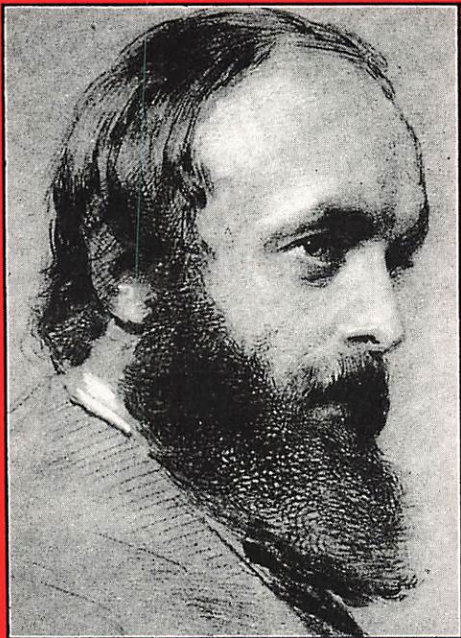


The
Salisbury
Review

Winter 1998
Volume 17 Number 2 £4.00

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



The Third Marquess of Salisbury
1830 - 1903

- The Betrayal of Ulster**
Patrick Roche
- Fascism and Anti-Fascism**
Paul Gottfried
- Singapore Remembered**
Donald Moore
- Austrian Conservatism**
Ulrich Zellenberg
- The Politics of Accounting**
David O'Regan
- Eurosepsis**
A D Harvey

The Claridge Press

Contents

Unionism	
<i>Patrick Roche</i>	4
Eurosepsis	
<i>A D Harvey</i>	7
Out of the Woodwork	
<i>Peter Bassett</i>	9
Politics and God	
<i>R W L Moberly</i>	11
Conservatism in Austria	
<i>Ulrich E Zellenberg</i>	16
Fascism and Anti-Fascism	
<i>Paul Gottfried</i>	20
The Politics of Accounting	
<i>David O'Regan</i>	22
How Global Corporatism has Destroyed Russia	
<i>Rodney Atkinson</i>	25
Colonialism	
<i>Donald Moore</i>	27
The Middle East Propaganda War	
<i>David M Jacobs</i>	31
Slovakia After Mečiar: a Change for the Better	
<i>Johnathan Sunley</i>	34

Editorial	38
Letters	39
Reviews	41
Sophie Jeffreys, Brian Crozier, David Edelsten, Patricia Lança, Ray Honeyford, Hal Colebatch.	
In Short	52
Notes on Reviewers	44

Subscription details

Published quarterly in September, December, March and June, volume commencing with September issue.

Annual subscription rates: £16, Europe/surface rest of world £18, £24 airmail rest of world; Single issues £4.00, ISSN: 0265-4881.

North American subscription from ISI, 3901 Centerville Road, PO Box 4431, Wilmington, DE 19807-0431, USA.

Copyright © The Claridge Press.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or other without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Printed in the UK by The Warwick Printing Company Ltd.

Typesetting by DASH

Conservative Journal Občianska Spoločnosť

OS, as it calls itself on its title page, is perhaps the first serious attempt in Slovakia to launch a conservative journal that will be not merely a vehicle of opinion, but an exploration of the historical and cultural roots of the Slovak predicament (described in these pages by Johnathan Sunley). The title is a familiar one: civil society, the goal and rallying cry of 1989, incorporated or codified in the names of political parties, conferences and think-tanks throughout central Europe. In Slovakia, civil society means one thing above all: a society based in free and responsible association, with the mafia driven into second place. Time will tell whether such an aim is feasible. Meanwhile *OS* does its best to put the case for an open and law-governed society, actively preserving its European heritage, while forging from a unique remnant of the Austro-Hungarian Empire a nation-state that can stand up for itself.

Appearing monthly, and now coming to the end of its first year of publication, *OS* has maintained strong links with conservative writers outside the country, both Czech and Hungarian. It is conscious that Slovakia has a large and culturally active Hungarian minority, and carries articles discussing the deep problems of

allegiance and legitimacy which the region has inherited from the Treaty of Versailles. It carries extensive book reviews, together with articles on theatre, music and the arts, and does its best to maintain an alert and sympathetic overview of the national culture, recognising that Nitra and Košice are as important in their way as Bratislava. The October issue for this year contains an illuminating history of the Slovak peasant-farmer, in his long journey from feudal servitude to freedom and back to communist enslavement. The article (by František Lucký), identifies one of the most serious problems facing Slovakia today: the existence of a rural population, still the majority of citizens, with inadequate property in the land that is its source of income, and with an inherited burden of bitterness towards the urban edicts which enslaved it. Other articles survey the history of Slovak nationalism, the political map of modern Europe, the nature of political freedom, and the building of a Slovak state. All are informed by the educated hesitation which seems to characterise Slovak conservatives of a more liberal cast of mind.

OS is available from P.O. Box 223 (Staroměstka 6), 810 00 Bratislava 1, price 35 Sk per issue.

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
E-mail: salisbury-review@easynet.co.uk
Web site: <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~salisbury-review>

An impartial view of our century would surely deliver a negative verdict, not only on its vast and all-but-incomprehensible crimes, but also on the role of intellectuals in producing and excusing them. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the intellectuals' political involvement has been the seeming indifference to truth with which the great projects have been endorsed or executed. The real truth about the human condition is hard to utter, harder still to live with. Which is why we need the person who will remind us of it. Such a person was the prophet Micaiah, celebrated in this issue by R W L Moberley. But the intellectuals, who assumed the mantle of the prophets, have seldom followed that worthy example. Their advocacy of truth has always revealed itself to be, when the time for action comes, an advocacy of *comfortable* truth. And if truth is uncomfortable, comfortable falsehood is offered instead. This observation has been confirmed again and again by the history of communism, and by the selective attitude to the crimes of the last war, discussed here by Paul Gottfried.

Of course, the truth about our century is confusing and elusive. It is tempting to make sense of it in terms of those easy dichotomies that appealed to earlier generations: socialism versus capitalism, bourgeois versus proletarian, nationalism versus internationalism, us versus them or alternatively them versus us. But we now know, or ought to know, how stupid all such dichotomies are. As Rodney Atkinson points out, the simplifying dichotomies have done as much to destroy Russia in the aftermath of communism as they did under communism itself. Capitalism is no more a panacea than socialism; nor is it one thing, but many very different things, depending upon the legal, moral and customary framework within which it works.

The dichotomising state of mind is soothing: it gives you only one choice, and a clear antidote to every evil. This appeals especially to those who feel alienated from the surrounding order, as intellectuals in general do. Even in the majestically boring discipline of accounting, as David O'Regan points out, such people occur. And here as elsewhere they produce their counter-culture, their radical alternative, drawing on Marx, Foucault, Critical Theory and the distilled resentment of continental intellectuals, in order to point to the one, clear alternative — so clear that it need not be described.

The great merit of conservatism is that it is not a theory,

an ideology or a panacea, but a slowly accumulated store of practical wisdom, constantly amended in the light of experience, but building on what is tried and known. It requires social stability, patience and a habit of constructive dialogue if it is to exist, and it will not exist in every place or at every time. As Ulrich Zellenberg argues, it has existed in Austria, but is now jeopardised by the seeming inability of Austrian conservatives — to whom, after all, we owe as much as we do to conservatives of the Anglo-American variety — to face up to the disorders of the modern world. It exists too in that misunderstood corner of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovakia, described here by Johnathan Sunley, which tenaciously clings to an identity routinely denied to it by Western intellectuals. But does it still exist in England?

Well yes, this *Review* is surely proof of that. But what does the *Salisbury Review* matter in the world of New Labour? Certainly, we can go on expressing uncomfortable truths, and so give comfort to those who acknowledge them. (For that is the only comfort in an uncomfortable truth — that it is *shared*.) But the Conservative Party, unwilling to jettison the mediocre old windbags who vie for Mr Hague's position, and unable to find a belief, an issue or a policy that has not been pre-empted by New Labour, is no longer a vehicle for the much needed conservative debate. As is shown by the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, discussed here by Patrick Roche, the Conservatives have effectively acquiesced in the break-up of the Union — even though the break-up has been intended neither by them nor by the Government. Without the Union, with a constitution reformed out of existence, and with no coherent policies with which to re-affirm national sovereignty after the slide into Europe, the Conservative Party will have lost the historical conditions which its store of wisdom assumes.

And this, of course, is both the strength of conservatism — that it does not hide behind abstractions, but bases itself in a given historical predicament and the human understanding that has emerged from it — and its weakness, since it cannot survive when the historical conditions that created it are totally destroyed. The work of the conservative in our time is really a work of memory — to retain for the future an image of our nation, to which we can return in other circumstances, when all meanings and all images will have been radically transformed.

Unionism

Patrick Roche Charts the Betrayal of Ulster

Unionism is commitment to what the Solemn Covenant of 1912 described as the 'cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom'. But unionism is not merely a commitment to the abstract principles of democratic practice and the rule of law. Unionism is rooted in a sense of identification with the experiences that have shaped the cultural and political ethos and institutions of the United Kingdom deriving in significant measure from the Reformation. Unionism therefore defines what it is to be British and is an allegiance without which the Union could not survive.

Unionism contrasts with Irish nationalism which may be understood in terms of allegiance to 'ancestral voices' dictating imperatives quite literally divorced from political and economic reality. There are no criteria of national identity that can be used to establish the nationalist claim that there is a single nation on the island of Ireland and the nationalist goal of the political unification of the island of Ireland is devoid of economic feasibility at an acceptable level of economic well-being. This divorce from political and economic reality tends to reduce nationalist politics to what Elie Kedourie in his classic *Nationalism* has described as 'passionate assertion' and 'fanaticism of the will' entirely unrelated to normal politics concerned with the well-being of citizens and the security of the state.

This passion and fanaticism can in turn only be sustained by retreat into the self-enclosed morality of the nation, where right and wrong are determined by what is understood to be instrumental to the realisation of some national purpose such as the political unification of Ireland. The logic of this

retreat into a self-enclosed national morality is that there is no recognition of moral restraint on the use of force in terms of the norms of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. But in the absence of such restraint there is no moral barrier to terrorism and therefore to the horror of the Omagh bomb and the catalogue of Irish republican atrocity extending over the past thirty years.

The political use of terror is no longer confined to the republican tradition of Irish nationalism. This republican tradition is now central to a nationalist consensus led by successive govern-

This republican tradition is now central to a nationalist consensus led by successive governments in the Republic since the early 1990s and backed by the Clinton administration

ments in the Republic since the early 1990s and backed by the Clinton administration. The consensus is based on agreement between Hume and Adams worked out between 1988-92. This Hume-Adams agreement required the government of the United Kingdom to concede in principle the legitimacy of the unificationist demands of Irish nationalism and to agree the institutions for a transition to Irish unity. The Downing Street Declaration of 15 December 1993 conceded what is fundamental to Irish nationalism: that there is a single nation on the island of

Ireland with a right of self-determination or self-government. The Declaration reduced unionism to a 'tradition' within the Irish nation. The Declaration conceded the need for unionist consent to Irish unity as a purely pragmatic requirement and on 22 February 1995 Major and Bruton agreed the Framework Document as a blueprint for creating the all-Ireland institutions to bring about the conditions for unionist consent to unification.

The Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document operated as parameters of the so-called 'peace process' prior to the Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998. But republican terror lurks at the heart of this process. The 'peace process' is directed towards meeting the demands of Irish republicanism backed by so-called constitutional nationalists and by the Clinton administration. The discourse of the 'peace process' elevates meeting these demands into a moral imperative while requiring no authentic renunciation of violence by republican terrorists. This moral perversion is central to the Mitchell Report. The core thesis of the Report is that a 'political settlement' acceptable to terrorists is required to 'take the gun out of Irish politics' (Par. 23). But the Report does not require the decommissioning of terrorist weapons (Par. 34) and consequently establishes the fiction that the representatives of terrorist organisations can combine authentic commitment to principles of 'democracy and non-violence' with a refusal to hand over their terrorist arsenals to lawful authority.

This perversion of public morality has the virtually unqualified support of leading churchmen and religious organisations in Northern Ireland. These clerical and religious ideologues

of the so-called 'peace process' disguise the accommodation of evil as a morally obligatory search for 'peace'. This has the political effect of obscuring the reality, namely that the threat and use of terror is central to the dynamic of the whole process. The result is that terrorist outrages such as the Omagh bomb become the occasion for an outburst of clerical exhortation to 'forgiveness' and a 're-doubling of effort' to 'make the peace process work'. This nauseating and theologically uninformed rhetoric trivialises wickedness and is in fact divorced from a substantive Christian understanding of the obligations and duties of government as 'an agent of justice to bring punishment on the wrongdoer'. These exhortations are therefore a contribution to that erosion of public morality which has given rise to a moral vacuum within the United Kingdom and certainly within Northern Ireland, where support for the appeasement of terrorism can be presented by churchmen as something not far removed from the essence of Christian virtue.

The Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998 was the outcome of this process. The Agreement concedes the core demands of Irish nationalism. The Belfast Agreement endorses the 'right of self-determination' of the 'people of the island of Ireland'. This concession to Irish nationalism is entirely incompatible with the legitimacy of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. The constitutional basis of that status has itself been radically altered within the terms of the Belfast Agreement. The constitutional status of Northern Ireland within the Union is now based on the will of a simple majority of the electorate in Northern Ireland and not on the Act of Union (Annex A, sections 1 and 2). The North/South Ministerial Council and the Intergovernmental Conference established under the Belfast Agreement give the Republic effective joint authority over Northern Ireland with respect to which the Assembly will have no real control. The new Article 3 of the Republic's constitution refers to the 'firm will of the Irish nation [...] to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of

Ireland'. This explicit constitutional imperative means that what is in effect the joint authority of the Republic over Northern Ireland will be directed to bringing about the structures of an all-Ireland administration which would make unionist consent to unification little more than a constitutional formality.

But the Belfast Agreement is for 'new Labour' part of a wider agenda of constitutional change within the United Kingdom. This agenda of constitutional change extends to Scottish and Welsh devolution, some as yet unspecified devolved structures for the

*The discourse of the
'peace process'
elevates meeting these
demands into a moral
imperative while
requiring no authentic
renunciation of
violence by republican
terrorists*

English regions and reforms of the House of Lords on the basis of considerations that undermine the legitimacy and authority of the monarchy. These constitutional changes are directed by a combination of ideological and pragmatic considerations. For example, the commitment of 'new Labour' to Irish unity set out in *Towards a United Ireland* co-authored by Mo Mowlam, is part of the ideological baggage of 'old Labour'. The commitment to Scottish devolution was almost certainly based on the pragmatic calculation that Scottish devolution would consolidate the Labour Party base in Scotland against the electoral encroachment of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). But the evidence of current opinion polls in Scotland would indicate that this was a serious miscalculation and that Scottish devolution is acting as a stimulus to the separatist nationalism of the SNP. The Blair administration is now a major threat to the Union and this will be reinforced by what seems to

be a growing commitment to EMU within the government. The crucial consideration here is simply that EMU cannot work in the long term without the development in the EU of federal structures of government quite incompatible with the survival of the United Kingdom as in any substantive sense a sovereign state.

The constitutional agenda of 'new Labour' is a threat to the Union and the Belfast Agreement is intended to take Northern Ireland out of the Union. The Agreement has not merely the 'bipartisan' support of the Conservative party but the virtually unanimous endorsement of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. This is a truly astounding state of affairs because the implementation of the Agreement amounts, in a manner beyond dispute, to a radical corruption of democratic practice and of the rule of law. The Agreement puts members of Sinn Fein into the Executive Committee to govern Northern Ireland without any requirement for the IRA to surrender its terrorist arsenal. The Agreement provides for the early release of terrorist prisoners on the basis of a 'complete and unequivocal cease-fire' on the part of the terrorist organisations to which these prisoners are 'affiliated'. The terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland have not put into effect anything that could be remotely regarded as a 'complete and unequivocal cease-fire'. But even if the IRA were operating such a 'cease-fire' that could not be regarded by a government committed to the integrity of the rule of law as an extenuating ground for the early release of convicted terrorist prisoners.

The provisions of the Agreement on the release of prisoners convicted of terrorist crime effectively legitimises what the IRA calls the 'armed struggle' and establishes the 'political status' of terrorist prisoners. There has been no opposition from the judiciary of the United Kingdom to these aspects of the Agreement and they were given legal effect with the overwhelming approval of Parliament. This corruption of law is reinforced in the Agreement by provisions for a 'new beginning to policing' in Northern Ireland. The section of the Agreement on policing

brings into question both the integrity and efficiency of the RUC and lays down the principles for a 'community based' system of policing without barriers to the recruitment of members of the republican movement. The result will be a 'Northern Ireland police service' that will in effect give the IRA grass-roots control of the areas out of which it operates. This means that the IRA will exercise control over its areas of operation — a necessary condition for the success of terrorist insurgency — under the authority of the state against which the IRA has directed thirty years of terrorism. No clearer signal of surrender to the IRA could be given by the government of the United Kingdom.

But all this was endorsed by the unionist negotiators who accepted the Agreement and was sold to the pro-Union electorate in Northern Ireland by the Prime Minister on the basis of speeches and written 'pledges' which were cleverly crafted to convey the impression that the Prime Minister would require 'decommissioning' as a condition of both prisoner releases and Sinn Fein taking seats in the Executive. The pro-Union electorate of Northern Ireland now know that the Prime Minister had no intention of making such a requirement which would in any case be in breach of the terms of the Agreement. This means that the selling of the Agreement to the pro-Union electorate was an exercise in moral cynicism and duplicity that matched the corruption of the rule of law involved in the actual content of the Agreement.

The approval of Parliament and the absence of objection from the judiciary to an Agreement that corrupts the rule of law indicates a distemper at the heart of British politics. There is now in the United Kingdom a divorce of politics from the public morality required to sustain the practice of democracy. This is due to the eclipse of a consensus — itself formative of the British identity and rooted in the heritage of the Reformation — on moral rectitude in the conduct of government which dictated constraint on the moral propriety of government action. The absence of this type of constraint on

government policy in relation to Northern Ireland is reinforced by an increasing exclusion of the pro-Union electorate of Northern Ireland from the bonds of national solidarity. In addition to these considerations the opportunity for the politics of cynical manipulation which informed the government's involvement in the referendum of May 22 was heightened by the natural desire for peace in a people subject to thirty years of unremitting terrorism.

But even if the IRA were operating such a 'cease-fire' that could not be regarded by a government committed to the integrity of the rule of law as an extenuating ground for the early release of convicted terrorist prisoners.


But there is a fallacy at the heart of the consensus that now directs the 'bipartisan' Labour and Conservative policy on Northern Ireland. The fallacy is that it is possible progressively to remove Northern Ireland from the Union without weakening the sense of being British that binds the Union. It is precisely because this sense of being British is now dangerously diminished that the policy of progressively removing Northern Ireland from the Union can be pursued as a 'bipartisan' endeavour directed to the appeasement of terrorism under the guidance of the Clinton administration. The reality of 'cool Britannia' is that the frame of public morality and the bonds of national solidarity that have sustained the Union are not merely collapsing but are being eroded from within by government. The 'bipartisan' Conservative and Labour policy on Northern Ireland has produced an Agreement that has fragmented the constitutional basis of the Union. The constitutional

provisions of the Belfast Agreement relating to the status of Northern Ireland within the Union have, within the terms of the Agreement, legal precedence over the Act of Union. This politically dangerous fragmentation will be further exacerbated by the Blair administration's overall programme of constitutional change and the impact that these changes will have on political life within the Union particularly in Scotland.

The pro-Union electorate in Northern Ireland approach the Millennium in a mood far removed from the rhetorical glitz of 'cool Britannia'. The citizens of Northern Ireland committed to the Union now know that the appeasement of the violence that has emanated from Irish nationalism of which they have been the victims is directed against them. This appeasement is pragmatically directed to secure the British mainland from terrorist attack and it is now sustained under the Blair government by the ideological commitment of the Labour party to Irish unity set out in detail in the party's policy document *Towards a United Ireland*. The current mood of unionists in Northern Ireland is well captured by the deep pathos of Kipling's poem on Ulster in 1912:

The blood our fathers spilt, our love,
our toil, our pains,
Are counted as for guilt, and only bind
our chains.
Before a nation's eyes the traitor claims
his price.
What need of further lies? We are the
sacrifice.

Patrick Roche is a United Kingdom Unionist Party Assembly Member at Stormont.



***What comes
from the heart
goes to the
heart***
Coleridge

Eurosepis

A D Harvey explores the real problem

There are a hundred and one reasons to be dismayed by what is happening to the European Community, and by the way Britain continues to be sucked deeper and deeper into its yeasty depths. The trouble is that many vocal objectors are using up their energy in making irrelevant or inappropriate objections, which is hampering the emergence of an anti-Brussels platform that might actually achieve something.

In the long run, European unification is inevitable. If one reflects on the past two thousand years, it is inconceivable that in another two thousand years' time — if there is anybody around by then — Europe will still be divided up into completely autonomous nation states on the pre-1939 model. If European unity is not achieved the Helmut Kohl way it will be achieved the Adolf Hitler way. There is much to be said for the view that, since there is little likelihood of another attempt at the Adolf Hitler solution for the next century or so, we can safely postpone the peaceful alternative: but we must face the fact that, either in our children's or in our great-great grand-children's time Europe will be one state.

As far as overall nation policy is concerned, Britain will be surrendering very little by being absorbed into Europe. This writer is/was a sceptic regarding the Falkland war, and apart from that expensive and unexpected adventure can see *not one* instance of an initiative by our national government during the last thirty years, in foreign affairs or in domestic policy, of which a Briton can be proud. We have reached the point where we can say that British governments are so useless that we would be no worse off being ruled by foreigners. We might

even be better off: lots of foreigners are. Of course loss of national sovereignty would make it more difficult for a Westminster regime that was any good to turn the country round: but a team of genuine leaders who were genuinely capable of turning this country round and reversing forty years of rot would also have the personal capacity and ability to turn the whole of Europe round. Britain's prestige and influence are bleeding away day by day, but we will continue to represent a large enough proportion of the EU's population and wealth to have *some* voice. The problem is, and always will be, not the platform on which Britain's leaders speak, but what they have to say.

With regard to particular areas of policy, I am unable to understand why full British participation in a European Foreign Policy would be any worse than being a trusty tool of American Neo-Imperialism. European Monetary Union is probably going to be a disaster, though a bigger disaster for some EU-member states than for others; but it is still far from clear how it will work out in practice from the British point of view: the only thing clear is that it is premature. A good case can be made for saying that currency union is an unequivocal demonstration of how the EU is running out of control as a policy-making, policy-administering entity. What cannot be argued is that we would be much safer if Tony Blair and Gordon Brown had completely untrammelled control of our financial future. We simply have to wait and see: one way or another something nasty is going to happen whatever 'we' do about it.

With regard to the loss of national identity, separate from the issue of loss of independence on national policy, all experience shows that the real threat to

language and communal culture comes not from the loss of political autonomy but from the globalisation of the economy and the speeding up of communications. We were worrying about 'Coca-Cola Culture' when the Common Market was little more than a gleam in a Frenchman's eye. It is true that political unification has sometimes accelerated the demise of minority languages and minority cultures, but most instances of central governments attempting to eradicate minority languages have ended in embarrassing failure. In any case during the foreseeable future, the *maintenance* of minority languages is likely to be an acknowledged European Commission priority. That may kill them off all the more quickly. All we know about the factors controlling the survival and spread of languages and cultural patterns is that they change and develop whether governments want them to or not. The demise of our language is the last thing we should be worrying about anyway: since 1945 English has been without rival as the world's *lingua franca* and as I write five-sixths of native English speakers live outside Europe. European Unity will almost certainly boost the use of English but even if it doesn't, the language is too well planted the world over to be affected by anything the French or Germans can do. As for English culture, separate from English language, even if we didn't think Damien Hirst and Peter Ozymandelson represent a bigger threat than Jacques Santer, there is nothing we can do other than have faith in ourselves: it is our belief in ourselves, rather than the nihilistic manoeuvrings of our elected representatives, that will guarantee the survival of our identity.

The real threat posed by Europe is

not loss of control over our policy or our language or our culture, it is something that has been creeping up on us in the most sinister fashion all through the Twentieth Century: *bureaucracy*. Bureaucracy — not just the movement of snowdrifts of paperwork from one desk to another but the notion that public officials know best — is what the European Community is all about in *practice*, whatever it stands for theoretically or politically or emotionally. Indeed the whole fantastic business of European Monetary Union can probably only be understood in terms of over-stimulated bureaucrats on index-linked salaries responding to the logic of bureaucracy, in which everything is interchangeable because nothing is real. Paperwork, also, is necessary — I have inked over as much paper as the next man — but it is not overstating the case to say that bureaucracy as such is an *Evil*. Making the administrative framework within which each one of us lives into a professional body of knowledge protected by codes of confidentiality and secrecy, robs us not only of our time, our money and our freedom of choice, but even of our right to know all we need to about our own business. At bureaucracy's worst, its bland cocktail of evasion and procrastination transforms itself, as it seeps down to the outside world, into a corrosive emulsion of vindictiveness, victimisation and vendetta: at its best it can never be better than an enlightened despotism, deciding on behalf of the majority what meaning it is expedient to give to words like 'freedom', 'rights' or 'justice'. Even separate from the EU, bureaucracy in Britain, growing exponentially as a result of two world wars and public-sector-led economic growth, has become much the greatest threat we face to the freedom of the individual; and of course the EU represents a bureaucracy even bigger, slower, more callous and more self-justificatory than our own unholy alliance of Whitehall and Town Hall. It's not just the 15,000-plus amazingly overpaid bureaucrats currently working for the European Commission: it's the prospect of an eventual amalgamation of the million-plus public service

sectors of France, Germany, Italy, Spain etc. that now confronts us.

The predominant theme of western history during the past 250 years has been the issue of personal equality: for the next 250 years it is likely to be the issue of the autonomy of the individual within the social and political collective. And it is not dictatorship guided by runaway ideology that we have to worry about. Despite the precedent of Fascism, which was defeated in war, and Soviet Communism, which collapsed under the weight of its own bad faith, the real threat to the individual is from a democratic consensus that has been hijacked by its salaried officials.

Of course, people are always having a go at bureaucracy and bureaucratically-run public services. Remember John Major's Citizen's Charter? Unfortunately one cannot exorcise demons simply by inviting the citizenry to write with their complaints, however loudly one clashes one's cymbals when announcing the invitation. The high-minded experts who sacrifice careers in other parts of the public sector in order to staff regulatory bodies such as the Ombudsman offices, though rescuing thousands of individuals from injustice, achieve nothing to improve the overall situation. Their investigations never lead to dismissal or police prosecution: the same officials go on to carry out the same offences, often against the same victims, and the compensation payments to individuals which local authorities, government departments and other public bodies increasingly have to make come out of public funds — i.e. out of the pockets of those who have been affronted and injured — rather than out of the pockets of those who committed the offence. This form of distributive justice, which always redistributes at the complainant's expense — heads I win, tails you lose — is not something we have derived from the EU but something we are exporting to them: we are one of the few member states that has not sent any of its public officials to the scaffold this century. Public Sector employees could easily afford to pay for their own mistakes. There is over £200,000,000,000

in Public Sector pension funds in this country: this is all money derived ultimately from the public purse and in so far as anyone has a justified complaint against a public official this money includes sums obtained under false pretences, since public servants are owed money only for doing their duty, not for neglecting their duty or abusing their powers. One finds that the worse a public body's record of complaints against it upheld by the Ombudsman or the courts, the larger its pension fund. The London Borough of Lambeth's pension fund, for example, at £300,700,000, is larger than the combined pension funds of the London Borough of Sutton, the London Borough of Merton, the Stock Exchange and Lonrho, with Hackney, Lewisham, and Southwark not far behind. It's time these funds were regarded as a public asset, not as a private nest egg for defaulting clerks.

Even if it were not for Europe, British bureaucracy would be bad enough and growing worse. Under Thatcher and Major, and now under Hague, the Tories have always been prone to that mindless conservative-with-a-small-c assumption that the chap with the salary and the suit and the desk must be right, and the helot who complains is a disloyal helot. Under Labour, the helots are still complaining but the chaps with the salaries and the suits now have their own party in power. New Labour is pre-eminently the party of the Public Employee. Any change in the ethos of Public Service in this country is completely off the agenda.

In the meantime the usurpations of our servants continue. Soviet communism collapses, the funds financing espionage and subversion in the 'Free World' are cut off, and MI5 and MI6 find themselves without a job. What happens to all these redundant spies? Do they all resign? Do they submit grumblingly to early retirement? No, they redeploy. MI5 takes on Northern Ireland and Organised Crime. MI6 takes on international Drugs Cartels, or, for all we know, becomes one. European integration transforms the responsibilities of Customs and Immigration, as most of the traffic of people

and goods into this country becomes unstoppable and untaxable. Are the surplus staff dismissed? Of course not. Pornography becomes the target of hugely expensive offensives (with the hideous menace of the rabid chihuahua from Liechtenstein held in reserve). Much of the pornography the Customs concerns itself with is not lewd enough to be noticed by the police if it is produced within the country, and several EU member states have governments which gave up worrying about pornography a generation or more ago. No doubt we should be grateful that the defenders of our borders are still fight-

ing to defend the notion that all culture should be suitable for 12-year-olds; at least these officials are not being transferred to sections dealing with VAT. Sooner or later however Brussels will inaugurate a Common Pornographic Policy along the lines of the Common Agricultural Policy and the chaps will have to be redeployed. We don't know how or what against; all we can be sure of is that work will be found for them.

British bureaucracy, as flexible and durable as nylon but not as cheap, may seem absolutely beyond all practical prospect of reformation, but even absolutes may be relative: it will be *much*

more beyond reformation once it has been integrated into a vaster and more powerful European bureaucracy. That, in the end, is the real menace of European Integration. Never mind our pound, never mind our foreign policy, never mind the British banger: it's time to start worrying about the people who have been controlling them since long before the Treaty of Rome.

A D Harvey's latest book is *A Muse of Fire, Literature Art and War*. (Hambledon Press)

Out of the Woodwork

Peter Bassett says the battle for real education is far from won

Ten years ago, in February 1988, a petition was handed to the Secretary of State for Education urging him to bring back the formal teaching of grammar in schools. The petitioners, the Queen's English Society, who marched into Parliament Square bearing banners with strange devices such as 'Parsing Is Such Sweet Sorrow', confidently expected that the Secretary, Mr Kenneth Baker, would recognise the wisdom of the petition and, by a wave of his wand, have every school in the land teaching grammar by the following Monday morning.

It did not work out that way. The petitioners had little conception of how set in its ways the teaching 'establishment' was, how adamant its refusal to abandon the new, 'progressive', child-centred methods of teaching that had revolutionised the classroom scene since the 1950s. Now, ten years on, we have seen successive Government initiatives intended to improve the standard of State education always thwarted by the ideologues, the 'educrats', in

the positions of power in teacher-training colleges, teachers' unions and even the Department of Education itself. It has become clear that the young teachers who emerge from the training colleges when they have completed their course have not been taught how to teach children to read or spell, or to speak and write grammatically. They *have* been taught that they must *not* correct the mistakes their pupils make: and that they must resist the reintroduction of whole-class teaching and the grouping together of children of similar intelligence ('streaming').

A leading article in the *Spectator* for February 1993 described the training colleges in these terms: 'They are staffed by Marxists who peddle an irrelevant, damaging and outdated ideology of anti-élitism.' We have seen the result: generation after generation of children leaving school barely able to read or write. Now, we are told, 28% of our adult population are illiterate. And many of the education gurus who masterminded this destruction of our

education system are *still* in the positions of power in high places. Twelve years ago Mona McNeer had warned of the threat to literacy in this journal ('On Teaching Not to Read', April 1986).

But there are signs that, for the first time for thirty years, the educational bandwagon is changing direction. On all sides (apart from the groves of academe) we hear the questions 'Why can't our children read?' 'Why can't they spell?' 'Why don't they know their multiplication tables?' Our schoolchildren and teachers, even the teacher-training colleges (some of them), are being tested; all, to some extent, are found wanting. This turning-on of the harsh spotlight of criticism is now chiefly in the hands of the man who now heads the counter-revolution: Christopher Woodhead, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. It was he who organised a revitalised team of inspectors, and who proclaimed that 13,000 of our teachers were so incompetent that they would

have to leave the profession before we could hope to see any significant improvement in our children's attainments.

We need not be surprised to find that none of these actions has endeared Mr Woodhead to the education establishment, that solidly entrenched coterie of academics and teacher-trainers who have wrought such terrible harm on the education of the young. These clever and determined people will redouble their efforts to do all they can to block and hold up to ridicule any scheme designed to test and improve the quality of State education. Every day we see fresh evidence of the ingenious and desperate rearguard actions being launched to subvert the best endeavours of the Education Department. The testing of children of seven, nine and eleven years of age is designed to monitor the progress of children up the educational ladder. But equally it monitors the effectiveness of their teachers. A revealing remark was made recently by Margaret Morrissey, of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations: 'If teachers are saying that *more testing* would impinge on time when they should be teaching, parents would not want to see that happen.' We may perhaps interpret this to mean that, to avoid undesirable revelations about the quality of teaching the children receive, teachers are to urge parents to oppose the testing of their children. A singularly prescient observation, also from the *Spectator* of February 1993, read: 'Extremists in the [teachers'] unions want a boycott of tests not because they fear it is unfair to the children who will have this élitist idea forced on them. They want it because they know testing will show which teachers are so bad that their pupils cannot attain basic standards.'

The 'progressives' also oppose testing because, so they say, it would reduce the scope of the teaching the children would receive. As Margaret Morrissey also said: 'If schools are coming under pressure to do well in yet more tests, there is a danger the whole curriculum will be skewed towards just the basics, when it should be an awful lot more

than that.' We may take this to mean that it does not matter if your children have not been taught to read and write so long as they are 'rounded' persons, able to take their place in society with misplaced confidence.

In a television programme on Channel Four (*Dispatches: Inspecting the Inspectors*), there was an unmistakable note of hysteria in its blatant attempt to smear the name of Chris Woodhead. The programme was intended to show that the system of school inspection was faulty, that schools were unjustly blamed for circumstances outside their control. Two 'expert witnesses' were called to support this thesis, Professor Tim Brighouse and Colin Richards, a former Specialist Adviser on Primary Education. Both these men are bitterly opposed to the reforms that Chris Woodhead would

***This turning-on of
the harsh spotlight of
criticism is now
chiefly in the hands of
the man who now
heads the counter-
revolution:
Christopher
Woodhead, Her
Majesty's Chief
Inspector of Schools***

like to see. (It will be recalled that it was Professor Brighouse who won his court case against the former Education Secretary, John Patten, who had indiscreetly described him as a 'nutter'.) The television programme finally lost all semblance of credibility when it went so far as to blame Woodhead for the death of an allegedly highly-regarded woman headteacher from stress, induced, so the programme-makers maintained, by the inspection process.

In February of this year Mr Woodhead was reported as complaining that a number of highly influential academ-

ics were undermining the Government's drive to raise standards. In an unusually frank speech he identifies three professors who were, as he put it, at 'the real heart of the darkness'. Mr Woodhead explained that by 'the real heart of darkness' he meant the trivialisation of culture and the erosion of belief in the intellect which has destroyed the lifechance of so many children. He said that Robin Alexander, of Warwick University, wanted to replace literacy and numeracy in primary schools with 'individual empowerment and social progress', and demanded: 'Does he really believe any individual will be 'empowered' in the 21st century if he or she has not learnt to read?' Professor Ted Wragg, he said, was proposing a 'millennial nightmare' by seeking to replace subject discipline, which helped children to understand the world, with a 'multi-dimensional, hyperspace curriculum'. He accused John MacBeath, director of the Quality in Education Centre, Strathclyde University, of dismissing 'with contemptuous indifference the idea that education was about teaching the young and ignorant about the things they need to know if they are to grow a little wiser.' A recent article in *The Times Educational Supplement* shows us how thoroughly justified Woodhead's accusations are. MacBeath's style of writing does not make it easy to discern his meaning, but he appears to want all schoolchildren, even primary grade, to formulate their own theory of education and conduct full-scale market research into their own schools. 'Thinking schools', he says, 'require thinking students who are not merely consumers but producers.'

On 20 March, the Government sent out to 18,500 schools its 91-page *National Literacy strategy: A Framework for Teaching*, which has been described as 'the first country-wide policy on the teaching of reading'. This will require all primary schools to return to traditional, structured teaching of phonics, and to abandon the present system, still widely used, in which children are expected to learn to read 'in context', i.e. by *guessing* what

the words say from clues provided by the illustrations that accompany the reading matter: *guessing*, because they have never been taught properly the sounds that the various combinations of letters represent. In daily, hour-long English Lessons, pupils must now be taught for most of the time as a whole class, reading together, and learning punctuation, grammar and spelling.

All this sounds eminently sensible: but already the ideologues are gathering to oppose it. Anne Barnes, of the National Association for the Teach-

ing of English, has commented: 'Phonics is very difficult to teach and if it is done badly children will hate it and be discouraged from reading' — this despite all the evidence that a crash course of systematic phonics has rescued many children from a lifetime of illiteracy.

And there are rumblings from other 'progressives' ('subversives' would be a better term, for that is what they are), anxious to sabotage reform, that the *National Strategy* is too 'prescriptive', too 'authoritarian'. These same people have also always

opposed the teaching of grammar except 'in context', i.e. as occasion arises — no matter that the occasion may never arise!

These subversives are expert at frustrating any Education Secretary's well-meant intentions; we must hope they will eventually be defeated, but their actions will inevitably delay the day when our children are taught to read and write competently.

Peter Bassett was Vice Chairman of the Queen's English Society.

Politics and God

R W L Moberly examines some Old Testament spin-doctors

Some of the most enduring and difficult questions as to the possible relationships between power and truth, expediency and goodness, justice and mercy, the individual and the social, are periodically focussed in questions about the various relationships between "politics" and "God". Sadly, the issues rather too regularly become sniping matches between politicians and clergy in dispute over the size of their bailiwick and the extent of their competence. I suggest, therefore, that there may be value in stepping back from familiar debates, and attending instead to an unfamiliar voice.

The voice is that of the Bible, and I hope for at least three positive gains from the exercise. First, the text I wish to consider has no history of usage in the context of "politics and God" debates; yet it is eloquent not only of the meaning of "God" in the understandings of Jewish and Christian faiths but also of the kind of difference to "politics" which God might be supposed to make. Secondly, the story

is a classic "problem" story of the Old Testament, the morality of whose God may seem reminiscent (as one recent commentator put it) of Richard Nixon's White House on a bad day. Yet if we take the biblical text with at least the same kind of imaginative seriousness which we give to our favourite novelists or filmmakers, we may be reminded afresh why the Bible has mattered so much to so many people down the centuries. Thirdly, a genuine encounter with a serious mind and outlook which stands outside our contemporary prepossessions can be as good as the best of holidays. For we can return to our familiar contexts invigorated and refreshed, with renewed vision and energy and direction for our daily living.

The Story of Ahab and Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kings 22:1-38)

For three years Syria and Israel continued without war. But in the third year Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. The king of Israel said to his servants, 'Don't you know? Ramoth-gilead belongs to us. Yet we are doing nothing to take it out

of the hand of the king of Syria'. And he said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?' Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, 'I am as you are; my people are as your people, my horses are as your horses'. [v.1-4]

The issue for going to war is the perennial problem of disputed border territory (Ramoth-gilead is close to that part of the Golan which is in dispute between Syria and Israel today). Although Ramoth-gilead was part of Israel under Solomon, the text does not say whether or not the king's claim to the territory was a good one. Territorial integrity is a legitimate concern for a king. The peace between Syria and Israel, however, had only been a short one (3 years/days being the Hebrew idiom for an indefinite short period of time, as 40 years/days is for an indefinite long period of time). The king is willing to sacrifice peace for the arguable benefit of regaining disputed territory — arguable, because no benefit is specified for anyone (except, implicitly, the king in his reputation and power). His course is not obviously

wrong. Yet the king may be abusing royal prerogative and responsibility for his people in lightly sacrificing peace and undertaking war. What could be a minor issue rapidly snowballs.

The fact that the king lets what he has in mind be known publicly in his court implies that his mind is already resolved. His question to his courtiers is a leading question. Since people don't like changing publicly adopted positions (for fear of loss of face amidst cries of "U-turn"), they don't start asking for support for a position unless the decision is already taken. So Jehoshaphat diplomatically consents to the king's request.

But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, 'Inquire first for the word of the LORD'. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred of them, and said to them, 'Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?' They said, 'Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king'. [v.5-6]

But Jehoshaphat, who is a principled believer as well as a diplomat, requests that proper religious practice be observed, and that God's will be sought before such a commitment is undertaken. The king consents, but only to seek confirmation of what he has already decided. The prophets, religious professionals, functionaries whose livelihood depends on the king, know which way the wind is blowing and what the king wants — for the king had already made his views public. So they duly oblige by telling the king what he wants to hear.

But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?' The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for his prophecies about me are never good but only bad'. Jehoshaphat said, 'Let not the king say such a thing'. [v.7-8]

The assumption that the prophets are telling the king what he wants to hear is confirmed by Jehoshaphat's response. He smells a rat. We are not told how. Maybe it is simply as obvious to Jehoshaphat as to the 400 which way the royal wind is blowing, and he wants his request for the seeking of

God's will to be taken more seriously.

The king knows of another prophet, Micaiah ben Imlah, but he is unwelcome for a simple reason. Micaiah is known by the king as someone who does not tell him what he wants to hear (Hebrew "good", i.e. "favourable", "positive"), but rather what he doesn't want to hear (Hebrew "bad", i.e. "unfavourable", "negative").

However, as Jehoshaphat diplomatically puts it, the fact that the king does not like Micaiah does not mean that Micaiah may not have something to say which needs to be heard. Jehoshaphat still wants a second opinion, and if Micaiah is the only other prophet around then he must be heard; to which the king agrees.

Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, 'Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah'. Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing-floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, 'Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed'. At the same time all the prophets were prophesying the same thing and saying, 'Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king'. [v.9-12]

As Micaiah is summoned, the narrator pauses to fill out the context in which all this is happening. An impressive scene it is — the kings of Israel and Judah, two anointed rulers of the people of God, wearing the special clothes (robes) and sitting in the special chairs (thrones) which represent and symbolise the dignity and authority of their position. And they are at the gate of the city, the formal gathering place where those with public responsibility administered justice. In the presence of these kings, the prophets, the formally recognised representatives of their religion, are performing their religious function of speaking on God's behalf. Zedekiah, presumably the leader of the prophets, performs a symbolic action such as Hebrew prophets characteristically performed, a deed which enacts words. Meanwhile the other prophets prophesy similarly, like a chorus supporting their lead singer. The tempo-

ral and spiritual authorities of God's people are gathered together in their official capacity in the place of justice. Here surely one can expect God to be present and his will to be done.

Why does the narrator take the trouble thus to depict the setting? It is not, I think, that he likes grand occasions (of a sort still to be found today, *mutatis mutandis*, in Westminster, Washington, or the Kremlin). On the one hand, because we have already been alerted that the king has an agenda and the 400 prophets are telling him what he wants to hear, we may contemplate the possibility that such a formal and symbolically resonant gathering of religiously responsible leaders may in fact be a sham, an elaborate fraud. On the other hand, we now know exactly what Micaiah has to face. It will not be a private meeting with the king of Israel, where the privacy of the occasion and the not unfriendly presence of Jehoshaphat might perhaps allow Micaiah space and confidence. Rather, he must face a meeting in a formal, public, symbolically charged context whose every dimension underlines the authority of the hostile king — and so will bring pressure on Micaiah to conform to the will of that king.

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, 'Look, the words of the prophets are with one accord positive towards to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak positively'. But Micaiah said, 'As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak'. [v.1 3-1 4]

The messenger, like the prophets, lives and works at court, and he knows what is going on. So he already starts to bring pressure to bear on Micaiah. Micaiah must tell the king what he wants to hear, something that will sound "positive" to him (Hebrew "good", that which the king has already complained he never got from Micaiah). Micaiah, not surprisingly (given what the king has already said about him) refuses to do any such thing, but rather formulates his responsibility to speak truly for God.

When he had come to the king, the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?' He answered him, 'Go up and

triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king'. But the king said to him, 'How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' [v.15-16]

If what the king wants is a "positive" message, then that is what Micaiah, his loyal subject, will give him. Micaiah repeats verbatim the words of the other prophets. But as he does so, he mimics them so sarcastically that the king instantly gets the point — he, the king, is being mocked by Micaiah. This provokes from the king a protestation of delicious irony. The man who hitherto has wanted nothing but confirmation of his own will now claims the moral high ground and says that he wants nothing less than the truth of God (and so implicitly brands his 400 prophets as toadies). The king's expostulation is, of course, no guarantee that truth is what he really wants. But Micaiah's throwing the king off balance at least might lead to a greater openness to his real message.

Then Micaiah said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, "These have no master; let each one go home in peace".' The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Didn't I tell you? His prophecies about me are never good but only bad'. [v.17-18]

Micaiah's message from the LORD initially takes the form of a vision, a vision of the future and its interpretation by the LORD. The king instantly thinks he understands it and pronounces accordingly. His prejudices about Micaiah have been confirmed: he just makes unpleasant threats against the king.

But has the king understood the vision? Only in part. He has seen, rightly, that it is a vision which implies his death in battle. What he has not seen is that it is not primarily a vision about him at all. It is a vision about Israel, the people for whom he has responsibility; they are scattered and leaderless. The LORD's concern is for them and their safe return home. But the king does not care about that dimension of the vision and is concerned only with the implications for himself. Micaiah's words, in essence a challenge to the king to remember his responsibilities as shepherd to his people before it is too late,

evoke only a hostile response.

Here we need to remember the basic dynamics of Hebrew prophecy. Prophecy is relational, engaging language that seeks a response. Classically, it is a warning of disaster (Hebrew *ra'ah*) which seeks a response of fundamental change of heart and action ("repent", Hebrew *shuv*) so that the disaster may be averted because the LORD himself responds to such response. It is somewhat like saying to someone who is standing carelessly in the road "There's a car coming — you'll be run over", where the whole object of speaking is to get the person to move. If the person moves to safety, the words fulfil their purpose. If the person does not move, and if they are in fact run over, there is no satisfaction in the literal fulfilment and correctness of the warning; there is only the knowledge that the person who gave the warning is not at fault for having failed to do so.

Micaiah's vision of Israel's distress, and their loss of a leader, is a warning designed to avert its taking place. It is a challenge to the king to (in the classic biblical idiom) "repent", i.e. to abandon his self-willed ambitions for Ramoth-gilead and in so doing both to save his own life and benefit his people. But the king does not repent. Rather, (in the classic biblical idiom) he "hardens his heart", simply seeing in Micaiah's words a confirmation of his prejudices.

At this point it might seem that Micaiah has failed. After skilfully mocking the king into requesting a true message, he has delivered his message from the LORD. But he has not been heeded. Micaiah, however, does not give up. Rather, he speaks again with words of such keen sharpness that they will surely cut through even the hardest of hearts.

Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, "Who will trick Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?"' Then one said one thing, and another said another, until a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, "I'll trick him". "How?" the LORD asked him. He replied, "I'll go out and be a

lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets". Then the LORD said, "You shall entice him, and you shall succeed. Go now, and do it like that".

So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you'. [v.19-23]

The dynamics of the encounter between Ahab and Micaiah are crucial — Micaiah begins with "therefore". The vision of the heavenly court is not the primary message of Micaiah, which has already been delivered. But Micaiah is faced by the king's refusal to respond positively to his warning. The issue at stake is one of life and death. But how do you get through to someone who doesn't want to hear? This is Micaiah's supreme attempt to engage with the king, to penetrate a barrier of complacency, pride and obstinacy, to touch his mind and soften a hardening heart.

Micaiah's communicative strategy is simple: Don't state the obvious. If you simply tell reluctant people what they think they already know in categories that they already accept, then they will ignore you; you are a bore and a nuisance. So Micaiah does not say it again, only louder. Rather, he paints a picture and tells a story of such imaginative starkness that the king must surely be moved by it.

The purpose of the vision is made crystal clear by Micaiah in his closing words in which he interprets the vision to the king. His conclusion, that "the LORD has decreed disaster (Hebrew *ra'ah*) for you" makes the vision into a classic prophetic warning, the logic of which we have already seen in relation to Micaiah's first vision — it is a warning whose purpose is fulfilled if it moves the person addressed to respond in such a way ("repent", *shuv*) that what is envisaged does not actually happen. The second vision has the same purpose as the first vision. If the message is that the king will die, it is given so that the king may not die.

The narrator has told in some detail of the court scene in Samaria to which Micaiah has been summoned: the kings on their thrones and their religious courtiers speaking in their presence. Micaiah now tells of another court scene, of a king on his throne

surrounded by his courtiers. But now the king is the LORD and the setting is “heaven”. But “heaven” does not mean somewhere else — another place, perhaps another time — but rather represents and depicts the spiritual reality of what is happening in the here and now on earth, at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. That is, the relationship between the court of the LORD and the court of Ahab is not that of a causal relationship between two different times and two different places: i.e. first, the LORD makes a decision at his court, and subsequently this is enacted upon a luckless Ahab; first a decision is made somewhere else (wherever heaven might be supposed to be), and subsequently it is enacted in Samaria. Rather, God is both *here* and *now*. The court of the LORD is the spiritual counterpart to the court of Ahab, it is the other side of one and the same coin. The scene of the LORD’s court interprets to Ahab the reality of his court.

There are at least three interrelated dimensions within Micaiah’s words. First, there is the (“psychological”) level of the communicative dynamics of Micaiah’s trying to get through to Ahab. Here the issue focuses around the word used to initiate the plot within the vision, i.e. “trick”. The basic form of the Hebrew verb means “to be simple-minded/foolish” (the sort of person who is easily put upon by others), and its form here means “treat as a fool”. In Micaiah’s vision God is proposing to treat Ahab as a fool (“he’s sure to fall for this one”). In other words, Micaiah is saying to Ahab “You are being conned”. The point is that nobody likes being told they are being conned, and nobody willingly goes along with it. If you think you are being conned, you do something different. To tell someone that they are being tricked has a similar logic and dynamic to that of warning someone of coming disaster.

The second (“moral”) level within Micaiah’s vision arises once the trick has been agreed on, with reference to the means by which it is to be carried out. The issue here focuses again on one particular word, that which the

spirit says it will be in the mouths of Ahab’s 400 prophets, and which Micaiah confirms in his explanation of the vision — “lying/lie”. This is another fundamental term of Hebrew prophetic language (especially elucidated by Jeremiah). It represents that which prophets speak when they are not sent by the LORD and when they tell people the agreeable and acceptable (“positive”/“favourable”) things that they so want to hear. It is at heart a self-serving use of religious language, which lacks integrity and so lacks engagement with God.

What Ahab’s prophets say is “lying” because they are telling the king what he wants to hear. But in speaking thus the prophets are reflecting back to the king his own self-will. Here is the moral point of Micaiah’s vision. The deceptive message of the prophets is the counterpart to the king’s self-seeking. Micaiah complements the psychological challenge to the king not to let himself be duped (“don’t be a fool”) with the moral challenge to recognise a lack of integrity about the proposal to fight at Ramoth-gilead (“can’t you see it’s a deceit?”).

The third (“theological”) level in Micaiah’s vision is the God-centred dimension — that the proposal to trick Ahab through putting a lying message in the mouth of his prophets be ascribed to the LORD. It is not just that he, Micaiah, has “decreed disaster” for Ahab, but that *the LORD* (the Hebrew word order is emphatic) has spoken thus. It is God whom Ahab is confronting. What sort of God is the LORD? One whose purpose in sending the prophets to announce “disaster” (*ra’ah*) is a compassionate one, to reach out to those who are going astray, so that they may turn to God (“repent”, *shuv*) and so that the disaster may possibly never take place, because the LORD is merciful.

But how is the compassionate concern of God to be communicated to someone resolved on questionable self-will? The announcement of compassion in such a context (“Although you are pursuing your own course, God is merciful to you”) is hardly capable of being understood as a message of true

compassion, for it will almost always sound to the addressee like acquiescence in, or even encouragement of, the self-willed course of action. Such a message lacks genuine engagement with the realities of human resolve. This means that the message of divine compassion must be expressed in other terms which engage with, and challenge, the human will. In other words, the message of divine compassion must be formulated as a challenge. The message of God must be presented as, in one way or other, confrontational and adversarial. And this is not just a matter of communicative dynamics but of reality, in that the moral character of God is intrinsically opposed to that which is immoral and self-serving.

Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah and slapped him on the cheek. He said, ‘Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?’. Micaiah replied, ‘You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber’. The king of Israel then ordered, ‘Take Micaiah. Take him back to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son, and say, “Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on minimum rations of bread and water until I come in peace”’. Micaiah said, ‘If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me’. And he said, ‘Hear, you peoples, all of you!’ [v.24-28]

Zedekiah, as leader of the court prophets, is the person who stands to lose the most if the king heeds Micaiah. If publicly exposed as one who self-servingly deceives the king, he would face at least public shame and probably more — perhaps loss of his position, perhaps loss of his life. So at the moment of truth he decides fully to embody the lying spirit of Micaiah’s vision. He intervenes to ensure that a possibly wavering king remembers who his real friends and advisers are.

Zedekiah performs another action, as much a symbolic action as was his previous wielding of iron horns. He hits Micaiah, to humiliate and hurt him. At the same time he asks a clever rhetorical question, which seeks to change the whole dynamics of the moment. For if Micaiah tries to answer such a question on its own terms, i.e. to justify or explain his speaking,

Zedekiah would hold the initiative in interrogating a defensive Micaiah. Micaiah has no justification beyond that contained in what he has already said. Micaiah, therefore, does not waver but responds with a challenge to Zedekiah: if a time comes when Zedekiah seeks God in his own hour of need, when his own life is threatened, then the truth will become clear to him and he will know how it was that God spoke through Micaiah.

For the present, however, Zedekiah's action and words are decisive. The king does not heed Micaiah, but arrests him and orders him to be detained. One may wonder whether the giving of Micaiah to the charge of two such significant figures as the city governor and one of the king's sons may not imply some kind of VIP treatment, a tacit recognition of Micaiah's stature. But certainly the instructions, that Micaiah be given only minimal amounts of bread and water, makes no concessions. The king's final words, that Micaiah be held in prison on minimum subsistence "until I return in peace" — which, in terms of what Micaiah has said, will not happen, and so anticipates a possible life sentence for Micaiah — may be one last attempt by the king to get Micaiah to change his message to a more positive one. But Micaiah does not flinch. Although he may be signing his own death warrant he reaffirms the content of his message and warning. If the king is indeed successful at Ramoth-gilead, then Micaiah is prepared to recognise that his own words have been empty and have not conveyed the will of God.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes'. So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, 'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel'. When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, 'This is surely the king of Israel'. So they turned to fight against him. But Jehoshaphat cried aloud. When the captains of the chariots saw that he was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. [v.29-33]

The king has decided to seek his moment of glory at Ramoth-gilead. But something has gone wrong. At the very moment that his glory and power should be demonstrated in anticipation of victory, the king puts on a disguise, so that no-one would recognise him as king. Why? Because the king recognises in his heart that Micaiah was probably speaking the truth. He cannot savour his longed-for battle, because when it comes he is too afraid. But he thinks that he can get round God's words by a trick of his own. If he is a "marked man" because of Micaiah's warning — and perhaps aware that the king of Syria regards him as the cause of the warfare and so wants to single him out — then he will remove his public markings and become, as it were, invisible. If he can survive he may yet triumph. The Syrians are initially taken in by this ruse and think that Jehoshaphat in his robes must be Ahab. Jehoshaphat realises what is happening and makes sure they discover their error. But if Ahab remains invisible can the Syrians do anything about it?

Now a certain man drew his bow with no clear intention — and he hit the king of Israel between the scale-armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded'. The battle grew fierce that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians; at evening he died, and the blood from the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot. Then at sunset a shout went through the army, 'Every man to his city; every man to his own land!' So the king died, and came to Samaria where they buried him. They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken. [v.34-38]

The end comes simply. Ahab's device works, and he remains unrecognised. Nobody points him out, not even God, who might perhaps have given specific instructions to a particular Syrian. Rather, an Syrian archer acts unknowingly, that is not specifically targeting Ahab, and his arrow finds not just Ahab but also the chink in his armour, so as to give a fatal wound. Ahab lives a little longer but only to

see his army defeated. And so it becomes apparent that Ahab's campaign plan was indeed foolish, and that the message of Zedekiah and the 400 prophets was indeed a falsehood. Micaiah's words receive the fulfilment that they never sought. And even in unintentional human action God's purposes are fulfilled.

Conclusion

How then does one tell between conflicting voices when all claim the same authority? The king has to choose between rival accounts of what is good for him, in which he must decide who is speaking the truth. In that respect he represents the situations in which we find ourselves, where we have to make choices between conflicting voices and where the future outcome is unknown. Although there can be no simple answer, the story nonetheless sets out one prime criterion of decision-making: integrity, doing what is right, living the truth, even at great cost.

What the king has to choose between is, in essence, his own self-seeking desire, as expressed and represented by his prophets, and Micaiah's warning that he is neglecting his duty and jeopardising his life. Even before Micaiah has spoken, a certain kind of integrity is what the king grudgingly recognises as characterising Micaiah. Micaiah challenges the king about the integrity of his proposed action, and in his climactic appeal he is most explicit. There is no integrity about the prophetic encouragement to fight at Ramoth-gilead. It is a message which only a fool will heed, because it is deceit, and it is deceit because it represents a working out of Ahab's self-will.

Micaiah's stark vision is one which may not be heeded, and is not heeded. But for Ahab and Zedekiah and Micaiah, each in his different way — and for those ordinary Israelites who must enact their leaders' decisions — the consequences of not heeding are dire.

R W L Moberly is Lecturer in Theology at the University of Durham.

Conservatism in Austria

Ulrich E Zellenberg

The dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy after World War I struck Austrian conservatism a blow from which it has so far not recovered. The sudden fall of the empire disrupted historical and institutional continuity. The violent upheaval that in many respects severed the present from the past created an enormous spiritual vacuum: the ruling dynasty and the army, which — functioning as political symbols — had expressed the unity of the empire, disappeared from public life. In blatant violation of President Woodrow Wilson's principle, proclaimed in his Fourteen Points, that the international order should be based on ethnic self-determination, a part of the German population of the multinational empire almost overnight found themselves to be citizens of the Republic of Austria, a tiny nation state with borders drawn arbitrarily by the victors. The new body politic for most of the population was something alien for which they felt no affection and which no one thought could survive.

What was left to conserve? Of all the old institutions that had held the empire together and were able to inspire feelings of loyalty in the subjects, only the Catholic Church remained. But it could not substitute for a founding myth or an animating idea that could have served as a spiritual support of the new state. The fundamental crisis of orientation that was produced by the fall of the monarchy proved almost fatal for Austrian conservatism. Unlike its British counterpart, it could no longer defend political institutions which have, to use John Henry Newman's phrase, 'stood the trial and received the sanction of ages'; and in contrast to America it was impossible to hearken back to something similar

to a Philadelphia Convention, Founding Fathers, and a constitution expressing the political will of a people. Some conservatives tried to cling to the idea of monarchical rule. But as the years went by, it became increasingly clear that there was no way back. And although monarchists were important in the Austrian resistance movement against Nazism, after World War II they found themselves reduced to a tiny and obscurantist group on the lunatic fringe of politics.

To make matters worse, at the time of the fall of the monarchy a self-confident conservative movement did not exist. Although conservatism had been a strong and at times dominant cultural, intellectual and political force since the middle of the 18th century, it was hardly acknowledged as such, and its exponents were rarely regarded under this label. This is because the many different groups of conservative leanings never managed to form a single conservative party. Unlike the Tory party in Great Britain, the Catholic Conservatives, the only party of some influence in Austria that was called conservative, was but one movement among the many diverse currents that constituted Austrian conservatism in the second half of the 19th century, but was also a relatively short-lived phenomenon; it disappeared in 1907 after it had joined forces with the Christian Social Party in parliament.

This lack of a clear-cut identity still troubles Austrian conservatism, which has always been a lot less liberal and a lot less market oriented than its British and American counterparts. Its heritage is diverse and even contradictory as it comprises centralist and decentralist forces alike, and problematic as it contains authoritarian, clerical, illiberal, and paternalistic traits

that cannot possibly serve as a guideline for future politics. As a look at the history of Austrian conservatism will make clear, present-day conservatives are faced with enormous difficulties in their efforts to relate adequately to the conservative tradition, to discern its viable components and to take them as a starting-point for their political activity.

Political conservatism emerged in Austria in the course of the last decades of the 18th century. It manifested itself in the opposition of the catholic estates to the Austrian variant of the enlightenment which came to be called *Josephinism* and found its political expression in the moderate politics of reform, modernisation, and centralisation initiated by empress Maria Theresa — who herself remained a lifelong foe of the enlightenment — that culminated in the efforts of her 'enlightened' son, emperor Joseph II, to put the administrative structure of the empire on a rationalistic foundation and to turn the Catholic Church into a useful institution, conforming to the exigencies of the state. But *Josephinism*, which sought to use the state as an instrument of political and social reform, was not only a radical movement. It also had a conservative wing which spawned a new form of conservatism, namely bureaucratic conservatism, with which the feudal conservatives had to join forces in order to fend off the challenges of the French Revolution.

Bureaucratic conservatism found its most prominent exponent in Prince Metternich. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 he negotiated the peace settlement after the Napoleonic wars; this was based on his conviction that 'the cultivation of the ego must recognize bounds in the lives of states as in

private life, in order not to be reduced to absurdity.' Metternich, who stayed in power as State-Chancellor from 1809-1848, knew that the multinational monarchy was a fragile structure that would dissolve if the nationalities could not be restrained. This is why he relied on censorship and cast a wary eye on liberal sentiments that were closely linked with national aspirations all over the continent. Intellectually, conservatism in this era found expression in the writings of Metternich's secretary and close collaborator Friedrich von Gentz, who in 1793 had published his influential translation of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* into German. Also of importance was the circle that had formed around the catholic priest Clemens Maria Hofbauer, which included among others leading romantics such as Friedrich von Schlegel, Joseph von Eichendorff, and Adam Müller.

After the suppression of the bourgeois revolution of 1848, three distinctive strands of conservatism emerged. The strongest was the feudal conservatism championed by the most influential families of the Bohemian aristocracy, who favoured a decentralised empire. Of lesser weight were the bureaucratic conservatism of the civil servants, who were advocates of centralisation, and the romantic and catholic conservatism which remained, despite its strong ties with the Church, mainly an intellectual force. In that time it also became increasingly evident that the supranational empire, faced with the steadily growing problem of rising nationalism among its peoples, was held together by the joint existence of three conservative institutions: the ruling dynasty of the Habsburgs, the powerful catholic church, and the loyal imperial army.

In the neo-absolutist government that came to power in 1849 the main conservative was Count Leo Thun who, as Minister for cultural affairs, reformed the school system and the universities. He was one of the driving forces behind the conclusion of the concordat of 1855, which gave the Catholic Church a position and influence in public life

it had not enjoyed since the time before Emperor Joseph II had acceded to the throne. Thun also had a hand in the founding of the conservative journal *Vaterland* (fatherland), which was to oppose the ideas of 1789 and which in 1875, when Karl von Vogelsang became its editor, turned into the organ of the conservative social reform movement. After the liberal era, which lasted from 1867-1879, interrupted only by the short-lived conservative governments under Potocki and Count Hohenwart in 1870 and 1871, Count Taaffe was appointed Prime Minister. Taaffe, who did not belong to any party and understood himself to be an 'Imperial minister', relied on a coalition he had forged out of diverse conservative groups in parliament such as the clericals, the great landowners and the Poles, which came to be known as the 'Iron Ring'. Taaffe was a sceptic. He relied on time to provide solutions. His aim was the conciliation of the nationalities and the prevention of any one nationality obtaining decisive predominance. He strove for the nationalities to accept Austrian unity and to seek the favour of the central government. With great dexterity he made administrative concessions on all sides and in so doing not only kept — as he himself wrote — 'all the nationalities in a balanced state of mild dissatisfaction', but also bought off all those interested in a fundamental change of the system. Taaffe, who stayed in power from 1879-1893, with his politics of 'muddling along', secured the old empire fourteen years of calm and stability, during which he enacted important social reforms, heavily influenced by the conservative intellectual Karl von Vogelsang.

These ideas of social reform were eventually taken up by the Christian Social Party that was formed out of diverse movements in the course of the last two decades of the 19th century and in the First Republic (1918-1938) under the leadership of the prelate Ignaz Seipel, who served twice as chancellor. This became the dominant political and conservative force in the country. In 1933, in the presence of the unresolved crisis of the legitimacy of

the republic, of enormous economic problems, of increasing propaganda by the National Socialists, and of growing antagonism between the workers movement, middle class society, and paramilitary organisations, the Christian Social government under the leadership of chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß resorted to authoritarianism. Dollfuß suspended parliament on the grounds of a procedural technicality after it had become incapable of acting, and outlawed the National Socialist Party. A year later, after a short civil war during which the government crushed the uprising of an illegal paramilitary organisation of the Social Democrats, a new constitution was proclaimed, expressing ideas derived from Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Although it was never fully implemented, it served as the foundation of the new *Ständestaat*, organised on the basis of corporatist principles. About three months later, chancellor Dollfuß, who had energetically struggled to retain Austrian independence vis-à-vis Hitler's expansionism, was murdered in the course of an aborted coup by the illegal National Socialists. Kurt Schuschnigg became Chancellor and continued Dollfuß's efforts to stave off Hitler's grip, but in 1938 he had to succumb to German pressure and to step down.

In the Second Republic that came into being after World War II, when Austria, which in 1938 had been incorporated into Germany, was restored as a state, the Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei* — *ÖVP*) was founded. It took the place of the Christian Social Party as the political exponent of conservatism. Like its predecessor the People's Party possessed strong catholic roots. It was primarily the party of the farmers, the owners of small shops and enterprises, and of civil servants. Although this party explicitly rejected the label 'conservative', it was by the politics it pursued and the world view of its leaders a conservative party, which it remained well into the 1960's. After the loss of two general elections (1970, 1971) the *ÖVP* tried in vain to adapt to the new circumstances — the party

found itself out of power on the national level for the first time since 1945! — and formulated a new programme, the Salzburg programme of 1972, in which the ideas of the student's movement of the late 1960's made themselves felt. In the course of the following two decades the ÖVP — now calling itself the 'party of the progressive centre' moved, while adamantly defending the *status quo* in terms of the actual distribution of socio-political power in the country, to the left and began increasingly to embrace the liberalism now dominant in the Western World in cultural matters and social issues. As a result of this, the contours of the party slowly dissolved and voters began to turn away in growing numbers.

The decline of the ÖVP, reduced from more than 50% of the vote in 1966 to a meagre 27% in the general elections of 1995, was due largely to changes in the social structure of the country. As a result of economic transformations, the number of catholic farmers, the traditional backbone of the ÖVP, had dwindled from about 35% of the population in 1945 to about 5% at the beginning of the 1990's. Also the numbers of owners of small shops and businesses, the second traditional pillar of the ÖVP, have declined in recent years. Of similar importance is the ongoing secularisation, the loosening of Church ties, and the disengagement of the ÖVP from her (shrinking) traditional catholic milieu.

Conservatives, disillusioned by the direction the People's Party has taken since the 1970's, have looked elsewhere. But only three organisations merit closer consideration. Some conservatives joined the Paneuropa movement which is almost exclusively concerned with the task of furthering European integration. Although the movement was successful in having the leader of its Austrian branch, Karl Habsburg, the grandson of Austria's last Emperor, elected member of the European parliament on the party list of the ÖVP in October 1996, its political influence is negligible. The reason for this is quite simply a severe lack of ideas — endless repetition of words

and phrases like 'Europe' and 'Christian values' is held to be a coherent political strategy — a concentration on technical questions of European integration, a more or less uncritical affirmation of the general direction politics in Brussels are taking, and a mixing-up of the interests of the organisation and those of the Habsburg family.

Other conservatives in 1974 founded the JES, short for Junge Europäische Studenteninitiative (Young European Student's Initiative), in order to oppose the leftist ideas that flourished in the universities in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Designed to campaign for seats in the student parliaments at the Austrian universities in elections held every two years, the JES has always declared itself a conservative force. Inspired by American conservatism and thinkers such as Russell Kirk and Friedrich August von Hayek, the JES tries to forge a coherent programme out of the Christian and classical heritage of Europe, the tradition of a free market economy and limited government, and Antimarxism. After initial successes — in the middle of the 1980's the JES was the third largest group at the universities with about 20% of the vote — its fortunes began to wane. Although it is still very much alive, at the moment it stands reduced to the size of a splinter group, because it is no longer able to translate its conservative convictions into practical political proposals that make sense to the electorate.

After the ÖVP in 1986 again formed a grand coalition with the SPÖ, some conservatives started to sympathise with the national-liberal Freedom Party, the FPÖ, the only effective oppositional political force, that in the course of only ten years has risen from about 5% of the popular vote to more than 20%. But although the FPÖ at times makes use of conservative clichés and addresses topics dear to the conservative heart, it is in reality no conservative, but a catch-all party, that in order to receive the total of the protest vote frequently changes direction. Not only is its populist anti-establishment rhetoric so aggressive and offensive that civilised discourse becomes al-

most impossible, but also its intention of demolishing institutions and structures that have stood the trial of decades may make it an effective populist force with right-wing rhetoric, but hardly warrants calling it 'conservative'.

Any account of the history of Austrian conservatism would be incomplete without a section dealing with a most peculiar aspect of the Austrian socio-political system, namely the Second Republic's structural conservatism. In contrast to the time of the so called First Republic (1918-1938), when the country was torn by civil strife, the political leaders who came to power after the war managed to establish a system for the peaceful solution of social conflicts which enabled the country to enjoy a period of remarkable stability that lasted till the end of the 1980's.

Political scientists have termed this new political *modus vivendi* 'consociationalism'. It manifests itself in the so-called *social partnership* that has institutional roots reaching way back in the First Republic and even further to the middle of the 19th century. The term 'social partnership' denotes a system based on the most important associations representing the interests of employers and employees, which aims at reaching and implementing decisions in economical and socio-political matters in a co-operative way. In the social partnership, the Federal Economic Chamber, the Austrian Trade Union Federation, the Chamber of Labour, the Chambers of Agriculture, and the Association of Austrian Industrialists try to reach decisions by way of compromise and consensus. The social partnership's main functions are wage negotiations, price setting, and the formulation of recommendations to the government. As the social partnership has no legal power to enforce its decisions, its influence rests on a kind of gentlemen's agreement between its constituent institutions and on their authority, vis-à-vis their respective members, as well as on the fact that the leading persons in the institutions that form the social partnership play important roles in the

two dominant political parties, the SPÖ and the ÖVP.

The social partnership is accompanied by something called *Proporz*, meaning that the SPÖ and the ÖVP in effect divide the country, i.e. the public administration, the educational system and the state-owned industrial sector into separate spheres of interest. Jobs, government contracts, and flats — the city of Vienna for instance is the biggest landlord in Europe, owning several hundreds of thousands of flats! — were and still are awarded according to party affiliation. Although the social partnership has secured decades of social peace for Austria, it also gave rise to negative developments. It engendered enormous political dependencies for individuals — remarkable for a country that is a Western democracy — and it enabled certain socio-political interests to become so firmly entrenched as to stifle individual initiative in many areas.

The social partnership has been conducive to social inertia. It led to the development of an attitude which the historian Klaus Epstein has called *status quo conservatism*. This kind of conservatism has for many decades been practised in the actions not only of most politicians in the country, but also of the greater part of the population, regardless of the individual's party affiliation and his ideological leanings. Concerned solely with the preservation of the finely tuned balance between the different spheres of social and political power that exist in Austria, this structural conservatism, transcending ideological party lines, has been the most important political force in the country for about four decades since the end of World War II.

It is of course true that the defence of any *status quo*, irrespective of its substantive nature, does not make anyone a conservative. But when contrasted with what by rights has been called conservative, it is obvious that the described Austrian *status quo* conservatism is — albeit with some peculiar traits — but one of the many different conservatisms that have so far emerged in the course of time. If conservatism is defined by what Benjamin Disraeli, in his speech at

Crystal Palace on June 24, 1872 called 'the three great objects which are sought by Toryism', namely 'the maintenance of our institutions, the preservation of our Empire, and the improvement of the condition of the people', then both parties, the SPÖ and the ÖVP, insofar as they strive to preserve the evolved balance of power of which the social partnership forms an intrinsic part, are very conservative parties indeed. Standing in the continental European tradition of conservatism, informed by Catholicism and the idea of corporatism, and therefore far less individualistic than Conservatism of the Anglo-Saxon variety, they struggle — notwithstanding their other political aims — to preserve institutions and traditions, which, peculiar to Austria, have evolved in the course of the last 150 years and have, by and large, proved themselves to be beneficial.

Because of influences coming from abroad, like globalisation, budgetary constraints and Austria's entry into the European Union on the one hand, and because of the aggressive political course of the FPÖ on the other, the hitherto unchallenged balance of socio-political power, the dominance of the SPÖ and the ÖVP, and the whole system of the social partnership have come under pressure. Austria is no longer 'an island of the blessed', as the country used to see itself in the 1970's and 1980's, after being called 'an island of happy people' by Pope Paul VI in 1971. Structures that were thought to be immobile and immutable are beginning to crack up and to change. But a conservatism that could point a way and show where and in what way necessary adaptations should be made, is nowhere in sight, because present-day Austrian conservatism is largely sterile. Most of its exponents confine themselves to the use of catch-words and phrases taken from the large fund of conservative thought, but leave their relevance unexplained. They neglect the fact that ideas are mere words unless related to current social and political problems and issues. Almost no one is asking whether these ideas are obsolete or whether they contain a solution for one or more of the pressing issues of the day.

Those Austrians who think of themselves as conservatives and who reflect on their conservatism, are almost exclusively cultural conservatives — people who judge the phenomena of cultural, political and social life according to certain ethical and religious standards. They mainly criticise the efforts of those who act in the world, be they politicians, artists, managers or just ordinary people. They denounce the things they do not like and that do not conform to their standards, but they fail whenever it comes to developing a feasible political alternative. Many of them dream of the last days of the monarchy, thought to have been golden, and are unwilling to acknowledge the fact that those days are irretrievably gone.

The talk about values and the necessity of a return to the roots of the country is empty and verges on the grotesque because it is not accompanied by efforts to tackle a most vexing, but all-important question: How are existing institutions that alone are able to provide the environment for those coveted conservative values best preserved and supported in the face of the constant onslaught of all the many 'modernising' forces in contemporary mass society?

If conservatism wants to be more than just a repetition of catch-words and phrases that were coined in the course of the political battles of the past and which have long since lost their application to the questions that concern the people, it has to achieve what is celebrated in the work of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Austria's greatest literary conservative, namely 'a creative restoration'. It has to take up old traditions, to relate them to our present predicament, and to make them bear upon the issues of the day. There are strong signs indicating that such an undertaking is way out of reach for most of those who today think of themselves as conservative. If that really were the case, then it might well be that the history of conservatism in Austria has come to an inglorious end.

Ulrich Zellenberg works at the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.

Fascism and Anti-Fascism

Paul Gottfried examines a hangover from Vichy

Last year, a war crimes trial unfolded in Bordeaux in Southwest France. The defendant, Maurice Papon, an octogenarian on the verge of cardiac arrest, was the sub-prefect of the Gironde during the Vichy regime. At that time Papon and his superior, Maurice Sabatier, oversaw the deportation of thousands of Jews destined for concentration camps and often eventual extermination. The trial of Papon is being used to underscore French complicity in the holocaust, and, as *L'Express* (November 26, 1997) observes, most of the prosecution's case has consisted of "discours solennels" instead of rigorously presented evidence. The trial was originally planned to deal with the misdeeds of Papon's boss, but since Sabatier inconsiderately departed this world before the proceedings began, the prosecution has had to refocus.

But the gloomy sermons are far more central to the trial, as object lesson, than some legal critics recognise. These orations are meant to drive home what the French and American media industry does not want Frenchmen (and other vestigially Christian peoples) to forget, that their societies had eagerly collaborated in Nazi atrocities and that their inherited cultures had predisposed them to such behaviour. Though this complicity was admittedly more common in France than it should have been, the charges made are all too often questionable. One, featured in the movie *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, is that religiously indoctrinated Frenchmen ran to welcome the German armies that overran their country in 1940, as a bulwark being offered against Jews and communists. On the basis of highly selective sources, such as the pro-Nazi statements of the rector of the Catholic Institute in Paris, we are led to believe that professing French Christians hap-

pily supported Hitler's occupation and the deportation of Jews. But French Calvinists, almost without exception, protected Jews, invariably at the risk of their lives. And though the Catholic record was, on the whole, less impressive, monasteries and convents throughout France took in Jewish refugees. One beneficiary of such kindness is the present Archbishop of Paris, whose parents had been Polish Jewish immigrants.

Another faulty generalisation is that most of France's intelligentsia were well-disposed toward Nazism. Here a distinction is appropriate that may also apply to other European intellectuals of the same period, between those who (like Louis-Ferdinand Céline) applauded the Nazi regime in all its grisliness and those who merely went along. It is the latter who were in the vast majority, certainly in France, and who form the subject of Jean-Robert and Giles Ragache's probing study, *Des écrivains et des artistes sous l'occupation 1940-1944* (1988). Unlike such proudly collaborationist authors as Céline, Robert Brasillach, and Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, most intellectuals — for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, André Gide, and (throughout most of the Occupation) André Malraux — tried to stay out of harm's way. This also applied to the Russian Jewish artist Marc Chagall, then resident in the French village of Cordes. The Ragaches studiously avoid confusing plainly different actions — such as cheering on the Nazis, keeping a low profile, or expressing generic pro-fascist sentiments — and turning Jews over to the Waffen SS.

There is, of course, a compelling reason why most Frenchmen no longer ask who did or did not collaborate, and in what way, with the Vichy govern-

ment. From June 1944 until months after the war ended, French communists (who ironically had been among the most conspicuous Nazi collaborators until Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union) led the way in meting out rough justice to "collabos" in areas freed of German control. During this "épuration", thousands lost their lives, and many more suffered public humiliation, like being beaten and spat upon or, in the case of women thought to be fraternising with the enemy, having their heads shaved. Similar ghastly displays occurred in Italy, particularly in liberated Rome in June 1944; and a feature story in *Corriere della Sera* in April 1995 describes one such anti-fascist bloodletting. This *strage* engulfed the innocent and not very guilty as well as those who may have aided the occupying German army, and it was carried out against hundreds of Italians with the connivance of the Committee of National Liberation, which was in charge of organising the post-fascist government. Even more ominously, millions of Eastern Europeans were killed, imprisoned, or deported between 1945 and 1948, as Stalin tightened his grip on the region in the name of "anti-fascism." In view of the ugly, bloody history attached to digging up and concocting pro-fascist dossiers, it is understandable that the French were long reluctant to renew the post-liberation witch-hunt of 1944-45.

In interwar Europe, fascist and quasi-fascist movements flourished, a situation that has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Historians have debated the differences and overlaps among fascist groups: whether, for example, the German Nazis, who claimed some affinity with European fascism, were representative fascists, or whether the Nazis were more like

Stalinist totalitarians, as suggested by George Watson, Robert Conquest, and Stanley Payne. Latin fascists like José Antonio Primo de Rivera and Giovanni Bottai did not have either the totalitarian agenda or the anti-Semitic fixation of Hitler and his lieutenants. Those fascists spoke for national revolutionary movements that left their mark on non-Latins as well: both black nationalist Marcus Garvey and revisionist Zionist Zev Jabotinsky were strongly drawn to the Italian national revolution, identified with Mussolini. Well into the 1930's (Renzo de Felice has shown in his dissertation), the Zionist right both expressed admiration for and sought favour with the Duce. He, in turn, granted Jabotinsky's followers the right to build a navy at Genoa for a future Jewish state.

Israeli francophone historian Zeev Sternhell has written copiously on the background of the Latin fascism that came of age in the 1920's. Looking at the "founding generation" of thinkers and activists concerned with bourgeois decadence and the irrational sources of power and social actions, Sternhell traces back to the late 19th century a revolutionary force that was "neither left nor right" in any traditional sense. It also combined varying degrees of economic collectivism with a belief in hierarchy and a vivid sense of the national past.

Unlike Sternhell, German intellectual historian Ernst Nolte downplays the anti-bourgeois aspect of fascist movements. Rather, he focuses on their role as a bulwark of bourgeois civilisation in the face of the social ferment following World War I. For all their invective against the liberal capitalist order, insists Nolte, fascists were essentially *bourgeois* opponents of the revolutionary left. The movements they created were "counter-revolutionary imitations of Bolshevism" that drew their ideals from a folkish past.

While Nolte may indeed understate the revolutionary thrust of some interwar fascist movements, he is correct to stress their bourgeois component. Fascist leaders and thinkers were recruited from the business and professional classes, and Italian bourgeois liberals such as Vilfredo Pareto, Luigi Einaudi,

and Gino Olivetti generally gave Mussolini the benefit of the doubt, at least in the 20's. The major pro-fascist movement in early 20th-century France, *Action Française*, numbered many professionals, particularly physicians, in its ranks. And faced by a choice between restive socialists and clerical fascists in Austria in the 1930's, classical liberal economist Ludwig von Mises quickly made his peace with the clericalist imitator of Italian fascism, Engelbert Dollfuß.

Despite this bourgeois and occasionally reactionary direction taken by interwar fascism, its reforming image also appealed to

There is a compelling reason why most Frenchmen no longer ask who did or did not collaborate, and in what way, with the Vichy government. From June 1944 until months after the war ended, French communists led the way in meting out rough justice to "collabos" in areas freed of German control

some on the left. Most significantly, American advocates of an expanded welfare state followed English and French socialists in holding up Mussolini's Italy as a political model. In the 1920's, the *New Republic* published essay after essay by, among other contributors, Horace Kallen and Herbert Croly, praising Mussolini's socialist zeal. *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* by J P Diggins treats this love affair that large parts of the American left had with fascism, seen as an anti-capitalist, revolutionary force and

as a nationalist variation on Marxist-Leninism.

This romance, however, was supplanted by an implacable hate, which has characterised the left's relation to fascism ever since. While there certainly are explanations for this hate, including the reasons most often given — that all fascism came to be identified, rightly or wrongly, with Nazism, which produced the holocaust — the standard explanation is not entirely convincing. Mass murder is not a moral problem for much of the left. When the communists undertook this experiment in Russia and Maoist China, journalists and academics tried to look the other way. Afterwards, they urged (and continue to urge) "healing" in dealing with communist killers and their accomplices, in order that we might get on with the unfinished business of atoning for right-wing oppression. Such ideologues in America and in Europe do not wish to be diverted by the fact of communist genocide from dealing with the apparently real enemy, anyone thought to have been passively as well as actively implicated in fascist crimes. It is therefore not even worthy of note that at the end of World War II, Truman, Churchill, and Anthony Eden all collaborated in returning hundreds of thousands of Eastern Europeans to Stalin's rule and certain death, in Operation Keelhaul. Such behaviour, which barely amounts to a footnote in most histories of the war, would seem to make the alleged crimes of sub-prefect Papon pale by comparison.

It is no longer clear what fascism was or is, save for an extension of Hitlerism into the present. This extended Hitlerism is imagined to be behind every political or religious movement that is guilty of political incorrectness, from anti-immigrationists to homeschoolers and evangelical Christians. Meanwhile, the holocaust, as depicted in the *New York Times* and *Le Monde*, has been revised to exaggerate the sufferings of homosexuals (fewer than 5,000 died directly or indirectly owing to Nazi mistreatment) and to include the entirely fictitious afflictions of lesbians. This is consistent with revised definitions of fascism that

make it synonymous with homophobia, sexism, and general insensitivity. As a proclaimed effort to combat such insensitivity and to expiate the national past, the German Bundestag has decided to have two separate monuments erected to homosexual and lesbian victims of the Nazi regime.

In the language of Critical Theory, "fascism" and "anti-fascism" have been instrumentalised. From being a failed model of political management tied to a project of cultural and national regeneration, fascism has evolved into a codeword for genocide associated with insensitive attitudes. The semantic denaturing of the terms in question was already under way by 1950, when volumes of *The Authoritarian Personality*, a study of fascist attitudes and their relation to anti-Semitism, began to appear under the aegis of the American Jewish Committee. All the contributors — among them S M Lipset, Max Horkheimer, Ilse Frenkel, Theodor Adorno, and Paul Lazarsfeld — believed that any departure from their socialist, secularist, and gender-egalitarian outlook betrayed fascist and possibly Nazi sentiments. The "pseudo-

democratic" populist danger evoked in this work has now been updated to include such telltale fascist signs as favouring restrictions on immigration and being uncomfortable at the sight of gays fondling each other in public.

"Fascist" is also now exempt from the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction. As seen in *Le Monde's* attacks on the National Front, fascism, like liberalism, can be used in ways that contradict a once settled meaning. While granting the prevalence of Thomas Fleming's mock equation — that European populism equals fascism which equals Hitler which equals Auschwitz — one might still expect some to remember that the Nazis were engaged in far-reaching territorial conquests, not in restricting immigration or in fighting for local democratic autonomy. Are we supposed to believe that *leghisti* or *lepenistes* are incipient Nazis because they complain about the growth of the welfare state or are unwilling to expand their societies to include culturally alien immigrants?

Although these populists may be provincial or insufficiently cosmopolitan, theirs is not the evil that produced a

murderous Nazi empire embracing the European continent. Such decontextualisation, encountered daily in journalistic descriptions of "the new fascist threat," makes one wonder whether the slanderers have any idea of the expansionist dynamic embodied by the Third Reich or of the fascist corporatist welfare state vision. Remember the illiterate insolence of Charles Krauthammer, who in March 1992 decried Patrick Buchanan as a Hitlerite. Krauthammer pronounced the "N" word after learning that Buchanan opposed free trade and had a father who admired Francisco Franco. Such malicious pseudo-reasoning abounds in the verbal industries, which makes it unlikely that lying about fascism will soon end.

Paul Gottfried's latest book *After Liberalism* will be published by Princeton University Press in December. This article first appeared in *Chronicles* magazine.

The Politics of Accounting

David O'Regan looks at the Marxist critics of the accountancy profession

The notion that accounting has a 'political' dimension may seem surprising. To many, accounting is value-free territory. The arithmetic is objective. The accountant, of course, is aware of the many different ways of accounting for items and presenting them in financial statements, which can have huge impact on reported results. The creative accounting scandals of recent years illustrate this. He nonetheless has a tendency to view himself simply as a messenger who reports the numbers. The judgmental aspects of accounting seem

above all to be technical matters, for example whether to value an asset at historic cost or at current market price. In contrast to law, for example, accounting does not seem to be a subject in which philosophical judgments on man and society so obviously intrude.

Yet there is a body of New Left academics, disciples of Foucault, Marx and other leftist theorists, who identify in the social aspects of accounting mechanisms for sustaining existing power structures in society. They see accounting as an oppressor of disadvantaged groups by its assistance in

the maintenance of the *status quo* of capitalism, with all the evil consequences that this is deemed to imply. They also accuse accounting of stunting the emancipation and authenticity of the individual, by reducing him to a mere 'number', ripe for manipulation.

It is instructive to consider accounting's traditional intellectual standing before describing the New Left challenge. Accounting has only recently established itself as a serious academic discipline in Britain, and scholars in other areas still tend snootily to dismiss this *parvenu* subject. They view

accounting as little more than the mastery of the mechanics of double-entry bookkeeping, and the formalising of the results of these transactions into financial statements.

This view of accounting as a technical discipline is also reflected outside the university, where the “scoreboard” approach still dominates the accountant’s professional training, as encapsulated in the examinations for entry to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Accountants see themselves as practical, down-to-earth men and women. It is an unscholarly environment. Where is the reverence for books and learning characteristic, for example, of the legal profession? I recall one of my lecturers describing the Accounting Standard Board’s first attempts at a conceptual framework as ‘intellectual masturbation’.

This background partly explains why professional accounting has such a rudimentary conceptual basis for its practices. Such generally accepted accounting concepts as exist are rooted in common sense: there are no fancy metaphysical notions behind ideas such as the accruals principle. One of the key objectives of this concept is to encourage the matching of items with the accounting periods to which they most closely relate, so that profit cannot be distorted by the arbitrary allocation of transactions.

New Left academics, under the banner of ‘Critical Accounting’, have for a number of years been challenging the value-free, mechanical view of accounting. Acting in the classic manner of a fledgling academic subject, this movement borrows freely from better-established disciplines to glean some of their prestige. It adopts theory from sociology, political philosophy and literary criticism, and has sprouted its own journals such as *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, and *Accounting, Organizations and Society*. Most professional accountants, it must be emphasised, are completely unaware of this literature.

To get a flavour of this writing, the best introduction is probably the collection of essays edited by two academics from the London School of

Economics: Hopwood & Miller’s *Accounting as Social & Institutional Practice* (Cambridge, 1994). This is the better side of Critical Accounting writing. Some of these essays are erudite, thought-provoking, at times witty, often challenging, occasionally outrageous. Titles include *Writing, examining, disciplining: the genesis of accounting’s modern power*, *Governing the calculable person*, and *Early double-entry book-keeping and the rhetoric of the accounting equation*. One signal achievement of this literature is to introduce Foucault’s *Histoire de la sexualité* into the study of accounting. The thousands of accounting students who for years have groaned

In contrast to law, for example, accounting does not seem to be a subject in which philosophical judgments on man and society so obviously intrude

through dull lectures and worked through dry, number-crunching textbooks would be astonished to see their chosen subject in this light. It must be pointed out, however, that much Critical Accounting writing, particularly in the journals, is not of the standard in this collection.

The fundamental problem of Critical Accounting is not in its opening to discussion of the social and political nature of accounting: it is rather that these writers seem to share a set of contentious *a priori* assumptions. To get to the heart of this literature is a little like groping one’s way into a haystack, only to find its core largely hollow. The New Left accounting journals contain esoteric and arcane arguments between Marxist modernists and Foucauldian postmodernists; or between those who have obtained ‘insights’ from Gramsci, or from Habermas, and so on. Yet behind all this superficial bluster, it is clear that

these are the theological disputes of a not-so-broad church.

Critical Accounting theory stems from the ideologies, or related group of ideologies, of the radical redbrick professor. The Critical Accountant accuses — and convicts — accounting of accepting and reinforcing capitalistic and class structures in society. He therefore sees his task to be the ‘demystification’ of these hidden social structures, as a step towards reform. The literature is saturated with negative — often openly hostile — attitudes towards capitalism, free markets, profit, individualism, the accounting profession, multinational companies and current social arrangements. There are generally positive portrayals of collectivism, state control, egalitarianism, utopian social justice, and the professional academic. The tone of the polemic is often evangelical, as the Critical Accountant tries to strip away the reader’s assumed prejudices, so he can perceive how accounting acts as one tool among many in a network of repressive social structures underpinning class, race, and gender power inequalities. The reader is led towards a view of the illegitimacy of current social arrangements, and the way that they are deemed to stunt personal emancipation

The sources quoted in the literature clearly indicate the intellectual debts of the Critical Accountants — the main authorities invoked include Marx, Foucault, Derrida, Habermas and Gramsci. Few truly alternative perspectives are offered. The Critical Accountants occasionally drag into their texts a bogeyman from the ‘right’, a historical figure such as Adam Smith or Edmund Burke, or a modern member of New Left demonology such as Margaret Thatcher, but this is mainly to serve as a symbol of a discredited reactionary system. The attack on capitalism and the ‘hollowed-out state’ is aggressive and relentless. For example, one writer presents as self-evident the assertion that:

what is made visible — and what is not — in our society today is still overly reflective of a narrow, crude, individualistic, materialistic and capitalistic vision of life. It is a visibility which

helps to produce a repressive society and functions as a negating influence upon personal development and growth. This is an important criticism. On the whole, I would tend to agree with it. But it can be counter-argued that the social arrangements that would arise from the implementation of the Critical Accountants' dogmas would create far more repressive regimes. That counter-argument is not heard. Sometimes one is confronted by apocalyptic clarion calls for the acceptance of a Marxist order before violent revolution imposes one:

Marxist theory which seeks to change the world is intimidating. Social change is never easy. But the world in which we are living is becoming increasingly frightening and perhaps changing it might turn out to be the least scary option.

Again, the counter-argument that such social 'change' might jeopardise most of our basic freedoms is silenced. For these writers, the market is a mechanism of coercion rather than consensus.

The development of Critical Accounting represents a further maturing of accounting. At last there is thought-provoking writing on a subject that has traditionally been mind-numbingly dull. And it is a delight to witness a few long-overdue intellectual hand grenades lobbed into the smug environment of the accounting profession. There *are* issues to be discussed here — the social and political implications of accounting are not figments of the New Left imagination. The New Left's case that accounting is as much a social as a technical practice seems irrefutable. For example, a Marxist critic can point to accounting's reinforcement of the capitalist role allocated to labour, in that employee costs are charged in the profit and loss account as an expense, rather than being treated as an appropriation of profit.

The weakness of the New Left approach, however, is its subjectivity, and its revelatory and emotional tone. Those who feel sympathy for any of the conservative traditions — in the widest sense, including the libertarian wing — and who have benefited from reading Burke, Hayek, Nozick, Orwell, Popper, Scruton or Voegelin, to men-

tion a few, will be disappointed by Critical Accounting. Such writers rarely appear in Critical Accounting footnotes and bibliographies, unless as representatives of an ill-defined 'enemy'. One reads in these journals little scepticism of utopian state planning. And it would be sacrilegious to voice the notion that capitalism allows for wider diffusion of wealth and greater individual flourishing than any of the systems proposed by the ideologies of the New Left. We are encouraged to view society as riddled with illegitimate power structures, but there is no counterbalancing defence of Burkean notions of the loyalties and institutions that nurture civil society. There is little advocacy of consensual political arrangements, but rather of system-building and top-down reform. The spectre of totalitarianism goose-steps through the murkier pages of this literature.

The Critical Accountants are a relatively small group. In this rather esoteric world, they comment on each others' research, and fill their bibliographies with each others' writings. They sometimes portray themselves as a semi-subversive group, engaged in a *jihad* against mainstream prejudices through quasi-underground journals — an ironic echo of the East European dissident. But in truth it is a cosy world, typified by mutual reinforcement of a shared set of assumptions. Even such internal challenges as arise are confined within New Left terms of reference. For example, those who genuflect before Foucauldian notions of power and domination are unlikely to object to the following critique:

'Critical' accounting research is dominated more than it would surely like to be by white, male, western, Anglo-Saxon and middle-class researchers. The perspectives of, for example, women, the poor, the working class, ethnic minorities, those beyond the English-speaking world, those from 'developing' countries, those of the indigenous peoples... are surely still very much under-represented and underplayed if not entirely absent.

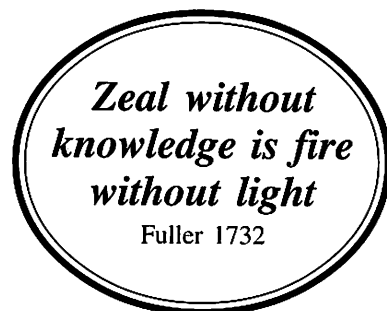
I am not, I must stress, in any way against the concept of Critical Accounting. Many on the right would share the critique of hard-nosed multinationals, gangster capitalism, corpo-

rate greed and exploitative working practices. A realistic assessment of the ugliness of modern post-industrial English society is not the exclusive property of the New Left. The right may also have a few targets of its own, such as the management guru, which appear infrequently in this literature. But it is time for a conservative challenge to some of the flimsier intellectual foundations of Critical Accounting. The terms of reference are being established by those who adhere to intellectual traditions which, when they have been imposed in the real world, have caused incalculable human suffering, from the destruction of the English education system, to the impoverishment of Eastern Europe, to the genocidal regime of Pol Pot. Anyone who delves into this literature will be struck by the torrent of ideology poured out by the self-appointed Critical Accounting priesthood. It is time for Critical Accounting to become more nuanced, less Manichean, equally critical of the hairy-arsed industrialist and the radical professor.

The New Left has thrown down the gauntlet. Where are the professional academics with the time and intellectual energy to challenge this New Left assault? In the politically correct environment of the modern university, is it career-damaging for a right-wing academic openly to challenge the left's hegemony? If so, perhaps it is necessary for the counter-revolution to emerge from that most unlikely source, from that most dowdy and dull of collectives, the accountancy profession itself.

[All quotations are taken from one issue of the journal *Critical Perspectives On Accounting* Volume 8 Numbers 1/2 (February/April 1997).]

David O'Regan is a chartered accountant.



How Global Corporatism has Destroyed Russia

Rodney Atkinson

When the Soviet Union and its satellites rejected the communist system their peoples anticipated the dawn of that energetic, liberal entrepreneurial capitalism which had made the West so wealthy.

But that enterprising capitalism based on widely spread individual wealth for which market economics is merely a system of continuous challenge had long disappeared in the 'capitalist' West. In its place had come that state-manipulated, high taxing, corporatist capitalism which had emerged from the destruction of widespread individual and family wealth. It is not market economics which produces wealth but individuals, families and entrepreneurs and their *personal responsibilities*. But decades of inflation, inheritance taxes and growing State interventions and ownership had already replaced that free, democratic, organic system of social and economic responsibility. Even the attempts to privatise western state industries had done little more than provide profits for the Exchequer and establish exploitative monopolies to the private profit of cliques of executives and the politicians who enjoyed the reliability of taxing monopoly profits.

When wealth is transferred from responsible capital owners by the power of the State to those whose only skill is in the spending of it, and from individuals and families whose wealth is taxed to corporations which are immune to such taxation then the bulk of capital becomes the plaything of those who neither created it nor truly own it.

The new corporatist capitalists in big business are characterised by their ability to exploit and bypass those who in

theory own the capital (shareholders and taxpayers). They literally 'pay themselves'. No true capitalist was ever so powerful since other capitalists and competing companies were a perpetual challenge to his *personal capital*. If he failed he was bankrupt. If the modern pseudo capitalist fails he receives a massive package of compensation and pension rights often amounting to millions of pounds.

The new corporatism is at best a compromise with socialism and at worst just another form of socialism, with company executives acting as trade unionists, except without the need to strike to impose their will. In true corporatist style they even recruit the State to provide subsidies for their robbery of capital owners — as in the preferential tax treatment for employee shares and option rights. Note how option rights never give the option of sharing in losses, only profits. No wonder, as *The Times* reported recently, '...employee share ownership is a perfect compromise between communism and the free market'. (Note once again the grotesque misunderstanding that 'market economics' is the alternative rather than capitalism!) *The Times* went on to report that that compromise 'was given formal blessing by Beijing in 1995 when it was described as making employees become masters of the enterprises'. Does that strike you as your definition of capitalism?

It was of course a similar 'compromise' which — following the socialist revolutionary upheavals of post-war Germany — characterised the Weimar Republic and which provided 1930s Fascism with both the desperate electorate which brought it to power and the economic structures for its abso-

lute control of German politics, economics, business and social life.

So it was this most dangerous kind of 'capitalism' which in the early 1990s was presented to Russia and the newly emancipated nations of eastern Europe. Even those cut off from western liberalism for 40 or 70 years had understood that a natural accompaniment of capitalism (which gave so much freedom and responsibility to individuals, families and communities) was the democratic vote, sackable governments and free parliamentary debate. But in the place of this idealism the ex-Soviet citizens saw descending upon them the massed ranks of the IMF, the European Union, German banks with government guaranteed money, LSE economists, British social democrats, western civil servants and the same spoon-fed, State-subsidised corporations which had done so much to destroy wealth and true entrepreneurship in the West.

In no other organisation, outside collapsing Japan, is this anti-liberal corporatism so well represented as in the institutions, attitudes and political machinations of the 'European' Union. We now see in the chaos of Russian political economy the fruits of the beliefs and philosophy of the European Union — the 'country called Europe' as they call it in Brussels.

Vital to the health of true liberal capitalism are not just competing individuals and companies defined and protected by law, but free trading nations defined by their sovereignty and operating not in collectivist blocks or under the control of globalist capital but under an international rule of law and trading rules.

'All peoples have the right to self

determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'. The words are from the *United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966*. The reality in 1997 is that within the so-called 'European Union' what were once free, democratic nations have been (secretly and undemocratically) turned into the provinces of a new supranational power.

The fundamental system of control which has brought about this European tragedy is Corporatism. Collectives of capital and labour, in collaboration with State power, plan and order the social economic and political life of the people. They despise bottom up, democratic accountability and the freedom of individuals to develop their independence and responsibilities without the patronage of State and corporate or trade union power. Collectives of capital and labour, subsidised by *and manipulative of* the State, must inevitably seek to control prices then interest then capital then trade and then the nations themselves — through war if necessary but preferably (as now) through covert constitution-destroying agreements signed under various extra-constitutional devices like 'Royal Prerogative' and behind the backs of the electorate.

When the Soviet Union broke up (after a refusal by Russia to finance the kind of federal structure now created in the European Union!) free peoples who had defeated the communist political economy were hungry for the capitalist enterprise of which they had heard so much. But instead of free market capitalism based on competing companies, 'capitalist' countries sent those who did not represent nor even understand these concepts.

In the place of entrepreneurs came socialist or social democrat economists from some of our more unworldly universities. In place of the owners of small competitive businesses came executives (ie employees) of large multinational corporations. In place of proprietorial capitalists and individual investors came large international

banks. Such banks, having no money of their own, cannot *invest* it in the form of equity, they can only *lend* it short term. Note how these 'advisers' so well reflect the kind of people who planned and implemented the anti-democratic institutions of the European Union.

Needless to say there also came western politicians, most of whom were prisoners of the multinational

***...ex-Soviet citizens
saw descending upon
them the massed
ranks of the IMF, the
European Union,
German banks with
government
guaranteed money,
LSE economists,
British social
democrats, western
civil servants and the
same spoon-fed,
State-subsidised
corporations which
had done so much to
destroy wealth and
true entrepreneurship
in the West***

corporatists who now have far more influence than mere voters. This merry band sought large, globalist solutions for the poor ex-communists, earning vast fees for arranging \$billion loans to the Russian State and large corporations (still run by 'former' communists). These 'reformed' communists suddenly realised that the methods of corporatist capital were similar to those of the old soviet system. The western corporatists and politicians told their new eastern friends that privatising monopolies was very profitable — *for the State*. They told how in the West

the State in fact was now a dominant player in the economy — in many ways even more powerful after privatisation than before (taxing billions of private sector monopoly profits had replaced billions of State industry losses!). They told of ways of taxing and then introducing tax allowances to 'direct' private sector investment. They told of privatising those activities which would really be part of the State but which one could sell for money and yet still control politically. They showed how, even if there were no immediate improvements in industry you could (with the right marketing, aided by the State which stood to profit so much) sell shares to the masses at a good price, based on hopes for the future! Corporatists showed that, far from worrying about the power of the voters, corporate executives had direct access to policy-makers in the State administration — especially in Brussels, where the ex-communists could readily see how much they all had in common.

As a result of this combination of communist apparatchiks and corporatist businessmen what could have been a liberated economy and polity has become instead a corrupt oligarchy with the most craven mass media either metaphorically or in many cases literally bought by business interests. Oneximbank and an oil company, Lukoil, bought Izvestia (which, following the end of communism, had enjoyed a brief period of objective journalism for the intelligentsia). How quickly they have learned the methods of western corporatism.

As the British commentator John Lloyd wrote in *The Times*, Boris Yeltsin 'achieved re-election because he mobilised the financial support of most of Russia's leading bankers'. Of course this 'generosity' had to be repaid — with massive bank interests in industrial assets (the most dangerous element in, for example, German corporatism) and even positions in government (for example Vladimir Potanin of Oneximbank and Boris Berezovsky of Avtovaz). How similar to the employment by the Blair government in the United Kingdom of

Lord Simon, formerly Chief Executive of British Petroleum, and Martin Taylor, former Chief Executive of Barclays Bank. Meanwhile British Airways, another supporter of the destruction of British national sovereignty which recently removed the British flag from its aeroplanes, is run by a friend and *confidant* of Prime Minister Tony Blair.

As Lloyd pointed out about Russia 'few seem to find the revelations of corruption shocking since there is seen to be no effective way of stopping it'. (Not that we in Britain are immune. Here the 'Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards' refuses to investigate evidence of corporatist corruption in the present Labour and former Conservative governments.)

How exactly this process of the corruption of embryo democracy and free market capitalism in the East is mirrored in the destruction of

democratic nations in the West may be disputed. But, as Lloyd writes in *The Times*, 'money can still write many of its own rules but it has witnesses and it cannot wholly control them'.

Boris Yeltsin's sacking of his youthful, reformist government and the recall of the old fashioned, interventionist communists-turned-corporatist-capitalists is the latest attempt by the new corporatist class which governs Russia to rescue themselves from the consequences of their own illiberal system. How ironic that they owe its existence to those social democrats and 'liberals' in the West who advised them and provided lavish funding for their hideous version of 'capitalism'.

The high tensions in the world today are the result of the spread of that system of political and corporate control which Japan, Germany, the new Russia and of course the attitudes and institutions of the European Union

have so long and so well embodied. It is only the stock markets of London and New York (where there remains still some semblance of that Anglo Saxon, free trading liberal internationalism so despised by the European Union) which stay reasonably bouyant, although in the international meltdown occasioned by global corporatism no market is now immune.

How ludicrous that, as our economic systems prove to be the least corrupted, we (like the Russians) have surrendered our constitution, nation and parliament to the clutches of those who have failed.

Rodney Atkinson's *Europe's Full Circle* will shortly be published in a third edition.

Colonialism

Donald Moore remembers Singapore

I arrived in Singapore in 1946 when it was emerging from the hands of Military Government and Japanese prisoners-of-war were still sweeping the streets; I left thirty years later when Singapore was no longer a British colony, nor even an internally self-governing entity, but a sovereign independent state admired and respected throughout the world. Today, two decades on, I look back on British colonial achievements there as the culmination of an inspired and infinitely precious process. Indeed, I long ago reached the conclusion that, apart from the example of a few modern democracies, British colonialism offered the most fair-minded and decent form of government the world has ever known. True, my experience was limited to Southeast Asia — Singapore, Malaysia and to some extent Hong Kong —

and some may hold this to be too small a sample to constitute a platform for pontification, but given the homogeneity of British colonial policy and practice the objection holds little water.

Fashionable attitudes today insist that the Empire was an evil conspiracy based upon cruelty, exploitation and greed, little more than a large-scale smash-and-grab raid. Like the belief that the earth is flat, this opinion is so at variance with the facts that one wonders how it can possibly be held by intelligent people. Of course, since the colonial empire has not existed in any meaningful sense for some thirty or forty years, many of its critics are too young to have experienced it, and thus, in a literal sense, do not know what they are talking about. It may be objected that when historians speak, say,

of the Roman Empire, they are, by the same argument, just as benighted — something that is clearly not the case. But even the most eminent historian might agree to listen to someone who'd actually marched with Caesar's legions. Not so the cool young bloods of modernity who remain impervious to anything but the received opinion of their tendency; anyone who was there at the time is but a relic of unacceptable events.

Imperialism, they will say, was wrong — as if wrongness were an absolute condition surviving intact from one era to another. Our predecessors believed in bloody retribution for the smallest theft, looked upon slavery as an acceptable fact of life, were certain that heretics should be burned at the stake, and held unflinchingly to the doctrine that an eye (at least) should be

forfeited for an eye. We no longer countenance such behaviour, but that is not to say that it was not deemed to be beneficial when it was *de rigueur*: in fact, in the context of the time, it was seen to be a positive good. Human behaviour of past ages might not be to our taste, but it is infantile to judge it by the standards of today. Moral imperatives might be immutable; their application over time clearly is not.

Another facile assumption of our time sees imperialism as an exclusively British idea, and therefore a peculiar kind of British horror story; in fact, it was shared by virtually every country in Europe — all of whose rulers and peoples believed themselves to be engaged in honourable and necessary work — God's work, in fact — the God all Europe worshipped. Hadn't Jesus told them to go forth and spread the Gospel? If Christian missionary zeal wasn't the driving force of Empire, it was certainly a vital component — never more so than in the Spanish conquests. Indeed, it can be argued that if the tree of European imperialism had not been so firmly planted in the fertile soil of Christianity, it might never have thrived so mightily. But neither trade nor church could prosper among the anarchic or economically backward heathen until the land they occupied was taken over and made safe. The trader and the missionary were therefore joined by a third partner — the soldier. And God looked down on the handiwork of his European triumvirate and saw that it was good.

Worldwide empire could not, however, be sustained without the support of naval forces: merchant and passenger ships, each with its quota of nuns, brothers, vicars and bishops, needed to be protected; piracy which reduced oceans to killing fields could not be tolerated; armies were useless unless they could be transported; and ships were the vehicles that showed the flag whenever it was necessary to impress the natives. Naval power ensured the security of the arteries which carried the two-way traffic of manufactures and primary produce and became the adhesive that glued empires together. And to this day mariners acknowledge

the crucifix — long removed — which once brooded over the quarter-deck of every man-of-war: God protected those in peril on the sea.

Like all other large-scale institutions, empires were never free of the tyranny of unintended consequences: colonial armies that marched to save the bacon of missionaries held hostage beyond the safety of the imperial perimeter often forgot to retreat; naval detachments that sailed into foreign harbours to rescue merchant adventurers tempted by a deal too far were inclined to plant the flag there while they were at it; imperial territory was often extended to render particular enclaves less vulnerable, a move which nearly always rendered other enclaves even more vulnerable, requiring yet another extension in a nearly endless progression; attack in the field by a rival power led, more often than not, to the appropriation of the disputed territory, if only to prevent a repetition; and the history of European expansion abroad is replete with stories of massive areas of real estate being traded, snatched, or occupied by one power in order to deny them to another. In an age when it took half a year for news to travel from one side of the globe to the other, imperial agents were not above acquiring territory on behalf of the Centre before the Centre even knew it existed, and would not have wanted it if it had. Finally, the shape of empires changed in sympathy with the changing face of Europe — and that changed all the time.

Indeed, the single most important fact about the British Empire — for example — is that no-one actually willed it: it came into being like a jigsaw, piece by piece, haphazardly, sometimes with London's connivance, sometimes in the teeth of its opposition: trade was welcome, proselytisation could not be faulted, but who the devil was going to pay for yet another garrison? In fact, western imperialism was a largely spontaneous movement of talented, aggressive, God-fearing people from Europe into the empty and/or undeveloped areas of the world which their captains and adventurers had discovered. No matter how the expansion occurred, whether under the official-sounding

auspices of the East India Company, or as a result of the private initiative of people like the white Rajahs of Sarawak, colonialists were expression of the spirit of their times. The empires of Europe which followed were the progenitors of the multi-national corporation, the global society, and the international paraphernalia of overseas development and disaster relief — and probably did a great deal more good. They were the most natural innovation in the world, and if they hadn't existed, someone would have had to invent them. They were the creatures of their times, as inevitable as the Black Death or the Model T Ford.

It is a commonplace of the pro-imperialist argument to point to the construction of roads and railways, docks and ports, bridges and ferries, schools and hospitals, clinics and sewers — the basic infrastructure of a modern state. And these massive facilities were indeed essential if economic progress was to be made in the colonies, but they would all have been of smaller moment without the services of the men who actually made the empire function — the British colonial administrator and those who worked with him in every branch of government and the public services: health, education, the police, the administration of justice, municipal utilities and so on. If the British version of empire was more successful than most — and it was; if, at its end, we were not reviled — as others were; and if, when departure was imminent, we left a governmental structure in place and didn't fight a profitless colonial war — as others did, then these and countless other benefits were due in large measure to the men and women who went out to the colonies and provided the life-blood of decent, honest government. They derived no personal gain from commerce, had no hand in bribery and corruption, organised no private scams, built no palaces: they simply did their job wherever they were sent until they retired — possibly with an honour or two, a title perhaps if they had climbed to the heights of a Governorship, and a pension if, in the early days of empire,

they lived long enough to enjoy it. Their purpose was to rule where little rule had existed before, not only for the benefit of Britain and British trade, but for the benefit of the people they ruled: the two, we had the wit to realise, were indivisible.

These, however, are the people whose work is denigrated with particular fervour by the *bien pensants* of our time, in thrall to a philosophy that rejects, even ridicules, all that has been worthwhile in our history. For the most part empire-builders came from the middle classes, were educated in public schools, grammar schools and universities not yet reduced to the status of hobby-classes; they were trained to take pride in their country, its achievements, and its empire, and at all times to be loyal to the King or the Queen who stood at the apex of their society. If from time to time they backslid at school, they were given lines by prefects who themselves had once backslid, and if that did not work they were caned and caned again. As young people (if not always as adults) they went to church and prayed for God's grace and the Royal Family, and on Armistice Day stood stock-still for two minutes and on Armistice Sunday sang *Onward Christian Soldiers*. And if they weren't exactly steeped in history they knew enough about the past of their people to recognise the great and to honour the dead. Almost inevitably their characters were steeled in war — if, that is, they survived it. They knew their place in society — as almost everyone did in those days — contributed to charity, honoured their mother and father, and probably voted Conservative. When they married, they looked for someone of their own kind, and brought up their children to be loyal upholders of the traditions of their class and their people. They often played cricket.

It is so easy now to mock! But these were the men who went forth into the world and brought forth wondrous transformations that are beyond the wit of today's slavish followers of fashion to comprehend. How, in the climate of political correctness, are they to be defended? It would be misleading merely to generalise about their

achievements: they deserve better than that. On the other hand, to deal with them at all comprehensively would call not for an article but a book. Perhaps, then, it must suffice to look at some of the colonial conditions that I experienced in Singapore.

When Raffles arrived on the island of Singapura in 1819 it was a largely uninhabited swamp with an heroic history lost in the mists of time. A handful of fishermen lived by the sea, otherwise there was nothing but jungle and mangrove. Raffles' purpose was

Another facile assumption of our time sees imperialism as an exclusively British idea, and therefore a peculiar kind of British horror story; in fact, it was shared by virtually every country in Europe — all of whose rulers and peoples believed themselves to be engaged in honourable and necessary work

two-fold: to establish a free port where trade could flourish, and to set up in opposition to the Dutch who had established themselves, in his words, as 'the exclusive sovereigns of the Eastern Seas'. The Dutch were not given to free trade, and from the moment the British flag was raised on its murky foreshore, thus 'breaking the spell of Mynheer's plans' (Raffles again), Singapore flourished and has continued to flourish ever since. People, notably the Chinese, flocked to it, more than happy to accept a colonial dispensation in exchange for the less than happy conditions they had left behind. No-one

was dispossessed by Singapore's founding or its subsequent development; no-one was oppressed; no-one was obliged to go against his own conscience. The new arrivals were freer than they had ever been. And they stayed, generation after generation, even unto the present day. Quite a few of them became Christians.

They did not have a vote, of course — no-one had a vote. Democracy did not exist, nor did anyone at the time think it should — only when the possibility of democracy was mooted did the vicious struggle for power begin. But if the populace was denied the chance to dabble in politics, it enjoyed from the beginning the opportunity to become rich. The British were glad when their subjects became rich, for what better advertisement could there be for the success of their enterprise? And the Chinese who became rich were especially glad, not only because they knew how to enjoy their wealth, but because no-one begrudged them their good fortune, not even their own people who had failed to become rich. The Chinese have never regarded a millionaire as an object of hatred (at least, not until the Marxists got at them), but as a person to be admired and, if possible, emulated.

Nor, as Singapore got into its stride, was anyone denied an education, nor were they forced into unacceptable modes of instruction. Chinese children went to Chinese schools where they were taught in Chinese; Indian children, similarly, were taught in their original mother-tongue in Indian schools, and Malay children attended Malay schools to be taught in Malay and given the rudiments of Islam. For those, however, who sought to escape the limitations of the vernacular — and many did — the government, often in association with religious groups, provided English schools where Chinese, Indian and Malay and even some English children were taught in English and sat, eventually, the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate, one of the keys to a betterment of prospects, and some went on, by payment or by scholarship, to universities abroad. Apart from the Government English Schools, Catholic, Church of England, and

Methodist schools proliferated throughout Singapore and Malaya, all remarkable, not only for the quality of their instruction, but for the fortitude of their teachers — nuns, brothers, parsons, preachers and laymen who resisted their every impulse towards religious engineering; it was enough that their charges should grow up with some learning and a proper moral sense. Small fees were attached to schooling — students paid for their own textbooks, for example — but these were never beyond the resources of the most humble parents, and who is to say that education in England would not be improved if there were some charge at the point of delivery?

Before he left for England in 1824, Raffles devoted much energy to the founding of his institution of learning which was to become Singapore's senior secondary school — Raffles Institution. He harassed local notables until they subscribed to its cost, and harranged them for good measure at a meeting to launch his scheme. His lengthy discourse concluded with this astonishing peroration: 'If commerce brings wealth to our shores, it is the spirit of literature and philanthropy that teaches us how to enjoy it for the noblest purposes. It is this which has made Britain go forth among nations, strong in her native light, to dispense blessings to all around her. If the time shall come when her Empire shall have passed away, these monuments of her virtue will endure. Let it be still the boast of Britain to write her name in characters of light; let her not be remembered as the tempest whose course was desolation, but as the gale of spring. Let the Sun of Britain arise on these islands, not to wither and scorch them in its fierceness but like that of her own genial skies whose mild and benignant influence is hailed and blessed by all who feel its beams.' Grandiloquent bombast? I suppose it is — but it wasn't then. Nor is its import now. Nor was there ever a shortage of others to follow in the way he had pointed. And did he not, even then, entertain the vision that one day the Empire might wither away, its work accomplished?

Racial inequality — yes, it existed, but few people seemed to worry about it. The division — if such there was — between the British and 'local people' was a not unnatural situation: the British were, after all, in charge. If, as the officer class, they received certain benefits, they were no more resented by the generality of people than soldiers, say, object to the better living standards in the officers' mess — or, for that matter, the sergeants' mess. In any case, so many of the subject people were now far richer than the masters. Miscegenation was frowned upon, every bit as much by Asians as by Europeans, but so it was nearly everywhere at the time: it was not a purely colonial phenomenon. Religious freedom was total; the press was freer than it is today. The remedies of the law were available to all; judges were beyond contamination. Health and housing were vital concerns of government, and none of its new high-rise apartment blocks was vandalised.

When the British returned to Singapore after the war, they referred to their arrival as the 'Liberation'; resident Asians who had endured the Japanese for more than four years persisted with the more accurate 'Re-occupation'; but by then Britain's stock was not what it had been and the Empire was already in retreat. Yet I never met an Asian man or woman who, when the time came, was agitating for freedom from colonial rule, who saw me or any other Briton as enemy — at least, not on political grounds. When the British arrived in Singapore they attracted a hard-working peasant people; when they left many of the descendants of those original peasants had become middle class: doctors, engineers, lecturers, lawyers, architects — the whole professional gamut of the modern state — some educated in Singapore, others at universities in a dozen different countries. Today, per capita, Singapore is one of the richest countries in the world — and lest it be thought that this is because Singapore became independent, it is as well to remember that when still a colony, Hong Kong became even richer.

How did all this monumental national

achievement come to be so denigrated in our own country, so shameful that it is scarcely mentioned in our schools — unless accompanied by ridicule and innuendo? How did the Empire, something of which we should be proud, become a dirty word in the mouths of our children's teachers? How did the brains of the political correctness brigade become so addled that they see British expansion overseas as an evil no less gruesome than that of slavery? I have no answer to this beyond that propounded by Nietzsche and quoted in Samuel Francis's fascinating 'Letter from America' in the Autumn issue of the *Review*: 'The values of the weak prevail because the strong have taken them over as devices of leadership.' Francis agrees that this is cryptic and goes on to elucidate, maintaining that all the ills we perceive in contemporary society, 'the weakening of families, the erosion of communities, the inversion of sexual morality, and all the other chants in the litany of decline' are 'also signs of the triumph of the dominant culture' (the media, the universities and national politics) 'which regards them as indications of impending liberation from traditional restraints and the defeat of its adversary, traditional culture. The values of the weak, the weird, the excluded, and the repressed prevail because those who inhabit the dominant culture have taken them over as devices *by which their own leadership is entrenched.*' He could have added to his litany of decline disgust with our past and the pleasures to be derived from rolling about in a morass of pseudo-guilt.

Now, the question is, how did we get this way? And how is the movement towards the abyss to be halted? Well, the men who constituted the backbone of empire would have had an answer to that.

Donald Moore was a publisher and impresario in Singapore. His latest book is a novel about the fall of Singapore.

The Middle East Propaganda War

David M Jacobs

Anyone reading the World's press or listening to radio broadcasts during the past decade would get the idea that Israel is one of the worst violators of human rights. This impression would have been backed up by the fact that Israel has been condemned at the United Nations more than any other country — more than China, Iraq or Iran. However anyone with direct knowledge of Israel or who has taken some trouble to analyse the facts would have realised that Israel's human rights record, and standard of democracy, is far higher than that prevailing in any of its neighbouring states.

How has this extraordinary situation come about? The clue lies in the way that the Israeli government and Jewish communities throughout the world have responded to the enemy propaganda onslaught. They have tried to defend themselves by using Public Relations. Now Public Relations were designed for purely peace time, mainly commercial, purposes. In a conflict situation, for which they were not intended, they are useless. The Israeli Foreign Ministry even calls the department handling counter propaganda the Department of *Hasbarah*. This Hebrew word, always mistranslated by Israeli diplomats as 'information', actually means 'explanation'. This shows the subconscious defensive role that they take when they 'explain' themselves in public.

The problem is that propaganda or Psychological Warfare, PW for short, is an effective weapon of war, and has little in common with PR. In fact during the Second World War the Americans found that PR specialists tended to be ineffective at propaganda (see Daniel Lerner, *Psychological Warfare against Nazi Germany*, Cambridge Mass., 1971, p.71).

The purpose of PW is the same as that of all warfare. It is in fact one of the arms of a war machine, and has been referred to as the Fourth Arm, following the Army, Navy and Air Arms. The aim of war as summarised by Clausewitz is 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.' PW is more gentle. It employs persuasion and psychological manipulation to achieve the same end. The ancient Chinese sage Sun Tzu, who lived in the Fifth Century BC, who is often considered to be the greatest of all writers on war, wrote: 'To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.' This statement is a good summary of modern propaganda warfare.

PW is operated through Front Organisations and Agents of Influence. There are three types of Front Organisation. Firstly the overt organisations such as the now defunct Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding or the British Soviet Friendship Society. Secondly the covert ones such as Medical Aid to the Palestinians, which appears to be about giving help to suffering Palestinians whilst its real aim is to rally support for the Arab and Palestinian campaign against Israel. The third type is the infiltrated organisation. This is where agents of influence have infiltrated an organisation set up for another purpose, and then used it to promote their own cause. The Arabs have been very successful in infiltrating many charities and Church groups in this way. Government departments may also find themselves subject to this type of treatment. There are two types of agents of influence. Firstly the 'useful idiot'. This uncomplimentary term was coined by Lenin to describe the kind of naive

ass, often a person in a prominent position, who fell for his propaganda and could be manipulated to publicly aid his campaign. The second type is the conscious agent who fully understands what he is doing and works behind the scenes. Often referred to in the press as a 'mole', he has nothing to do with espionage and his job is to influence policy.

There are various actions that propagandists have to carry out. Some of which need to be described here. One of these is Concealment of Motive, that is pretending to be supporting something, but in reality promoting something else. Next comes Demonisation, this is an unpleasant operation which involves vilification of the opposing side. Then comes an obvious operation, namely Repetition. This is vital in getting ideas across to the public by continuously returning to a simple message. Finally comes a complicated concept known as the 'Holy Phrase'. Lasswell (*Propaganda Technique In World War*, New York 1972, p.66) says of this: 'A propagandist must always be alert to capture the holy phrase which crystallizes public aspiration about it, and under no circumstance permit the enemy to enjoy its exclusive use and wont.'

The great masters of PW were the Soviets. The department concerned with what the Soviets called 'Active Measures' was the First Chief Directorate of the KGB. From there were run all the agents of influence and the front organisations. They were extraordinarily effective in getting their propaganda across. It was they who invented the concept of *dezinformatsia*, or disinformation. This was not exactly lying, but the putting out of distorted information to confuse, or alter, an opponent's policy.

The reason for the Soviet involvement

in Arab PW is that the Arab defeat of 1967 was felt by the Soviets to be a major defeat for Soviet policy and a triumph for the United States. The Soviets also had a traditional Russian reason for supporting the Arabs. For two hundred years the Russians had wanted a 'warm water port' which would give them the opportunity of operating freely in the Mediterranean without worrying about an opponent blocking the Dardanelles. There were a number of Arab ports which could be ideal for this role. Before 1967 Arab propaganda had been totally ineffective. After 1967 with Soviet help Arab PW increased in effectiveness by leaps and bounds. The Arabs were able to use the Soviet front organisations for their own PW as well as many of their agents of influence. Some of the most effective of these were the church organisations, in particular the World Council of Churches which had been set up in Prague in 1948. From that base it was possible to infiltrate not only other church bodies, but the various international charities, especially those giving aid to the Third World.

We now come to the core element in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, which is the Islamic dimension. Mohammed got his basic monotheistic ideas from the Jewish and Christian tribes living around him in the Hejaz. He therefore felt that he should get support for his new religion from the Jews. When this failed to materialise, it led to bitterness. Islam's relationship with Jews and Judaism thus started off in the Seventh Century very badly, with attacks by the nascent Muslim war band on the local Jewish tribes in the Hejaz, eventually driving all the Jews out of the region. Following these events came the very rapid creation of a mighty Moslem empire stretching from the Indus in the East to the Atlantic in the West and including virtually the whole of the Iberian peninsula, its expansion only being stopped by Charles Martel at Poitiers in 732. This vast conquest took place within a century of Mohammed's revelation. The Moslems regarded the territory they had conquered as the House of Islam and considered it inalienable. The territory outside was regarded as pertaining to

the House of War.

With this conquest came the regulation of the status of the non-Moslems, more particularly the Christians and the Jews, within the Domain of Islam. These were regarded as People of the Book as they already had scriptures of their own. They were given an inferior status as *dhimmi*s or protected people. They were protected as long as they accepted this secondary status towards their Moslem overlords. The pact, dating from the Eighth Century, under which this was laid down was known as the Pact of Omar. The Jews were automatically regarded as inferior to the Christians as, unlike the Christians, there were no Jewish military powers against whom the Moslem forces were fighting.

Islam and the Arabs had traditional PW techniques long before the modern concept of propaganda had been invented. There are two concepts in particular. These are the idea of *taqiya*, or dissimulation, and that of the *hila*, or ruse. *Taqiya* implies outward conformity to alien customs whilst remaining faithful to Muslim beliefs. Thus the Arabs are able to maintain outward agreement with Western concepts of international law and practice, whilst keeping faith with the Islamic tradition which says that Israel is a *dhimmi* state and stands on land which is part of the Domain of Islam, and therefore must be removed. The doctrine of the *hila* is based on the saying of the Prophet Mohammed when he stated 'War is a series of actions for deceiving the enemy'. Another statement by the general and politician Al-Muhallab in the generation following that of Mohammed was: 'Have the heart to use deception in war, for it enables you to arrive at your goal more certainly than in a bloody body to body battle.'

The combination of traditional ideas of *taqiya* and the *hila* combined with Soviet *dezinformatsia* have enabled the Arabs to run rings round, not only the Jews and Israelis, but the whole of the West.

The reason that I stated that the Islamic component constitutes the core of the Arab-Israeli Conflict now becomes clear. It is essentially the re-

sentment of Islam at the rule of the Jews over part of what they regard as the Domain of Islam, not only that but by setting up a Jewish state in such an area, defeating several Muslim armies, and ruling over Muslims, the Jews have abrogated their *dhimmi* status and thus torn up the Pact of Omar. It is this, not the percentage of Israeli withdrawal on the West Bank, which has brought about the sense of Moslem fury and humiliation, which is what the conflict is about. By making the World think that the conflict is about the Palestinians, or the minutiae of Oslo, is thus an excellent demonstration of the PW doctrine of Concealment of Motive.

The term Palestine is a post-Biblical expression. It was originally coined by the Romans following the fierce wars that they had to fight against the Jews in the First and Second Centuries AD. In the early part of the century the concept of Palestine was automatically associated in everybody's mind with the Jews. This continued throughout the 1940s. In 1938 when George Antonius wrote his famous book 'The Arab Awakening', in support of the Arab Nationalist position, he made no mention of the existence of a Palestinian People, because at that time such a concept had not come into being. The first moves in this direction were made at an Arab League Council meeting in Cairo in March 1959, and in September 1963 the Council appointed Ahmed Shuqairi as the 'representative of Palestine' to the Arab League. This was the same man who, as the representative of Syria, had said in the Security Council in May 1956 that 'It is common knowledge that Palestine is nothing but Southern Syria.' In October 1965 the PLO was still being referred to by the Arab states as representing 'the Arab people of Palestine'. It was not until 1974 that the PLO was invited to participate in a General Assembly debate as 'representing the Palestinian People'. The PLO had managed to gain a platform within the United Nations normally reserved for sovereign states. It subsequently built an impressive power base at the UN, including the establishment in 1977 of a 'Special Unit on Palestinian Rights'.

This meant that the UNICs (United Nations Information Centres) throughout the world were forced to carry PLO propaganda. The final passing of the name Palestine to the Arabs came when the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in September 1993 stated that 'the Government of Israel has decided to recognise the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian People...' The Arabs had captured the Jewish 'Holy Phrase'. The Israelis however seemed sublimely unaware that anything had happened, in what had been a brilliant Arab PW operation carried across several decades. The result of this particular PW operation in the military and political spheres has been considerable. It means that the Israelis instead of having merely a frontier problem with the neighbouring Arab states are confronted with a land and people which is virtually coterminous with their own. The PLO issued its Covenant calling for the destruction of Israel in 1968. This, though they agreed to change it at Oslo, has never been changed. In 1974 the Palestine National Council had issued a 10-point programme, in which Article 8 had stated that 'the Palestinian national authority, after its establishment, will struggle for the unity of the confrontation states for the sake of completing the liberation of all Palestinian soil and as a step on the path of comprehensive Arab unity.' This doctrine has been reiterated many times by Arafat and Palestinian officials since Oslo, but only to their own people. To the West they say something rather different. This is why, until these ideas have been genuinely given up, any withdrawals by Israel constitute a foolhardy strategic risk. However the Israelis seem unable to get this point across to the outside World, nor even to many of their own people, particularly to those on the Left.

One of the aims of a good PW campaign is to get behind your opponents' guard. Here the Peace Campaign comes in. Targeted at the Left Wing of both the Israeli and wider Jewish communities it has had a lot of success. The desperate desire of all Israelis and Jews for peace has been successfully exploited by the Arabs, who have copied

the old Soviet Peace Campaigners. It is interesting to note that in Daniel Lerner's book (see above) on PW written originally in 1947, he wrote:

'The will to resist dissolves into a desire for 'peace soon', and finally crumbles into a desire for 'peace now'.' It is interesting to note that these words were used many years before the Israeli Peace Now movement came into being. Although Peace Now itself is very much a minority movement in Israel, its influence is widespread, and many of the Left refer to themselves as the 'Peace Camp', which gives the impression that only they want peace. In their desperation these people have swallowed the PLO propaganda line put forward to the West. The Peace Now propaganda line gets widely reported in the Western media, and helps to undermine the Israeli government's position.

Another facet of the Israeli Left is its secularism. Because they themselves have largely abandoned Judaism, they cannot accept that Arab policy has an Islamic basis. This enables the PLO to emphasise more effectively the Palestinian Nationalist position. Though undoubtedly a Palestinian identity has been created now, while Article 12 of the Palestine National Covenant stresses that this is just temporary, the ultimate loyalty remains to Islam. The PLO regularly uses Christians to front their propaganda operations. The Christians are a tiny minority in the Arab population and need, for their own political security, to keep in with the Muslims. By using them the PLO is able to emphasise the nationalist position, which the Israeli Left, as well as the international Left who share their secularist attitudes, easily swallow.

An important development in the propaganda war has been the affair of Mordechai Vanunu. He was convicted of high treason by publicising Israel's nuclear secrets abroad. High treason in time of war in virtually all other countries, besides Israel, carries the death penalty. Vanunu was thus very lucky that the country he betrayed was Israel. Instead of being sentenced to death he received a long prison sentence. Nonetheless a huge campaign

was launched to free him. It was presented as a humanitarian campaign, but its prime purpose was to deprive Israel of her nuclear deterrent. The 'Campaign to Free Vanunu and for a Nuclear-Free Middle East' is another example of the PW principle of Concealment of Motive. Israel is the only country in the Middle East with a nuclear deterrent. The object of the campaign is to shift the balance in favour of the Arabs and Iran with their much larger conventional forces. The campaign, apart from the usual CND crowd, was operated through the 'useful idiot' type of agent of influence. Many of these were actors, who can be very useful in this role, being as articulate as they are politically ill-informed.

In order to deal with the problem of Israel's lack of a propaganda section in the style of Britain's wartime Political Warfare Executive or the post-war Information and Research Department of the FCO, it will be necessary to change the Jewish and Israeli mindset. This is going to be difficult, as centuries of irrational hatred directed at the Jewish People have resulted in a desire to be loved. Hence the emphasis on PR as opposed to PW. Some of the problems of Jewish identity that were examined by the Chief Rabbi in his article in *The Salisbury Review* (Summer 1998), are very relevant to the ability of Jews to deal with their neurotic block against using PW.

The other issue that has to be faced is the nature of the conflict itself. This is that it is primarily a conflict between Judaism and Islam. Most Jews and Israelis, even those who are not secularists, are very scared of this fact. Once they are prepared to admit it, the problem can then be handled in a more intelligent manner.

If Israel's long term diplomatic and strategic position is not to be further undermined, thus putting the whole state in danger, then Israel and the Jewish People will have to copy the rest of the World and run their own PW agencies.

David M Jacobs is writing a study of the Middle East Propaganda War.

Slovakia After Mečiar: a Change for the Better?

Johnathan Sunley comments on a faraway country of which we know less than we think

In the autumn of 1994, a group of Central European politicians visiting Nato headquarters in Brussels, listened spellbound as a high-ranking officer explained the reasons for the break-up of Czechoslovakia some two years earlier. The underlying problem he recounted, was the existence throughout that part of the world of ineradicable ethnic and cultural fault-lines. The Czechs and Slovaks were both Slavs, he did not deny. And their languages were similar. But the boundary between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy ran through the middle of what had after the end of World War I become their common state, and the recent establishment of two separate countries only gave expression to the religious gulf between them.

To anyone glancingly familiar with the history of Central and Eastern Europe, this is — needless to say — nonsense. Still, this particular general allowed himself to be corrected by his audience, and rightly remarked that Western soldiers and statesmen had traditionally had difficulties finding their bearings in this region. Perhaps he was thinking of the famous exclamation of Czechoslovakia's midwife, President Woodrow Wilson, who kneeling on a giant map of Europe sprawled across the floor of a Paris conference-chamber looked up despairingly and declared: 'But I can't find Litomysl!' With no state of their own for over a thousand years and just a handful of exceptional individuals who have made their mark on a wider stage, Slovaks have suffered in this sense more than most. Addressing parlia-

ment soon after Slovakia achieved independence at the start of 1993, it was not pure rhetoric on the part of then prime minister Vladimir Mečiar to warn:

'Should we lose this state, then the waves of European development will swallow us, just as they swallowed the Lusatian Sorbs'. The Lusatian Sorbs? Precisely.

But ignorance is one thing and ill-will another, and what was remarkable about the 'Velvet Divorce' between the Czech Republic and Slovakia was the way that the latter was from the outset almost universally dismissed as too weak to survive. Writing in *The Guardian* one week after the split, the well-regarded pundit on post-communist affairs, Jonathan Eyal, adopted the disparaging tone of most observers in predicting that the Czech Republic would flourish as an 'adjunct to the mighty German economy, while Slovakia will seek to barter its weapons and antiquated goods with its eastern neighbours in a commonwealth of the poor'. Reporters on-the-spot thought that the overnight introduction of VAT would give the majority of Slovaks second thoughts about their sovereignty, when the reality is that they took this tax in their stride. Slovenia, meanwhile, which is one of five countries from the former Eastern Bloc invited earlier this year by the EU to commence membership negotiations, has still to expose its supposedly superior economy to this burden.

If, five years later, many of these same commentators have now resigned themselves to Slovakia's existence, this has less to do with the country's own

achievements and more to do with the shift in perceptions of its one-time other half: the Czech Republic. For, once it became clear about 18 months ago that the Czech 'economic miracle' was not all it had been made out to be, it became much harder to go on ignoring or rubbishing Slovakia's redoubtable economic performance. Many Czech politicians were clearly unhappy at being lowered to the same level as Slovakia, none more so than President Václav Havel, who earlier this year took yet another highly public swipe at Mečiar—whom he labelled 'paranoid'.

Still, for those now perhaps reconciled to the existence of Slovakia, but long embarrassed by the alleged antics of Mečiar, the results of this autumn's elections have yielded the ideal outcome: victory for the parties and political forces whose *raison d'être* was — and remains — a combination of fear and loathing towards him. Foremost among these is the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), which is a grouping of five parties including the nominally conservative Christian Democratic Movement and the communist-spawned Democratic Union. As if this alliance were not inherently unstable enough, the new coalition government will also include the Party of the Democratic Left (whose name needs little unravelling — only questioning) and another mini-coalition made up of the single-issue ethnic Hungarian parties.

But Mečiar has gone (even though his party, as in 1992 and 1994, again won the most votes, and he individually the greatest number of preference votes), and nothing but joy and relief are allowed to inform the prognoses

made by nearly all observers with regard to the country's future. This is especially true for the media in such neighbouring states as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Austria, whose reporting on the affairs of Slovakia while Mečiar was in power was invariably hostile and often untruthful.

Back in March, for example, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) presented the incident of a Gypsy woman drowned in a river by right-wing extremists as typical of the racial intolerance alleged to be endemic in Slovakia. But this tragic occurrence happened in the Czech Republic. (There was a similar confusion at the time of last year's exodus of Gypsies from the Czech Republic to Britain — most of which were reported in the Western media as fleeing persecution in Slovakia.)

Meanwhile, many of the Western journalists who wrote regularly about Mečiar's Slovakia appeared convinced that their fellow-professionals there were labouring under conditions of government-sponsored intimidation if not outright censorship. Freedom House (a civil and economic liberties watchdog organisation, based in the US), gave credence to these suspicions in this year's annual report, qualifying the media in Slovakia as 'partly free' — putting the country in the same category as Albania and Brazil. To anybody who knows the full range of daily newspapers fiercely opposed to the then government, e.g. *Sme*, *Nový Čas*, *Pravda*, *Práca*, this judgment must seem either ill-informed or ill-intentioned. For two years now, moreover, the hardly pro-Mečiar, privately-owned (by Ronald Lauder's Central European Media Enterprises) TV Markiza has been building up an audience share at least equal to that of state-owned television — which is, admittedly, biased as much in the other direction. Slovaks can also freely pick up Czech, Austrian and Hungarian television—none of which tend to paint a very rosy picture of developments in their country.

True, the controversial election law passed in June discriminated against stations like Markiza, by stipulating that campaign advertisements and the

like could only be shown on the state-owned electronic media. But opposition objections to this distinction (which was exactly the same for this year's elections in the Czech Republic, and which nobody complained about there) were initially overshadowed by a scandal involving revelations that the wife of the SDK's campaign chief had offered money to journalists to write positively about the party. At the time, wags in Bratislava said that instead of calling the Slovak media 'partly free', Freedom House ought to have put 'partly honest'. All the same, the OSCE emphasised in its report on the September election that state TV and radio in Slovakia had been strongly biased in favour of Mečiar's party, even though the data (compiled by an independent media monitoring organisation) clearly showed that TV Markiza had been much more biased in favour of the opposition. Moreover, the OSCE's report on the Czech elections had actually defended the greater proportion of airtime given to government politicians on the grounds that this is unavoidable — even in an election-period. Needless to say, the OSCE made no such allowance for Slovak ministers.

Still, double-standards have been a constant of Western reporting on and analysis of Slovakia during the Mečiar years. In 1997, for example, there was an outcry over a referendum on how to elect the president, that had to be aborted after the Constitutional Court ruled the appendix attached to this question illegal. A few months later, the Hungarian government succeeded in sabotaging a referendum on the issue of land ownership, first by trying to re-word the question and then by cancelling the vote altogether, but hardly anyone outside Hungary commented on this. Similarly, when an Austrian MP was asked why she did not have the same objections to the (much older) nuclear power-plant at Temelin in the Czech Republic as to the much-criticised Slovak reactor at Mochovce, her answer took the form of two words: President Havel. As though an individual could hold back the waves of radiation that would follow from a Chernobyl-style accident!

Excluded from the first wave of

membership negotiations with the EU, Slovakia will also not be joining its three formerly communist neighbours in becoming a member next year of Nato. Slovaks are bearing this slight stoically, while wondering what it is their armed forces lack that the equally poorly equipped and trained militaries in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic possess. But when Nato leaders, at their summit last summer, decided not to invite Slovakia to join their organisation, it was implied that the real reasons behind this step were in fact political rather than military. Slovak diplomats, however, tell a different story, saying that they were informed back in 1996 that their country was not ready for membership, owing to — of all things — a law on higher education not deemed to be compatible with Western standards! Certainly if economic criteria had been a priority consideration for either the EU or Nato, Slovakia would have passed their tests with flying colours. Growth has topped five per cent for four consecutive years now, while inflation has been kept in single figures for the last three. These are both unique achievements in Central Europe, and are all the more impressive recalling how the country's economic prospects were virtually written off at the time it acquired independence. Indeed, it was the Czechs' desire to have their own currency — so as not to be saddled with the problems arising from Slovakia's weaker industrial base and poorer human capital — that accelerated Czechoslovakia's break-up. But though the two currencies started at parity, today it is the Slovak crown that is slightly stronger. True, total foreign direct investment in Slovakia since the end of the communist system, has not yet reached \$1 billion—lagging far behind the Czechs' \$7 billion or Hungary's phenomenal \$14 billion. Lacking the glossy shopping-malls or greenfield investment sites of its neighbours, Slovakia can indeed seem more dowdy and backward — something few foreign journalists fail to notice. On the other hand, it is simply too early to say whether the Mečiar government's strategy of favouring management buy-outs

(usually at heavily discounted prices) to privatise state-owned assets, will succeed — where both the Czech Republic and Hungary have so far failed — in creating a strong class of domestic owners.

On top of all this, Slovakia under Mečiar was also repeatedly chastened for its 'low political culture', or — to borrow another sweeping generalisation often invoked — its 'democratic deficit'. These were apparently most strikingly manifested in the difficulties allegedly experienced by 'civil society', which is usually defined in terms of 'third sector' non-governmental organisations or NGOs. All too often, however, such NGOs are not so much non-government as anti-government, taking a position which may be common in the context of Slovakia's sharply-polarised political scene, but which ought to debar them from being glorified as neutral and objective third parties. Indeed, one frequently-cited NGO, the Slovak Helsinki Committee, cannot even be said to be non-governmental, as it is supported by the office of the Austrian chancellor, an institution which has been particularly outspoken about Slovakia's internal developments.

Another, the Institute for Public Affairs (which is indirectly subsidised by the US government, through tax-breaks for its American donors if nothing else), issued a damning survey a few months before the elections modestly titled *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State of Society*. In 200 pages of extremely fluent English, hardly a single positive observation can be found. A typical chapter on human rights problems ends with the following alarmist question about the Mečiar government's future intentions: 'Or will it lose its existing inhibitions and adopt a more radical course of human and civil rights violations?' The author of this section, the philosopher Miroslav Kusy, is described as a signatory of Charter 77 and a dissident imprisoned by the communist regime for his opposition to it. What is not mentioned is that Kusy was also for many years a lecturer in Marxism-Leninism and for a several month period from 1968 to 1969 (i.e. after the

Soviet invasion) ideology secretary of the Slovak communist party's Central Committee. It is understandable if figures like these, excluded from Mečiar's administration, did their utmost to discredit it.


But it was foolish of the West not to be perceive their agenda and instead to be taken in by their posturing as well-meaning experts in individual or collective (i.e. Hungarian, Gypsy, etc.) rights. Instead the West affirmed and amplified their criticisms, joining in their demonization of Mečiar as 'despotic' (the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation) and Slovakia itself as 'a black hole in the heart of Europe' (US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright). In the run-up to the recent elections, any alternative leader was seen as preferable and benefited from hefty moral (and no doubt material) support — even if they embodied the sins of which Mečiar himself stood accused. Rudolf Schuster, for example, the mayor of Košice and now a likely contender for the office of president, was presented in the West as a modern-minded reformer in tune with Slovakia's youth. In fact Schuster also used to be a member of the Central Committee (Mečiar himself, by the way, was expelled from the party in 1969 and was not permitted a passport until 1990), and was recalled from his more recent position as ambassador to Canada for failing a lustration test (implying close connections to the old secret police). Similarly, the SDK was billed in Western political circles as an essentially centre-right force, and had its cause championed by—among others—the British Conservative Party. But one look at its programme, which consists mainly of Keynesian-type commitments to higher spending and lower unemployment, should have been enough to make any conservative query just what principles they held in common.

Everyone knows, however, that (as with the role of Palmerston in mid-Victorian politics in Britain) the dominant issue of Slovak politics since independence has been—and is likely to remain even now — the question: were you or were you not, are you or are you not, for Mečiar? Other issues are

simply not important. Thus, in the weeks following Mečiar's election 'defeat', even though the Slovak crown lost 20% of its value and Britain re-introduced visa requirements for Slovak citizens, still attention was focussed both inside and outside the country on whether Mečiar would go quietly — or else attempt to stage some form of extra-constitutional comeback. In the event, Mečiar announced on television that he had done his best by his people, and if they no longer saw the situation like that, then he would leave politics altogether.

If indeed Mečiar does give up his seat in parliament, then this will confront the incoming government with the tricky temptation of whether or not to arrest him (as many of their MPs have said privately that they intend to do). Having squealed for years about Mečiar's authoritarianism and contempt for the rule of law, it will be interesting to see whether such politicians—egged on by their Western patrons and paymasters—put these principles aside in order not to derail their country from its newly-found fast-track to European integration (which is at all times their all-purpose and all-absolving mantra). If so, then Vladimir Mečiar will become neither the first nor the last victim of the campaign in Brussels to subjugate the region of which Slovakia forms part.

Johnathan Sunley writes about Central and East European affairs from Budapest.



*He that will not
apply new
remedies must
expect new
evils; for time is
the greatest
innovator*

Francis Bacon

Editorial

The age of consent for heterosexual relations is 16, for homosexual relations 18. A private member's amendment, introduced into legislation during the last session of Parliament, would have rectified what many see as an anomaly, so as to make homosexual relations legal at the age of 16. The House of Lords rejected the amendment, and the government is now promising to introduce a bill of its own, in order to override the upper house's verdict. Opinion polls suggest that the vast majority of voters side in this matter with the House of Lords and not with their elected representatives.

The dispute is between an old and a new establishment; between the people and those they vote for; and between two conceptions of sex — one embedded in the feelings of ordinary people, the other propagated by the gay lobby and endorsed by the makers of public opinion. The Conservative Party, which would in the past have expressed the rooted instincts of old-fashioned people, has taken no stand in the matter. Indeed, Mr Hague approved of the amendment, and has shown on many occasions that he sees the issue of sex in much the same terms as it is seen by the gays — by which term we don't mean old-fashioned homosexuals living private lives, but the lobbyists who pretend to speak for them, and who wish to persuade us that sex is one and the same thing, whatever the sex of your partner.

It is remarkable that the Archbishop of Canterbury needed *courage* in order to condemn homosexual unions, and that only the African bishops at this year's Lambeth conference were prepared to uphold traditional Christian teaching in the matter. The British bishops were far more intent on displaying their 'compassion', and showing that in this, as in everything, they are politically correct. Nor is anyone in the serious press prepared to make the case for traditional morality. Still less are we treated, either in Parliamentary

debate or in public discussion, to the relevant facts. Those who point to the promiscuity and paedophilia of male homosexuals are accused of 'homophobia', while anyone who dares to mention the connection between sodomy and AIDS will be the target of abuse from the compassion industry, and liable to intimidation from the activists of 'Outrage'.

The instinctive aversion that most people feel towards homosexuality is not something they can easily justify. But that does not mean that it is unjustified. It means that the justification lies deeper than most people's thoughts. The same is true of many other things. If you ask the ordinary person why paedophilia is wrong he will probably not find an answer. Why should we be so keen to 'protect' our children from experiences which the entire surrounding culture represents as the source of all fulfilment and the prerogative of youth? Why not hand out the contraceptives and let the children play? Yet we know that paedophilia is wrong, even if there are two or three per cent of people in any generation who are tempted to engage in it, and even if the temptation is (as is sometimes said on behalf of homosexuality) genetically determined.

Popular confusion in these matters has been enhanced by the established forms of 'sex education', from which all moral judgement has been carefully expurgated. The official view of sex, propagated by schools and opinion-formers throughout the Western world, is that it is a sensation, obtained through co-operation with a partner, and carrying a risk of pregnancy and disease. The main purpose of restraint is to guard against the risks. The distinction between natural and perverted desire forms no part of the picture.

The distinction becomes part of the picture, however, as soon as we see sex for what it truly is: not a sensation, but an emotion, which puts the personality, and not just the body, at risk. That

is why we distinguish the natural course of sexual desire, in which love, commitment and child-bearing play a central part, from the activities which undermine these things. The real question is where homosexuality fits into that picture, of the 'natural course' of sexual desire. Or is the picture nothing more than ideology?

Homosexual feelings have been many and various, and some of the most creative and civilising forces have been rooted in them. Homoerotic longings have led to faithful attachments; they have inspired compassion, leadership and a chaste devotion to the young. They have produced exemplary priests, schoolmasters and artists. But, as Stephen Green has shown in *The Sexual Dead End* (1992), 'liberation' has changed all that. The severance of desire from commitment means not only that the object of desire is constantly changing, but that it is eternally young, eternally beckoning, eternally destructive of any actual human love. Hence promiscuity, of the most loveless and genital-obsessed kind, has become the refrain of gay culture. Gay activists will protest against that sentence — but their own literature, from Genet to Alan Hollinghurst, abundantly confirms it. And it is the instinctive awareness of its truth that leads ordinary people to believe that young boys need to be especially protected from the advances of predatory homosexuals, for whom young boys are a normal target.

Homosexuality can be both poignant and amusing. It may even be a social asset, as Plato perceived, precisely through those qualities which make it dangerous when the restraints are removed. Traditional morality compelled homosexuals to 'sublimate' their desires, and to find an outlet for their emotions in a non-familial and generalised interest in the young. They became priests, teachers, scoutmasters and coaches. They were 'father' and 'mother' to everyone's children, and

their role was summarised in the Greek term of education — *paideia*. Societies benefit from the work of this priestly cast, which in turn benefits from sublimated homosexual feeling and the rule of chastity that it imposes. Homosexuality can confer this benefit, however, only if it is felt as forbidden — and that is what Plato perceived, in his celebrations of the love that bears his name.

Once the *moral* injunction against

homosexuality is removed the situation changes completely. Young boys are now exposed to a threat against which they cannot easily protect themselves. The shame and hesitation of girls are specific to the female condition, implanted by nature in order that sexual union should be deferred. No such feelings impede the sexuality of boys, which is as urgent and outgoing as it needs to be, if they are ever to break down the barrier which conceals

the other sex. This is one of the many factors which the House of Commons, in its wisdom, failed to notice. In fact, it failed to notice anything relevant to the question before it. For its entire discussion was conducted in the terms laid down for us by the gay lobby. Members of Parliament, like the Bishops, have been intimidated. The truth about the 'love which dares not speak its name' is a truth which dares not speak its name.

Letters

Sir

The key to Mosley's politics was his firm conviction that the prosperity and therefore geostrategic position of Britain were increasingly threatened by endemic dependence on external trade; and he urged government policy to develop a large home-market system adequately supplied with food and raw materials. Since neither an island nor a worldwide solution worked, he proposed regional combinations: until 1940 the Empire, and after 1950 Europe plus South Africa and other Dominions.

Mosley's "socialism" entailed not state interference in industrial management but an incomes mechanism to maintain a progressive balance between productivity and consumption. Readers interested in his actual economic thought, instead of relying on prejudiced secondary sources (never mind TV "sex-opera") often hostile to the extent of downright falsehood, could begin with the anthology *Revolution by Reason* (Mellen 1997) edited by Michael Quill.

Mr Cooney knows more, and better, than he let on. As "correspondent to the Vatican" of the main Social Credit organisation, he supports the late Major Douglas, whose views on the political control of finance had its resonances with Mosley's pre-war "national credit", although Douglas, unlike

Mosley, was also a "Jewish Plot" theorist. Another comparable monetary reformer, Professor Soddy, believed "government credits" could work well in a United Europe.

Mr Cooney did not disprove Mosley's observation that the UK had already lost effective "national sovereignty" to international speculators; indeed it is backed up by recent literature promoted by his own group. Unlike Baldwin and Blair, however, Mosley said something should and could be done about our acute vulnerability in the "global economy", and that he would do it, if voted into power as a British leader in Europe.

Different ideas for uniting our common continent and civilisation have appeared in years past, from Kropotkin and Trotsky to Hitler and Heseltine. Why not examine each on its *own* terms? Even the Vatican wanted a Christian federation to help defeat both Communism and Americanisation.

Sharp distinctions exist also between Mosley's concept of a British-led "white superpower", which protected internal diversity, and the present Britain-erasable system run by a coterie of Brussels bureaucrats and Frankfurt financiers. Whereas promoters of the so-called "EU" operate by "spin and stealth", at least Mosley always tried to put his case fully and frankly to the people themselves at public meetings,

despite leftwing violence and media boycotts.

Olive Green
Barton, Staffs

Sir

Isn't it interesting that the word 'environment' (literally that is round-about) has become a quasi-mystical term. It is now frequently used to bestow virtue rather than to reveal meaning. The National Rivers Authority has become the "Environment Agency"; the Department of Transport, "Environment, Transport and the Regions".

Your editorial asserts that the appetites of modern democratic man are out of control. However, so were the appetites of men and women in Ancient Rome (*vide* Juvenal's Satires). If there is a difference, it is that the Romans lacked the double-edged sword of advanced applied science.

Andrew Carnegie said, "Capitalism is about turning luxuries into necessities". However, it is applied science which comes up with the luxuries. Science can enable us to understand and rectify environmental pollution. It can also enable us to fill our homes with clutter — cars, TVs, freezers, fax-machines, mobile phones, etc. — like demented technological squirrels.

Doesn't this partially exonerate democracy and the market? Don't these systems relieve the pain of necessity as

well as catering to the insatiable appetite for luxuries? Thus Paul Johnson on a trust-busting court in the US: "A well-paid Supreme Court judge would not, naturally, take the same view of the importance of marginally lower food prices as a working-class housewife operating within a strict budget."

I don't say your conclusions are wrong; but democracy is not the *sole* cause of the problem, neither is democratic man necessarily very much greedier than his predecessors.

Michael Dalling,
Crowborough, East Sussex

Sir

Sir Rowland Whitehead must allow me my *métier*. A metric door to an imperial doorway, I fear, is liable to jam or to hang loose, because of the fundamental disparity between a decimal and a duodecimal system. Neither ten nor one hundred is divisible by three. Furthermore, imperial numbers are compatible with binary arithmetic on which computer science – and hence the whole of modern technology – is based, whereas decimal numbers are not. What in Britain we call imperial measurement is as old as civilisation, relating directly to the measurement of time and music as well as the shape of the Earth; whereas metric units are abstract, relating to nothing but themselves. Any exact equivalence between imperial and metric measurement, in area, volume, mass, heat, pressure or whatever, is therefore merely nominal and accidental. Measurement is *meaning* as much as amount.

Vivian Linacre
Edinburgh

Sir

Conservative philosophy cannot subscribe to a belief in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Much that is discovered by modern research is useless, and sometimes far worse than useless. This is so not only within the natural sciences (how many today wish that nuclear fission was never discovered!) but also within the social sciences.

If police records reveal that blacks are responsible for 80 percent of the

muggings in London (see Honeyford, *SR* Summer 1998) there are advantages in being aware of the fact. If there are half a million blacks in a metropolitan area of some 7 to 8 million inhabitants then a black is about sixty times more likely than a non-black to commit such an assault, which can rationalise the greater suspicion of blacks by the police under a range of circumstances. Yet since one does not conceive of proneness to crime to be an inherent, or genetic, characteristic there can be hope for a decline of black crime over time.

One the other hand, there is no practical advantage in publishing the fact (see review of Levin's book, *Race Matters*, *SR*, Summer 1998) – if it is a fact – that "blacks in the United States score on average about 15 IQ points below whites and Asians" (which statement, however, does not preclude the fact that there will be many blacks with an IQ well above the average for whites).

No people or race, however defined, could remain undismayed at the publication of statistics tending to establish their innate mental inferiority. Endeavours to broadcast it as an indisputable fact cannot but generate resentment and anger by the race in question.

Other than causing unnecessary hurt to the self-esteem of the blacks in America and, possibly, some gloating among the more despicable white citizens, just what purpose does the publication of such mortifying statistics serve?

Clearly it can serve only to strain, if not to undermine, the existing good will and aspirations of the many blacks who have made signal contributions to their country and work conscientiously for a fully integration in the larger community. And among the currently more disaffected and refractory segments it can serve only to increase their sense of alienation, their scorn and rejection of white culture and institutions, and therefore to fuel their irresponsible behaviour.

E J Mishan
London NW11

Sophist's Corner

It is the influence of collectively organized gay men which has probably done most to connect recent theoretical debates on the precarious nature of 'masculinity' with a sexual politics which works to undermine and challenge it. ... this has strengthened with the impact of HIV/AIDS on significant numbers of highly visible politicized gay men in Western societies. They have mobilized against the silence surrounding the extent of men's homosexual engagements, and analyzed and fought the tenacious fear and loathing of gay sex (seen as symbolising the possibilities and pleasures of men's 'receptive' or 'passive' bodily encounters). They have promoted attitudes of sexual responsibility and care ('safe sex') in men's sexual practices, again so alien to many straight men's carelessness, if not coercion, in sexual exchanges. They have campaigned for increased public concern and support for people living with HIV, while also exemplifying men's enduring and selfless potential to love, nurture and sustain the sick and the dying. Finally, and maybe most inspiring of all, some have developed a vernacular for expressing and sharing their own terrifying fears and grief, confused impotence and rage, aching pain and yet continuing capacity for pleasure and love, in ways which are both cathartic and empowering for themselves and, especially, for others, in the extraordinary literature, poetry and artworks relating to AIDS. Reviewing Mark Doty's AIDS memoir, *Heaven's Coast*, for example, one reviewer writes: 'in sharing his own pain and love, Doty offers a kind of survivor's guide, not just for those who have lost a lover to AIDS, but anyone who is, after all, only human.'

From *Rethinking Gender Categories*,
Lynne Segal.

Reviews

Grand Tourists

Sophie Jeffreys

The Evolution of the Grand Tour, Edward Chaney, Frank Cass, 1998, £45.

Edward Chaney has written his history of the Grand Tour of Italy with as much attention to detail as a medieval or Renaissance chronicler would have devoted to his travelling experiences. Chaney's subject-matter is not the places as he finds them, nor the people as he judges them, but the places as the people described them and the characters as they are revealed through records left by themselves or their contemporaries: letters and journals, poems, portraits and tomb effigies. He makes extensive use of quotations and pictures, and most readers will be encountering Chaney's research for the first time, since it has been gleaned from obscure archives or is presented visually in photographs taken by himself.

Geography is Chaney's starting point. He maps the Kingdom of the two Sicilies by naming place after place in the order that his travellers explored them. Scenes and sights are included not for their quality, but for the interest that the visitors expressed towards them. It is not until we are presented with Inigo Jones's response to the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Naples that its qualities and significance are described in any great detail; and since John Evelyn visited the Sistine Chapel without remarking on Michaelangelo's ceiling, Chaney does not celebrate it. Chaney pieces together the route taken by George Berkeley on his two early eighteenth-century grand tours. His source is the philosopher's surviving correspondence which provides us,

Chaney says, 'with a record of the most extensive and most intelligently observed Italian tour of the period'.

The geographical map of Italy that we obtain from his subject's movements is lightly overlaid by another map, of religious, cultural and political events affecting his travellers' visits. Most important of these, in Chaney's eyes, is the visitor's relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. The origin of foreign travel, Chaney argues, is the medieval pilgrimage; hence it is interesting to learn how often, even after the Reformation, the papal province (in all its artistic splendour) was still the most important attraction for those who ventured abroad. Indeed, travel to Italy provided an outlet, far enough away from the watchful eye of post-Reformation English monarchs, for carefully controlled Catholic expression. On the other hand, from the late 16th century onwards the touring vogue had to be resisted by many Protestants for fear of the Inquisition.

Chaney gives us the sense that from the twelfth to the twentieth century travel has satisfied a vocational urge either to save or to purify the soul through culture. Pilgrims invested their hopes in their fervent reverence towards devotional icons. Later they were followed by sceptics, like Thomas Hobbes, who nevertheless continued to stand in admiration before the very same icons, seeing them now as art, stripped of one kind of sanctity only to be invested with another. Thus arose

one of the greatest sources of inspiration for the British Enlightenment. Chaney ascribes the sophistication of English literature, art, music, mathematics, science, architecture, politics, banking, philosophy, historiography and much else directly to the grand tourists' experience of Italy.

The implicit question posed by Chaney's last chapter, an obituary of Sir Harold Acton who died in 1994, seems to be: 'Are we still drawn to the South by our love of high culture and our concern for our souls?' The Brits on Mediterranean beaches suggest a depressing answer to that question; and Chaney regards the refusal by Christ Church, Oxford, of Acton's bequest of Italian villa, collection and grounds, to be a sign that even our most prestigious academic institutions no longer invest any faith in the idea that young people should travel South for culture's sake, and for the sake of the soul.

The Evolution of the Grand Tour does not, as its title might imply, give a chronological account of all significant visits to Italy from the thirteenth century onwards, with a parallel account of European history. It is in fact a collection of previously published essays, each of which conducts the reader to Italy in the company of some important traveller such as William Thomas, Sir Thomas Hoby, Richard Lassals or Robert Dallington. In one chapter a place will be mentioned in passing where in another it is described

at length. The repetition will be evident to anyone who reads the book from cover to cover; but probably a cover to cover reading should be discouraged, since the majority of essays have been written for some narrow scholarly purpose. Occasionally the academic style proves rather forbidding. Most pleasurable are the chapters directed at a general audience, such as those that first appeared in the 'Blue Guide' or that which appeared in *Country Life* entitled 'From Pilgrims to Pictures', and which contains

Chaney's thesis in a nutshell. Professional historians will no doubt prefer the heavily factual chapters such as 'Quo Vadis? Travel as Education and the Impact of Italy in the Sixteenth Century', with its seven pages of supporting footnotes.

The book could play an important role in educating art history students in the interpretation and presentation of documentary evidence. It is exemplary in almost every relevant respect, except for the glaring omission of a bibliography and

except for the all-important map of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which is so small that it is impossible to read. Students of English literature will also learn much from Chaney's researches. One of the more surprising chapters, 'Milton's Visit to Vallombrosa: A literary tradition', makes a convincing case that Milton never actually visited the remote monastery of Vallombrosa (evoked in *Paradise Lost*), but took what he needed for his poem from the picturesque name.

Russia's Leader to Come?

Brian Crozier

The General against the Kremlin. Alexander Lebed: Power and Illusion, Harold Elletson. Little, Brown, 1998, £17.50.

Ever since Boris Yeltsin came to power as the Soviet Union collapsed, and especially since his triple by-pass operation in November 1996, one question has dominated all others: Who will succeed him? There is no shortage of contenders: the long-time Prime Minister and former party apparatchik Viktor Chernomyrdin, the ex-Finance Minister Anatoly Chubais, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Gennady Zyuganov, the Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov. And, of course, Alexander Lebed, the Afghanistan war hero who brought the tragic and futile carnage in Chechnya to an end.

Yeltsin has developed a habit of removing such potential rivals (as he sees them) when they show signs of exceeding the boots they have been wearing. Three of those listed above (Chernomyrdin, Chubais and Lebed) were fired, although Chubais was brought back. Zyuganov is unlikely to be a serious contender, if the IMF continues to support the Russian economy, but the example of the ex-

Soviet satellites (in particular, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia) makes it clear that ex-Communist parties can indeed come back preferably under a change of name.

If I were a betting man, my money would be on Lebed, for a number of reasons: he has drive and ambition, he is demonstrably honest and courageous, he sticks to his principles. In other words, he has integrity. Moreover, he is a man of action. His period in the political wilderness, to which Yeltsin sent him soon after he had brought peace to Chechnya, was relatively short-lived. He fought his electoral way to the governorship of the mineral-rich Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk: not perhaps the best stepping stone to supreme power, but a strong step in the right direction.

Of particular interest is the author's reconstruction of the dramatic events of October 1993, when a special force of 2,000 soldiers, under General Pavel Grachev's command, stormed the White House (as Moscow's parliament building was known) to rid Yeltsin of

the rivals who were trying to oust him. There were hundreds of casualties, and the leaders of the anti-Yeltsin faction, Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov, were marched out of the building on their way to Lefortovo prison.

According to Yeltsin's own account in his book *The View from the Kremlin* (1994) Grachev had been his unconditional ally. According to Elletson, the unconditional ally was Lebed, and Grachev was a reluctant participant, ready to back the anti-Yeltsin faction during the failed August 1991 coup and the siege of the White House rebels two years later. In comparison with Lebed, Grachev was an opportunist, who happened to pick the winner, Yeltsin, in the two crises. To be realistic, the fact that Grachev did decide to support Yeltsin was a major factor in the latter's double victory. The way Elletson puts it is: 'In the summer of 1992, as Pavel Grachev settled into the Ministry of Defence and contemplated the array of opportunities for personal gain... he began to feel uneasy about

the presence of his former deputy. General Lebed knew the real nature of the double role Grachev had played during the August *putsch* and could easily confirm Yeltsin's suspicions.'

Grachev spent a good deal of time and mental energy trying to think of ways to rid himself of Lebed, and his opportunity came when the worsening situation in Romanian-speaking Moldova reached crisis point. Lebed was posted to the agitated republic, in command of the hard-pressed 14th Army and with ill-judged orders to stay out of the conflict between the government and separatists. Typically, he rejected Grachev's orders and furious exchanges of telegrams followed.

Meanwhile, a far more dangerous and costly conflict was developing in the Caucasian republic of Chechnya. In September 1995, Lebed decided to retire from the Army and enter politics. Having been outspokenly critical of Yeltsin's handling of the Chechnya war, he had toned down his public attitude. He was elected to the Duma and appointed by President Yeltsin as National Security Adviser and head of

the Presidential Security Council. His first move, within twenty-four hours of his appointment on 18 June 1996, was to oust General Grachev as Defence Minister. He soon decided that the war in Chechnya could no more be won than Brezhnev's war in Afghanistan. On 11 August, he flew to the war-torn republic and negotiated a peace deal — in effect, an acknowledgment of defeat — with the Chechen field commander, Asian Maskhadov, a former Soviet colonel. A cease fire came into force on 27 August.

It had been the costliest war Russia had fought since World War II, with 84,000 dead and 240,000 wounded. Elated, Lebed, turned his thought to domestic aspects of security, especially the rampant crime and corruption that had taken hold of post-Soviet Russia. From his hospital bed, Yeltsin severely criticised him, and on 17 October, in a television address, Yeltsin announced Lebed's dismissal for 'unacceptable' mistakes. Earlier, Yeltsin had also sacked General Korzhakov, head of his personal guard, who had been a

close ally of Lebed's.

Paradoxically, in a professional soldier who had reached the top, Lebed had been, from the early days of his career, a determinedly disobedient one, refusing absolutely to carry out orders which he thought ill advised. This is hardly the traditional road to the top; but then, Lebed was not, in personality and character, a traditionalist. His early habit of disobedience, plus his courage and his independence in later maturity, contribute to his undeniable charisma. Unfortunately, they also point to dictatorial rule rather than a Western-style democracy.

In Harold Elletson General Lebed has found a remarkably qualified biographer. A fluent Russian speaker, the young Conservative ex-MP has made many visits to Russia and his book is based largely on prolonged conversations with his subject, plus an admirable talent for reconstructing the complex events of the post-Soviet period in readable style. He has painted a lively and convincing portrait of a rising potential leader of the defeated superpower.

More Than Half Angel

David Edelsten

Fanny Burney, Kate Chisholm, Chatto & Windus, £20.

Born twenty-three years before Jane Austen, and surviving her by precisely the same span, Fanny Burney had not only a long life but one that was notoriously full of incident: she seems to have bumped into history at every corner. Her character was luminous, shining down the two centuries since her mid-life apogee: writing in 1843, three years after her death, Macaulay described the 'singular emotion' that the thought of her inspired. The phrase serves just as well to-day as we revisit her in an outstanding new biography.

Her father's extraordinary talent for

attaching extraordinary people, placed her in the wings (she was a shy girl) of a stage never equalled for aesthetic brilliance, before or since, in this country. The artless launch of *Evelina* (1778) could not have been contrived to achieve more *éclat*, but, despite the best encouragement, Burney never subsequently wrote a better novel. Her basic plot, not to say literary ploy, a parade of monsters, anticipated Lewis Carroll, but her style was a part of the block from which Jane Austen mounted.

I shall return to discuss *The Wan-*

derer (1814), but if *Evelina*, *Cecilia* (1782) and possibly, if we are kind, *Camilla* (1796) survive as significant but charming curiosities, and if some find interest in her plays, Burney's 'real skill', as Kate Chisholm tells us, 'was as a reporter, a witness... the diaries she has left are an extraordinary historical document': if you would visit Johnson's circle, Garrick's Drury Lane, George III's or Napoleon's courts, or be with Becky Sharp in Brussels, there is nothing like them.

Her letters too are a mine of information and delight, here, from

her correspondence with her mentor 'Daddy' Crisp, is her description of a Brighton flirt:

She smiled, tittered, lisped, languished, and played pretty all evening... the Captain was totally insensible.. but Peggy... was not easily to be discouraged... she began to set down her cards, in a pretty, affected manner, protesting she did not know how to play, and begging his advice....

One thinks immediately of the younger Bennett girls. And here, from a letter to her adored younger sister Susan, is a superannuated Brighton dandy, who was 'between 60 and 70, but means to pass for 30, gallant, complaisant, obsequious and humble to the 'Fair sex', for whom he has an awful reverence.'

The incident-prone, like the accident-prone, are seldom purely passive victims. If Fanny had not run away, King George could not have chased her, nor would she have been rewarded with a kiss: if she had not hob-nobbed with Spanish prisoners she would have had no Dunkirk adventure in her flight from France; her stranding in Capstone Cave at Ilfracombe, when she was over sixty, was entirely self-inflicted: she looked for scrapes, she marched towards the sound of gunfire — literally so in 1815.

Kate Chisholm starts her narrative in the National Portrait Gallery, an excellent and original device, typical of the book — there is no better place to make a first acquaintance with her

subject. Would that we had such a picture of Jane Austen. The endearing image of Fanny, in an enormous hat, painted by her cousin, Edward Francisco Burney, who is said to have had tender feelings for her, is described by Chisholm as 'pensive and demure': that is a woman's view I find. Samuel Johnson's 'little rogue' looks downright naughty. If there is a key to the genius of this most brilliant of journalists is it perhaps her taste for mischief?

I have only one quarrel with this book, namely with the author's attempt to sell us the notion that *The Wanderer* is worth reading, she describes it as Burney's 'richest and most rewarding book': for the common reader at least, this just will not do. *The Wanderer* is an appalling farrago of high-flown pretentious worthless unreal drivel, which, as Macaulay prophesied, 'No judicious friend to the author's memory will attempt to draw ... from the oblivion into which it has justly fallen'.

If it does nothing else *The Wanderer*, and indeed her equally reviled memoirs of her father, point up one of many contradictions in Fanny Burney's life and make-up. How could someone who wrote naturally so well descend to writing rubbish? I believe that she lacked intellectual ballast; the plasticity that made her such a good reporter disqualified her from more ambitious writing: journalists do well to recognise their limitations. There are other

seeming inconsistencies, she was fragile in health but indestructible to the age of 87, vulnerable, particularly to stress and bereavement, yet tough, fay as well as fly, timid but heroically brave.

I think that her admirable if protean character shows to best advantage in her marriage, both in the superior wisdom, against all appearances and advice, of her choice of husband, and in the lifelong reciprocal devotion each partner inspired in the other. When, on the morning of 30 September 1811, in Paris, Fanny heard that the surgeon Baron Lally was due to come in two hours' time to remove her cancerous breast, she hid the news from her husband, contriving that he could not return from his office until that nightmare of an analgesic butchery was over. It was this act of superhuman unselfishness which drew from General d'Arblay the description of his wife that I have quoted at the head of this review.

Fanny Burney (1752-1840) was a quite extraordinary woman, whose virtues and charisma still spring bright from the pages of her diaries and her letters: she was not a great novelist, but as a commentator on her so interesting times she has no rival. This is an excellent biography, long overdue, immensely readable, and adding to, I would almost say doubling, our knowledge and understanding of its subject.

Notes on Reviewers

Hal Colebatch's next book *Blair's Britain* will be published by Claridge Press.

Brian Crozier has just completed the history of the relentless rise of the Soviet Empire and its fast collapse, with an Epilogue on the return of Communist parties to power in various countries.

David Edelsten is Hunting Correspondent of *Country Life*.

Ray Honeyford has just published *The Commission for Racial Equality: British Bureaucracy and the Multi-ethnic society* (Transaction Press, New Jersey).

Sophie Jeffreys is an Architectural Historian.

Patricia Lança has written an account of the intrigues in North Africa preceding the assassination of General Delgado (Patricia McGowan Pinheiro, *Miserias do exilio, os ultimos meses de Humberto Delgado, Contra Regra*, Lisbon).

Two Blows for Clarity

Patricia Lança

Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa, Keith B. Richburg, Basic Books, Harper Collins, 1997, £20.00.

America in Black and White: One Nation Indivisible, Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, Simon and Schuster, 1997. \$32.50.

Both these works should be required reading for everybody, black and white, concerned with the problems of race. In their very different ways each is dynamite for the explosion of received mythology.

Keith B Richburg is a successful young black American journalist who is presently Hong Kong bureau chief for the *Washington Post* and spent three years from 1991 to 1994 as that newspaper's Africa bureau chief based in Nairobi. In one sense this is an enormously sad book, chronicling as it does the ghastly tragedy and bloodshed of present-day Africa, many of whose worst events were witnessed (and reported on) by the author. After a number of years in the Far East, Richburg commenced his African assignment with hopeful trepidation and curiosity. He was at last to discover the reality of the lands of his remote ancestors and to move, he thought, in an environment where, for the first time in his life, his colour would not make him stand out. In his long calvary of struggle against bureaucratic stupidity and corruption and his heart-sick revulsion at the terrible cruelties he saw, he finally discovers that it is his Americanness that is his outstanding feature, the most important component of his identity.

Richburg's journey to self-discovery is already summarised in his preface. It begins with the words: *I watched the dead float down a river in Tanzania*. And before he begins his story he concludes the Prelude by explaining:

So excuse me if I sound cynical, jaded.

I'm beaten down, and I'll admit it. And it's Africa that has made me this way. I feel for her suffering. I empathise with her pain, and now, from afar; I still recoil in horror whenever I see yet another television picture of another tribal slaughter, another refugee crisis. But most of all I think: Thank God my ancestor got out, because, now, I am not one of them.

In short, thank God that I am an American.

Richburg criticises those of his black fellow-citizens who continue to mythologise Africa. What he says little or nothing about are the faults in current American policy. But that is not the intention of his book. The Clinton régime's reversal of Reagan's positive policies is another story.

However, in the end this is also an optimistic book, at any rate for black and white Americans, because it shows that black nationalism is no solution for Americans of African descent and that what these share today with their white fellow-citizens is of far greater importance than what separates them: full participation in American nationhood.

It is this growing participation that is the main theme of the Thernstroms' massive study of *Race in Modern America*, the subtitle of their book. In nearly 700 pages of thoroughly documented analysis — a model of what a sociological work should be — the authors start with history and end with the present day. The first chapters describe in harrowing detail the lot of black Americans, first under slavery and then under Jim Crow, the American version of apartheid. They go on to

narrate the beginnings and progress of the civil rights movement and the development of the demand for 'affirmative action'. So far they say nothing with which received liberal (in the American sense of Left-wing) opinion would not agree. At this point, however, the authors part company with the Left. Most of the book documents in scrupulous detail the great progress made by black Americans in sharing the riches and opportunities of American life. This sharing, the authors claim, owes nothing to 'affirmative action' and has, in fact, slowed down since its implementation. They contrast the condition of black Americans today with the pessimistic diagnosis of Gunnar Myrdal in his 1944 classic, *The American Dilemma*, and show that the greatest progress was made between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s.

The Thernstroms are not complacent and show that there is still a long way to go. However, those who claim that nothing has improved are demonstrated to be glaringly wrong. Black married couples now earn only slightly less than their white counterparts. Residential segregation is down in almost every major city, and today 70 percent of whites and blacks claim to have a good friend of the other race. Black and white high school graduates are in identical proportion. In 1960 7.2 percent of blacks over the age of 25 had attended college against 17.4 of whites. By 1995, the figures were 37.5 against 49 percent respectively. The percentage of blacks with four or more

years of college had also risen dramatically: from 3.1 for blacks against 8.1 for whites in 1960 to 13.2 against 24 in 1995.

These are only a few of the indicators cited by the authors. They do not avoid dealing with the thorny problems posed by the existence of a black underclass in the inner cities or of the growing number of single black mothers among them. The 'politically correct', like the racist far Right for different reasons, insist on this phenomenon. They ignore the impressive growth of a black middle-class which is inexorably moving out into the suburbs to live a largely integrated life whose style is that of middle-class white Americans. The Left-wing stance does nothing to help in finding solutions to the problems of

the inner-city, which is a world-wide phenomenon, not basically connected with race. Indeed, as the authors show in their chapter on crime, by far the greatest number of victims of black crime are young black males.

Some of the facts cited by the Thernstroms come as a surprise. For instance, college-educated black females earn more than white women with comparable education. And when it comes to proportions of college graduates by race there are even more startling figures. In 1990, whites overall at 22 percent (blacks were then 11.3 percent), were outstripped by Chinese at 51 percent, Latvians at 49.6, Armenians at 38.1 per cent, Scots at 36.2, Japanese at 34.2, and Greeks at 32.8. On the other hand, Italians with 21.9

and Irish with 21.3 come at the bottom among whites.

The extensive array of tables and figures is elucidated by analyses and interrogation, rich in information and insight. The greatest insight of all is that concerning the harm done by 'affirmative action' policies, now orthodoxy throughout the western world, and officialised in the European Union. Such policies define people by their colour, something that was once regarded as an essentially racist approach. Like so many 'politically correct' solutions, 'affirmative action' whether regarding women or races, is not a solution at all, and can only exacerbate the ills it is supposed to remedy. The Thernstroms have provided an indispensable tool for all those who oppose it.

Blacker than thou

Ray Honeyford

The Story Of Black History, Roy Kerridge, The Claridge Press, 1998, £5.95.

This is a hugely enjoyable book. Enjoyable, you may say, when dealing with such a serious subject? Well, yes. Roy Kerridge has the gift of conveying serious insights in a witty and entertaining manner. He has the good reporter's ability to seize on the small but significant detail which lights up a whole area of concern and he has an extraordinary and unique grasp of multi-racial realities. He possesses this, not through reading policy documents, self-interested tomes and statistics. Rather he bases his views on his own experiences in a racially-mixed family and on direct, observational field work: he not only describes the adherents of the Nation of Islam as being dressed in penguin-suits and resembling 'stern, brainwashed Mormons'; he actually attends their meetings and browses in their book shops.

At the same time this is a sad book, because it tells the story of a communi-

ty's attempts to create a view of itself which it finds congenial and is in accordance with the truth. And, alas, this search for identity ends only in frustration and failure. Those whom the author describes as 'professional blacks' have led West Indians and Africans in this country down the road to Black History, an enterprise which Kerridge says combines job creation with sheer dottiness. Black History was invented in the United States about thirty years ago with the specific objective of bringing to the world's attention the contribution of black people to civilisation and progress. Unfortunately, instead of pursuing truth in the detached, objective way of genuine historians, 'Blackademe', as Kerridge calls it, has been obsessed with the notion of history as a means of boosting self-esteem and racial pride — history not as narrative combined with analysis, but as chest thumping and

triumphant crowing.

This has had considerable success in the United States, where, since the 1964 Civil Rights Act, criticism of any black-led activity has been difficult, and open debate about race relations virtually impossible. In this bogus, guilt-ridden atmosphere Blackademe had a field day. A good example of what went wrong in the academic world is the true story of black students sitting at the feet of the preposterous, not to say offensive, Professor Leonard Jefferies who preaches that mankind consists of white, ice people (bad), and black, sun people (good). Perverted histories, it seems, of African triumphalism have poured out of Blackademe, baffling the genuine historian, and sustaining the crazy theories of the 'arrogant, black Race Supremacists'.

A noted feature of this kind of alleged history is its perpetrators' reluctance

to acknowledge the key role played by many Africans in the successful running of the slave trade — a deeply uncomfortable fact which, essentially, demolishes the whole edifice of Black History.

A version of Blackademe exists in this country. Kerridge describes its 'patron saint' as Stuart Hall, professor of sociology at the Open University. The search for identity in a country dominated by whites — who have by no means always made blacks feel welcome — has created a number of significant outcomes. For instance, those born before 1969 see themselves as English, with Britain being perceived as the 'mother country', whilst those born after this date see themselves as Black. Many of the latter group see a link between themselves and black Americans, each of which groups stresses its African origins. But nothing is clear cut. Providing themselves with a sustaining history often involves British blacks in a bewildering mixture of identities. However, Kerridge claims to have observed a number of fairly distinctive accounts of Black British History.

'Windrush history' is founded in the belief that the 'Empire Windrush' began it all in 1948. Reputable Jamaicans loyal to the Empire and desperate to make their way in their new country arrived here anxious to take jobs in transport and hospitals, and aiming to amass some capital so as eventually to return home. Black historians maintain that West Indians were enticed here to do the jobs white workers refused to do. But Kerridge effectively demolishes both these myths. They came of their own accord, and were not seen as helpless victims doing other people's dirty work. Rather, they were resented for stealing white men's jobs — trade unionists were actively hostile to these newcomers in the labour market.

'Black Presence History' is peddled by those who claim that there has been a black community in this country for hundreds of years. True, there was a handful of blacks in Bristol and Liverpool, and a scattering of individual blacks elsewhere. But this does not constitute a settled and historically

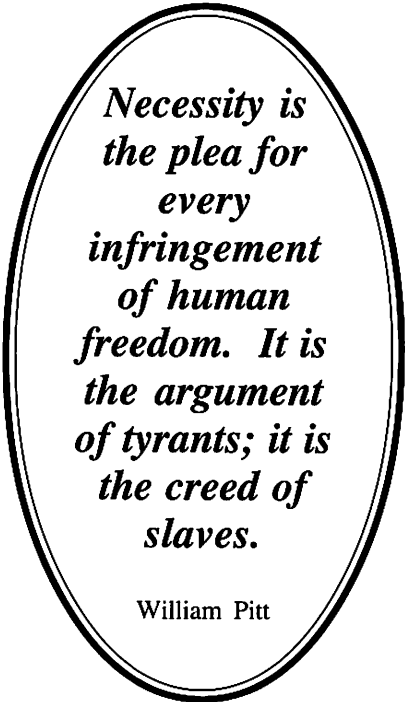
decisive community. Being strictly objective, it is difficult to see how resident blacks can claim to have made a significant contribution to British history. Before the large-scale post-war immigration the vast majority of British people very rarely saw a black face. There have been attempts to elevate Mary Seacole, the Jamaican nurse who went to the Crimea to tend the wounded, into an icon and to use her absence from the text-books as proof of a cover up by white historians. Unfortunately for this thesis Mary Seacole was not born here, but in Jamaica, and she never thought of herself as black till she came to England.

'Nubianism' is based on what the author calls 'Eddie Murphism' — a reference to a successful black American actor who appeared in an influential film *Coming to America*. According to this pre-colonial Africa was a veritable Garden of Eden 'with every man a king'. This vision of Utopia was given a considerable boost by Ali Masrui in the Reith lectures of 1979, and 'The Africans', a BBC1 series in 1986. Alas, the truth does not correspond with this particular vision of black innocence. It ignores the black contribution to slavery, underestimates tribal conflicts, and downplays the positive force for good in many aspects of colonialism. It also avoids mention of the fact that black Africa has produced some of the worst tyrants known to man — Bokassa, Amin, Obote, and many more. But it is a version of black history which makes an appeal to many British blacks, particularly to the young: if Africa is the true begetter of civilisation then possession of black skin ought to be a matter of pride, not to say vanity. This back to Africa mentality produces some strange beliefs. The author quotes a poster advertising a Nubian meeting, 'Nubians are super-beings made in Africa in ancient times by immortals from space adept in arts of genetic engineering, wrongly called God'. These distorted versions of historical reality, coupled with fixed, simplistic ideas about colonialism are dangerous. They presuppose a futile conflict between Black and White history, a conflict which is scarcely conducive to amicable race relations.

Worse yet, they can produce an outlook which justifies black crime on the grounds that, since all whites were slave dealers, this provides a licence to rob. Mr Kerridge describes this mentality as a 'muggers' philosophy' — and to judge from the fact that 80 per cent of muggings in London (where most blacks live) are committed by blacks, it is a philosophy which has had considerable success in motivating young black delinquents and drop-outs — an interesting instance of how a specific view of the past can result in specific, and in this case, anti-social behaviour.

The answer to the distortions, half-truths and downright lies of Black History is of course the rigorous pursuit of truth, a version of historical activity which ultimately sustains the individual and his community because it is based on the open mind and intellectual honesty. But is black history ever likely to produce an honest view so long as blacks are used as pawns by the race-relations industry?

For some years now the Open University has run courses on race and ethnic relations, you can even take a master's degree in the same subject at the University of London. The people who run these courses should invite Roy Kerridge to talk to their students, who should be required to read this book.



*Necessity is
the plea for
every
infringement
of human
freedom. It is
the argument
of tyrants; it is
the creed of
slaves.*

William Pitt

Titanic or San Demetrio?

Hal Colebatch

Some film buff must know exactly how many films about the Titanic have been made. I count seven, including a Nazi version intended to discredit British seamanship (its footage is said to have been recycled later). There has also been an improbable musical and my own modest radio play.

There have been plenty, anyway. James Cameron's *Titanic*, the latest and by far the most lavish, frankly stinks, both of ordinary political correctness and at some deeper level of advanced cultural neurosis.

This is quite apart from the fact it certainly deserves an Oscar for the worst script of the year. "Oh, Mr Andrews, I saw the iceberg and I see it in your eyes. Please tell me the truth," the heroine pleads as the passengers are first advised to put on their lifebelts. This is actually one of the better lines. She is fresh from seducing the hero in the cargo-hold with the request "Put your hands on me, Jack." (This cavorting fortunately has not reduced his stamina for subsequent exertions). The script is so cliché-ridden and with a hero and heroine so corny, tedious and irritating as to make this the first Titanic movie where one actually cheering for the iceberg.

No wonder the critical establishment has lauded it. It is not Marxist — it is far too infatuated with Plutocratic glitter and glamour for that (in the final scene Rose, the heroine and last Titanic survivor, dies in old age in the 1990s and is received with applause into the glittering First Class dinner-dance apparently going on forever on the Titanic in Davy Jones' Locker, a happy ending if tough on the firemen presumably stoking forever below) — but within its intellectual limitations it is still a piece of politically-correct class warfare, with neither originality of concept nor great historical accuracy of spirit despite the enormous

budget and breathtaking effects. The evening-dressed First Class promenade in sparkling luxury while the Third Class jig and swill Guinness in the bowels of the ship to highlights from *Riverdance*. The Second Class, probably the most interesting of the passengers, are never mentioned or shown. A Catholic priest, who in the hands of a sensitive director might have been a very interesting figure, is shown briefly in vestments holding a service as the ship disappears beneath him, oddly enough being pawed it appears — can this be right? — by Alf Garnett.

The attention paid to the crew is minimal, apart from the cockney-accented stewards who seem to spend all their time locking the Third Class behind grilles as the water rises about them. It is typical of the dim-witted, patronising level of the whole thing that it appears the hero and heroine actually cause the disaster, when, emerging from the hold, they carry on their canoodling on deck and distract the look-out.

There is something offensive and neurotic about an historic tragedy being reduced to expensive, moronically-scripted, melodrama as there is something depressing about the clichés. Why is one identified officer, William Murdoch, shown shooting himself when he did nothing of the kind? It is the harmless, frankly mindless, spectacle, action and genuine flu' of Cameron's films like *True Lies* and *The Deep* gone horribly wrong, plot and dialogue acceptable in fantasy applied to something real. It is as if a Tinseltown extravaganza has collided with cold hard historical fact. It could all be dismissed as a very expensive farce (Oh, for the Carry On team who did such a glorious spoof of *Cleopatra* to give this work the treatment!) except that the intercut shots of what appear to be the real wreck of the

Titanic take it into a kind of pseudo-documentary area, and by implication have it claim to be some kind of truth.

For all the lavish budget, details are wrong, some presumably from deliberate didactic intent. It is claimed twice that there are boats for less than half the people — there were in fact boats for more than half of those actually on board, but in the haste and confusion many were not fully loaded. Even the number of lifeboats available — a pretty crucial aspect of the story — is given wrongly at one point. The dialogue is full of neologisms, including "masters of the universe" from *Bonfire of the Vanities*, and does not even pretend to verisimilitude. It is not mentioned that the *Titanic* was American-owned. The heroine is apparently wearing waterproof lip-gloss in 1912.

Others have pointed out that First Class passengers would not have worn full evening-dress the night before going ashore, a small point but symbolic. *A Night to Remember* accurately showed them wearing ordinary suits. Benjamin Guggenheim and his valet only changed into evening dress when it was obvious they were going down.

Unfortunate as the fact is for class-warriors, those who behaved worst were some of the seamen in charge of part-loaded boats who refused to return after the sinking to rescue swimmers from the freezing water, despite the entreaties of some passengers in the boats (this is shown briefly in one scene). True, some of the passengers also did not want to go back, but it was the seamen who were in charge. Only a boat in charge of a junior officer put back (Lightoller, the senior surviving officer, was away off in the dark standing on the crowded keel of an upturned boat trying to balance it). In fact in general the First Class passengers on the *Titanic* behaved well and even nobly, a number of men accepting

certain death by giving up places in the boats for women and children.

The real story of the *Titanic* says less about class warfare than about rapid technological progress leading to a complacency which the disaster corrected. Joseph Conrad saw decadence in the fact that when they were ordered into the lifeboats some passengers objected that it was too cold and seemed to think they had some choice in the matter.

Many Third Class passengers missed out on places in the boats because the Third Class cabins were located furthest from the boat-deck. The *Titanic's* lifeboats went off with 500 empty places (or more if one considered that women and children weighed less than men — most of the boats were meant to carry 65 men) because there had been no boat-drills and even more lifeboats would not have been much use without proper boat-drills and a bigger and better-trained deck-crew.

The safety regulations when the *Titanic* was built, seen in hindsight, were incredibly stupid — the Board of Trade believed it was undesirable to clutter up the decks with too many lifeboats, and its chief marine expert said so at the official inquiry — but there was no conspiracy to drown the Third Class. The inquiry also found that a disproportionately large number of the third-class who perished were non-English speakers. If true, this suggests they simply did not know what was going on. This was unforgivable but it was not class war.

The chief builder, Thomas Andrews, is made to say in the film that “it was thought by some the deck would look too cluttered” with more lifeboats. It is presumably politically incorrect to specify that the decision was made by a government regulatory body. The disaster caused immediate reforms in safety regulations, the need for which in large modern ships had simply, if inexcusably, not been realised previously (though among other strange predictions Kipling had written a poem, “The English Flag,” in 1891, telling of a night in the North Atlantic when “the liner splits on the ice-field”).

The 1950s British film *A Night to Remember*, the best of the *Titanic* films,

looks dated in black and white, but this also gives it a rather authentically chilly documentary feeling. It did, in its way, honour rather than insult the people of the real *Titanic* by giving the impression that it treats them with a fundamental seriousness. Further, it rightly concentrated not on the romantic entanglements of fictitious passengers, but on the crew and their responses to the terrible situation facing them. It scrupulously kept every major character and incident as close to the known truth as possible, and the result was real and compelling human drama rather than melodrama, teak rather than papier-mâché.

A Night to Remember emphasised the seamen, the wireless operators, and not least the stokehold gang and engineers who drew the fires before the boilers could explode and stayed below keeping the lights and wireless going (none of the engineers survived). In *Titanic* these people are all virtually forgotten once the action starts.

Kenneth More as Commander Lightoller in *A Night to Remember*, suddenly placed in charge of loading and lowering the boats, had been a real Naval officer and played the part with authority. One felt the real Lightoller, an indestructible seaman who survived by a miracle and who in old age took his yacht to Dunkirk and brought off soldiers under heavy air-attack, would have approved. Most of the other historical characters are portrayed with a feeling for accuracy and fairness, though the film is arguably (only arguably) a little hard on Captain Stanley Lord of the *Californian* which was hove to some miles to the north and whose officers probably saw the *Titanic's* rockets. Lightoller is hardly mentioned in *Titanic*, and Lord not at all.

A Night to Remember did not forget the memorable figure of the baker, who, while cool-headedly and on his own initiative provisioning the lifeboats with bread and throwing deck-chairs to swimmers, calmly and deliberately consumed a bottle of spirits before stepping off the sinking stern and thus insulated survived in the freezing water, probably the last man off the ship and the last to be hauled alive from the sea. *Titanic* shows a man in

white on the stern drinking from a hip-flask but gives no explanation of who or why. Nor did *A Night to Remember* neglect the brave Captain Rostron who took the *Carpathia* at full speed through the ice-fields to the rescue. (Later Sir Arthur Rostron, he was honoured by the Sovereign as highly as were, later, Sir Elton John and Sir Paul McCartney). It balanced real horror and tragedy with real bravery and nobility.

SOS Titanic, made in 1979, starring David Jansson, showed that, like *Hamlet*, the story of the *Titanic* is one it is hard to wholly fail at. There were moving cameos (as in *A Night to Remember*) of Captain Smith and Andrews choosing to go down with the ship. However it had too many talking heads and really did not do anything *A Night to Remember* had not done better. *Titanic* shows Smith going down in style on the bridge but whereas *A Night to Remember* has Andrews calmly giving passengers advice to swim clear, *Titanic* has him into New Age feely-touchy embracing. There is, incidentally, no real evidence about what happened to Smith, though some survivors said they saw him in the water after the sinking holding up a child. In *Titanic*, unfortunately, his end seems slightly comic, irresistibly reminiscent of Alec Guinness (who the actor, Bernard Hill, strongly resembles) going down in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

Even the much-derided *Raise the Titanic!* was in a sense better than the latest version, in that it was a straight adventure story and not an aesthetically and morally repugnant confusion of documentary history and clichéd melodrama.

Why yet another version? Why \$200 million? Does it suggest that whatever *Zeitgeist* produces these things is stuck in a rather depressing creative rut? Why (it is a legitimate question even if we know the answer only too well) does it concentrate not on the heroism so many people really showed, but on hedonism and decadence. It turns historic tragedy into synthetic entertainment because it is decadent in the sense of being a decaying thing, as false at its core as one might expect of

any \$200 million spectacle made to make yet more money by directing synthetic anger at the excesses of the rich. It combines amazing effects and some stunning visual compositions with bankruptcy of thought.

Why, particularly, when there are literally hundreds of other great true stories of the sea from all history crying out for production, and when the technology is available at last to do them justice? Couldn't we turn to something else? Perhaps the voyage of the *Ohio* to Malta, a voyage on which the whole fate of the world might have turned? The effects could be spectacular enough for anybody. The finale could well move the audience to nobler tears than did *Titanic*, as I saw them moved when the newsreel of the *Ohio* entering Grand Harbour with every ship saluting it was spliced into the semi-documentary drama *Malta Story*.

My own candidate for filming, if anyone wants to give me a modest amount of money, is the story of the San Demetrio.

The San Demetrio was a heavily-loaded petrol tanker attached to a convoy steaming from America to England in November, 1940, escorted by HMS Jervis Bay, a former cargo-passenger ship which had been armed with 6-inch guns as an auxiliary cruiser. On November 5, shortly before sunset, the convoy was attacked by the German pocket battleship Admiral Scheer, manned with 11-inch guns.

Despite the hopeless odds, the Jervis Bay closed with and engaged the Admiral Scheer. It was, of course sunk with nearly all its crew but bought time for most of the convoy to escape in the falling dark (by an odd coincidence, Kenneth More was serving in one of the ships). "God knows" said the Scheer's captain as the Jervis Bay sank, "those men have put themselves in their county's debt today!"

The San Demetrio, after trying to fight with its one four-inch gun, was set on fire by shells from the Scheer, but with the rest of its prizes escaping the raider had no time to settle it. The crew abandoned ship in three lifeboats, which were parted in the rising storm. One boat, with fourteen men in it, including the chief engineer, but

with only three or four seamen, drifted apart from the others. After a couple of freezing days and nights the men in it saw a burning ship, which they recognised as the San Demetrio, still afloat. The fuel-oil bunkers had been holed, the superstructure was ablaze, and there was a shell-hole in the bows, but by some miracle the tanks with 12,000 tons of petrol had not exploded. The lifeboat had a sail and one man happened to be a skilled sailor.

Approaching the San Demetrio was deadly dangerous. The explosion of the petrol would have engulfed the boat even from a distance. Petrol was floating on the sea and a spark could ignite it. More petrol spouted from holes in the tanktops each time the ship rolled. But the men in the lifeboat tied cloth over the metal gunnels and groped along the burning tanker's side. They found the remains of a Jacob's ladder and climbed aboard. The lifeboat was banging against the hull just above the propeller blades and when they tried to hoist it inboard it broke away and was lost.

They rigged hoses and pumps and a compressor. In a day and a night of desperate battle they extinguished the fires. Then they found the engines were flooded with five feet of water and the radio, bridge and all navigational instruments as well as the food stores and cabins had been destroyed. They got the engines working (one who toiled heroically being a greaser named Boyle who was dying of internal injuries), plugged the holes in the tanktops, invented a steering system and through nine days of unceasing gales sailed the San Demetrio home with most of its deadly but priceless cargo intact. In the end as tugs came out to them they refused a tow into port.

The San Demetrio is one of the most tremendous and epic testaments to what ordinary men can achieve. What a film it might make, given modern effects and a good script!

I have long had an idea for a few scenes for a new film of the San Demetrio, among them these: before the convoy sails Captain Fogarty Fegen, the Captain of the Jervis Bay, is briefing the assembled merchant captains. As they leave the briefing, one repeats

his name and mutters to another that they are in the charge of a Irish Fenian of perhaps dubious patriotism if it comes to a crunch. This is remembered though not mentioned later when we see the last anyone saw of Fegen. Aboard the sinking Jervis Bay, dying, one arm blown off at the shoulder, he staggers from the wreckage of the shell-blasted main bridge to the docking bridge, supervising the firing of the last guns under local control. Another hit from an 11-inch shell brings the ensign down, and he orders another ensign attached to the stump of the mast. A seaman climbs and fixes it there. Extravagantly melodramatic? Corny? A cliché? Yes, except that that second scene really happened. The German captain saluting as the Scheer swept past the wreckage of the Jervis Bay would not violate the spirit of what happened either.

But the greatest part of story could be the "ennoblement" of the men of the San Demetrio from a nondescript collection of deck-hands, stewards, mess-boys and so forth into what they became. I think it would make a film. With modern computerised special effects it might not even be very expensive. It is true there is not a great deal of sex in it, but neither was there in *Zulu*. There is not a great deal of class-warfare, either, but that need not be an insuperable handicap. Just sticking to the story would be enough.

Charles Frennd of Ealing Films made *San Demetrio, London*, in 1944. There were some good performances and the power of the story alone would have given the film some memorability. It still occasionally surfaces on late TV, but it was done in a hurry and on a shoestring, and is probably of real interest only to old movie buffs. 1944 was hardly the time for costly special effects. The ships are plainly models and the fight of the Scheer and the Jervis Bay is barely shown. This is the only film of it that has been made and outside my own fancy I have never heard of any plans for another.

We might ask ourselves seriously: what is wrong with a culture that makes film after film about the *Titanic*, the latest costing \$200 million, and ignores the San Demetrio?

In Short

Civilians in Uniform, A Memoir, Richard Terrell, The Radcliffe Press, 1998, £24.50.

The events of the Second World War, particularly in view of insidious official efforts to obscure and falsify our history, will soon seem as distant and irrelevant as those of the Hundred Years War. This is why memoirs such as these, succinct and elegantly written, are perhaps more significant for posterity than those of the grand players.

Richard Terrell's experience of actual warfare took place in the Arakan Hills, the frontier bordering India and NW Burma, but most of his account, enlivened by incisive observations and anecdotes, shows how the war transformed the lives of ordinary people. He began the war as a rifleman and was in a good position to appreciate the realities and difficulties for men suddenly flung onto the parade ground, exiled to chilly corners of Britain in training camps, enduring sea sickness in troopships and marching in the Nigerian Bush and the Burmese jungle. He was also able to assess the differences between the attitudes of officers, some of whom did not care how their men were fed. Unlike most English people, Terrell understood food, always carrying provisions from Soho in his kit bag, which he used to make tasty stews — in Nigeria his efforts revolutionised the diet of the whole battalion.

Richard Terrell ended his war service in India, a country which has dominated his life, his father having been the Chief Justice of Bihar and Orissa. The final pages therefore are devoted to one of the big 'ifs' of history — what would have happened if Wavell's warning to the Attlee government had been heeded in 1946 — might the massive genocide, which Wavell predicted would follow independence, have been averted? Terrell is sure that Wavell's advice should have been accepted with qualifications and that he should certainly not have been dismissed. Wavell's

memorandum is reproduced here in full. It is an excellent distillation of the situation in 1946.

Merrie Cave.

How we squandered the Reich, Reinhard Spitzzy, Michael Russell, 1997, £19.95.

Written in 1946, published in Germany in 1986 and now available in English, Reinhard Spitzzy's memoir of events leading to the outbreak of war in 1939 is a fascinating account of the human failings of the diplomats and politicians involved, notably Ribbentrop whose assistant Spitzzy was. An arrogant, intellectually limited arriviste who would stop at no calumny to ingratiate himself with Hitler, Ribbentrop is blamed by Spitzzy for the disastrous misunderstandings between England and Germany during this period. Ribbentrop won undeserved esteem with Hitler by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 for which he was nominally responsible, but became a ferocious enemy of England, misrepresenting events and attitudes, while making himself a laughing stock in London, a development which aggravated his Anglophobia.

Spitzzy's perspective is interesting: as an early member of the Austrian Nazi movement Spitzzy was a committed idealist who took part in the unsuccessful coup of 1934, after which he made his way through party contacts to Ribbentrop. Spitzzy's political hopes were fulfilled with the Anschluss and the diplomatic triumph at Munich, but he claims to have become disillusioned as Germany and England moved towards war because he considered the Soviet Union was the greatest ideological enemy and territorial rival and because war would jeopardise the domestic and international achievements of National Socialism. As a result he became an opponent of the regime.

Spitzzy suggests that British interests would have been better served by a rapprochement with Hitler, in view of Britain's decline to medium power status. He might also cite the human cost of war; its long term consequence of moral collapse and the aesthetic disaster of reconstruction and artistic experiment. However, Spitzzy makes several misjudgements. We know that Hitler was a wholly untrustworthy opportunist who would in the early nuclear age have posed an apocalyptic danger to all. Of the inhumanity revealed by the Final Solution, Spitzzy can merely point to the mass murder committed by the Soviet regime and to extreme measures like the bombing of Dresden. However this is a riveting account of incoherence and confusion in human affairs leading to the most catastrophic events of the century.

James Turnill

Lords A'Leaping, Edward Heathcoat Amory, Centre for Policy Studies, 57 Tufton Street, London SW1, 1998, £7.50.

This is a very good example of the Conservatives' belated rush into the fray about the House of Lords. Playing a "long game" of the kind that never gets you anywhere, the political leadership of the party decided not to defend the existing Upper House, despite its obvious advantages and the equally obvious chicanery of the government. Instead, there were attempts at various deals. Now, with the clock ticking away rather menacingly, the intellectuals of the party have decided to have a go at producing some "forward looking" ideas. As an example of those, Edward Heathcoat Amory's pamphlet is not bad at all. He feels that we must abandon the idea of the hereditary principle, though he gives no adequate reason for that. Instead, he suggests a fully elected Senate, but elected on different principles from the House of Commons, to avoid the problems into which that in-

stitution has fallen into. Furthermore, he thinks that the new Upper House should be a legislative body only, thus avoiding the problem of patronage. It is glaringly obvious to all who have thought about the subject, thought not to Edward Heathcoat Amory, that a fully elected Upper House will want equal powers with the Lower House. Heathcoat Amory thinks that, despite being elected, the Senate will take second place to the Commons. Why? It is, perhaps, the only valid argument in favour of a directly elected Senate that it will be in a position to control the Commons and, through that, the government, which is what the Lower House is supposed to but does not do.

Heathcoat Amory insists that even a fully elected Senate should not be able to discuss or vote on finance bills. Again, why? His explanation makes one wonder about his knowledge of English constitutional history: "The spectacle of legislatures holding executives to ransom by refusing to vote the money to allow normal government business to continue is undemocratic and unappealing." Who defines "normal government business"? And what would John Hampden, George Washington or W E Gladstone have said to that?

Helen Szamuely

The REAL American Dilemma, Ed. Jared Taylor, New Century Books, 1998, \$9.95.

This collection takes its title from Gunnar Myrdal's hugely influential *An American Dilemma*. The key contention of that book was that 'White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners and morals. This, in its turn, gives support to white prejudice. White prejudice and Negro standards thus mutually "cause" each other.'

Those conclusions — offered as a comprehensive explanation of all the observed differences between the standards actually achieved by Negroes and whites — make the typical, and typically unstated and unevicenced, sociologists' assumption that *even on average* there are no considerable and

relevant genetically influenced differences between those two human sets; and hence that environment is all and heredity is nothing.

Although researchers continue to produce ever more evidence showing how wrong Myrdal was, all the public policies based upon his conclusions remain in force. Spokespersons for America's blacks now constantly construe all proportionate under-representation in anything desirable, or proportionate over-representations in anything undesirable, as compelling evidence of continuing, ineradicable white racism.

The present collection consists of an Introduction plus various papers on this and related topics. Three of these — by J Philippe Rushton, Michael Levin and Glayde Whitney — deal with facts and fallacies about genetics. Samuel Francis describes the harassment of those who try to discuss what is here the politically incorrect truth. Jared Taylor and Wayne Lutton consider the present and likely future consequences of the enormous inflow of non-European immigrants while Michael Hart — noticing that all the anti-racist policies of the last thirty years have left blacks more hostile to whites and more inclined to see themselves as members of an alien people — adumbrates a policy of tripartite racial partition.

Antony Flew

The Bogus State of Brigadoon, What can save Scotland? Bill Jamieson, Centre for Policy Studies, 57 Tufton Street, London SW1, 1998, £7.50.

Sad to say but we are sleepwalking into the dissolution of the United Kingdom, a noble and very successful experiment in constitutional democracy. One wonders what history's judgement on Tony Blair's government will be. At present Scotland is heading towards ever more devolution to end up, eventually, in a political state confusingly described by the SNP as "independence within the European Union". Since there is no independence within that benighted institution for anybody, one wonders

what the SNP can mean. But then, as Bill Jamieson shows in this witty and clever pamphlet, the Scots have been beguiled by a picture of their own country that bears no resemblance to reality. Scotland is not a quaint little backwater that has nothing but whisky, tartan and a peculiar accent in the present, a large number of rather unpleasant ruffians in the past and nothing but beggary from other countries in the future.

Many in England have accepted the division of the United Kingdom with the words "good riddance". England has supported Scotland for a long time, the Scots have done nothing but whinge. Let them go and see how they like it when they have to beg for money from Brussels. This pamphlet is a timely reminder that it is the Scots that have invented the very concept of free-market economics and of liberal politics. Bill Jamieson exhorts the Conservative Party to present the people of Scotland with policies that are truly different from the old-fashioned, redistributive socialist ones of both Scottish Labour and the SNP. An independent Scotland under either of these will lose its business, almost, its will to exist. If we cannot keep the union together, at least let Scotland become what it could be: a successful, highly competitive country with small government and light regulation. Let it, as before, become a genuine example to us all, an alternative to the highly taxed, highly regulated, centralised nightmare in which we are participating.

I do have one quibble, though. Jamieson proposes that in the new Scotland Adam Smith's birthday should be a national holiday. Fair enough, but what about David Hume, the great philosopher of the enlightenment or the patron saint of all literary journalists, Lord Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*?

Helen Szamuely.

The Claridge Press

Forthcoming Title:

Blair's Britain Hal Colebatch

Just Published:

The Story of Black History Roy Kerridge

Thinkers of Our Time Series:

Oakeshott Robert Grant

Polanyi Richard Allen

Carl Schmitt Paul Gottfried

Chesterton Ian Crowther

Scheler Francis Dunlop

Santayana Noël O'Sullivan

C.S. Lewis Philip Vander Elst

Heidegger David E. Cooper

Peter Fuller Memorial Lecture Series:

Landscape into Sound David Matthews

Subject Matter and Abstraction — in Exile Robert Natkin

Seeing With the Ear Howard Jacobson

Other Titles include:

Edmund Burke and Our Present Discontents Jim McCue

The KGB Lawsuits Brian Crozier

Understanding Youth David Marsland

Some to Mecca Turn to Pray Mervyn Hiskett

The Falsification of the Good Alain Besançon

Thinkers of the New Left Roger Scruton

Obtainable through your local bookseller, or direct from:

The Claridge Press, 33 Canonbury Park South, London N1 2JW

Tel: 0171 226 7791 Fax: 0171 354 0383