member Interim Islamic Jihad Council. A moderate commander, Professor Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, was to head it for three months. Then, a 10-member council, led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani of the Jamaat-I-Islami group, was to rule for four months. Meanwhile, a *Loya Jirga*, or grand council of elders, would choose an interim administration to rule for up to a year, pending elections. But within weeks Rabbani formed the interim council, forcing Mojaddedi to surrender power to the council, which elected Rabbani president.

Heavy fighting swiftly erupted between Rabbani and another scoundrel, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, head of the Hezbi-I-Islami group. Though Hekmatyar, supposedly a Muslim extremist, briefly took power, the clashes continued, as Rabbani was success-

fully backed by his relative, Ahmed Shah Massood, Defence and National Security Minister and head of the secret police. As ruthless a murderer as Hekmatyar, Massood, invoking the name of Islam, soon looted the National Museum of its valuable collection. Other factions quickly joined the fray, precipitating large scale fighting in Kabul and in the northern provinces, thousands of civilian casualties, and another wave of refugees.

Simultaneously, faced with no effective central government, lesser commanders countrywide began demanding pay for their forces. When none came, they used their guns to collect "taxes". Anarchy swiftly reigned in many provinces.

As Britain and France supported Massood (to their ultimate chagrin), while Pakistan and Iran backed (and still do) Hekmatyar, the US adopted and maintains a policy of distant restraint, refusing to get involved in the civil war and urging all sides to make peace — a wise policy, if a timid one. As there still is no party with whom we have political sympathy, perhaps there is no option but to wait.

Meanwhile, out of this chaos in 1994 a rag-tag force of seminary student fighters called Taliban after *talib*, the name of a stage of Islamic study, arose in the southwest. Led by clerics or *mullahs*, this force — opposed to communists, corruption and crime, government by soldiers, and non-Afghan forms of Islam — first won local support and began disarming local *mujahidin* commanders. As the Taliban movement, well commanded and well armed, quickly spread nationwide, it became strong enough to besiege Kabul, and since late 1995 has been on the verge of taking it. (Not that this is certain. History is replete with examples of commanders who snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. But even if Taliban fails to take Kabul, someone else will try, for the present government controls only three northern provinces. There always will be tension in Kabul, as long as there is no even-handed protector or strong central government in this buffer state able to supply the gold or aid to buy off the tribes in the hills and valleys. The

press needn't fear a lack of material from the Kabul front, at least any time soon. About the only thing this poor country exports, besides opium, hashish, and the best cab drivers in New York, is news.)

Simultaneously, a similar, but more moderate anti-government movement emerged in four eastern provinces, led by Haji Qadir Arsala, brother of Abdul Haq. Declaring the *jihad* to be over and condemning internecine fighting, Qadir and his mentor, a *mullah* named Khalis Younis, gained control over local *mujahidin* commanders, pacified the East, and became aloof from the government feuds and intrigues that continued destroying what is left of Kabul. By January 1996, Haji Qadir and the Taliban represented over 90 percent of Afghans, all of them opposed to the current government in Kabul, but lacking any post-victory vision.

As for Taliban, ethnically, and thus for Afghanistan, politically speaking, it is heavily comprised of Pathans, Pushto speakers who account for about 60 percent of Afghans. However, many other tribal groups are represented, the Taliban never has appealed to Pushtoon nationalism, and not all Pathans opposed to the Kabul government belong to Taliban. (For instance, the eastern zone, entirely Pushtoon, has been neutral in the war.) These last distinctions are important, because the current war between Taliban and the Rabbani-Massood government that remains in power has a major sub-theme. The Kabul government is controlled by minority Tajiks and Pansheeris from the north who have sought to prolong the civil war and to undermine the country's centuries-long fragile ethnic unity by rallying northern tribes against the Taliban, whom they falsely accuse of being completely Pushtoon.

Although the Taliban professes a fundamentalist vision of Islam, it does not appear to be supported by any international extremist group. It is a native, rural form of Islam, not one imported from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Egypt, or especially from Libya, where Islam is not just a religion but a political ideology. The Taliban wants an Islamic state, based on an Afghan ver-

sion of Islam, which always has permitted wide areas of life to exist beyond its purview. This is not to say that Taliban is opposed to Shari'a Law or that it does not exercise strict control over women. Essentially, the Taliban form of Islam is Afghan in a mild nationalistic sense. The Taliban want Afghan life to return to some semblance of normality, which existed before Dulles wrote off Afghanistan, but one that allows for changes wrought by the war and the *jihad*.

Reportedly, Taliban is run by about 80 *mullahs* mostly from the southeastern city of Kandahar, who agreed on a need to disarm the *jihad* commanders and to bring peace. However, as religious men, not statesmen or technocrats, they apparently don't agree on much else. Since *mullahs*, like rabbis, priests, and Protestant ministers, are not schooled in political philosophy and are most likely to turn their attention to squabbles over holy book interpretations, it is highly uncertain whether they will be able to run the country or to recruit adequate statesmen once true peace breaks out. They know their theology, not political philosophy, which is why they are respected moral leaders. While that is not enough to govern, given the peace that Taliban has achieved in most of Afghanistan after 16 years of massive death and destruction, and given the political policy vacuum largely caused by US policy and intellectuals, for the present, Taliban is as good an answer as any. Ultimately, though, if Islamic history offers an example, there always has been a *de facto*, if not theological, distinction between the *nizamat* and the *ulema*, between the sultan and the caliph, wherein the former relates to secular life, while the latter to theological concerns. It is up to the caliph or the *ulema* to provide a "prophetic voice" to the political process, and to the *nizam*, the prince or sultan to provide a secular, financial, and technocratic political voice, what we call "statesmanship". In Afghanistan, the division between *nizamat* and *ulema* already is partly visible.

Assuming it takes power, Taliban will face something very different from

the rural Islam it now professes. Having lived in Iran or Pakistan, up to five million Afghans have seen relatively advanced societies compared to Afghanistan, now 30 years behind in technology, instead of 20 years as before the war. Moreover, Afghanistan is the world's third poorest nation, worse off than Burma or Bangladesh, the two other poorest ones in Asia. An entire generation returning from their Diaspora will not accept a nation controlled by pre-war rural values, exposed to advanced education and societies, they will be unwilling to allow Afghanistan to become as inward looking as Iran or as religiously riven as Pakistan. They will want what they have become accustomed to or at least have seen: good roads, schools, and health centres, electric power for their computers, televisions, and cellular phones, business opportunities, and books and newspapers from around the world.

Furthermore, there now exists a generation of young men who have known war, have seen their fathers, brothers, and friends die, have themselves been maimed — a generation sick of war that wants jobs, peace and prosperity. There are over half a million widows who want some stability in which to raise their fatherless children. Finally, there are millions who grew up under the communists and know only the values they learned in communist-run schools.

Taliban reflects all these threads of thought, as well as the aspirations that fuelled the *jihad*. While it is difficult to predict which combination of aspirations will win, it is a fair bet that the desire for peace and progress will be victorious, as already there are enough complaints about idiotic communists, Kalashnikov-minded commanders, corruption, and "the mullahs" to suggest that the *jihad*, which was declared over long ago, finally is truly burning out.

The ultimate issue revolves around a battle that every Muslim nation faces: between the demands of Islam and more modern aspirations related to nationalism. For what unites all of Afghanistan's valleys, tribes, and ethnic and linguistic groups is a simple

love of the land, a sense of being, as we say, "down home". This is reflected in the most popular song, "Da Afghanistan" (This Afghanistan), a song so powerfully evocative that even the communists were unable to ban it and soldiers on all sides sing it. Today, as the nation is poised on the brink of peace, "Da Afghanistan" continues to reverberate from the highest mountain to the smallest wooded valley to the camel caravans in the desert. As important to the newly emerging Afghanistan as the *muzzein's* call for prayer, "Da Afghanistan", in its own way, is a prayer for peace, a longing for normality. A song Westerners have ignored, it is an expression not so much of nationalism as a simple love of the land, like "God Bless America" or "America the Beautiful". And like those American songs, it is sung by every ethnic group — Pushtoon, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazai, Nooristani. It is the essential sentiment of Afghanistan. While the haunting melody, Da Afghanistan, sung with love and tenderness, cannot be conveyed, it is exemplified in its first verse:

This is our beautiful country,  
This the beloved country,  
This Afghanistan!

Where does this leave us? The dog that has yet to bark here is a mild form of liberal secularism tolerant of Islam. It is a dog that was greatly discredited by the Soviet Union, and which is now being starved by international aid-givers. It would bark if Western and Asian governments took a more activist approach on the aid front in the 90 percent of Afghanistan that is peaceful, in order to provide hope for the future, but the aid-givers are taking their cues from UN functionaries.

There is a certain cynicism among Afghans about UN intermediaries trying to form government coalitions here, making the same mistakes America made in 1989-92. Muttering can be heard about traditional Afghan ways of creating a government via *jirgas*. Each province will send to a predetermined site as many leaders, religious and secular, as it desires. They will decide both the government composition and the nation's vision for the future. This is the Afghan way to solve

the problem and it should be given a chance. Unfortunately every last deputy assistant foreign secretary for South Asia must put his or her hand in, so that his or her evaluation report reflects some success. No one knows anything of *jirgas* or *shuras* or about the reality of the hills and valleys of Afghanistan, a country that prides itself on its unity despite different languages and ethnic groups. They are too timid to give the *jirga* method a chance by offering financial support or encouraging a meeting of the elders who are anxious for peace.

The native way is unlikely to be attempted, too, because the UN is so used to meddling that it will be unable to control its itch to do so here. In November, a perfectly decent Tun-

sian former Foreign Minister, Mahmud Mestiri, roamed the Afghan countryside trying to forge a coalition. Since his chances of success were remote, one wonders why he didn't ask the Afghans if there is a better and, more importantly, a native way. Unfairly dubbed by some as the "Dr Kevorkian of Afghanistan", he nevertheless represents the sort of UN dithering that ruined Somalia and Bosnia, not to mention Lebanon, Cambodia, and half a dozen other nations that have suffered from its ineffectual peace-making strategies.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's torments endure.

Alexander the Great, Cyrus, Tamerlane, Ghengis Khan, Babur, Sher Sha, the British, and the Russians

have passed through Afghanistan into a certain obscurity. It is certain that oil pipelines will rust and be forgotten. Even after they disintegrate into ferrous powder, and this is the real "but" of all the "buts" in this article, Afghanistan will remain strategic to someone. That is the truth about Kabul, and that is why there always will be fighting around about it. It is too beautiful a city to be left alone, and Afghanistan is too strategic to be ignored.

**James Novak is a volunteer in Afghanistan, working on a project of medical aid and reconstruction run by the Koh-i-Noor Foundation.**

## *What Stakeholder Society?*

### *Robin Cave*

It is being put about by the Labour Party that a Stakeholder Society is, or would be, a good thing — but what sort of a person is a stakeholder?

Gallup recently asked a sample of voters what it meant. Many had never heard of it. Some knew Tony Blair had invented it, but didn't know what it was. Quite a large minority said they knew what it was, but when questioned further, only about half of this minority could give a definition acceptable to Gallup. We were not told what would have been an acceptable definition.

A stake is something, especially money, which is placed at hazard or

gambled, e.g. on a horse. This stake may be used figuratively, as a stake in an event or concern, by which one may stand to gain or lose. The only meaning my dictionary gives for stakeholder is one who holds the stakes of a wager. He is therefore the honest or impartial middleman who holds both sides' stakes, and gives them to the winner when the result of the race etc is declared.

An example, in horse-racing, is the Tote, which holds all the bets, takes a fixed percentage for expenses (and profit), and distributes the rest to winners, according to prearranged rules. The largest example, in Britain now, is the Na-

tional Lottery, which holds millions of £1 stakes until six rubber balls have been selected out of a collection of fifty numbered balls, then gives half the stakes back to the participants. Most of the other half goes as tax and to various "good causes". The lucky stakeholder, keeping any profit, is Camelot plc, which has little connection with King Arthur of the round table, or even with John F Kennedy's presidency.

So, the society which we actually have now is a Camelot Society. People should not be prevented from gambling on little rubber balls, but nor do I think Tony Blair should encourage it.

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# The Greatest Story Ever Sold

## *Alexander Boot wonders whether Christianity leads to Socialism*

Now that Jesus Christ has become a superstar, he is enjoying the kind of commercial success the homeless carpenter could never dream of in his lifetime. Long since in the public domain, his estate is not entitled to royalties, which keeps down the overhead of countless West End and Hollywood productions, making them even more viable as far as entrepreneurial ventures go.

Mass vulgarity has thus succeeded where Crucifixion failed: Christ is now dead, at least as a social force, and his house has been converted into luxury condominiums for the whole family, while supply lasts. Now the question is, was it murder that accomplished this evil deed, or was there an element of suicide as well? What if, even as Christ himself instigated Judas's betrayal, Christianity itself contributed to its downfall?

The very fact that this question has been posed should tip you off as to the author's view. So I'd better come clean. Christianity, as a human institution, is a bit like democracy. Since birth, both have been carrying the malignant seeds of socialism inside their bodies. The seeds have now sprouted and are about to bring both of them down — if only to prove Boot's Law: *that which lives by mass appeal will perish by mass appeal.*

If you question the validity of this immutable law of the universe, just compare the music written for the Margrave of Brandenburg, the Archbishop of Salzburg, Baron Esterhazy and Count Rasumovsky to that concocted for the tattooed plankton befouling the Wembley Arena. Or the buildings erected for Charles II to those slapped together for the GLC. Or, for that matter, the sonnets written for

hundreds to the lyrics of pop songs belloyed for zillions.

Is it blasphemous to mention democracy and Christianity in the same breath? Democracy, after all, is nothing *but* a human institution; it is not sacrosanct, and one is allowed to criticise even 'one man one vote' in polite society. But is it legitimate to talk about Christianity in those terms? I think so, for while the essence of this religion is doctrinal emphasis on heaven, it was a worldly promise that enabled Christianity to triumph over other religions, including Judaism, its original monotheistic rival in first and second century Rome. And a worldly promise should be open to worldly exegesis.

Judaism is an introvert religion, which is why it has survived against all odds and, on its own limited terms, is doing fine. Christianity, however, is extrovert, and more than just a religion, which is why it succeeded in becoming the universal creed of our civilisation. But even as there is life in death, there may also be failure in success.

Christianity, and by that I mean not just the New Testament but the entire synthesis of belief, mythology, culture, theology, philosophy, social and political organisation, is so voluminous and multifarious that it can console people good and bad, animate greatness, accommodate baseness, encourage virtue, justify sin. If Bach's inspiration can be traced back to Christ's Passion as laid down by Matthew and John, then so can Hitler's animus be traced back to Luther and, even further, to Christian theology as laid down by Paul. Christianity has no walls, it is infinite — and therein lies its strength. Therein also lies its weak-

ness; and indeed, one can say that its greatness and weakness are more or less fused into one.

This is hinted at by the duality of Christ who was at the same time a man and God. The word 'Christianity' accommodates both, in a way. It means, of course, the teaching of Christ epitomised in the Sermon on the Mount, sanctified by Crucifixion and Resurrection, and accepted as infallible by the faithful. But it also means the Christian church, an undoubtedly man-made institution which is *ipso facto* prone to human foibles.

That is where duality starts and whence it grows into every aspect of the Christian creed, to a point where it turns into downright ambivalence, often residing within the same man's breast. For example, someone like Chesterton could in his theological writings approach the sensibility of St. Francis — while echoing, in his political writings, the sensibility of *Der Stürmer*. If a subtle and sincere Christian mind does not immunise its possessor against virulent antisemitism and a thinly veiled longing for genocide, what kind of effect can Christian ethics possibly have on the vulgar man?

Precious little, as a cursory look at Christianity even in its apogee will reveal. An interesting tidbit: at the time of Magna Carta, seven centuries after St. Augustine baptised England, the courts accepted an Englishman's oath only when corroborated by *eleven* witnesses. By contrast, a Jew's sworn testimony was accepted without any further validation — this in the Judophobe period of raging pogroms in York and elsewhere in England.

That brings us to the ultimate ambivalence of Christianity: its Manichean contrast of darkness and

light, a reflection of an elitist core and a populist periphery. The core — its sublime beauty — could have played only an insignificant role in the worldly success of Christianity, as it is for all intents and purposes incomprehensible to any but extremely subtle minds and refined souls, the likes of which are not to be found among too many people, and never have been. In addition, at the time Christianity scored its first public triumphs, its theology was not only incomprehensible but also inaccessible to most converts: no more than a small proportion of them were up on Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the only languages in which the Bible appeared before the Reformation.

But even now, when the Scripture adorns best-seller lists all over the world, how many people do you know who understand, or even purport to understand, such basic concepts as the Trinity, consubstantiality, the idea of a man-God, Resurrection, immaculate conception, transfiguration, prefiguration or why the meek and the poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom in heaven?

All these are amply explained by assorted Fathers and Doctors of the church (and even *they* found it difficult to be lucid on the subject of the Trinity, as any reader of Aquinas will tell you); but how many Christians over centuries have read the *City of God* or *Summa Theologiae*? And how many of those bibliophiles actually understood what they read? Call me a cynic and report me to Dr. Carey, but I doubt those spiritual over-achievers ever added more than an anaemic trickle to the vigorous flood that at one point engulfed the Western world.

That is why, had Christianity relied exclusively on what is beautiful in it, say the Sermon on the Mount, it would be known today, if at all, only as an interesting attempt to reform Judaism in the first century. So what enabled it, in a mere three hundred years, to become the universal religion of Pax Romana? It was not so much explicit doctrine as implicit socialism.

This idea is by no means new. It has been used a lot to legitimise socialism; and numerous crypto-commie hacks, in the sixties especially, have set out to

hijack ecclesiastical blessing for their evil nonsense. (Tony Blair will know what I mean.) Naturally, literate conservatives, particularly Catholics, would refuse to relinquish their own claim to divine descent. They would point out those places in the Gospels that are manifestly more Burke than Marx.

That Christianity has a lot in common with socialism has usually been asserted by those who hated the former and liked the latter. Now is the turn of someone whose feelings are roughly the other way round. For, much as I hate to say that, the good guys are wrong.

That is, they are not wrong on principle — there is enough in Christ's words, and indeed in the subsequent apostolic theology, to justify free will, individual salvation, personal responsibility, respect for family, thrift and hard work, freedom of choice and other un-Marxian things. There can be found, however, quite a bit more in Christianity that appeals directly to the innate socialist instincts of *homo vulgaris* — yet another demonstration of the amazing, often ambivalent breadth of this creed.

Since we have agreed that the popular success of Christianity could not have been owed to its elitist core, it has to be owed to its populist periphery. Indeed it is easy enough to demonstrate that its *mass* appeal relies on the same basic promise and, even more important, activates the same mechanisms of human behavioural response as socialism. As an experiment, you can list various impulses that trigger off those mechanisms and juxtapose them with what socialism is all about — the results could be quite interesting: *Revolutionary attitude to traditional values*. As a rule, *homo vulgaris* blames these values for keeping him, well, vulgar (Englishmen will talk your ear off on the subject of the vile 'class system'). That explains the otherwise inexplicable success of various iconoclastic ideas, of which early Christianity was one. More or less at the time the fourth Gospel was written, Tacitus expressed in his *Annals* the dominant attitude of his time: 'Nero... punished with every refinement the notoriously

depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius's reign by the governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilatus. But in spite of this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judaea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome. All degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish in the capital.'

Given the religious tolerance of Rome, where perhaps a hundred various creeds co-existed in peace, this is strong stuff indeed. Clearly the Romans saw Christianity as a subversive threat, and this attitude had little to do with their objection to all-encompassing charity. It is conceivable, in fact, that those Romans who didn't know better detested not so much the Christians' beliefs as their clandestine meetings which were in themselves punishable offences in Rome.

The Jews had a more substantial grievance: the very foundation of their religion was under attack. Here we touch upon a very unclear area, as there is every indication that Christ himself never planned to start a new religion; his declared aim was to purify the old one: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled' (Matthew 5:17-18).

Subsequent history seems to support this statement of intent: the first 15 bishops of Jerusalem were circumcised Jews who swore by the Law of Moses. But the bishops of Jerusalem, of whom the first was the Lord's brother James, did not create a new religion. Paul did; and his relations with James and his followers were even less cordial than those between such socialist brethren as Trotsky and Stalin (none so hostile as diverging exponents of the same creed). Yet, frankly, Paul too could have found inspiration in Christ's words.

For immediately after assuring his audience that he was not going to encroach upon 'one jot or one tittle' of the Mosaic Law, Christ proceeded to

do just that: 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill... But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire... Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart...' And so forth (Matthew 5:21-44). The same theme recurs in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere: When his disciples began to pluck ears of corn on the sabbath day, the Pharisees took exception: 'Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? ...And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not the man for the sabbath' (Mark 3:23-27). In short, every founding tenet of the Law, including the immutable Decalogue, was being revised in what the proponents of the Law could only see as a cavalier fashion. A millennium and a half later heretics would be immolated for less.

Paul, rightly or wrongly, pushed Christianity further along the iconoclastic path than Christ himself ever did: 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law...' (Galatians 2:16). And later, 'But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith...' (Galatians 3:11). In other words, do observe the law by all means, but from the standpoint of salvation it really doesn't matter one way or the other. Is it any wonder that Christianity grew closer to Islam than to Judaism? This observation, by the way, was made by Lev Gumilyov (*Russia and the Great Steppe*) who once again proved he is a true historian. He then went on to prove he is also a true Russian by remarking that Jehovah is actually Satan, and Judaism a form of fire-worshipping satanism; but one has to forgive intelligent people their little

prejudices.

Now what were, in addition to unlawful assembly, the 'degraded and shameful practices' that led the Romans to believe that the Christians were up to no good? Above all, it had to be another proto-socialist element in Christianity:

*An attack upon the family.* The attack on this pivotal unit of Roman society was doctrinal, in that Christ himself preached a loyalty that was to supersede, and indeed oust, loyalty to family. It was physical, in that children and young adults were yanked out of their families and shipped to the family-like communes of catacomb Christianity, even as in later years they were bound to monasteries and convents. Christ himself was explicit on this subject: 'For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law....He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me' (Matthew 10:35-37). Even that demand, outrageous by Roman standards, was not deemed sufficient: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26).

What Christ preached for the higher purpose *homo vulgaris* could not really grasp, Rousseau, Marx, Lenin, Hitler, Stalin and other socialist gods preached out of the evil-mindedness *homo vulgaris* shared; but the erosive effect on the family as the core unit of polite society was similar. In fact, Christianity encouraged not family but celibacy, and it was not until the 13th century that marriage was deemed worthy of a sacramental status in the Christian church. 'Even married sex, adorned with all the honourableness of marriage,' writes Aquinas, 'carries with it a certain shame, because the movements of the genitals unlike those of the external members don't obey reason.' A thought as Aristotelian as it is Christian.

*Latent paganism.* The unrelenting monotheism of the ancient Hebrews was

difficult for most people to accept. They did not really want the remote, 'jealous' God of Israel, Abraham and Jacob, what with His ethical rigidity, moral absolutism and summary justice. They wanted their own gods, flawed as they might have been. And what's all this business about graven images? As far as they were concerned, there was nothing wrong with those cute, cosy representations of their deities.

Christianity, whose finer points escaped them, nonetheless provided an easy alternative springing from its explicit anthropomorphism and implicit polytheism (both, incidentally, features more of Pauline Christianity than of Christ's). The palpable man-God who was a bit like them was more understandable, more accessible, more — if you will — human. And if God was even physically like them, logically speaking they were like Him, a much appreciated elevation in status for men whose physical lives were dire and who got little respect from anybody. Actually, this backpedalling towards our pagan past might be even more germane to Christianity than that, accounting for its susceptibility to pagan influences at the highest level as well. In the Middle Ages, for example, it was a healthy dose of neo-platonism and Aristotle that gave Christianity a shot in the arm, a service it had already performed for previously inoculated Islam. Incidentally, Aristotle seeped into Judaism as well, through the pipeline between two Cordoban contemporaries, Averroes and Maimonides. However, it made less of an impact there, for that soil was a lot less fertile for pagan implants.

The global glossolalian gloom of sectarian fundamentalism is living proof of the pagan propensity of the Christian *homo vulgaris* — and the potential for paganism built into Christianity. The happy-clappy multitudes are as pagan in essence as they are Christian in verbiage. The Jews, on the other hand, may have had their own risible Reformation, but they have never resorted to this kind of nonsense — never deviated one millimetre from the Sh'ma, Israel rectitude: God is one.

*Social and economic egalitarian-*

ism. 'But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first' (Matthew 19:30). This was a heady promise for *homo vulgaris* who was always likely to understand it in the crudest sense. By a simple declaration of faith he could now claim a sort of ascendancy, a coup as irresistible as it was effortless.

And money, let's not forget the money! Abraham's righteousness may have been rewarded with great wealth, but the masses always suspected the rich were nothing but thieves ('property means theft', according to Proudhon).

And they turned out to be right! 'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God' (Matthew 19:23-24). So what should the rich do with their money? Why, give it away, of course: '...go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor...' (Matthew 19:21). Now that's a wonderful idea, especially if you yourself happen to be poor and disinclined to change your condition by hard work. To give credit where credit is due, the apostles practised what they preached: 'And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need' (Acts 2:44-45).

Of course, the apostles were not particularly wealthy, and surely they were intelligent enough to realise that spreading their meagre possessions around hardly amounted to responsible economic policy. *They* were making a symbolic gesture whose sole purpose was self-purification. But the subversive potential of such acts, especially when misinterpreted by people who are not normally driven by high urges, is obvious. It certainly was obvious to Pliny the Younger who was sent to investigate the catacomb congregations. In his report he testified that they were not just communal but also communistic (similar to the group described in the Dead Sea scrolls); and since then we have had the opportunity to observe

what happens to communistic ideas whose full potential is realised.

Once again, we are talking here of the vulgar response of the masses, not the deep understanding of a subtle Christian soul. Thus, for example, comments Aquinas: 'The perfection of the Christian life does not consist essentially in voluntary poverty, though that is a tool of perfection in life. There is not necessarily greater perfection where there is greater poverty; and indeed the highest perfection is sometimes wedded to great wealth...' Unfortunately, few of us bear much resemblance to St. Thomas; and Romans were concerned with the revolutionary potential of the new creed. What they saw in it amounted to *A promise of impunity in destroying the old order*. Once again, Christ himself may have kindled their fears: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Matthew 10:34). Specifically, the Temple will not be standing for much longer: 'And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...' (Matthew 24:2-7).

People who are hung up on the historicity of Christ, to the detriment of his divinity, often portray him as a revolutionary. As long as we agree that he was not *nothing but* a revolutionary, I think there is at least as much evidence in the Gospels to support this view as to disprove it. Witness Christ's behaviour in the Temple. The money-changers peacefully and lawfully went about their business when he began to lay about him like Macduff. Now imagine for a second that you own, say, a souvenir stand in, say, Canterbury cathedral. Every year thousands of Japanese tourists buy from you thousands of lovely postcards, millions of miles of Kodak film, and happily go on snapping their way through the crypt. Then suddenly a wild-eyed bearded man appears, screams incoherent invective at you and knocks over your stand, sending the scenes from *Canterbury Tales* a-scattering on the floor. You wouldn't like that, would you? Neither

did the good citizens of Jerusalem; and the Romans were not overjoyed either.

Then Jesus told his apostles to carry arms to the fateful night in the garden, even though he prevented Peter from doing too much damage with his sword. And of course the very manner of his execution, which Rome reserved for subversion, suggests that his ministry was not seen at the time as entirely peaceful.

*Chilistic determinism*. Christian eschatology is appealing to *homo vulgaris* for the same reason Marxian determinism is: it not so much expiates guilt as makes it irrelevant. This is reinforced by many things Christ himself said, typified by: 'Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme' (Mark 3:28).

When Augustine postulated that human life is preordained to pass through eight stages, of which the first seven are a millennium of worldly happiness, and the eighth is eternal bliss, it was all *homo vulgaris* wanted to hear, and never mind the rest of *The City of God*.

*Appeal that is easily reducible to catchy slogans*. Again, Christianity shares this with socialism. 'Eternal happiness' and 'universal love' go on banners as naturally as the oxymoronic 'liberty, equality, fraternity' or the simply moronic 'workers of the world unite.' And what can competitors offer to combat this PR man's dream?

When the great Rabbi Hillel was asked if he could explain the essence of Judaism while standing on one leg, he answered that nothing was simpler: 'Do unto others as you will have others do unto you. The rest is commentary — go home and learn.' Now try flogging *that* to *homo vulgaris*. By the same token, what can we conservatives inscribe on our banners in response to left-wing sloganeering? 'Prudence'? 'The rule of law?' 'Respect for tradition?' Hardly the stuff that will put fire in the belly of *homo vulgaris*. Now, reducibility to catchy slogans is closely related to:

*The ease of initiation and conversion*. Conversion to Judaism involves years of assiduous study and a keen

ability to ponder and understand abstract points. The Talmud states point-blank that in 'To love the Lord your God and to serve Him' (Deut. 11:13), 'to serve' means the study of Torah' (Silfre Deut. § 41; 80a). When the relative merits of study and practice were debated at the Lydda conference in Hadrian's time, the conclusion was, 'Study is more important because study leads to practice' (Kid. 40b). On the other hand, it is possible to become a Christian as fast as one can take a quick dip and say, 'I believe in Jesus Christ.' That is a small price to pay for millenarian happiness followed by eternal bliss, especially since two thousand years ago *homo vulgaris* was as incapable as he is today of studying any subject that cannot provide a material pay-off. And, of course, he was attracted by a related socialist promise of Christianity.

*Instant and effortless attainment of superiority over infidels.* A feeling of superiority is as essential for *homo vulgaris* as it is undeserved. Both Lenin and Hitler played upon his vanity with virtuoso mastery, especially since it neatly led to egalitarianism: the tiny class differences among the national-socialist Germans, for example, were dwarfed by the gigantic superiority all Germans were supposed to have over everyone else; likewise, the international-socialist proletarians towered over capitalists, university lads and other human refuse. Neither had to do much to earn an exalted status, the good fortune they shared with the poor fishermen Peter and Andrew: 'And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men' (Matthew, 4:19). People like to feel significant and wanted, a weakness exploited by yet another shared feature of Christianity and socialism.

*Proselytism.* The Jews never turned converts away, but neither did they actively seek them. Not so the Christians: 'And as ye go, preach, saying The kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew 10:7). And not so the socialists: one of the first acts of Lenin and his apostles was the creation of a radio propaganda service that began to beam their sermons all over the world. Regardless of whether or not he believes

the sermons, *homo vulgaris* feels flattered by this attention, which also explains why, in the democracy he himself has spawned, he likes to see politicians grovel for his vote every few years — and greater, or more expert, grovelling will always win more votes than greater intelligence or better statecraft.

This list could go on indefinitely, but our editor's patience cannot. So let's leave it at that, and hope that the case has been made. As an American Catholic writer once remarked, without Resurrection, Christianity is socialism. Perhaps, if you quickly scan the italicised headings above, you'll agree that even with Resurrection, it might approach the same thing.

Christianity and socialism both won their following in essentially the same way — by suddenly expanding the limits of the allowable and providing an ecclesiastical blessing for the darker, or at least more shallow, side of human nature. The blessing was conveyed in a coy, veiled way. It was not envy that the two doctrines ostensibly blessed but the communal spirit. Not expropriations but sharing and caring. Not hatred of traditional values but a higher loyalty. Not destruction but creation. But *homo vulgaris* is good at reading between the lines, seeing through verbiage, grasping the straw of undeserved elevation. He took out what he needed and dumped the rest.

Once again, while this ugliness is *all* there is to socialism, there is infinitely more to Christianity. But its transcendent beauty always has been, and will for ever remain, the joy of the chosen few, those whose own faces are capable of emanating the same light as that cast by Zurbaran's St. Francis. The rest of the so-called Christians are a sorry lot who cannot protect their creed — and our civilisation — from the little demons gnawing at its insides, poisoning its body with the venom of populist vulgarity, adumbrating its ignominious demise.

The question is, if from its very inception Christianity has been carrying the seeds of its own destruction, how come those seeds took so long to sprout? Why was Christianity so successful for so long? The answer is simple: no competition.

It was not until the early 17th century that *homo vulgaris* could lay his hands upon a secular creed that made all the same promises to him, but without demanding any service in return, not even lip service to liturgical conundrums. It was no contest; the secular variety of socialism had to emerge victorious. And it did, with Christianity almost immediately going into an ever-accelerating tailspin, which, one fears, it will never be able to reverse.

In conclusion, I'd like to apologise for having quoted from the archaic King James version. To make up for it, allow me to leave you with the sixth commandment as conveyed in the modern American edition aimed at those lost sheep in Harlem and similar oases: 'Don't waste nobody. It ain't cool' (Exodus 20:13).

**Alexander Boot grew up in Russia, and emigrated to the United States before settling in London eight years ago.**

## *eurofacts*

*eurofacts* is a fortnightly newsletter and monthly supplement, independent of political parties and media groups, which provides an accurate analysis and balanced comment on Britain's place in the world and on her commercial and security needs.

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# From the Public Record Office

General Spears rang me up last night to say that General de Gaulle had received a letter to the effect that M. de St. Euxpéry, the wellknown French writer and aviator, who, I understand, has been active in Vichy circles since the collapse of France, left France for Lisbon on his way to the United States on the 27th November. The letter went on to say that although M. de St. Euxpéry was acting for the Vichy Government there were reasons to believe that he might be favourable to the free-French movement. He (General Spears) knew him very well and he would like to send a message to him to the effect that he would very much like, for private and other reasons, to see him in London. If M. de St. Euxpéry was willing to come we would arrange a seat for him on the plane and pay for his passage to and from Lisbon.

I have met M. de St. Euxpéry myself in Egypt but did not know him very well. There is no doubt that he is full of guts and if we could nobble him he might be useful to us.

*Who is to pay?  
If Gen. Spears can  
arrange this, I see  
no objection.  
J.H.  
12*

*H. of ...*

10th December, 1940.

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A.B.  
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# Children's TV

## *Rosalind Ardern discovers its low standards*

Well, what do you know? I tuned into Children's television the other day to see if it really is as awful as all my friends say it is and discovered to my delight, that they were right. 'Yippee', I thought, 'that fine old Oxbridge tradition of producing a brand of anarchic intellectualism aimed at destroying civilised values is still going strong.' Good manners, sense, the ability to think coherently, let alone string a grammatical sentence together are all withering away under the ill-informed, 'user-friendly' onslaught of what passes as entertainment for those of tender years. Trendy, 'children-friendly' presenters front a whole host of programmes devised for the young, whose sponge-like minds absorb whatever banalities are thrown at them.

Hold on a moment, I hear you cry, 'Isn't this surely because you have grown out of that sort of thing?' I don't think so. When one is permitted to see repeats of the kind of programmes which were around when I was a child, one thing which sticks out is the quality. *Jackanory*, *Play School*, *Andy Pandy*, *Bagpuss* and *The Klangers* (to name but a few), for a long time the staple diet of proto-wrinklies, seem to have been consigned to some obscure, dusty store-room or wiped to provide reel space for *Eldorados* past and present. I happened to see a video of the *Magic Roundabout* when minding my godson the other day and proceeded to laugh myself silly, because it was actually funny from an adult perspective as well. Programmes like *Play School* were of great educational value again to both adults and children. One of my former lecturers told me that when she and her husband finally settled in England, that particular programme was an invaluable aid to her gradual absorption of the English Language.

Not so now. Any self-respecting foreigner establishing themselves over

here for the first time can easily be forgiven for jumping to the conclusion that our children are let loose in the home to trash rooms, to fire masses of some unidentifiable goo either at each other or some long-suffering adult, and generally behave like drug-crazed delinquents in the making. No wonder, they will think, after the week's fifth mugging, that Britain's youth is so violent! We actually hold training sessions for them on television at a very early age to reach the maximum audience.

Children need to know their place and to have a realistic perspective of the gulf separating theirs and the adult world. This is being steadily undermined. The presenters themselves are obviously designed to appeal to the kind of moronic, brain-dead child we are seeing more often. Their behaviour is often infantile in the extreme and in treating their young viewers as equals confuses the boundaries even further. One show, going out on a Saturday morning, seems to be featuring a long-running "relationship" between one of the presenters and her fictitious "boy-friend" phoning from prison. Admittedly there is a crime problem in England. There always was, and always will be, given nature's propensity for fouling things up and producing the occasional psychopath. But do we really have to ram it down the throats of our impressionable children, the majority of whom will not yet have had the pleasure of a sojourn courtesy of HM Government? (I bet you never saw the mice who inhabited the Magical Mouse Organ mugging Bagpuss.)

Similarly, imported programmes such as the ubiquitous *Neighbours* do not provide a suitable diet for the viewer. Though unaccountably addictive to all age groups, this sort of series must logically have some kind of pernicious effect. It revolves around the kind of self-obsessed, tedious people who make a drama out of everything however trivial

(as they must if their series is to survive). This is the sort of broadcast which is rapidly replacing the school as the main source of education for children (and teachers).

Broadcasters have a moral responsibility as to what programmes they put out; in producing this diet of rubbish, they are helping to alienate generations of children not only from their heritage but also from a sense of right and wrong. They are also robbing them of their childhood.

I mentioned earlier that there are exceptions: *Oscar's Orchestra* is an admirable attempt to wean children off their computers and instead stimulate an interest in Classical Music. *The Dreamstone* is a lovely cartoon series which is a delight to watch. There are also the good old favourites like *Blue Peter* which still attempt to interest children in worthwhile pursuits, although even this is now fronted by more 'children-friendly' presenters. This is presumably so that the little darlings can 'relate' to the programme more easily. Shows like *Bad Influence* have a good go at providing serious information about the latest technology. Credit where credit is due, they do a very good job; but even the title is subversive in that it will be more attractive than say *The Sooty Show*. One can also link this kind of title with the upsurge of fashionable Americanisms — "It's baaaad..." and so on.

One could continue indefinitely. All that I am sure of is that somebody somewhere is to blame for the decline in standards and that broadcasters should seriously re-think what they are doing. All televisions carry a 'Warning — Dangerous Apparatus' sticker. My opinion of human nature is confirmed.

**Rosalind Ardern is a composer and pianist.**

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# Andrei Lukanov: my part in his Downfall

## *Robert Grant in Bulgaria*

**H**eaded by one Andrei Lukanov, Bulgaria's 'reform Communist' government fell at the end of November 1990, following massive demonstrations and a general strike. A couple of days earlier I had been attending an academic conference in Sofia, but my impressions here will be strictly extra-curricular.

Two dozen or more of us made up the Western contingent at the conference. We arrived on Saturday 24th November, and next morning visited Sofia's 19th-century Bulgarian Orthodox cathedral, built by public subscription in gratitude for Bulgaria's deliverance (by Russia) from Turkish rule. It lies in Alexander Nevsky Square, which is possibly the largest non-green open space in Europe, and hence (as will be seen) the ideal site for political demonstrations. A service, naturally, was in progress. It looked as though only the priests and deacons actually took the sacraments, the congregation merely bathing in the afterglow by presenting themselves, apparently at random and throughout the service, to kiss the bishop's ring. There were as many men as women; many of each were young. There being no pews, for the most part the congregation wandered around in groups. The whole rite, I gathered, lasted several hours, but the individual worshippers seemed to come and go at will.

There were various hatches in the enormous iconostasis (the whole building is huge, several times the size of the largest of the Kremlin cathedrals). From time to time one would pop open like a cuckoo-clock, some impressively-bearded personage would teasingly thrust out this or that imposing ritual object for an instant, the hatch

would shut, and the same object would re-appear a few minutes later, borne in procession through the main body of the cathedral. All this was utterly mysterious but undeniably exciting. The music, from an invisible unaccompanied choir, was continuous and magnificent, a kind of audible tapestry backdrop to the various visual goings-on.

Together with an equal number of Bulgarian colleagues, we were taken in the evening to a self-styled *restaurant folklorique*. The atmosphere was perforce candle-lit and romantic, on account of the equally traditional power cuts (two hours in every four). The *pièce de résistance* was a display of folk dancing, but Merrie England it wasn't. The band was both youthful and superlatively good, consisting of an accordion, a clarinet, a violin, and (a purely technical concession to modernity) an amplified bass guitar. In Bartók's music, *alla bulgarese* means an eight-in-a-bar quaver rhythm divided up into a pair and two triplets. What lay under their relentless, hypnotic *ostinati*, however, was something that, tap it out as I would, I could not reduce to anything so simple.

The opening number, like most of the others, was taken at a truly ferocious tempo, the clarinetist bubbling out a one-man dawn chorus, and the accordionist flashing two-handedly all over his instrument like a demented Liszt. There entered some half-dozen swaggering young men in embroidered jackets, Phrygian caps, tight breeches and kneeboots. They danced, not to say shimmied, arm in arm, with much shouting, slapping of thighs and stamping of heels, all this being interspersed with various gymnastic feats. A wind

was blowing across the steppes, carrying with it a whiff of danger, courage, love and careless, early death.

Off they went and, similarly booted and embroidered, but in a feminine version, the girls came on. Big-breasted and apple-cheeked, with flashing eyes, all were bursting with health and vigour. Every one, it seemed, had been made to slap a lover's face, or to go with him the full night's distance until desire should collapse from mere exhaustion, first into laughter and then into sleep; to bear hordes of noisy children, and alternately smack and spoil them into civilization; to bring to heel a drunken or faithless husband, or defiantly cheat on a feeble one; to trade blow for blow on the domestic battlefield, to cook, to sew, to raise, to tend, to grieve and to remember.

The men came on again with wicker-bound flasks, among other tricks trapping the necks between their feet and bouncing up and down with them as if on pogo sticks. They kneeled, with thighs splayed and buttocks on heels, while the girls took the flasks and pretended to empty them down the men's throats. Suitably emboldened, the men caught the girls round their tight-bodied waists and, drum-major fashion, flung them round and about and head over heels like so many maces. With not a hint of lubricity in the actual gestures, the performance was intensely erotic, as rammed and as fizzing with sex (and life, and death) as *Carmen*.

The general pattern was repeated several times with different costumes and props. I was gripped by a blend of nail-biting excitement, foreboding, nostalgia (for what? it was never my world), and finally tranquil accept-

ance. It was a response, doubtless, to a display of life at once animal and civilized, spontaneous and ordered. This, said the performance, is what humanity is really about, a world in which every powerful feeling without exception has its part to play, and in which one's membership of a society (or of that sub-society, one's sex, so long as it engages meaningfully with the other) amounts in itself to one's personal fulfilment. Nothing is so to speak left over to disrupt the society or to leave any of its members out in the cold, except the more languid and exquisite emotions, which could no more emerge under such conditions than survive if they did. The whole thing was Homeric.

The next evening was a total contrast. A Western friend and colleague (call him Alan) had been invited by a Bulgarian, an elderly French-speaking professor of film history, to come for dinner *en famille* to meet his artistic and intellectual circle, and to bring with him any likely takers. These were his wife (Linda), a defence analyst (Jane), a Soviet dissident in involuntary exile (Victor), and myself. We equipped ourselves with presents of whisky, chocolate and cigarettes, the usual duty-free luxuries we had bought for the purpose.

First, however, the entire conference was to attend a concert in Sofia's Palace of Culture, a modern and (even by Western standards) surprisingly well-appointed building, reminiscent of the Barbican on the inside, and on the outside, not least in its dimensions, of a football stadium. The programme looked mildly interesting: two fantasias for solo piano performed by separate pianists, followed by a fantasia for two pianos.

The first was a difficult piece by Schumann, full, in the fantasia manner, of abrupt contrasts of mood and texture. These the pianist, a youngish woman, dressed in a manner verging on both dowdiness and informality, ironed out into twenty-five minutes' worth of note-perfect but utterly spiritless monotony. When she rose to take her bow her lips were trembling uncontrollably and her eyes were moist, as if she were reeling from some sud-

den, unbearable tragedy. I thought she would burst at any minute into loud, ugly, undignified weeping. She looked like the deputy head of a primary school who has just been told, in the middle of morning assembly, that her much-loved husband, the father of her children, is an active, hardened bigamist.

The Professor rose too and came over to us, his guests. 'Elle n'est pas bonne,' he said uncontroversially, 'partons tout à l'heure.' But I rashly said I wanted to hear the next item, Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*. The performer this time was a beefy young man in his early twenties. Squeezed into a too-small Sunday suit, he looked like an old-fashioned butcher's apprentice out courting. The *Wanderer Fantasy* demands strength and endurance, but he had nothing else. The thunderous finale was sheer karate, a testimonial at best to the sturdiness of the instrument, which miraculously remained in one piece. I was reminded of the supposed pidgin English for piano: 'box-you-fight-him-cry'.

Like the dolls in a weather house, or a sado-masochistic duo, these two recitalists made a curious antithetical diptych. More than anything, they seemed to symbolise Communism's dual cultural legacy of brutal oppression and helpless victimhood. The prospect of their joining forces was unappealing, so we made our belated exit.

Outside, in the nipping cold, under the car park's sickly orange lights, we were introduced to the Professor's artists and intellectuals. The first was a grizzled *businessman* in advanced middle age. With his camel-hair coat and smarmy aerodynamic coiffure, in an instant he brought the word 'spiv' flooding back from oblivion. He spoke not a word of English or any other foreign language (French and German being historically *de rigueur* for educated Bulgarians), but seemed affable and obliging enough. With him he had a younger, stoutish man of Armenian appearance, evidently his minder. He too seemed obliging, though in respect of what was so far (as it was to remain) obscure. And finally, sheathed in leather and swathed in fur, there was a strikingly beautiful young woman of

about 28, called Maja.

It appeared we were to dine, not *en famille* after all (no *famille* ever manifested itself), but at a night club. The clientele were local Essex women (the style, it turns out, is international), men like the Professor's male companions, and young toughs in leather blousons. We were conducted with bows and scrapes to a table with a full, unimpeded view of the floor. The food was edible, the drink drinkable, and the show watchable, if only for its sporadic nudity and unintentionally comic loucheness. It compared instructively with the previous evening's entertainment.

After the show the diners took to the floor. As one will, I had pseudo-inadvertently ensconced myself beside Maja, albeit with no realistic amatory expectations, but Linda opposite, who was separated from Alan by some distance, kicked me under the table and hissed at me urgently, 'For God's sake ask me to dance!' When we were safely out of earshot, 'Didn't you notice anything?' she said breathlessly. 'No,' I said honestly. 'The boss,' she said, 'my God, he was all over me, his hands were, well, *just everywhere*. And the old Professor too, he's almost as bad.'

This was disconcerting. What was I, what were we all, to do? Accuse our hosts, who had made perfectly clear that everything was on them, of being ill-mannered perverts, and flounce out? (Where to? We hadn't a clue where we were.) What did they want of us? Our bodies? (Not the men's, for sure.) To do some kind of business? In which case why molest their customers? One thing was certain: cultural exchange was way down the agenda.

I looked over at our table. Alan was talking to the Professor, just conceivably about film; Jane was talking to the boss, heaven knows about what, but, as was quite likely considering her profession, she must have had Russian (which is close to Bulgarian) to do so; Maja and the minder were dancing perfunctorily; while Victor was staring into the middle distance, smoking. He wore an expression of mingled boredom, cynicism and well-satisfied contempt, as of one who has seen whatever it may be countless times

before, and knows how it invariably ends.

Following his example, I decided to do nothing. I secured the next dance with Maja, whose French had already proved even less serviceable than mine. At all events, she detached herself as soon as she decently could and went off with one of the bloused toughs, while I took on Jane, who immediately told me, but in respect of herself, the very same tale I had just heard from Linda.

We were eventually driven to Maja's flat, where Jane and Linda lost no time in squeezing themselves between Alan and Victor on the sofa. We were enjoined not to wake Maja's child, who was sleeping in an adjacent room. Maja, the Professor told us, was actually 42: 'Une très belle dame, non?' I assented, noting privately that under her harsh domestic lighting she did in fact look something like her age. (As I revise this memoir, it suddenly occurs to me that she may actually have been his daughter, and hence have qualified as *famille* after all.) 'Maintenant, on va voir ses peintures,' he went on, 'va les chercher, Maja.' These were not hanging, but stacked facing the wall. They were a collection of large, moderately hideous canvases in the smudgy Fauve manner favoured by those armless painters by foot and mouth of charity Christmas cards. The subjects were loosely tropical — palm trees, lagoons, exotic flora, volcanoes — and each had a single prevailing chromatic cast: bilious yellow, mineral green, acidic blue. She was a 'colour therapist', the Professor explained, adding that she also did things with crystals, and could see people's auras. (Maybe she had seen mine.)

The situation was no clearer than before. Were we supposed to buy these daubs, praise them, put their healing powers to the test, or what? Though all was smiles and affability on the surface, I recall thinking at one point that it would be no more bizarre than earlier events if, on a signal's being given, our hosts were suddenly to fall upon us and cut our throats. At any rate, somebody made the sound move of producing our presents, to the unfeigned delight of the recipients, who instantly

regaled us and themselves with the contents and then drove us back, by now thoroughly drunk, to our conference centre.

To this day neither Alan nor I has a clue as to what it was all about. Perhaps it really was a wholly sincere, uncalculating display of Balkan hospitality which somehow, at some point, got out of hand. The only one of our party who seemed completely unfazed was Victor, who, as a result of his political experiences (which included a prison camp), had evidently long ceased to expect rationality in any human proceedings. He had taken little part in the evening's activities, except, at apparently random intervals, to punctuate them with his loud, harsh, woodpecker's laugh or to photograph our antics with the expensive-looking camera permanently slung around his neck.

The next day I and a few others were invited by the deputy leader of the democratic opposition, Dr Stefan Stoyanov, to the mass rally to be held that afternoon in Alexander Nevsky Square. I had met and been impressed by Stefan in Hungary a couple of months previously, and had had him invited to the conference. We arrived at about two o'clock and threaded our way through already massive crowds to the tall cathedral steps, now a podium for political and celebrity speakers, pop and jazz bands, and foreign television crews. Stefan welcomed us aboard, and we climbed up to join him on his eminence.

There were people as far as the eye could see, which was for hundreds of yards in every direction. There might have been a quarter of a million of them, perhaps more (the transport strike had temporarily been lifted to enable them to get there). These were not the usual stage army of professional protesters, as in the West, but people of every age and calling, ordinary-looking parents with children in pushchairs or carried on their shoulders, everyone, it seemed, except Communists and the very old. There was neither violence nor anger. The numerous police were everywhere fraternising, laughing and joking with the crowd. It was evident that, if the

Lukanov regime had ever possessed a shred of authority, it had now lost it utterly. People were holding up the old Bulgarian flag, egg-timers and brooms with pictures of Marx and Lenin stuck to the bristles, and chanting what must have been Bulgarian for 'Out, out, out!' in the most good-humoured manner imaginable. Even Chuck, a big, bearded American of our party, and a veteran anti-Vietnam protester, seemed to be enjoying himself.

We were scheduled to depart the next morning, the first of the general strike. Hoping it would be confined to domestic flights, we left for the airport in taxis and a minibus, accompanied by a couple of Bulgarian colleagues. We were disappointed and worse, since by ten o'clock the airport was already occupied by hundreds of stranded Russians and Vietnamese who, being without food, water and adequate sanitation, were understandably in an ugly mood. Chuck had a good idea: leaving the rest temporarily at the terminal building, three of us (himself, the conference organiser, and I, as a friend of Stoyanov), accompanied by one of the Bulgarians, would take the minibus (all we had left), besiege the airport director in his headquarters a mile away and demand action (of what kind was yet to be determined). It seemed preferable to the sole alternative, which was to remain at the terminal.

We found the building ringed by trade unionists, who seemed disposed to deny us access. With them grabbing at us, we pushed through without apology, up the staircase past protesting secretaries and receptionists, and into the director's office, where we found him, a large, meat-faced Communist boss surrounded by one or two aides and a couple of uniformed pilots. Chuck assailed him with a noisy and indignant peroration about rights (ours). It was evident that, wherever his erstwhile sympathies might conceivably have lain, Chuck had no hands-on experience of Communism. The director was not a reasonable man, but he pointed out reasonably enough that it was not he, but so-called friends of the West, who were detaining us, and that we should address our complaints to them. Nevertheless, he would do what

he could. It was obvious that he meant to use us as a pawn in the contest, to discredit his opponents. Their only viable counter-strategy, consequently, had to be to let us go, even though it would initially involve some small loss of face.

I said as much to our organiser Rana, a youngish Middle Eastern lady long practised in diplomatic wranglings in unpromising corners of the world. The first thing she did was tactfully pack Chuck off (still vociferating) to start ferrying over the rest of our party with their luggage. She then insisted that I be allowed to telephone Stoyanov. Miraculously I got through, and explained our situation. He said he must consult with his strike committee. When, as good as his word, he rang back, he said his trade-union colleagues could not see why a handful of middle-class Westerners should be allowed to leave when working-class Bulgarians had agreed to forgo transport and much else for so long as was necessary to bring their Government down. Nevertheless he too would do what he could.

From this moment I was confident that we would get out without serious mishap, since both sides had an interest in our departure (in that each would strive to claim credit for it), and only one, the Communists, in our continued detention, since they could blame it on their enemies, who would naturally wish to deny them that advantage. Stoyanov moreover was genuinely concerned about our plight. It could not be long before he persuaded his colleagues that the Communists would try to capitalise on it.

It remained to make ourselves as comfortable as possible until our departure, whenever that should be. Rana had already sent the bus back for our contingent. The airport director was smirking in his newfound role as our patron, and she begged him, literally on her knees, to give us shelter. Bursting into eloquent, servile tears, she kissed his hands with heartfelt promises of our undying gratitude. It was a scene from antiquity, and horribly embarrassing. Nevertheless he agreed, in lordly fashion, that we should have a committee room on the floor below, and gave her the key. As we trooped

down I congratulated her nervously. 'Oh,' she said, brisk and dry-eyed in an instant, 'it works every time. I know how to deal with these people.'

By four o'clock the strain was taking its toll on those who, unlike Chuck, Rana and me, had had nothing to do but wait. One sociology professor slept peacefully on the floor for eight or nine hours; another read half a dozen popular paperbacks without once raising his eyes from the page. Jane, for all her military expertise, began to weep silently (she had young children at home). She was comforted by Rana, who was simultaneously conferring with the director's office and looking after a young African couple (the husband with a broken leg, the wife heavily pregnant) whom she had rescued on Chuck's second trip to the terminal. At Rana's prompting, Chuck kept us posted on developments. No one had eaten since breakfast, but another American, Dan (let us honour him with his real name), slipped quietly out with our translator, returning with vast quantities of cold beer and pizza, which, braving roadblocks, and at the risk of missing our possible departure, he had driven right back into strike-bound Sofia to buy from a pavement vendor, the shops being shut. With a fatalism born of experience, our two or three Eastern European exiles, Victor included, were simply flying on autopilot, immune equally to fear and hope.

At about seven o'clock there was a rumour that a bus might be available in Sofia to take half of us to Belgrade, an eight-hour drive along mountain roads. These folk would then fly home the next morning. The question was, who were they to be?

No doubt if our situation had been worse, so might our behaviour. But the first was still bad enough to make the altruism shown all round both cheering and remarkable. No one angled (or at least was prepared to be seen angling) for special consideration. It was agreed almost instantly that priority should be given to couples with young children, then to parents with spouses at home, then to people with urgent commitments. Astonishingly, the rumour was confirmed an hour later, and the fortunate dozen or so had virtually

to be pushed off to their freedom.

At about ten o'clock, just as the rest of us were resigning ourselves to a night on the floor, we heard that a Czech airliner was making an unscheduled landing. It would be allowed to continue to Prague with us on board and re-routed home from there the following morning. This too was confirmed, and before midnight (Prague being an hour behind Sofia) I was outside a friend's flat in Prague, haggling with a sullen extortionist of a taxi driver. Scarcely more than a year earlier, Prague cabbies had been infinitely more interested in changing your hard currency than in your fare. Czech Airlines, by contrast, had changed wholly for the better: smart cabins, decent sandwiches, cold beer instead of warm fizzy orangeade, slim, pretty stewardesses in place of the bulky, hatchet-faced Rosa Klebs of yore. The next morning it took me forty-five minutes to reach the airport through heavy traffic, whereas on my last trip the previous January, not much more than a month after the Revolution, I should have allowed twenty at most.

Back home I discovered that the Belgrade party had not yet returned. Alan, who was among them, told me later how they had fought for seats with other passengers and been detained at roadblocks. Then the driver had fallen asleep and driven clean off the road into a wood, fortunately without injury to man or vehicle. They had had, in a blizzard, to open all the windows and take turns keeping him awake. They missed their flight and waited an entire day for the next. So much for chivalrous efforts. We who made them, however, were handsomely rewarded. So was Bulgaria, since it was just as our Belgraders struggled home that Lukanov and Communism finally threw in the towel. Once ridiculed for their official Institute of Wit and Humour, Bulgarians finally had something to laugh about.

**Robert Grant is Reader in English at the University of Glasgow.**

# Editorial

The decision by the Government to establish a Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education is long overdue. Not since the Robbins report has public policy focussed on the question what a university really is; and the fact that the Robbins report gave the wrong answer has meant that British universities have lost much of their prestige.

The universities have welcomed the Committee of Enquiry, arguing that they are 'underfunded', and in need of public subsidy. 'We are underfunded' usually means: 'we have overspent'. A business that lacks the capital to invest in a project must either borrow or limit its activities. There is no such thing as 'underfunding' in a market economy. But an institution protected from bankruptcy by the state can go on expanding despite the fact that there is no real work done by its staff, no obvious demand for its product, and no apparent benefit to society. This is not yet the norm in our universities; nevertheless, an institution which calls out for public money has an obligation to show that the money is well spent. It is no proof of this that the money is spent completely. On the contrary. An institution would deserve well of the taxpayer if it so managed its affairs as from time to time to hand back some of its public subsidy. Universities have never done this. Instead they have become like all other state enterprises. As soon as money is provided, they expand to the point where yet more money is required.

Successive governments have not been innocent in the matter. The expansion of the universities in the fifties and sixties was engineered by government commissions and departments. No real *quid pro quo* has ever been demanded for the taxpayer's money, and no watch has been kept either on the intellectual quality of the average graduate, or on his social function. In the French and Italian systems a university degree is a qualification to teach in the state schools. Not so in Britain,

where only a degree in 'education' has such a use. Given the proliferation of new and questionable subjects — media studies, peace studies, sports studies, and so on — which neither qualify a student for a profession nor impart any serious academic skills, it is surely time for the universities to examine their own purpose, and to justify their claim on the public purse.

Such reflection would be timely for another reason. Much hot air has been blown over Lady Thatcher's social and political legacy. It has become common to argue that the market can answer some human needs but not others, and that many of our most valuable institutions must be protected from market forces if they are to flourish. Those who propose this argument tend to reside in universities, and usually have their own *alma mater* in mind. The onus lies heavily on them, therefore, to tell us what it is that universities do, and why it cannot be done by private enterprise.

University vice-chancellors are increasingly drawn from the scientific and practical disciplines. They argue that the country can compete in the world economy only through scientific research, and through the army of technologists and computer buffs who will lead us into the future. But there is absolutely no evidence that universities are the best places to produce such goods. Indeed, they are just the goods which are produced and tested in a market. The competition between firms is more likely to produce economically useful research and properly skilled employees, than the protected leisure of a university. In any case, the majority of students do not read either scientific or technical subjects, but spend their time (in so far as they study at all) reading history, literature, history of art, and other seemingly useless things.

Nevertheless the apologists are right. That which is done by a university cannot be done by a market. For the real purpose of a university is to per-

petuate knowledge *for its own sake, and without regard to its utility*. Knowledge that seems useless may not remain so forever. Who would have foreseen that the study of Ancient History was exactly what our ancestors required, when suddenly called upon to administer an Empire? Who could have foreseen that the abstruse investigations which occupied Boole, Cantor and Frege would one day produce the computer revolution? But this kind of usefulness is an unintended by-product of a subject whose sole and sufficient purpose is itself. It is through the pursuit of useless knowledge that a university justifies its claim to be an irreplaceable public good.

But what good is such knowledge to the *student*? Writing in *The Times* during February of this year, David Blunkett made the reasonable observation that, in modern conditions, graduates must be able to change jobs, and acquire new skills, if they are to be of any help to themselves or to society. This fact, far from being an argument for vocational education, is an argument against it. If your education is focussed entirely on today's technology, on the obsessions of today's gurus, or on today's political map, you will very soon be out of date. The education that best prepares you for modern life is one that is disciplined, internally coherent and *irrelevant*. That is another reason why our country was so successful, in the days when its elite were educated in higher mathematics, in ancient history, and in Greek and Latin grammar. Such subjects impart the kind of mental discipline which makes it possible to master new and unforeseen problems. The real obstacle to educational renewal is the cancer of 'relevance', which has extinguished so much learning, and so much intellectual discipline, that the modern graduate cannot be relied upon to think about any problem that he has not already encountered.

# Letters

Sir,  
We have no interest in Twentieth Century music and therefore had no opinion about Pfitzner before reading R.J. Stove's apologia. (*SR* December 1995.) No doubt Pfitzner was no worse than thousands of other artistic and intellectual Nazi fellow-travellers — few had the foresight and courage of a Dietrich von Hildebrand. In his anxiety to rehabilitate a composer he admires, Stove appears to have become almost a fellow traveller himself. As conservatives, we must always guard against the suspicion that we think the crimes of Nazism less terrible than those of Communism.

Stove says that the Versailles Treaty's "German war-guilt" clause constituted a "vindictiveness not entirely different from the spirit that subsequently wiped out six million Jews". This cheap comment is unworthy of the *Salisbury Review*. He credits Pfitzner, the Nazi sympathiser, with greater political acumen than Thomas Mann, the democrat, because the latter supported the Weimar Republic. It is right not to idealise Weimar, but it is quite misleading to imply that the ghastly conditions of 1919 to 1924 continued throughout its life.

Stove's worst piece of casuistry occurs when his efforts to rehabilitate his hero lead him to extend a partial exoneration to Hans Frank the Governor of Occupied Poland: "When he did meet with a leading Nazi's favour, it was typical that the Nazi should have been Hitler's adversary Hans Frank, who enraged fellow-hierarchs by urging they adopt the rule of law!" This presumably is a reference to the attempts by Frank, the leading Nazi lawyer, and Wilhelm Frick to introduce a completely NSDAP constitution. "Hitler's adversary"? Even Frank, for all his sham repentance at Nuremberg, did not attempt that line. "... enraged fellow-hierarchs"? Hitler, as did most dictators, kept all his senior subordinates in a state of mutual distrust and near hostility.

"...urging they adopt the rule of law"? Unfortunately Frank's diaries and memos told a different story. Frank told a government session in Cracow 16th December 1941, in which he spoke of the expulsion of Western Jews to the East: "What however shall happen to the Jews?... we must take measures that will somehow result in ex-

termination so that this will be in concert with the major campaign launched by the Reich...."

Toni Dawes  
Andrew O'Connor  
NSW Australia

Sir,  
I see from John Peek's letter (*SR* Spring 1996) that I cannot have made myself clear in my article (*SR* December 1995). Of course I do not think that plural voting would encourage people to have more children or even that more children should be an aim in an overpopulated world. I agree with your correspondent that the reforms he suggests are desirable, as are those suggested by David Marsland in the same issue.

What preoccupies me is how such reforms might be brought about by the democratic process in a situation where an ever-growing proportion of the electorate are childless and too often concerned only with a pleasurable present and not with future generations. History teaches that we cannot look to dictators for desirable reform, so the only alternative is to examine how such reforms may be brought about democratically.

I also agree with John Peek that plural voting would be very difficult to administer. My suggestion was intended to provoke discussion. My own political experience shows that a substantial part of the population of western countries is concerned about the matters raised continually by the *Salisbury Review*, but an even larger part does not seem to care and this is what keeps our electoralist politicians of every party in power.

The key question is how in a democracy we can prevent the dictatorship of the majority bringing about the demise of democracy itself? Theoretical discussion is fine and may in the long run gain a larger audience, but as the one responsible for many of our present ills pointed out, in the long run we shall all be dead. What are needed are concrete and simple proposals now about how the changes we desire may be brought about.

Patricia Lança  
Portugal.

Sir,  
Niall Ferguson's *Paper and Iron* is a fascinating book about a key period of German history ("Germany's modern Tragedy", Book Review, *SR* December 1995.) However, he differs from the modern American view that "big business in particular gained" from Germany's Great Inflation after World War I. He believes the reparations were "excessive", whereas modern American specialist historians contend that they were fair.

Ferguson acknowledges that Germany aimed to use her diminishing value for the mark to swamp the world with exports after World War I (and wipe out internal debt) while blaming "excessive" reparations for the mark's depreciation. In 1922 Germany pointed to her trading deficit, and declared herself bankrupt. The coal magnate, Hugo Stinnes, blamed French rapaciousness over the reparations for Germany's parlous state, declaring that Germans would have to work a ten hour day after the mark's stabilisation to be able to pay reparations to France. France, however, had received no "actual cash" in reparations, and in 1923 she occupied the Ruhr.

German shop floor socialists had been accused of undermining Germany's victorious army in 1918 by accepting peace on President Wilson's terms. The German people blamed France and the shop floor for their penury in 1923. Interestingly, however, Ferguson reports that the Foreign Minister, Stresemann, considered Germany to be strong in 1925, conceiving his mission as being to "conduct foreign policy by economic means".

Ferguson comments only briefly on Germany's trade with the Soviet Union. The extent of the military and industrial collaboration between the two countries is still unfolding. The armaments firm of Krupp helped with Stalin's agricultural collectivisation programme and in 1930 Soviet wheat deluged onto World markets, deepening the world depression and persuading German farmers to vote for Hitler.

Ferguson contends that Germany was a victim of circumstance after World War I. I think he lets Germany off too lightly.

Sara Moore  
London W.8

Sir,  
Professor Marsland is on firm ground when he discusses domestic policies (SR Spring 1996) but he is not on familiar ground about Yugoslavia in general and the Serb people in particular. His phrase "Serbo-communist aggression" must have been borrowed from mendacious western Mass Media reporting.

He has forgotten that communism was imposed on Yugoslavia as a whole, by the western allies in the last phase of World War II by, in order to appease Stalin. The incessant bombing of Serb towns and villages by the Anglo-American air armada from Italy, during 1944, paved the way for the communist take-over. This fact has been deliberately hushed up, by the strong lobby of Titoite historians at our universities. There is not much to choose among the present leaders of the mini states which emerged from the collapse of Yugoslavia, as all of them have been and still are communists.

Germany, the Vatican, the EU and the United States have destroyed Yugoslavia, not the Serbs, and Lord Carrington has on several occasions condemned the cowardly stand of eleven EU members in front of Germany.

Stanisa Vlahovic  
Birmingham

Sir,  
Stephen Pimenoff (SR Spring 1996) quotes the normally very sensible Libby Purves as writing "Frankly to parents of young children it seems so glaringly obvious that they learn better in small groups that the maternal impulse is to scream and bite the carpet..."

This outburst is, however, irrelevant to the two assumptions for which this lack of research evidence is at last being noticed. One is what has been the almost universal assumption that, when the absolute minimum average class size is twenty or more, a reduction by one or two guarantees improved learning. Even if this was the case policy makers would still want to know by how much learning improved in order to be able to decide whether some alternative form of expenditure would not produce a still greater improvement. The other assumption is that it is more productive for teachers to teach small subgroups of the whole class for a fraction of the total

class time than to teach the class as a whole for all that time. Would-be researchers should perhaps be warned that findings suggesting that these assumptions are indeed false are unwelcome to the teacher unions, to their political creatures in the Opposition parties, and to the whole 'progressive' education establishment.

Antony Flew  
Reading

Sir,  
Anthony Milne's silly attitude to so-called 'positive discrimination' (SR Spring 1996) exemplifies the difficulties of the Conservative Party of recruiting in those communities and threatens to leave the Party with a dwindling membership comprised largely of white OAP's.

If Milne could see beyond skin colour he might be surprised to learn that many ethnic communities share a set of values based on family, business enterprise and belief in education that could be tapped by a party which claims to represent these principles.

What if there are more black faces in television commercials or leisure and women's magazines? Isn't this a case of commercial companies attempting to broaden their client base? He criticises the more liberal tenor of readers' letters to *The Times* and claims that this an editorial move to the Left. Surely *The Times* is a newspaper responding to its readers' concerns, again a commercial decision.

Milne demonstrates his ignorance of the people who work in TV when he writes that they 'confirm the non-smoking, feminist, vegetarian, non-drinking and green milieu'. *Non-drinking*? Not any of the producers, directors and TV staff I know.

It may be, as he says, 'foolish to seem to be sympathetic to asylum cheats' but in the long run it is more foolish and deeply damaging to the Conservative party to deny its Christian obligations.

Tony Mulholland  
London W11

Sir,  
Although I endorse most of Professor Marsland's Radical Manifesto — particularly the parts on Europe, the family and crime — his remarks about environmental groups appear to me to be injudicious,

indeed intemperate. And his proposals bear a closer affinity with doctrinaire Thatcherism than with traditional conservatism. His statement that "The best protection of the environment... is provided by a free market..." would be rejected by mainstream economists who are concerned with the incidental degradation of the environment consequent upon economic activity.

In several articles and textbooks I have used intelligible economic analysis to show *pace* the "Coase Theorem" and the Property-Rights literature promoted by the Chicago School — that the unaided competitive market is quite inadequate to protect us against local and global perils and pollution. (v. *Costs of Economic Growth* pp.22-102.)

Finally, the economic punditry which holds that government involvement in employment policies "serves merely to prevent or postpone essential unemployment... by preventing competition and innovation," can be supported neither by economic theory nor evidence. Moreover, Marsland's association of Keynes with "the superstitious belief... in the power of government to manage the economy in defiance of market realities..." amounts to a gross misrepresentation.

In his *General Theory*, Keynes revealed, for the first time, that the tendency to stabilisation of security prices — an outcome of competitive global markets — acts over time to destabilise the rest of the economy (as indeed does the stabilisation of exchange rates). It follows that any unnecessary unemployment caused by this phenomenon can be prevented or offset by a reduction in taxation or an increase in government expenditures.

True, economic conditions have changed since the Thirties, so limiting the application of the Keynesian remedies. For all that, the crucial significance of Keynes's writings at the time lay in its unequivocal policy conclusion, in as much as it manifestly strengthened the case for private enterprise and free markets by showing that high levels of employment could be maintained without recourse to economic planning or socialism — solutions to the unemployment problem that were popular in the Thirties among large segments of the population in Britain.

E.J. Mishan  
London NW11

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# Letter from America

Brian C. Anderson

With Bob Dole's resounding victory in the Republican Presidential primaries, the "conservative crack-up" many have predicted as imminent has once again been staved off. The Republican candidate nominated to run against Bill Clinton will indeed be Senator Dole, a man suspicious of ideas and a political pragmatist, who has honourably served his country for decades but fills few with enthusiasm. The tensions between cultural and economic conservatives remain, and the possibility looms that populist firebrand Pat Buchanan will run as an independent candidate in the fall election, thereby improving the odds that President Clinton will be re-elected in November. What drives the cultural conservatives drawn to Buchanan and black Catholic Alan Keyes is the perception — and it is more than just a perception — that their passionate concerns are not taken seriously by mainstream Republicans, who are deemed to be far more interested in a balanced budget or in cutting the capital gains tax than they are in the moral drift of the country. And that moral drift continues unchecked.

Obscured by the din of the political season have been two court cases, one decided, the other soon to be, that will change the fabric of American life far more dramatically than the outcome of the November election. Both cases exemplify the reign of activist jurisprudence — invariably of an antinomian liberal stripe — over the moral destiny of the American regime.

The first has yet to take place, and involves the state of Hawaii's supreme court. Back in May 1993, hearing a case on appeal involving Hawaii's refusal to grant marriage licences to several gay and lesbian couples, the court argued that the state's marriage

law is in violation of the "equal protection clause" of the state constitution. Only if the state were able to show a compelling interest in sustaining the limitation of the marital relation to male and female could the restriction be maintained. But as the Constitutional scholar Walter Berns notes, the compelling state interest test is almost impossible to meet:

Indeed it has been the means by which the courts have dismantled a variety of discriminatory state laws. Here the state constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, and, to quote one of the proponents, if Wilma is permitted to marry Barney, but Fred is not permitted to marry Barney, then Fred is obviously being discriminated against on the basis of his sex.

The state will have difficulty opposing this kind of argument, and will be tested as early as July, when a retrial is scheduled. Religious considerations will be inadmissible because of the dominant, and unhistorical, understanding of the church-state relationship that has built an unpassable Constitutional wall between religious belief and public morality. What other argument could persuade the court? An argument from nature? But the modern liberal view of human nature is reductive: men seek pleasure through sex. As a liberal colleague once matter of factly put it: "You have to stick it somewhere". This moral *neutrality* — which captures beautifully the desiccated language of contemporary liberalism — is certain to be mirrored in the court's thinking.

Nor will Hawaii be alone in recognising homosexual marriage: other states are obliged to recognise legal marriages contracted outside their jurisdiction, and since the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution

secures equal protection of the laws, they will soon be recognising homosexual marriages contracted on their own home turf. Thus, despite the 70 per cent of Americans who view same-sex marriages as immoral, America will soon be a society that extends full marital benefits to same-sex couples. Short of a full scale political campaign to adopt a plank in the party platform opposing same sex marriage — which neither political party is likely to pursue for fear of being deemed "insensitive" or "intolerant" — there seems little that can be done to stop this juridically-led *coup d'état* from carrying the day.

The implications of this new legal order will be profound — further desacralization of marriage, the transformation of the meaning of the family, the public legitimisation of homosexuality and homosexual adoption — but another case, just decided, promises changes profounder still. On March 6th a sizeable majority of the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeals — one of the highest courts in the country — struck out a part of a Washington state statute that made it a felony to help another individual commit suicide. Drawing on a succession of privacy law decisions, beginning with the Supreme Court's infamous *Roe vs Wade*, enshrining a woman's right to an abortion in the Constitution, and culminating with the 1992 decision *Planned Parenthood vs Casey* which posited the autonomy-right of the individual to fashion his own concept of the meaning of existence, the Ninth Circuit has legitimated a "right to die" wholly at odds with the American Founding and the religious sensibilities of many Americans today.

Judge Stephen Reinhardt, who wrote

the majority decision, says all the usual things about “competence” and “terminal illness” and promises that doctors will make reasonable judgements in such grave matters, and that doctors alone will be given sanction to prescribe death. Even were one to share the view that under certain circumstances, euthanasia might be morally justified (which I do not) the experience of the Netherlands, where officially condoned euthanasia has led to thousands of patients being killed *without* consent, and where older citizens live in fear of being sent to hospitals, from which they may never emerge, should stop such rationalist optimism.

Soon then, American doctors, not unlike their Dutch counterparts, will have within their medical bags the option of ending life. This new liberty will irrevocably corrupt the *telos* of medicine, and unleash forces that will be extremely difficult to contain once liberated. How sympathetic, for example, will today’s adolescents, products of broken homes and neglectful families, be to their ageing, burdensome parents when the time comes? What built-up rage masked as compassion, will they visit on their elders? “You’ve

had a good life, Mom. Perhaps it’s time to leave this mortal coil...” Heretical thoughts, but not hyperbolic. The contemporary liberal mind, in its refusal to fathom the darker side of human nature — what might unfashionably be called original sin — refuses to acknowledge the fundamental transgression of euthanasia, and the horror that awaits should its march through the institutional life of the West not somehow be stopped. What Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Evangelium vitae* has coined the culture of death is fast becoming a reality. Unlike same-sex marriage, the legalisation of euthanasia is seductive to many Americans because it is seemingly consistent with the democratic principle of consent.

The contradictions at the heart of the American experiment, which place in tension a Promethean egalitarian individualism and a deep religiosity, are at a breaking point. The law is ever a teacher, and the lesson it has repeated time and again for the last few decades has aggressively favoured the Promethean side of the equation. This is in large part what fuels the “culture war” in the face of courts promoting a world where only two realities exist:

the individual, creator of his own universe, and presumed master of his moral “choices”, and the state, dispensing benefits but silent, indeed “non-judgemental” concerning those choices. It is a world where one can eliminate the burdensome, whether unborn or aged, where one can dispense condoms in classrooms, but where a graduation prayer in a public school is illegal. It is a world emptied of its moral contents, where tolerance and affirmation are blurred. Thus, the cultural conservatives, who refuse to affirm the new “life-styles”, will not go away. The rift between what they believe and the America they see being born around them is bound to grow. Bob Dole, even were he capable of defeating Bill Clinton in the coming election, which is unclear at best, does not speak to them. Who will?

**Brian C. Anderson is Research Associate in Social and Political Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, and Books, Arts and Culture Editor of *Crisis*.**

## *Notes on Reviewers*

Brian John teaches English at King Edward VI’s Grammar School in Chelmsford.

Dennis O’Keeffe is Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of North London.

Joseph Quoilé is an independent researcher and writer.

Gerald Russello is a freelance writer in the United States.

Andrew Shaughnessy was an assistant to Russell Kirk.

Tom Soper was an economic adviser to Barclays Bank.

Richard Terrell is the Editor of *Childhood in India, The Reminiscences of George Roche*, Radcliffe Press, 1994.

Derek Turner is Editor of *Right Now!*

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# Letter from Slovakia

*Ján Carnogurský*

The prize question could be: Which *Salisbury Review* readers knew, before 1989, that Slovakia was a separate part of Czecho-Slovakia and the Slovaks a separate nation?

In the past only a few knew about Slovakia, because for centuries she was an anonymous part of the Hungarian Kingdom. Throughout the existence of Czecho-Slovakia attention was paid mostly to events in Prague. In spite of their anonymity, due to a large dose of national solidarity, the Slovaks survived for a thousand years as a separate nation, but during the history of Czecho-Slovakia they made numerous attempts to achieve formal equality with the Czechs.

Hence the world remained unaware of Slovakia. But it was only seldom that Slovakia decided on her relations with the world. Almost never could she trust in the help of other nations or countries. The lack of awareness led people to anticipate that the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia would result in Slovakia's bankruptcy. And Slovak ignorance of the world means that little attention is paid to the question whether she will be admitted to the European Union along with the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary or later. The EU démarche encountered similar ignorance. Such is the historical and social background to events in Slovakia today.

The news from Slovakia in the world media causes two kinds of surprise: a pleasant one concerning macro-economic output, and an unpleasant one concerning political development. We at home, and especially those in the Opposition, perceive the macro-economic figures very critically. It is indeed true that Slovak GDP in 1995 grew by 7% and in 1994 by 5%. Unemployment oscillates around 14%,

yet an annual 10% inflation is lower than in the neighbouring countries. Undoubtedly that is a success, especially when it is borne in mind that Slovakia had been more tied to the Eastern bloc than her neighbours. In 1989 approximately 90% of Slovak exports headed towards COMECON members, while by 1995 Slovakia supplied 38% of its exports to the European Union. The grand economic transformation occurred in spite of the country's heritage of a vast armaments industry. Until now the arms sector has not been restructured, and remains a price that Slovakia continues to pay for the communist past. The transformation was made possible by the virtues of Slovak citizens, who are willing to work in humble conditions, for little reward and under great pressure. Slovakia experiences fewer strikes than the Czech Republic or the new federal lands of Germany, even though living standards here are lower than in those two other countries.

The dynamics in Slovakia's political life appear more complicated. Vladimir Meciar's Party has repeatedly won general elections and continues to take the lead in opinion polls. We traditionally divide Slovak political parties into standard and non-standard ones. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) is clearly a non-standard party. It embraces most former Communists, together with anti-Communists, nationalists and pragmatists of all kinds. The Party lacks ideology and is based on the personality of Vladimir Meciar. Until now, this conglomerate of people, ideas and short-term goals clearly and comprehensively appeals to most voters. HZDS politics resemble those of the Communist era well remembered by the people. Yet its rhetoric is anti-Communist.

The events surrounding the Anti-Communist Bill clearly illustrates the HZDS phenomenon. A group of MPs from HZDS submitted a draft bill on the illegality of the Communist system. The draft turned out to be tougher than the alternative version submitted by MPs from our Christian Democratic party. Parliament passed the Bill with the support of our votes. Then Meciar's Cabinet decided that the bill was politically incorrect and returned it to Parliament for debate.

One of the consequences of HZDS having adopted Communist policy is the fact that the actual post-Communist party, the Party of the Democratic Left, lost the elections in Slovakia. That distinguishes us from a number of other post-totalitarian countries such as Poland, Hungary or Lithuania.

In its final stages, Communism was known for its utmost irrationality. Such irrationality persists in Meciar's policy, and is expressed through his fight against President Michal Kovac. The latter was among the founding members of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia. It was indeed HZDS that nominated Kovac for the Presidency. Meciar's attacks against the President gave the Opposition a common ground in spite of its diversity. That opened space for agreement between the Opposition parties. Moreover, the attacks cause severe damage to Slovakia's image abroad. The irrationality of the attacks lies in the weak position of the President as designed by the Constitution. The Presidential powers are similar to those of the German President. Meciar could rule quite easily, should he simply ignore the President. Yet even a weak President represents a centre of power, though much weaker than that occupied by the Prime Minister. Still, it is a

power centre of some kind. Shortly after entering Office, President Kovac showed that he intended to exercise his Constitutional powers independently according to his own will. That was, however, in conflict with the Communist doctrine of the State, where power is regulated by connecting each position in the State with a position in the party.

The kidnapping of the President's son to Austria provides a vivid illustration of the attacks against the President. A Slovak emigré was sued in Germany in 1994 for a number of frauds. After the sentence he testified to the German police that the son of the Slovak President participated in one of the frauds. The Bavarian police accused the President's son, Michal Kovac jr, and issued an arrest warrant against him. His attorney negotiated with the Munich prosecution to carry out the hearing in Bratislava. When the hearing was about to be held in Bratislava, unknown offenders stopped Michal Kovac jr. in full daylight on a busy road near Bratislava, pulled him out of his car and tied him up. Eight hours later, following an anonymous telephone call from someone with a Slovak accent, the Austrian police found the trussed Kovac jr. in a parked car in a small town near the Slovakian border.

The objective of the kidnapping was to make the Austrian authorities extradite Michal Kovac jr. to Germany, in pursuance of the international arrest warrant. The Austrian court deciding on the extradition case, refused the German claim and requested that Kovac jr. be returned to Slovakia. The court had evidence implicating the Slovak intelligence service in the kidnapping.

The Slovak opposition press nearly every week brings new evidence that the Slovak intelligence service organised and implemented the kidnapping of Kovac jr. The intelligence service is headed by Ivan Lexa, confidential friend of Premier Meciar. Slovak police investigators who were examining the kidnapping were removed from the case, since their evidence also implicated the Slovak intelligence service,

and the case was handed to a new police investigator who does everything not to disclose the offenders. The crime is becoming an even greater burden to Meciar. Yet, he rejects all accusations against Ivan Lexa and allows him to retain his post.

The position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is another source of tension. According to the 1991 census, the Hungarian minority represents less than 11% of Slovakia's population. Members of the minority have their own schools, theatres, press, bilingual road signs, and representatives in the Parliament. The background of recent Slovak-Hungarian relations embraces two issues. Most Slovaks fear Magyarisation in the territories where the Hungarians might gain political control. The fear arises from their negative experience dating back to three historical periods — pre WWI, between 1938-1945 when Hungary occupied South Slovakia, and the Communist period, when the Kádár regime closed down Slovak schools in Hungary in 1960. These schools have not since reopened. As a result, no party will allow the Hungarians to have political control over any part of Slovak territory, not even in the form of regional autonomy.

Secondly there is the modification of the geopolitical situation in Central Europe following the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia. Hungary and the Hungarian minorities understandably study the new situation and try to gain some concessions. For Hungary the results are not encouraging. In 1991-1992 the country attempted without success to prevent Slovakia from completing the Gabčíkovo Water Dam. The Dam has been completed with no negative environmental impact detected until now; indeed, it seems even to have a positive effect. Hungary has not succeeded in gaining autonomy for her minorities in other countries either. Any attempt to offer unreasonable support to the minorities in the surrounding States or to internationalise their status would naturally lead to a decline in cooperation between them and Slovakia, Romania and, after the Dayton Agreement, Serbia.

That brings me to the overall position of Slovakia between East and West, or to be more precise between Russia and the European Union. Last year Slovakia submitted a formal application for full EU membership. The Association Agreement and the application present a proof of economic trends. The problem of today's Slovakia lies in the dichotomy between its rhetoric and actions. In spite of its declared orientation towards the EU, Slovak domestic policy spurred a joint submission by the EU démarche to Bratislava, expressing concerns about the policy of the Slovak Government in relation to the media and the Opposition. That is another discrepancy in Meciar's Cabinet that will sharpen over time.

The position of Slovakia in the area of security differs from other states in the region. Slovakia has no historical grievances towards anyone save Hungary. We enjoy rather good relations with Russia and especially good ones with Germany. Therefore there is no strong domestic pressure to join any security structure. The objective of the present Government, as declared in its programme manifesto, is to enter NATO. Yet there seems to be no hurry to achieve that objective. Political cooperation with NATO within the Partnership for Peace is very successful. Thus the debate about NATO enlargement to the East is far more muted in Slovakia than in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. This is the more so, in that most equipment of the Slovak army is still made in Russia.

Slovakia resembles a water drop: it offers a clear picture showing all the problems of the former Communist Central and East Europe. The picture is not only to be studied. It is necessary to determine whether our problems will be resolved in a Western or in an Eastern manner. Such is the political struggle in Slovakia.

**Ján Carnogurský is Leader of the Christian Democratic Party and of the Opposition in the Slovakian Parliament.**

# Reviews

## Another Side of the Raj

*Richard Terrell*

**Boxwallahs, The British in Cawnpore 1857-1901**, Zoë Yalland, Michael Russell, £28.00.

This volume was intended by Zoë Yalland to be the second of three chronological studies of the social and economic history of one of India's major cities. Her death on the day that *Boxwallahs* was published in 1994 deprived India and the world of a major interpreter of the past and an artist in historical presentation. It is this dual quality of her achievement that must be stressed in any review.

The sub-titles of the two published volumes, *Traders and Nabobs* and *Boxwallahs* are *The British in Cawnpore 1765-1857* and *1857-1901* respectively. Although the first covers a much longer span of years, the second, *Boxwallahs*, is much the longer book. The difference is explained by the much greater volume of events that occurred after the defeat of the Mutiny than in the century before it. Each volume culminates in a historical epoch deeply affecting the entire subcontinent, the Mutiny in the middle of the century and the emergence of the modern nationalist movement at the end of it. The vast industrial development since 1947 cannot be understood without apprehension of the infrastructure laid down in the two previous centuries, an achievement wonderfully illuminated by Mrs Yalland's book.

At the outset of her task she must have faced three alternative general procedures. First, she could have concentrated upon the changing functions of the British community over the en-

tire period, beginning with the *commercial* provisioning of the biggest Indian military base during the Mahratta-Moghul wars by the trading enterprise of the community virtually exterminated in the military mutiny of 1857. She could have continued the story with an account of the industrial development of Cawnpore that was the achievement of British newcomers, many of them belonging to the families of those who had been killed. All such development could have been described in general terms familiar to students of economic history in university libraries.

Second, she could have concentrated on the changing fortunes of particular enterprises, the shops in the city, the factories, the railways, the great civil engineering works of bridging rivers, the building of canals, the irrigation of land and feeding of a rapidly growing population, in all of which Cawnpore played a key role.

Or, finally, her work could have comprised, in the main, a great number of human portraits derived from letters, diaries, journals, cuttings from newspapers, innumerable photographs and many paintings and engravings.

In both volumes, but especially in *Boxwallahs*, whatever her original intentions may have been, the author produced a wonderful gallery of portraits, derived from innumerable sources and vivid descriptive writing. Nevertheless this book is no mere al-

bum but constitutes also a solid achievement in economic geography, effectively grasping such problems as why such major developments should have occurred in Cawnpore rather than anywhere else in India. She identifies important factors, several of which arose in the outside world. Most important were the American Civil War and the opening of the Suez Canal. The former created a global shortage of cotton, raw yarn and cloth. Lancashire turned naturally to Cawnpore for yarn, and India, with its own bankers and financiers, provided the finance capital required for many British factories in the city. A woollen industry also appeared. The Suez canal brought to India thousands of British women and children, which transformed the relationships between Indians and Europeans, not always for the better.

In *Boxwallahs* local factors are also stressed. The region between the Jumna and Ganges rivers, known as the Doab, had always been a major source of cattle and the hides required for the leather industry. In the region, therefore, were many Chamars, members of the low caste of leather workers. Cawnpore, situated in the region on the great waterway of the Ganges and later at a key centre of railway development, thus became the main centre of leather production for the whole country. The British community introduced the machinery from Britain and transformed themselves into industrialists

on a great scale.

What kinds of people, then, were the British of Cawnpore? Modern anti-imperialists who may be interested could address themselves to that question through a study of this book. Many of the Cawnpore British — the Joneses of Wales, the Maxwells, Stewarts, McRobertses of Scotland, the Allens and the Ansons and many others — were of very humble British origins. Most of them were devout churchgoers and inspired by the evangelism of the epoch. At Cawnpore they developed a way of life within the Indian environment which characterised them as a

caste in all the Indian senses of the term, vocational and genetic. In this book we discover exactly how they lived, with their rides before breakfast, their drives in their carriages in the late afternoons, their church services, their marriages and honeymoons in the hills, their dances at Christmas, their miscarriages, their Indian wet nurses, their deaths, their gardens and their flowers.

Zoë Yalland so buried herself in the personal lives of her subjects that her own literary style was much influenced by their own.

My only criticism is that, in the midst

of all the portraiture the reader finds some difficulty in following the chronology of the whole exactly. This is difficult to trace without standing back from the page and doing some work. The book as a whole resembles a painting of a rose garden, every rose depicted as unique.

Zoë Yalland, née Wilkinson, was herself a child in Cawnpore in the 1920's, just outside the span of this book. Most charmingly, however, she describes her life at that time, including an incident when she refused to curtsy whilst presenting a bouquet to the visiting Viceroy, Lord Irwin.

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# The American Conservative Conscience

*Andrew Shaughnessy*

**The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict**, Russell Kirk, Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995. \$34.99.

In 1953, Russell Kirk, a young college history instructor at Michigan State University, published a book — *The Conservative Mind* — which sent seismic shocks surging through the edifice of American liberalism. (This work had grown out of his doctoral dissertation written largely in Fife where Kirk had attended St Andrews University). Liberal intellectualism in the United States, so dominant, so self-assured (so dull, so unimaginative), proved that it was sensible of the blow by treating the book with respect; important reviews were printed in the *New York Times*, *Time* magazine, *Chicago-Tribune*, and elsewhere.

Kirk's book, a study in the history of ideas, dealt with the intellectual heirs of Edmund Burke in both Britain and the United States. In its pages he defended the notion that, far from being the intemperate political expression of a few benighted reactionaries, conservatism embraced a lively and coherent

body of thought capable of answering the political aspirations of ordinary people. Today it is widely recognised that Kirk's study influenced a profound reorientation in American political life, the consequences of which have not yet been fully worked out.

The present book, Kirk's autobiography, completed shortly before his death in 1994, represents the culminating achievement of an extraordinary man of letters. (His literary *oeuvre* amounts to some thirty books, together with countless introductions, essays, articles, reviews, and lectures).

The term of Kirk's life marked a fundamental transformation of the American republic. When he was born, in the last year of the Great War, America was still, essentially, a land of small towns and farms where local — or territorial — democracy prevailed to a large extent in the several states. But already, under Woodrow Wilson's presidency, the inflation of

Federal power had become an established fact. Wilson's personal direction of the war economy (to be emulated and vastly expanded by Franklin Roosevelt during World War II) was the decisive step towards creating the Federal Leviathan in Washington. Kirk was to devote much time later to warning of the dangers (the totalitarian tendencies never far from the surface in liberal democracies), which America faced if centralisation of political power remained unopposed.

Kirk's childhood was a happy one, weathering the storms of the Great Depression. He was born at Plymouth not far from Detroit. In many respects his early years explain his lifelong attachment to conservative ways. In hard times, particularly, the centrality of the family as an institution of order, founded in love, is never more clearly demonstrated. His was a loving family. The need for community — true community — entered his consciousness and was to re-

main a permanent feature of his life. Kirk made his home at Mecosta, his ancestral place in the Michigan stump country; and, despite being an inveterate traveller, was never tempted to forsake it for New York or Washington or some other metropolis. His affections were predominantly local ones: family, village, and later, church. He did not know it then, but the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour was the basis of his understanding of community.

Kirk's journey to faith forms a major theme of these memoirs. His people had been Swedenborgian spiritualists and part of the background to his childhood visits to Mecosta had been talk of seances, levitations, automatic writing, and other manifestations of the uncanny. (It came naturally to Kirk, later, to write metaphysical tales). At an early age he had become aware, intuitively, that he was more than mere matter; he liked to stand between two mirrors and observe his image reflected into infinity. His reading in the classics, as a young man, resulted in a lasting admiration for Cicero and the Stoics, particularly Marcus Aurelius. The early chapter, "A Stoical Sergeant in the Waste Land," describes, with great humour, Kirk's years of national service which he spent largely in the Utah wilderness, a minor cog in the

wheel of the fledgling Chemical Warfare Service. Here he had abundant opportunity to read and reflect. His studies in Burke led backwards to the Anglican divines, Hooker and Browne, and forward to Cardinal Newman whose writings made a profound impression on Kirk. Newman in turn pointed back to the great patristic writers, two of whom — Gregory the Great and St. Augustine — influenced him greatly. Kirk describes his conversion as an intellectual one. He was gradually persuaded of the truth of Christian doctrine by the arguments advanced by such figures as Augustine and Newman. Indeed Newman's understanding of the idea of Authority was instrumental in Kirk's conversion. At the age of forty-five he was received into the Catholic Church.

He married at this time the young and beautiful Annette Courtemanche from Long Island, thus inaugurating a new and more active phase of his life. For years Kirk kept up a column syndicated in national newspapers, traversed America from Atlantic to Pacific taking part in debates and delivering lectures, and found time to engage in national politics. He and Annette worked tirelessly to support Senator Goldwater's campaign. Somehow he contrived to publish books and raise a family amid all this activity. The great radical move-

ments of the Sixties found Kirk debating on college campuses with such demagogues as Tom Hayden, William Kunstler, Malcolm X, and others.

It is scarcely possible to do justice to the breadth of Kirk's experience of which this book is the record. There are fascinating chapters dealing with his travels in various lands: Scotland, England, Ireland, Italy, Austria, Africa, Taiwan. Compelling are his portraits of a number of important writers whom he came to know, some to call friends: T.S. Eliot (who arranged for Faber to publish the London edition of *The Conservative Mind*, and about whom Kirk was to write an authoritative critical study), Wyndham Lewis, the poet Roy Campbell, Malcolm Muggeridge. He has much of enduring value to say about humane learning, the field of education (this a recurring theme in his books), politics, economics, social and cultural decadence, architecture and the doctrine of the soul. Constantly he draws attention to the lack of imagination (a favourite theme) which everywhere characterises our age.

This is a magnificent and densely-woven tapestry of a book. For British readers who may not have encountered Kirk's work before, it provides a splendid introduction to the life and thought of a unique conservative man of letters.

## Any Questions?

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# The White Heat of Politics

Brian John

**Harold Wilson**, Ben Pimlott, Harper Collins, 1993, pb £6.99; **Edward Heath**, John Campbell, Jonathan Cape, 1993, pb £6.99.

In his classic *Lives* Plutarch paralled the careers of Greek and Roman heroes, shrewdly spotting their fatal flaws. These biographies serve both in bulk and intention as tombstones to two whose reputations history has already cremated. Between them Harold Wilson and Edward Heath dominated politics for a decade, in which they stripped Britain of all illusions but their own. By the time Wilson's regime, under his eternal understudy Callaghan, was mercifully or mercilessly put down by the electorate, Socialism, in any meaningful sense, had also perished. There was to be a Chinese summer in the ideologies of the 1970's before the prolonged cold turkey of today, where the party resembles a dissolute younger son waiting for his elder brother to break his neck on the hunting field. Had Heath survived Thatcher's *coup de grace* the fate of Conservatism would have been little different. As it is, both men have been expunged from party history with a celerity Stalin might have envied. If Clinton gained brownie points from old footage of him meeting Kennedy we may safely assume Tony Blair has no desire to do a Forrest Gump with Wilson. Yet on his mysterious resignation, which Pimlott does little to explain, many writing in the same papers which were to stand united for Heath against Thatcher a few years later, felt he had become indispensable.

Both of these volumes offer a tentative rehabilitation if only to argue that George I was always reckoned bad but George II was worse. It may encourage Michael Foot to return his life of Wilson to a list of books from which it has oddly disappeared (possible retitled *Guilty Men II*). If, as Disraeli claimed, a conservative

government is an organised hypocrisy, a Labour opposition is usually a disorganised one. Wilson, long seen as a man of the Left, realised this more than most. The youthful photographs resemble a callow J.B. Priestley and little in his early career hints at his mature style; the young Harold was a dull dog seemingly destined for the sound men who stock unsound committees. Then, inspired by his namesake Macmillan, he recreated himself substituting the image of a cheeky chappie for the languid Edwardian panache of his mentor. In both cases what at first seemed a brilliant presentation to the media was to prove Emerson's adage true that every hero becomes a bore at last; after offering them the kingdoms of this world their audience was soon to suggest that leaping from a tower would be preferable. Wilson was the last PM whose skills were honed in public meetings; who could take an egg or a heckler in good part. A magnificent leader of the Opposition, it was Wilson's misfortune, and our own, that he was to dwindle into a Prime Minister.

This was by no means inevitable. However, it was very likely, given that the Tories had chosen Home, who seemed to incarnate the gentleman amateur at a time in which the anatomisers of Britain were howling for that entrepreneurial spirit later to appal them when it tardily arrived in the storkish shape of Mrs Thatcher. It was gentlemen vs players and no one ever accused Wilson of being a gentleman. It was a damn close-run thing but Wilson was to break the apostolic succession of labour ducks. His administration, like most, was inaugurated with high hopes; more than most it was destined to fail them. In-

deed the Northern Nonconformist appeared curiously detached from the most lasting effects of the dazzling, dishonest decade. He exhibited neither knowledge of, nor involvement in, Roy Jenkins' reforms to liberalize the laws governing homosexuality and abortion. He claimed that Grammar schools would be abolished over his dead body. Photographed with the Beatles, hobnobbing with such legends as Harry H Corbett and Miriam Karlin, for one brief shining moment he reigned over a monochrome Camelot within the technicolour of swinging London. Somehow bizarrely taking credit for England's World Cup triumph, the 1966 election seemed to confirm Wilson's boast that Labour had become the natural party of Government. But like the Liberal apotheosis of 1906, the ringing of bells, as that other pragmatic premier Walpole observed, would be followed by a wringing of hands. The devaluation of the pound was, in retrospect, a grim necessity; at the time it was only perceived to be grim. The pound in your pocket speech, however unfairly misquoted, was to seal Wilson's image as an awkward apologist for a government whose much bruted managerial skills belonged entirely to the world of images that now abandoned him. Wilson had become not so much a lost leader as a leader decidedly lost. The full disclosure of the public's disaffection was to be shown in 1970. After Swinging London they desired a swinging Wilson or at least a return to a conservative government. What they were to get, of course, was Edward Heath.

If, as was thought at the time, Heath

was the Tories' answer to Wilson, it soon became clear they had misheard the question. He was a common man singularly devoid of the common touch; considered good on TV he proved to be a graduate of the Rank school for the charmless. Over many years a small group of journalists and a smaller group of friends have laboured to present a private Ted all warmth and charm; alas, it remains private. Even a not unsympathetic witness like Campbell presents example after example of his subject's boorish behaviour. Too aloof and isolated, even in sport, where his remarkable prowess as a yachtsman left the terrace throngs unstirred, Heath seems a man whom some inner wound estranges from the brash equalities of friendship, a tragic figure whose fatal flaw is a failure to reach tragedy. His victory convinced him he knew it all, and decades of defeat only deepened that conviction. His admirers saw him as an iron man, the hammer of the unions, while Heath saw himself more as a stern father than a bastard. He believed that a return to Depression level unemployment would not be tolerated; but his retreat from economic rectitude was to produce equally intolerable consequences. His reputation for dogmatic inflexibility was now so entrenched that it survived a sequence of inglorious retreats as Law Lords laboured to release the Toytown Tolpuddle Martyrs of his new legislation. Like World War I, the fatal showdown with the miners seems worse than a blunder, a crime.

Had he won the election, as most commentators expected, the miners would doubtless have been handed the fruits of that victory; as it was they had only to grab them.

Yet even after a dismal result in the dreary instant replay of the 1974 election his party, infirm of purpose, could not bring itself to despatch a terminally blasted Heath. Those very papers, poised to posture as the sedulous apes of the Thatcher years, were astonishingly dismissive as she picked up the daggers. Unlike Montgomery, Heath was to prove unbearable in victory and in defeat alike. Had he collaborated in the suttee of his political hopes a number of alluring avatars should have awaited; he could have become the Balfour *de nos jours* while his total disregard for the interests of England would have made an inevitable Foreign Secretary. Alternatively, had General Galtieri not ridden to Thatcher's rescue, adroit manoeuvring as a King over the water could have placed him in a very strong position had she fallen. Instead he adopted the role of a broken Coriolanus, gathered no acolytes about him but waited in the most protracted sulk of History for the Nation to apologise. He became the Father of the house; yet that blend of guilt-ridden affection and faintly contemptuous nostalgia which posterity bestows upon ageing statesmen, which suffuses Foot and which will surely embrace Thatcher, eluded him as it did Wilson. The one avoided the benign

intents of Destiny by effectually disappearing; the other by stubbornly refusing to allow his too, too stubborn flesh to melt. Both men cordially disliked each other. Heath felt Wilson was a threat to England, Wilson thought Heath might be a threat. Yet History, ever dulling the knife edge of distinction, may well find elective affinities between them. Both shared the weak man's penchant for dictators. We will have to wait to learn more of Wilson's curiously Le Carré trips to the Eastern Bloc; Heath's enthusiasm for Red China's brisk way with a dissident is sufficiently well known. Yet rancid and rank though their memories are likely to remain they were, perhaps, among the lilies that fester. There was a certain seriousness shared by those scoured by war, a stagnant grandeur that evades our perpetually boyish, bland forty-year-olds, babbling of cricket bats, football and laptop computers. The first victor-victims of the TV age both lived to see how disastrous was their belief that managerial efficiency was an effective substitute for principles; they discovered that pragmatism doesn't work in practice. Like the grim tower blocks which epitomise their period, soul of a soulless era, so stand their reputations to posterity; and despite the best efforts of these two skilled apologists the truth lies in the graffiti scrawled in rage and resentment by the betrayed children of Albion, who must inhabit their inheritance until it topples or, dare one hope, is rebuilt.

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## The West — and the Rest

*Derek Turner*

**The Camp of the Saints**, Jean Raspail, Social Contract Press, Petoskey (Michigan), 1995, \$12.95.

It is symptomatic of changing times and conditions that this underground classic has resurfaced. In the wake of books like Peter Brimelow's *Alien Nation*, the disintegration of multi-

ethnic states and revival of ethnic quarrels the world over, it was only a matter of time before somebody thought of reprinting this extraordinary, explosive work.

Jean Raspail, who was born in 1925, loves France and the West. Civilised, well-read and well-travelled, he refuses to speak English, anguished by the inroads of Hollywood into French life.

A prize-winning author who only narrowly failed to be elected to the Academie Française in 1993, he has been writing travelogues and novels since the 1950s. What made him, in 1973, throw his reputation to the winds and write *The Camp of the Saints* was a 'vision' he had in 1972, at home on France's Mediterranean coast: "A million poor wretches, armed only with their weakness and their numbers, overwhelmed with misery, encumbered with starving brown and black children, ready to disembark on our soil...To let them in would destroy us. To reject them would destroy them" (from the Preface). The 18 month-long "emotional outpouring" that ensued resulted in one of the most controversial books ever written.

The plot is this: In an intuitive racial movement, a million hungry, diseased, degraded Indians storm Western consulates, crowd into a hundred rusty old cargo ships, and set sail *en masse* for Europe, France's Mediterranean coast to be precise, a land they think of as a fertile demi-Paradise, inhabited by people who will positively welcome their incursion. The main part of the plot is taken up by an analysis of likely French reaction to the concept and then the reality of the fleet, made especially piquant by Raspail's liberal use of real exhortations from real-life opinion-formers.

A few conservative dissidents are the only calm voices to be heard amidst the mounting frenzy of breast-baring and moral masochism that is the expected, 'politically correct' reaction. The refugees are romanticised, made abstract and trivialised by the media. The fleet is nicknamed 'The Last Chance Armada' and a slogan is coined: "We're all from the Ganges now". The dull resentment felt by most French people is easily ignored, because inchoate, or simply gets dissipated in the daily routine.

The proselytising of the intellectuals, the cant of the clergy, the cynicism of the *classe politique* and the general apathy, combined with a robust Egyptian refusal to allow the repellent convoy through the Suez Canal, so that it has to sail around the Cape of Good Hope, mean that resistance is deferred

until the convoy has actually arrived off the French coast, with a "stench of latrines" and litter of dead brown bodies. Many young people and a few others — priests, mixed-race intellectuals, media folk — pour southwards to greet the people they view as brothers and sisters, but find the welcome is not to their liking. Some realise — when it is too late — that this great biological drive cares nothing for them or their liberal notions.

While France is being overrun, a similar fate has befallen or is befalling all the other "tired, overfed" countries of the West, as hordes, viscerally conscious of a final collapse of Western resolve, pour across its various frontiers as one — millions of Orientals and Muslims across the indefensible Russian borders, millions of North Africans across the Mediterranean, Mexicans across the Rio Grande, the slum and shanty-town dwellers of Africa and South America into the exclusive, fortified estates of the local whites. In Western cities, the "stampeding lambs", as Raspail graphically calls the latest arrivals, meaning the power of weakness when confronted by fettered strength, are augmented by a newly confident 'fifth column' of second or third generation immigrants who have never assimilated. A final battle is fought out between the forces of the French government acting on behalf of the aliens, against a motley, poorly-equipped band of patriots in the immemorial countryside near where Charles Martel saved Christian Europe in 732.

What Raspail has done is to telescope into a short time frame what is actually taking place now, but in patchwork fashion and within a compass of several generations, rather than months. It is because of this compression of events that some of the incidents are knowingly overdone, and some of the protagonists too articulate to be true — although the totality of the book rings undeniably true at a deeper level. Our borders are obviously too permeable. Our birthrate is below replacement rate — and everybody else's above. Westerners are rationalist, demoralised, riven by "deadly doubt", unconscious of their uniqueness and

value, and they make almost no attempt to assimilate immigrants. Our erstwhile inferiors are becoming our equals or superiors; we are losing our economic might, and a dozen Third World countries will have nuclear weapons within ten years (*Sunday Telegraph*, 14th January, 1996). Multiculturalism's various offshoots, like Afrocentrism, Black Muslims, PKK and *Hamas*, are making their presence felt in the Western world, where minority racists (in some cities, becoming majority racists) can already cause juries to give safe, rather than correct, verdicts and make quiet London suburbs explode in riot.

One of the many themes of the *Camp* is that of the conflicting instincts that run through Westerners when they are suddenly forced into close contact with 'the rest' — a discomforting blend of compassion, guilt, aversion and loathing. Another theme is the profound and often unbridgeable differences between the West and everywhere else, although this cultural chasm can be bridged by certain individuals. Raspail is not a genetic determinist; one of his most fondly-drawn characters is Hamadura, a Hindu who loves the West. When he joins the little Occidental liberation army, he is made welcome despite his dark skin. "Being white isn't really a question of colour" he says. "It's a whole mental outlook...with so many whites going black, why can't a few 'darkies' decide to be white?"

The *Camp* was first published in English in America in 1975 (nobody has yet dared publish it in the United Kingdom), meeting with a storm of publicity. It was variously described as "a Fascist fantasy...a disgusting book", "a jerrybuilt nightmare" and "a psychotic fantasy" and Raspail as the "white man's Frantz Fanon". Despite this reaction by some, the book has been doing the rounds furtively ever since. New editions came out in 1977, 1982 and 1987, each time reviving the controversy, albeit with lessening force. The sheer power of the writing and the significance of the issues it raises mean it has proved impossible to suppress it or wish it away. Even the patrician *Atlantic Monthly*, America's longest

continually-printed publication and one of its most respected, devoted most of its December 1994 edition to a discussion of the book and the questions it raised.

The book *is* about race, as its detractors have claimed, hoping thereby that it could simply be dismissed as a latter-day *Mein Kampf*. One simply cannot discuss the history of civilisation without discussing the racial aspect, or lament the passing of a civilisation without evoking particularist iconography; nationality and race are often synonymous. But the book is about more than race; as Jeffrey Hart put it in the *National Review* in 1975: "Raspail is not writing about race; he is writing about civilisation". The book's translator, Norman Shapiro, wrote, also in 1975, that overpopulation is "the real villain of the piece". The *Camp* is also about the laws of nature; Raspail compares the blindly determined Third Worlders to columns of ants, and in-

sists that they are only moving to fill a vacuum, in accordance with instincts that are as old as life.

On the other hand, the *Camp* is also spiritual. Raspail points out that "it is always the soul that wins the decisive battles". The Western freedom fighters all find glory and redemption in their desperate, chivalrous struggle for their vanishing world. Even in failing, they achieve immortality and wholeness, because they die in style, fighting for a lost cause, with a song on their lips and a gargantuan laugh in their throats. They are blended with their ancestors — with the drinking, cursing, whoring Crusaders who replanted the Cross in Palestine, with the grim Teutonic Knights who defied Mongol and Slav in dripping Carpathian forests, with gallant Don John as his gold standard billows in the easterly Adriatic wind.

Above all, Raspail is posing the great moral dilemma which is speedily

eclipsing all other moral dilemmas — how the West should relate to its restive, often resentful neighbours in a world that may have suddenly become too small. The prudent measures we should take — stopping or severely restricting immigration, repatriating illegal immigrants, re-introducing 'monoculturalism' and pride in the Occident and using foreign aid monies to improve family planning in the Third World — are at least partly racially discriminatory ones, which means they would be at odds with much present Western morality. Raspail puts the dilemma neatly, in his preface to the 1985 edition: "What's to be done, since no one would wish to renounce his own human dignity by acquiescing to racism? What's to be done since, simultaneously, all persons and all nations have the sacred right to preserve their differences and identities, in the name of their own future and their own past?" What, indeed?

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# Who will unite the Unionists?

*Joseph Quoilé*

**The Idea of the Union: Statements and Critiques in Support of the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, John Wilson Foster, Ed., Belcouver Press, Vancouver, 1995, £4.00.

In his introduction to this collection, John Wilson Foster asserts that "the idea of the Union rests on the proposition that the Union is a social, cultural and economic fabric and in a later contribution, the editor claims: "Unionism does not represent an alternative ethnic or religious nationalism, but argues for the reasonableness...of maintaining Northern Ireland's place within the multi-national, multi-faith, multi-ethnic United Kingdom state". Much the same is said by Arthur Aughey in what is by far the best of these essays. To Aughey, "The idea of

the union is the willing community of citizens...Its relevant concept is citizenship and not nation". Here, then, the idea of the Union — Unionism's big idea, if you like — is a kind of textbook state, culture — blind, not to say bland, where citizenship can be had as easily as a subscription to the *Fortean Times*. But if the Union and Unionism were really so — and it would be remarkable if they were — then there would be little need for an anthology such as this. *The Idea of the Union* exists because Unionism and the Union are other than John Wilson

Foster and his colleagues allege. One reason why it is not easy to argue in support of the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is because, in many respects, that argument was already lost in 1920. In fact, since that date, there is a sense in which there has been no Union for which to argue. For three quarters of a century, Unionism has operated within a context of defeat and resignation.

The year 1920 is important because it was then that Westminster, via its Government of Ireland Act, decided that the North Eastern part of Ireland

with its Protestant majority should, as "Northern Ireland", operate its own government, and that the Catholic South — today's Republic — should do likewise. Since then, Northern Ireland has played little part in the political life of the United Kingdom. The clearest sign that this is so is the long-standing refusal by the political parties of *national* government — Labour and Conservative — to operate in the province. This party boycott, coupled with the 1920 legislation, leaves Northern Ireland a place and a problem apart. The communal nature of the province's indigenous politics, Protestant Unionists versus Catholic Nationalists; the traditional antipathy of these two, and the relatively slender majority of the former over the latter make it a region thoroughly unsuited to semi-statehood. Its politics are war at peace.

The Government of Ireland Act can be read, then, as the first of many affirmations of long-term official indifference to the province's affairs, the most recent being the Downing Street Declaration of two years back and last year's Frameworks document. In the end, Irish Nationalism's strongest card is that not even the United Kingdom wants the Union. The "Union" is what John Wilson Foster's authors wish it were not — nominal and ephemeral, no Union at all.

But it is not just the present state of the Union that is the problem. Unionism and the Unionists who uphold it have their faults as well. Foster suggests that there is a need for Unionism to be re-invented, otherwise its decline will become terminal. Unless Unionism becomes other than it currently is, he reckons, it will soon be nothing at all. But *The Idea of the Union* gives little indication as to what Unionism is, what it should become and why or how it should become it. Whatever it is that is wrong with Unionism, it is scarcely discussed, and because it is scarcely discussed, it cannot be put right.

In my opinion what is wrong with Unionism is that it is the political voice of the Ulster Protestant community and of that community alone. This is

most obviously the case with Paisley's party, which is in many respects his own Free Presbyterian Church at politics. But even the other, more ostensibly secular, Unionist Party dithers over its links with the Protestant exclusivist Orange Order and last summer chose a leader — David Trimble — fresh from demanding the right of those same Orangemen to parade through Catholic neighbourhoods in which they were clearly unwelcome. Small wonder, then, that that rarest of rare birds, the Ulster Catholic Unionist, is now almost extinct. Recently, in fact, a Catholic graduate was obliged to sue Trimble's party after it had rejected her for a post in public relations!

A party as exclusive as that ceases to be credible. Unionism of one sort or another attracts more votes than any other "ism" in Northern Ireland; but because of its exclusivity and its communal support, it cannot be the basis for any lasting settlement. There is nothing in it for Northern Irish Catholics and, since Catholics comprise two fifths of the province's population, that is a problem. We have had fantasy football where pundits pick dream teams. The constituency to which *The Idea of the Union* directs its appeal is made up of fantasy Unionists — brilliant, balanced, unembarassing, and ultimately unreal. There is still an educated Protestant middle class, of course — most of the authors here are a part of it — but much of that class has educated itself *away from* Unionism. Its sceptical mainstream votes for the moderate Alliance Party and, at the margins, it is nationalist. Increasingly, as its young come of age, they emigrate.

*The Idea of the Union* will not keep them home. It aspires to present a coherent Unionist argument but, in the end, really only amounts to a series of debating points — rhetorical ties of a kind that has become perennial in Unionist discourse. Many of the contributors here mention the relative illiberalism or the relative poverty of the Irish Republic compared with Northern Ireland as if these are the sole reasons why most Northern Irish Protestants are Unionists. But today's Un-

ionism is not some simple calculation of the various pros and cons of continued Union versus Irish unity. For instance, south of the border, divorce was made illegal in the 1920's and unconstitutional in the 1930's. Quite properly, the issue thus became a staple of Unionist polemic. Ireland's position on divorce, which had its origins in the canon law of the Catholic Church, clearly indicated that that state was unfit to govern Protestants. But there were scores of other objections all of them wholly *negative* reasons for resisting the encroachment of Catholic irredentism. For decades, Unionism has had no positive vision, or idea, to set alongside these objections.

The problem is that if the list of things that make the current Irish Republic inhospitable to Protestants is the reason why the Union should endure, then the shorter the list the weaker the argument for the Union. Take the Northern and Southern economies. In *The Idea of the Union*, both Esmond Birnie and Graham Gudgin argue that Northern Ireland is economically unviable outside of the United Kingdom, as if Unionism relies on a balance sheet. If that were the case, then some future discovery of crude oil deposits off Kinsale should win the argument for the nationalists. Ireland's constitutional ban on divorce passed into history last November and there is no less Unionism now than before. In the end, a secular Republic is no more appealing to today's Unionists than a thoroughgoing Catholic one; a rich Republic no more attractive than a poor one. The Unionists will miss the divorce ban most. It has left them one less axe to grind, leaving Unionism more exposed as a purely communal, ultimately negative, emotional reaction.

If there is an idea of the Union that might even now prevail, I would be surprised to see it come from the Unionist Party. After all, it was the Unionist Party which, ten years ago, put paid to a previous idea of the Union, that of the Campaign for Equal Citizenship whose members argued for the right of the people of Northern Ireland to vote for and to join the Labour and Conservative

Parties. This implied the fullest participation of the entire adult population of Northern Ireland in the party politics of the United Kingdom as the state to which they belonged. The Unionist Party decided that the politics of the United Kingdom were anathema to Unionism, and could not countenance any disruption of the communal political order, certainly not for anything so trivial as the maintenance of the Union between

Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Campaigners were expelled.

They would now appear to have been erased from the historical record. *The Idea of the Union* fails to acknowledge them or to investigate their demands. That surprised me. Of the twelve contributors to this collection, at least eight were members of the Campaign for Equal Citizenship. Robert McCartney was its president

and its candidate in the 1987 General Election, whilst Arthur Aughey wrote a good account of its history. But now the specifics of equal citizenship go unmentioned. The last big idea has been forgotten, but nothing comparable has been put in its place. It is therefore a strong possibility that the last big idea will also be *the last big idea*. In its place, *The Idea of the Union* offers no idea at all.

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## A Historians' Orwell

*Dennis O'Keefe*

**The Revolt of the Elites: and the Betrayal of Democracy**, Christopher Lasch, Norton, 1995, pb £9.95.

This is an odd book. It has many virtues, not least its magnificent prose, clear moral atmosphere and vast learning. Without naming Political Correctness, Lasch flattens the claims of that insanity. He also says the philistinism of the non-elite colleges where most Americans get "higher education", is an even worse problem. The American attempt at the democratisation of liberal culture is now over.

There is a rivetting analysis of ideology. The pages on religion and morality are excellent, too, and the dissection of the amorality of modern psychology unanswerable. The book constitutes, at varying levels of explicitness, a valuable commentary on what the writer clearly sees as the manifest failure of the Enlightenment project. Lasch's early death was, in the light both of his intellect and decency, a tragic loss to us all. What, then, are my reservations?

Frankly, I find the central thesis wildly wrong. Lasch thinks that the young managerial high-fliers of the free world, with American golden youth in the vanguard, are greedy, uncaring and neglectful of their patriotic duties, especially to those less fortunate than they. Wall Street's darlings betray the democracy which was Lasch's life-

long concern. They care more about their wealth and communication links than about citizenship. Their sense of nationhood is feeble. They cocoon themselves in private finance and do not want to contribute to the public services. They care nothing for those below them, a middle and a working class today increasingly insecure in jobs and prospects.

This thesis is just our old friend anti-Reaganism and anti-Thatcherism dressed up in beautiful writing by a clever man. Few hard facts of expenditure support it: the affluence is generalised. The job insecurity is real; but it is also a function of high modern living-standards. As for collapsing values, the *prima facie* case for seeing careless public monies, rather than markets, as the true culprit, is very strong. Nor are the wealthy mean. The new rich in America and Britain have been active in the recent explosion in charitable giving. Moreover, they contribute vastly to tax revenue, which makes it doubly unfair to twit them with not doing their bit. Indeed, Bracewell-Milne's evidence is that as they are taxed more lightly, they contribute more.

They *are* tax-shy and will try to pay

fewer taxes as time goes by. Why not? Much modern taxation is thinly disguised theft and coercion. Hayek, Friedman and Rothbard are right: most public expenditure is a waste of resources. As more people hold their wealth, and even base their work incomes in places the taxman cannot reach, a very different evaluation from Lasch's becomes possible. Modern democratic government is increasingly flawed. Many of us have spent years resisting totalitarian error and horror, in the name of democracy. It is now clear that democracy itself suffers from a milder version of the state malady. It permits factional interests virtually to steal other people's money for all sorts of unsatisfactory purposes.

Sometimes these purposes are horrible, such as the welfarisation of American blacks, even more destructive of their humanity than slavery. Sometimes expenditures are just dotty, wasted on nonsense like the Channel Tunnel. Other expenditures are misused because the institutions they finance are — contingently, one hopes in all charity — no good, like state schools. In any case, public expenditure is a scandal, and its furnishers rightly seek exit, and a new, spontane-

ous market order. This is what Arthur Seldon in Britain, and Gerard Radnitzky in Germany, now argue, and the case is surely more convincing than Lasch's. George Soros's so-called greed when he forced the pound out of the ERM, was an example of this new spontaneous global order in action.

The glittering virtues of Lasch's book remain. He is right that the psychological sciences have displaced morality in favour of therapy throughout the Western world. Wickedness and illness are conflated. I hold that it is only a matter of time before the doctor and the vet converge. Lasch is correct that the future is bleak if we do not see the containment of moral ill as civilisa-

tion's central task.

The section on religion is quite superb, showing that its functions are not primarily or even significantly anaesthetic. It lays moral burdens on, rather than offers escapist evasions to, those who accept it. Religion will never die, nor is there anything new about modern existential despair, which is a recurrent historical phenomenon.

The book mounts the best discussion of ideology I have seen. Aron and Bell were wrong to think that rationalism would dispel ideology, which is always pervasive. Lasch would, I infer, find Minogue's arresting identification of ideology as a new mode of thought, claiming to uncover "alien

powers" beneath the seeming calm of human surfaces, unacceptably stipulative and provincial. What Lasch seems to imply, and despite myself I agree, is that ideology is forever. A wholly transparent order, moral or intellectual, is impossible. The dreadful Althusser was right that all social life gives off ideology, the disguising of interests to oneself and others, like a kind of mental perspiration.

There is no one on the anti-conservative side like Lasch in this country; and I cannot think of another American like him. He was a sort of historians' Orwell, not as original as Orwell, but more learned, and on the same road to truth. He will be sorely missed.

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## Laissez-Faire Triumphant?

*Tom Soper*

**The Life of Adam Smith**, Ian Simpson Ross, Clarendon Press, 1995, £25.

**Adam Smith's System of Liberty, Wealth and Virtue: The Moral and Political Foundations of the Wealth of Nations**, Athol Fitzgibbons, Clarendon Press, 1995, £25.

Everybody has heard of Adam Smith and knows he was the author of *The Wealth of Nations*. Not many, however have read that masterpiece, and fewer still are acquainted with his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and his massive output of other writing and published lectures. He delved into a vast range of subjects, including philosophy, politics, government, administration, economics, commerce and more.

That of course has not stopped people from lavishly propounding what are supposed to be Smith's views on all those matters. Yet close perusal of what he actually said reveals that things are not always what they seem to be.

These two books — the first by Professor Ross which is long and detailed, the other by Professor Fitzgibbons which is short and detailed — are

impressive contributions by scholars who have immersed themselves in Adam Smith and his age. Smith was no ivory tower recluse; he played an active part in academic administration at Glasgow University — Ross' observations on this activity, on Smith's travels as a tutor with the young Duke of Buccleuch and on his work as a commissioner of Customs and Excise are fascinating.

What is evident from both books is how relevant the work of an eighteenth-century Scottish Professor of Moral Philosophy is to the problems and challenges of the present day. Scotland and England in the eighteenth century were in a situation not far removed from that confronting Britain today. A single market had been established between the two countries; Scotland was facing problems of adapting

to a single currency and there were tensions associated with the inevitable encroachments on its sovereignty; both countries were moving into another phase of economic and social change. What had been restricted and protected markets were giving ground to wider and more competitive international commerce, an earlier form of what today is seen as the challenge of globalization. This was the intellectual and practical environment in which Smith wrote. As these books plainly show, he examined and analysed the vast range of critical issues that emerged at this time.

Smith has rightly been regarded as the apostle of freedom, individuality, personal choice, and the market economy. Yet this particular political economist's thrust was constrained. As Athol Fitzgibbons puts it, "the real

Smith, unlike his fictitious namesake, did not stand for free trade, empirical science, moral vacuity and self-love. The real system can be loosely summarized as free trade within good laws and supplemented by moral motives.....Smith thought that trade and economic growth would flourish best in a moral climate, not in a climate of greed.....”

Professor Ross underlines a similar point, “Smith is saying that the happiness of others is necessary to us, and that our economic freedom, as indeed any other kind, is to be exercised with attention to justice to others...that with wit, logic and sensitivity to our feelings, he might help us to aspire to virtue rather than

wealth, and so become members of a truly civic society”.

Fifty years ago Keynesian economics ruled the roost and Adam Smith was not priority reading in most British universities. There were, however, some honourable exceptions. “To be sure”, writes Ross, “this obscuring of Smith was never complete”. Scholars at the University of Chicago (Jacob Viner, Milton Friedman, George Stigler), from Austria (Ludwig von Mises, F.A. von Hayek) and from Scotland (Alexander Gray and A.L. Macfie) kept alive vigorous interest in Smith’s economic principles and in the man himself”. There were others including Professor Nisbet at St An-

draws whose economics courses ignored Keynes altogether.

Things are rather different now, and thanks, inter alia, to the splendid volumes commissioned by Glasgow University to celebrate the 1976 bicentenary of the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*, there is much less excuse for ignoring or misunderstanding what Adam Smith expounded. His work was learned, clear and elegant and demonstrated a profound understanding of history and human nature. Both these authors convey and reinforce Smith’s perceptions in volumes which the Clarendon Press has published in a manner and style worthy of their subject.

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# Rooted Convictions

*Gerald J. Russello*

**The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism,** Eugene Genovese, Harvard University Press, \$22.50.

Southern conservatism is not a subject commonly treated by the Ivy League press, and it is a sign of Professor Eugene Genovese’s stature, as well as his left-wing credentials, that he was able to devote a series of Harvard lectures to the South and its leading conservative thinkers. The recent victories in the United States Congress by the Republican party, and the general notion that America is undergoing one of its occasional swings to the “right” has led to a renewed (albeit reluctant) academic and popular interest in conservatism. Professor Genovese has offered a thoughtful and nuanced reflection on the tradition of cultural criticism in the South and its place in America as an authentic conservative voice. His analysis reminds us of forgotten distinctions and brings a sympathetic eye to bear on current problems in the American right.

Southern conservatism has always

been a vibrant strand within the conservative movement in America, but has suffered by its associations with some of the uglier aspects of American history. Nevertheless, Genovese asserts that the core of the Southern critique of American life is sound and needs to be reintroduced into the national debate. The weakness of this critique is that it relied on a set of organic social relationships — especially the notion of the necessity of a large class of propertyless workers, whether slave or free — that are no longer tenable, if ever they were, in the modern world. Conservatives who would borrow from the Southern tradition must alter its approach to account for the industrialism that has replaced the agrarian society of the southern states.

Genovese’s first chapter, “The Lineaments of Southern Conservatism,” describes the principle features of the

Southern interpretation of American life. Drawing on such figures as the poet Allen Tate, philosopher Richard Weaver and the late historian M.E. Bradford, Genovese finds in the “older religiousness of the South” a substantive body of thought that must be engaged both by those of the Left like himself and by American culture generally. Southern conservatives have attempted to define equality and individualism based on the traditional Christian/classical synthesis, rather than the post-Enlightenment understanding of those terms. Southerners support an individualism informed by Christianity that condemns personal license and demands submission to moral consensus. Modern perversions, the Southerners feel, have emptied these terms of meaning, and have made us, in Richard Weaver’s phrase, “moral idiots”. For southern conservatives, modern egalitarianism is a sham per-

petrated by élites that hide their power and show no sense of responsibility for those not as privileged. "Since the starting point for individuals and groups can never be equal, the illusion of equality of opportunity must result in a campaign for equality of outcome and for consolidation of state power in the hands of those committed to social levelling." The lessons of history teach that regimes proclaiming theoretical equality often result in actual tyranny and bloodshed. Bradford said that equality, in its modern sense of a moral or political imperative, is the antithesis of every conservative principle.

Conservatives in the South also offer a critique of capitalism that finds much common ground with both leftist criticisms of the market system and certain strains in Roman Catholic thought. Indeed, Genovese draws parallels between some southern conservatives and the present Pope in their economic thinking. Southerners reject an understanding of capitalism that treats human relationships and cultural norms themselves as commodities, and oppose the transformation of a market system into an impersonal global arena. This affirmation of norms beyond the marketplace has caused some friction with other groups of American conservatives, who share the Left's dreams of utopia yet would replace the classless society with "the global marketplace." With Christopher Dawson, southern conservatives from the time of John C. Calhoun and John Randolph of Roanoke have recognized that capitalism is a powerful social and cultural solvent before which very few traditional cultures can stand. Genovese astutely notes that this agrarian critique of capitalism was stronger before the Civil War than now, when so much of the South has adopted modern industrialism as its standard. While clearly unjust, the existence of the South's alternative social system greatly supported the southern attacks on capitalism, but these were discounted by the North as being racially motivated. Genovese reminds us that the evil of slavery does not make capitalism good.

The core southern beliefs are in the frailty of human reason and the reality of human evil. These beliefs are themselves expressions of the knowledge that there exists a transcendent order higher than this world, to which human society must conform. This world view, alien to the dominant strains of American thought in that it makes little separation between the political and the moral and ethical, is by nature suspicious of proclamations that the world will be perfected through the use of human reason, whether by means of a proletarian revolution or the information superhighway. The southern conservative looks to no Brave New World and rejects ideological blueprints for an earthly paradise, knowing these to be invitations to Chaos and Old Night.

Yet the southern conservative vision is not perfect, and Genovese finds within it tensions that have reduced its effectiveness. Primarily, it is the question of race that has prevented a better reception of southern conservative principles. For too long the southern conservative convictions of limited government and an expanded view of the rights of the states have been connected to a defence of segregation and racial antipathy. Part of Genovese's second chapter is devoted to explaining that there is no logical connection between support for states' rights or a strong federalism and racism, although that there has been in practice is well-known. In fact, the doctrine of states' rights has been used selectively by northerners as well as southerners, for a variety of political reasons, and Genovese is right to say that the doctrine of states' rights is invoked as often from policy as principle. Genovese traces the political and constitutional principles of the southern conservatives from the Revolutionary era to our own. He undertakes a fascinating comparison of Calhoun with his northern conservative contemporary Joseph Story, as well as between northern and southern conservatives generally. He explores the ambivalent role of Thomas Jefferson in the southern conservative pantheon, and examines Calhoun's curious doctrines of the con-

current majority and dual presidency.

The belief of southern conservatives in local autonomy conflicts with their equally strong belief in what are at present called "traditional values," whose defence in a modern market-driven economy "compels [southerners] to consider government interference as the only feasible way to sustain a society in which those values can survive." If the southern conservative tradition is to influence the larger society, it must recognize that a nation of yeoman farmers is no longer possible — and is itself a somewhat fanciful construct of modern southern conservatives who wished to gloss over the centrality of the slave culture to the South's social cohesion, a squeamishness not shared by their antebellum forbears. To recover the historically evolved social and political institutions that are the bedrock of true human communities is the task for conservatives in the next generation, and the southern tradition has much to offer in this task. Genovese thinks that these institutions require governmental support in the world of finance capitalism and corporate gigantism. He states: "the alternative to present arrangements may well reside in the extension of republican principles to the economy — to a constitutional arrangement that protects private interests, including the right to inherit property, while it respects the right of the people, acting collectively, to establish proper limits on individual action."

Genovese's solution is somewhat unclear, and its merits are certainly open to question. For example, one could argue that the old common law system was exactly the type of society he is describing, which as a whole placed limits on individual action while still preserving property rights and avoiding direct government meddling. Genovese's plan seems to smack too much of outright government interference — which, as he surely knows, has done much to support the expansion of finance capitalism. Nevertheless, the publication of this book by a senior establishment academic press is an important intellectual event for American conservatism.

# IN SHORT

*Julian at Number 10. A Dream Sequence.* John Peek. Minerva Press 1995. £7.99

Many of us have had fantasies about restoring our nation to its former health and some of its self-respect. Such a fantasy has been now written by John Peek.

In this readable tale the country has grown so tired of politicians that it gives a big majority to a new party, the Julian Party, whose leader Sir Julian Clore is inspired by the brief career of the Emperor Julian. Radical policies are introduced: stopping immigration, encouraging emigration, requiring one parent to stay at home with small children. National Service is re-introduced and extended for women with an emphasis on domestic service which is encouraged. Parliament sits only for one day a week and speeches are not allowed to exceed five minutes. All administration is de-centralised and organized in Parishes of a 1000 souls.

The book was written 25 years ago, when the author perceived the disastrous effects of the Wilson years. Then entry into the EC was seen as a way out of our troubles and a bulwark against Socialism. Now, as the author declares in the preface, Julian would walk straight out of a Maastricht Europe. The disappointment of the Thatcher years reinforced his belief that, *pace* Muggeridge, Liberalism not Socialism was "the real destructive force of the age."

Can a nation's apparent, terminal decline be arrested and can virtue be restored to a people by new policies? "Cynicism, selfishness and loss of moral fibre" is more noticeable among our leaders. What we lack, like most of the Western world, are virtuous people in power.

MC

*Volga, Volga: a Voyage down the Great River.* Lesley Chamberlain. Picador 1996 £7.99

The title is the name of a musical comedy film of the Thirties, and according to the author one of the finest Soviet films, admired by Stalin. The tyrant of course realized the old Russian dream of increasing the river's efficiency. Slave labour succeeded in linking the capital to six seas but produced an ecological disaster as well as a blighted landscape. "It (the Volga) symbolizes Russia's unfathomable self-destruction" under Communism.

Chamberlain excels in blending her immediate observations, the stories of her fellow travellers, and the geography and history of the different regions through which she travels. Her narrative is enlivened by fascinating details — Lewis Carroll's visit to Nizhny Novgorod for example — and interesting allusions to the literary figures like Chekhov, Alexei Tolstoy and Gorky who lived by or travelled along the Volga. Above all she is sympathetic to the peculiar Russian temperament, mostly misunderstood by Westerners, and fully comprehends the tragedy which has befallen the country before and after communism. She hopes that many Russians are now undertaking "a massive drive for psychic health against the repression of 70 years".

MC

*There is an Alternative, Britain and its relationship with the EU.* Brian Burkitt, Mark Baimbridge and Philip Whyman, Campaign for an Independent Britain, 1996, £4.50.

This is not a guidebook to cloud-cuckoo-land, more an incisive argument for moving to it. The authors have traced the economic and political consequences of Britain's member-

ship of the European Community. It is a sombre tale, not of missed opportunities as some federalists would have us believe, but of misguided enthusiasms. There never was much point in British membership. The Community was never intended to be just a common market, let alone a free market. It is precisely the protectionism, the safety, the mediocrity and corporatism that appealed to some of this country's so-called leaders. But they had to pretend that membership would be in the whole country's interests. Twenty years on, we can see how those interests have been served. Parliamentary democracy and common law have been eroded, state interference increased, the number of jobs in manufacturing halved, a huge trade deficit has been run up, primarily with the EC, the fisheries gone, agriculture and food production subverted and so on. These and other facts are detailed in the book. The authors do not simply pontificate, they provide figures. Next time a "pro-European", usually somebody who thinks Europe is simply somewhere one goes on holiday, complains that the Eurosceptic arguments are all emotional, data from this book should be produced.

There *is* an alternative which goes further. It raises the spectre of the future. There are four possibilities: go on as is (though the other members are unlikely to let us), choose the Norwegian option and stay in the European Economic Area, the Swiss option and free trade on industrial and financial commodities, or the Greenland option and withdraw completely, in order to form new and more sensible ties. The authors favour the last one and give good reasons why it would make sense. Cloud-cuckoo-land may be a cold and hard place, full of competition, but it is where the future lies.

HS

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