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The 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, 1830 -1903

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MEASUREMENT IN THE FRENCH IDIOM

More than 200 years after the French first had metrication foisted upon them in the wake of the Revolution, there are many expressions using traditional units of measure still alive in their language. 'Faire une tête de dix pieds de long' 'to pull a very long face', is one of them.

When Napoleon Bonaparte came to power, he was well aware of its unpopularity and his memoirs reveal how he deplored it. Within a year of overthrowing the Directory and becoming First Consul, he took steps to halt the metrication and decimalization of weights and measures. The Republican Calendar had been a dismal failure; the division of the circle into 400 grads instead of 360 degrees had been no better. Both were peremptorily abolished.

However, when it came to measures of length, volume and weight things were more problematic. Napoleon acknowledged the need to standardise measures throughout the land since under the *ancien régime* there had been far too many local variations. All that had been needed was to have made the units of weight and measure of Paris common to all provinces. Like much of the populace Napoleon was not in favour of a system built around the unit of a metre, nor was he in favour of the new nomenclature. 'Nothing is more at odds with the way the mind, the memory and the imagination work. A fathom, a foot, an inch, a line, a point, are fixed portions of size that the imagination conceives independently of the relationships between them.' His psychological interpretation of these issues remains as convincing as ever: the mind does not work in the ruthlessly rational way propounded by the metric system. Its natural bent is to work with units of sizes that are born of practical use and bear simple memorable names.

Unfortunately his initial meddling made matters worse. By decree he allowed the substitution of the old names of traditional measures for several of the names of metric units. Thus, a *litre* could be translated by the word *pinte*, a *kilogramme* by *livre*, a *décalitre* by *boisseau* [bushel]. This proved an ill thought-out exercise in semantics. Taking the names of old familiar measures and using them to replace the names for some metric units only brought more confusion.

So, some months before Napoleon made his military retreat from Moscow, he made a strategic retreat of a different nature. In the face of continuing public resistance to the metric system, he introduced a system of weights and measures known as the *système usuel*. The new system, essentially for vernacular use alongside the official metric system, allowed the old familiar names to be used with precise metric values approximating to their traditional ones. Defining those values necessitated the use of fractions of the metric units and so a fundamental principle of the metric system, namely decimal division, was broken. A *livre* became half a kilogram, a *pied* became a third of a metre and a *pouce* [inch] became a thirty-sixth of a metre.

Although the July Monarchy outlawed all weights and measures other than those expressed in metric units from January 1st 1840, the old measures were not forgotten so easily. In any French market today the terms *livre* and *demi-livre* are in constant use. The Napoleonic use of the *livre* for half a kilogram has somehow stuck. So one old name at least is still used, albeit at a metric value, and a division by fraction has not been eradicated.

Look in any good French dictionary under any of the headings for common traditional measures and you will find a wealth of idioms that pepper everyday speech. Even after 200 years' use, there is a dearth of expressions built around metric units. This says much for the dreariness of metric terminology and even more for the indestructible imagery of the old terms.

John Adamson

The Salisbury Review

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The word 'poverty' is a dangerous and dishonest one in the vocabulary of modern politics. Great Britain is among the richest, most open societies of all time, an irresistible magnet to newcomers, who know we British are not poor. There is plenty of work and a vast welfare state. The relentless 'poverty' rhetoric joins other campaigns seeking our increasing subjugation to the state. Indeed, the whole welfare system does this, whatever its origins in real poverty in the Beveridge era and earlier. It facilitates bureaucratic control by know-alls and busybodies, anxious to identify those variously 'disabled' or 'deprived'. A voracious state has banished from national memory the old myriad private arrangements for welfare of pre-'welfare state' times.

Poverty of the imagination is far more prevalent than material poverty. A television glimpse of the ghastly economic distress in many countries ought to banish the notion that the British, any of them, are 'poor'. Likewise it insults the poor whom Mayhew encountered back in the 1840s, to call anyone in this country poor now. Here only minds conditioned by false pity will be taken in by 'poverty' and the other mantras. Unfortunately many minds are.

As David Webb points out, the long-term elite, controlling the state whichever party is nominally in power, has additionally employed related falsehoods like 'racism' and 'ethnocentrism' to justify further regulation by un-elected quangos. These claims seem brazenly contradictory when these same people have also engineered a vast immigration. They have long controlled education and broadcasting, from within whose fastnesses they have mocked our historical and cultural sense, and advisedly striven to eliminate knowledge of our past, and pride in this country's achievements in the development of modern civilisation: not least in the reduction of real poverty. Our wretched schools, here lamented by Tom Burkard, show that if there is poverty in this wealthy land, it is overwhelmingly spiritual and cultural.

Patricia Morgan identifies a curious reversal, perhaps peculiar to societies of unprecedented affluence. Today it is order and innocence which must justify themselves. Vandals and thieves flourish unpunished. Idlers live in a 'poverty'

they have happily constructed for themselves, officialdom having deliberately handed them the requisite space. The whole welfare constituency is greatly encouraged both by public handouts and by lack of old-fashioned punishments and prohibitions. Roy Kerridge notes the shamelessness of many beggars and 'homeless' people. Poverty today is not economic failure. It stems from casual sexual relations, the erosion of marriage and family, the drug culture and self-serving bureaucratic propaganda. People are encouraged into state-dependency by what American critics call 'welfare pimps' whose incomes depend on this contrived folly.

Jon Davies's searching article on the poverty myth invokes a heart-breaking nostalgia for the days when the Labour Party was untainted by the politics of envy, its supporters patriots and monarchists who would have been deeply affronted by the foul lie that crime is principally caused by poverty. He emphasises the indispensable part learning plays in politics. If millions today are corrupted morally and socially, it is because a calculated ideology has elbowed learning aside, and instead of a slow, steady rising tide of intellectual and moral decency, we now have a flood of antinomian cant.

Davies sees the new elite as advisedly ignorant. Peter Mullen identifies the same destructive unspiritual outlook in the senior reaches of the Church of England. No sense of historical change informs either. In many past societies the rich few did exploit the poor many. The marvel of the nineteenth century market economy was the prospect of its eliminating in due course both poverty and exploitation. Unfortunately the abiding legacy of certain Victorian intellectuals is their confusion of the two things. Economic exploitation was the fate of most people in the past. Today, outside the welfariat, most people are exploited fiscally to pay for the modern state, receiving in return rotten public services. Hayek was quite right that socialism, having failed in its nationalisation and planning form, now assumes a tax and regulatory one.

Any Conservative government which does not cut taxation and unnecessary, counterproductive spending, will have failed in its duty. No Conservative Party which fails to explain this mission, will be elected or deserve to be.

Jon Davies

POVERTY A file produced for the teeth of the rats of reform. The number of plans for its abolition equals that of the reformers who suffer from it, plus that of the philosophers who know nothing about it. Its victims are distinguished by possession of all the virtues and by their faith in leaders seeking to conduct them into a prosperity where they believe these to be unknown. Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*, 1911, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc edition, 2003

The well-to-do cannot directly raise the poor to any great extent. I hold that the poor must be raised by the artisan class: and that the first duty of the social reformer is to study the points of view of those artisans whose life and character are noble.

Alfred Marshall, in *The Strength of the People*, Helen Bosanquet, Macmillan, 1903

For a period of thirty years, from 1960-1990, I would every year for a month or so go canvassing for Labour Party candidates. For twenty years I was a Labour Councillor. The ward I represented was in the main made up of new and old Council houses, in an inner-city location, occupied by 'ordinary' working class people. They called themselves that, and they tended to vote Labour. There were a number of things which I learnt. The Queen was well regarded, as were the armed services and their military record. Religion was respected, if not actively engaged in. They, being British, lived in Britain; and while there was much sympathy for 'those poor people overseas', the limits of compulsory (tax-derived) altruism stopped, if only for reflection, at the national borders. They were, in a phrase, commonsensically patriotic.

The older people, pensioners and the like, thought that they themselves had never been so well off – not that they felt themselves to be 'rich', but that didn't bother them: they were, they knew for sure, better off than their grandparents. My voters knew that too many people on social security were fiddling, or were tempted to fiddle by easy money, and they knew it because the fiddlers were living nearby, and they resented them because they themselves were honest and hard-working: the parasitism was 'in their face', they lived with it, both as fact and as temptation. They knew also that various kinds of

'social security' were necessary, and legitimated because earned by contributions to society of various kinds such as insurance contributions or service in the wars. They would get either angry or incredulous at being told that poverty was the cause of crime, because they and/or their parents and grandparents had been poor, and were never criminals. Criminals, they said, should be punished. They did not think much of childbirth outside wedlock nor of sexual promiscuity and experimentation. Schools, they felt, were better equipped, and teachers better paid than they ever had been, and children needed discipline. Buying their Council house was a good idea, if that is what you wanted. Above all my electors knew as an absolute certainty, as most of the people reading this article will know also, that their own families three or four generations ago had been poor and they, now, were not.

This wisdom filtered but stutteringly into the deliberations of the local Labour Party. Party membership in working class wards like the one I represented was low and relatively inactive, and electoral turn-out was low. In the middle class wards (where ward parties were the largest), Party members who were often themselves public sector employees ('professionals'), provided vocal support for expenditure on measures of social provision which were congruent with a 'poverty' or 'class' view of history (and which also co-incidentally provided them with well-paid virtuous jobs). Local party policies followed this sense of what the world was all about, a world ideologically divided into 'the rich and the poor', our voters and theirs, where 'the poor' were the recipients of tax-derived services necessarily delivered by caring publicly employed professionals. Only with 'New' Labour did some version of the 'Old' proletarian wisdom achieve some degree of respectability and acceptability.

'The poor', said Jesus, 'are always with you'. Jesus did not have to face interrogation by Seebohm Rowntree, Peter Townsend or the Social Exclusion Unit: *What, Jesus, do you mean by 'the poor'?* There are statistical 'answers' to this question, whether those presented by Rowntree in his first book when he quantified the proportion of the population of York living below his 'poverty line', or by a host of later commentators, who refined, qualified or challenged Rowntree's chronicling of a progressive decline in the numbers of the poor. Much of the scholarly discussion 'solved' the problem by simply re-defining 'poverty'. In the 1960s Peter Townsend gave us the concept of 'relative deprivation',

and more recently the Department for Work and Pensions tells us that 'poverty and social exclusion' have to be, and can be, solved by improving access 'to good quality health services, educational and work opportunities, decent housing, a safe environment... as well as income'. There is, to be frank, little point in regarding such 'poverty' as something amenable to rational discussion, because all it means is that society, or societies, have inequalities in them. To retain the use of the term 'poverty' in this context is simply to pursue the class war by other means.

In modern Britain, we are told, the richest 1 per cent own 23 per cent of all wealth, 50 per cent own 6 per cent of the national wealth, and 18 per cent live at less than 60 per cent of median income – they are 'relatively deprived' or poor (OECD Britain Social Trends 2002). It is of course quite possible to be 'against' poverty and in favour of inequality: indeed

most of us live our lives in this way. When the two are conflated, and both *thereby* anathematised, then the whole of society is anathematised, capitalist ones in particular, but in effect *all known societies*. We can only imagine how ludicrous anthropology would have been if every Malinowski and every Margaret Mead had been accompanied by a 'poverty expert' – *The*

Sexual Life of Poor Savages (The Poor Sexual Life of Savages?) or *Coming of Age amongst Socially Excluded Samoans*.

There were earlier and better informed versions of this debate. In the 1840s, both Engels and Disraeli used data on social conditions in England contained in official 'Blue Books'. Engels saw England as divided into two *classes*, Disraeli saw it as divided into two *nations*. For a century or so after them, the debate – a genuine debate – about poverty was carried on in the trenches and in the 'no man's land' demarcated by these two concepts.

For Engels, poverty was, *tout court*, what happened to the working class. Poor was what the working class was. The only way to deal with it was by abolishing social classes. Engels' view has been put to the test in the great social experiment visited upon our European homeland from 1917 onwards. In 1934/5 Sidney and Beatrice Webb visited the country where the experiment had been 'tri-alled'. In their report on the USSR (*A New Civilisation?* 1935) the Webbs commented that the Soviet system had solved the problems of all types of sufferers and poor people in a way that is 'hard to describe otherwise than in terms of eulogy', and the only possible defect that might

occur to a British or German observer might be 'the encouragement of malingering' that the Soviet system might lead to. 'Many people', wrote the Webbs, 'who ought to know, assert that there is little malingering in the USSR'. Jesus, it seems, was wrong: the poor had gone from history, abolished by Equality and a little Bolshevik discouragement of malingering.

Some decades later, the Webbs' spiritual heir Peter Townsend, commenting on the failures of the Labour Governments of the 60s, and apparently undeterred by the terrors and failures of 'un-' or 'non-democratic' socialism, said 'the question left unanswered by Labour rule is whether democratic socialism can be effective' (in *Labour and Equality*, N Bosanquet and P Townsend, Heinemann, 1980). Into the world created by this (continuing) failure of 'democratic socialism' came more and more surveys proving *beyond doubt* that British and

all non-socialist societies contained radical inequalities in income, access to and benefit from health care, ditto for education, ditto for housing. Compounded by the discovery of racial and gender inequalities, and by various forms of physical disability (including a new kind of venereal disease), the nation saw a veritable parade of poverty, a menagerie of minorities, unchallenge-



ably the recipients of larger and larger sums of taxpayers' money, either because they (the recipients) were human ('human rights') or because they were minorities ('minority rights') or both at once. On December 17 2003 Krishna Sarda, Chief Executive of Ethnic Minority Foundation, said that the 'income gap' between 'ethnic minority and white households' resulted in 'poverty' for disproportionately large numbers of ethnic minority children. He told *Guardian* readers that 'this warrants a dedicated focus to shift the equality gap'.

Embedded in such gobbledygook are notions which see 'Rights' as Virtues, to the possessors of which nothing can be denied and to whom no vice can be imputed and from whom no contribution can be demanded, and for whose benefit wholesale social uproar has to take place. These are the descendants of Engels, blind to the lessons of the last 150 years, seeing now in the endless invention and proliferation of poor-socially-excluded-discriminated-against-unequal etc. etc. 'minorities' a better trumpet to blow than the single-tune of class which Engels so eloquently blew all those years ago. The licensing of the attack on the 'commanding heights' of our culture is the price that Tony Blair had to pay for the

abandonment of Clause 4. It has to be said that Mrs. Thatcher paved the way for this in her contempt for the traditional professions, as exemplified in her remarks about the 'traditionally immune targets', the law, medicine and the clergy.

Disraeli provides the banner for the opposing army. In *Sybil or the Two Nations*, Egremont was told that between the 'two nations' (emphasis added) which made up English society, there was little in the way of conversation: 'no intercourse and no sympathy, as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets'. Disraeli, the offerer of this analysis, was no great crusader 'against' poverty. He simply felt that the two nations need to be one, and as one would prosper. This could be accomplished, under the Crown, by a reinvigorated aristocracy, which would have a proper (traditional, said Disraeli) regard for their fellow-nationals in distress. The people in turn would be motivated and energised by the sense of belonging inculcated by the very responsibility of the rulers; their energies would be mobilised by being members of a successful, stable, wealthy (though sensibly egalitarian), militarily competent culture. 'The poor', a residual category, would have to be content with minimal provision, as otherwise the incentive effect of a wages hierarchy would be destroyed. The logic of this point – the logic of the work-house system – was that there would be few or no permanent poor, no 'underclass', but instead a movement of people into and out of that category. An individual could be poor at one stage of life and rich at another – actually, a very common occurrence! There were, as both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament taught, considerable differences between various classes or grades of 'the poor'. These differences were not so much ones of objective measurable gradations in, say, income or expenditure, or in the ownership of material goods, but of attitude, motivation, aspiration, in a word 'morale'; and that was best known, and best dealt with by reciprocal familiarity in local face to face communities and not in the 'formal rationality' of state or supra-state functionaries.

Disraeli did not, of course, spell all this out in his novel. He did not have to. Contrary to his complaint, there was much conversation about and between the classes. Sundry commentators described 'the poor' and saw the solution as their incorporation (necessarily at the bottom of the national pile) into that pyramid of unequal opportunities which made (and makes) society possible.

These commentators did not *begin* by asking 'How many poor are there? What must we do for them?' In 1822 for example Joseph Lowe, noting the low number of poor in Scotland (which had no poor laws) asked,

'The poor', said Jesus, 'are always with you'. Jesus did not have to face interrogation by Seeböhm Rowntree, Peter Townsend or the Social Exclusion Unit: What, Jesus, do you mean by 'the poor'?

first, about the effect of the English Poor Rate as a *tax on producers*, second, about the effect *on wages* of supplementation by the Poor Rate (Gordon Brown is keen on such things) and, thirdly and lastly, considered whether 'our Poor-law System [is] beneficial to the Lower Orders [or does it]... encourage them for example to contract premature marriages... and accustom them to a state of humiliating dependence?' Joseph Lowe felt that there was no need to exaggerate the incidence of such things, but concluded that 'no contrivance, however ingenious, no combination, however plausible, can be so advantageous as the plain rule of enabling the poor to provide for themselves'. These 'plain rules', said Joseph Lowe, included lowering taxes. Indeed he noted something much later discovered by President Reagan that 'the proceeds of a tax by no means decrease in proportion to the reduction of its rate'. By these plain rules 'England will have, if not fewer paupers, at least fewer real sufferers from poverty than any other country in Europe' (Joseph Lowe, *The Present State of England*, 1822).

Lowe and Disraeli were closer to being right, and Engels and the Webbs were (horribly and cruelly) wrong. The debate, however, was at least conducted in a way in which the rival hypotheses or predictions or arguments could be, and indeed tragically were, put to the test. The result? If you want more poor, set about

trying to abolish inequality: and apart from getting more poor you will also get all the nasty things the Webbs so resolutely refused to see.

In pure logic, this historical debate is no longer relevant, but the rhetoric flows on. The term 'Poverty' has a pedigree

but no prospect. In spite of all efforts (and such efforts are not always made) to give 'Poverty' an objective or scientific basis, it has become essentially an ideological construct, a catch-all bucket into which, once deposited, any group can claim the right to public support and/or favourable public intervention. What it lacks in objectivity, the term and its associated neologisms, make up in ideological fervour. Indeed, under one synonym for poverty, 'social exclusion', it is possible to be potentially poor, or potentially socially excluded, *without actually having to be or to say so*. Thus, for example, the interests of socially excluded minority religions were safeguarded by Buckinghamshire County Council, which refused to place notices of a carol service on Council notice-boards lest they offend ethnic minority sensitivities. 'We have a multi-faith community', said a Spokesperson for the Council, 'passions can be inflamed by religious issues. We don't want to cause offence to anyone'.

Except, presumably, the amiably supine Anglicans! Indeed, one of the (many) ironies of the above example is the fact that, as any Anglican will tell you, to be such

is to belong to a most seriously endangered minority species! The example, though, serves to point out one of the more pernicious uses of the nest of terms clustering around the word 'poverty', i.e. the attack on all those national institutions which, *though themselves minorities*, are minorities without rights because they are in some way and in their very nature in the business of social exclusion: the older universities, the established church, the Royal Lifeboat Institution, the law, the police, air-passengers, the medical profession, the health services, the armed forces. Such institutions are seen not only as the abodes of non-virtuous minorities, the un-poor, but as the very reason for the misery the virtuous minorities are in. The chief ideological significance of 'poverty' is to identify (as in 'target') those levels or institutions of society which are 'un-poor' or, direct of all, elitist – and therefore legitimate targets for democratic socialists. When Mr. Blair gave up Clause 4 he was forced to licence an assault on the commanding heights of our un-poor non-discriminatory cultural institutions. In what must be one of the more bizarre instances of this onslaught, the *Daily Telegraph* for December 15 2003 described a report by the Commission for Racial Equality which said that there were 'Twice as many blacks in jail as at university' (*Telegraph* headline). There are it seems 10 000 blacks in prison (data from the prison service) and 6 000 at university. 'Devastating', said Trevor Phillips, CRE's Chairman: 'discrimination', say 'race campaigners'. These figures have no meaning, on their own or together; and no purpose whatsoever except to legitimise an attack on both the prison service and universities. Whatever prisons and universities do in response to such comment (and just what are they meant to do? Transfer 2000 blacks from prison to university? Re-classify HM Prison Armley, Leeds, as Leeds University, Armley?) will not be enough. In a post-Clause 4 world, in which poverty (like the class war) is dead, the busy and angry grief of zealotry finds its motive force in the attack on the commanding heights of our remarkably stable and successful society and its major cultural institutions. The poverty warriors, having betrayed their own pedigree, find easier meat: and nothing bites so sharply as a dying dog.

I began this essay with a summary of what I learnt, over many years, from the 'ordinary' working class people of the electoral ward I represented. They knew they were not poor, but that their grandparents had been. They knew that their grandparents, while indeed 'poor' within the blandishments of poverty 'lines', would have adamantly rejected the label..

They also knew and still know, how to avoid becoming poor. Luck has a lot to do with it, as all life does, including the luck of being born in Great Britain and not

in Georgia or Bangladesh. But good luck has to be worked with and for – it can be dissipated: bad luck can be transcended. So: Stay out of prison, and stay away from the drugs which take so many young men and women to prison. If you wish to be a mother, then become a wife too, preferably first. Don't spend what you haven't got, stay out of debt. Work hard at school, keep fit and healthy, avoid too much alcohol, get and keep a steady job. A job, some pay, is better than no job and the dole. Stay out of trouble, any trouble, with the law and avoid the company of young men and women who don't see things that way. Don't cheat on the tube, tram or bus.

Will all of this guarantee you a high standard of living? No, that's not guaranteed, any more than else is anything in life. Will ignoring all of this get you into a serious mess? Yes, that is guaranteed (most probably). From either point of view, it is perhaps worth having in mind Thomas Sowell's comment that of the American bottom quintile of income earners in 1974, fewer than 3 per cent were still there in 1991, while 39 per cent of the bottom quintile were, by 1991, in the top quintile. The system works.

In conclusion, I am aware that I have ignored the matter of international or 'third world' poverty entirely. That is a large topic, needing perhaps another issue of this Journal. It suffices to say that the best advice (if our advice they seek) for those who live in that world, and who wish to see it improve, is to consider the causes of our prosperity and apply them to themselves. Should they, in sad re-explication of the Thoughts of Mr.

Engels, blame all their problems on us, ascribing to war and exploitation alone our present comfort, and insist therefore on some sort of shamefaced restitution from us, as a pre-condition for effort from them, then they will create but rods for their own backs.

When Mr. Blair gave up Clause 4 he was forced to licence an assault on the commanding heights of our Un-Poor non-discriminatory cultural institutions.

Jon Davies was head of Religious Studies at the University of Newcastle on Tyne

Patricia Morgan

People who complain about graffiti, vandalism, street drinkers, beggars, and drunken sluts screaming abuse, realise that these 'nuisances' lead to general loss and disorder. This intuitive grasp of the Broken Windows thesis – where one broken window leads to another and worse – suggests that, if left unchecked, these 'unattended behaviours' produce an atmosphere in which more serious crime flourishes. Some areas act as a magnet for disruptive and deviant people. It is obvious to them and the residents who scurry by who is in charge. Youngsters sensing the lack of control start committing crime themselves or turn to more serious crime.

As codes of conduct fall away, along with explicit prohibitions and sanctions, behaviour becomes much more a matter of context, suggestion and opportunity. Our immediate environment reflects what we are and value – which is why graffiti, vandalism, abusive behaviour are far from 'mindless'. Going beyond wanton destruction and disregard, they are violations and defiant challenges made to intimidate, or proclamations about dominance. So are the profitable enterprises who audaciously champion the aggressive foul mouthed juvenile, and warn off his detractors. Boards around a shop being refurbished proclaim the area's FIRST FCUK in giant lettering. A girl pushing a buggy wears a tee shirt screaming 'Who the FCUK are you looking at!'

My London borough is home – not only to FIRST FCUK – but to large and expanding colonies of street drinkers. A couple of well known drunks sipping Special Brew on a bench, became large raucous groups with dogs occupying open spaces and churchyards, sleeping in door and alley ways, begging and fighting in the town centre. The bank lobbies closed – like gardens, they became places for scrounging, defecation and dossing. A charitable project runs an open door centre providing food free or at minimal cost, bedding for rough sleepers, clothing, washing facilities and help with benefits and housing. There is, therefore, more money available to buy drink.

Those in authority do not understand the implications of the Broken Windows thesis. A council spokesperson thought that the drunks were attracted to the area because of the nice scenery. A vicar feels that it is unChristian to move drunks on from the churchyard, and the police claim they cannot intervene – as if the right of sanctuary still existed. Since the footpath from one part of the town to the other runs here, everybody walks a gauntlet of dogs and drunks and are harassed going about their

lawful business, while a historic environment is systematically destroyed. Maybe you can (or should) turn your other cheek, but is it right and proper to turn other people's?

In *The Dream and the Nightmare* Myron Magnet describes how when neighbourhood residents complained bitterly to a New York church about the atmosphere of threat and intimidation that its facilities for feeding the homeless had created, a minister told them 'You just have to curfew yourself and make way for wrongdoers.' The social order is seen as an infringement upon freedom rather than freedom's foundation. As understood by those like JS Mill, freedom is valueless without laws to protect it. Parks and public places are powerful embodiments of the democratic social order – made to dignify the lives of ordinary people. If they must hurry through the waste and threat with averted eyes, then a fake liberty has broken down the social order that guarantees true liberty.

Those who beg may appear intimidating but are, I am repeatedly told, very seldom a real threat. Their lifestyle, malnutrition and substance abuse debilitate them. A constant theme is one that dwells on the vulnerability of street people, who are victims of attacks by their own group as well as the public – one in a neighbouring borough was recently set alight by children. Certainly, a more direct threat, to citizens and street people alike, are the rampaging hordes of young drunks who take over the town and transport after 9 at night. There are more points of contact and encouragement between the two populations than is generally accepted. Both share in the erosion of any sense of shame, which helped keep begging, drinking and indecency off the streets years ago. A basic premise of zero tolerance policing is that anti-social elements must not assume that they are in control or in charge of public places. Policing makes a difference by reducing petty crimes and low level disorder, and indirectly by creating an environment less hospitable to more serious criminals. Up until the 1970s, the police and local authorities used the law to stop people sleeping in inappropriate places and being drunk in public. They could question suspicious characters and move on beggars. Then a new consensus decreed that the laws on drunkenness, begging and vagrancy be rescinded or not enforced.

Not least, this reflected the iconic significance of public space in counter culture imagery. 'Why don't we do it in the road.?' cried the Beatles, or out in the community of free spirits, away from the suffocating constraints of family, schoolroom and workplace. The man on the beat

was the enemy and the police just an instrument for harassment. This intolerance of 'human diversity' was a product of an oppressive capitalism which disciplined the people for factory labour. Those who objected to jobs smashing up the fixtures, abusing the citizenry, and taking over the seafront or town centre, were in a 'moral panic'. Soon, even to notice that violent robbery was happening to oneself or others revealed the crisis of a capitalism which was lashing out in its death throes. It stoked up fear of crime – a bigger problem than crime itself. In a recent study of begging, social workers complained that it was the media which led people to perceive it as intimidatory and to believe that it was a lucrative and easy option.

The pressures driving people on to the streets increased as laws were relaxed, the beat officer disappeared and agencies like the Crown Prosecution Service made policing more difficult. Madness was an alternative life style – with a special place in the ideology of the cultural revolution. It was also a political protest against deprivation, repression and lack of opportunities, expressed in a way that was safe. Indeed, the mad were really the sane, heroically striving to reach true wholeness, or just labelled so by a cruel society – rather than sick people who needed help. They were also exemplars for those seeking liberation through drug-altered consciousness. The asylums were a metaphor for the capitalist social order itself, a vast dehumanizing, tyrannical machine which crushed people's individuality, and suppressed their best impulses.

As a big money saving opportunity, the large asylums on the outskirts of towns were closed. Some ex-inmates managed as best they could – a colony lived in the cellars of the former mental hospital that once served my area. Otherwise, they went into the 'care of the community', often meaning on the street – and soon on to the drink and drugs that were flooding in to meet them in this hippy heaven.

Into the 'care of the community' also go the by-products of all that diversity of new family forms, where family change has drastically altered the scale and make-up of the homeless population. Traditionally, the typical single homeless person was an older male, who had worked in the catering trade, or an ex-seaman or soldier. By 1990, people in their teens and twenties became the majority of single homeless. About a quarter of rough sleepers are aged between 18 and 25. Their primary relationships are with others on the streets, and their money from begging, prostitution, thieving, or working in fairs. Even in the early 1980s, the main reason young homeless people left their last settled base was to find work. Now, family conflict, often allied with abuse and rejection, is the main and immediate cause of homelessness for at least two thirds and possibly up to 90 per cent. The epicentre of conflict is the step-parent – particular if he is mother's

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boyfriend or partner. Once on the streets, peer pressure carries all before it, and those not already on drugs soon will be. 95 per cent have used drugs (the majority after becoming homeless), and three-quarters will continue to do so. With a substantial minority problem drug users, many have mental health problems.

Nearly 40 per cent of beggars of all ages mention conflict with parents or step parents and nearly another 30 per cent with partners or children/stepchildren. The Report on Rough Sleeping for the Social Exclusion Unit reported how over a half of elderly homeless rough sleepers have experienced broken or otherwise disrupted homes in their childhood. They were also eight times more likely than average for their age group never to have married and five times more likely to be divorced.

This is a taboo area. According to caring agencies, poverty is the reason for homelessness and begging, as well as poor housing, unemployment, low benefits and a general lack of welfare. Or homelessness is both the problem and the cause of all other problems. Or it is a way that (wicked Tory) government cutbacks have taken their toll. But the early termination of parental responsibilities in reconstituted homes occurs despite all controls for economic circumstances – these simply lack the same commitment to the long-term support of young people.

Far from being the elect of liberty, street people are a sump of social pathology and mental disorder. Street life testifies to US sociologist Christopher Jencks' way to read the sixties – as a failed experiment whose price was paid by the 'Have-Nots'. The rising disorder it engendered has become a reason not to

deal with its incubators. Are there not bigger or more important problems than rough sleeping and begging, when real crime is rising? Such reasoning helps make those who object to street people who beg and choose to sleep in doorways in preference to a hostel, the real threat – to civil liberties. People behaving in bizarre ways, messing themselves, or lying on a bench, drunk or not, are not directly doing harm to someone else, so what possible right is there to do anything at all? Are not despotic impulses at work in those who want to remove ragged men drinking by Tesco's on a fine day, when others drink at tables outside the restaurants?

You do not have to kill or maim to be a public menace. You can do that by trashing the rules that make collective life possible. Isn't turning the street into a lavatory a violation of civil order? Or accosting someone for money? Does not screaming and swearing disturb the peace? Why should dealing with real offences against the person and property, preclude acting against minor disorder, particularly since this provides a breeding ground for worse problems? It may be costly in police time, but 75 per cent of those arrested when begging, reveal an extensive

criminal record, with often 20 or more previous convictions, many related to feeding a drug habit. Shoplifting, prostitution, theft from vehicles, pick pocketing, 'running' drugs for dealers, prescription fraud and selling methadone are all there. Yet, senior police officers are criticised for being more inclined than their juniors to initiate special operations on the streets, since they are 'less understanding' of the 'complex issues' involved than those on the ground. Interestingly, the side effect of such 'insensitive' high profile and robust policing is that all street crime drops.

Any notion that begging should be stopped is a blow against the progressive opinion that people should be allowed to do much as they wish. Instead the conditions that oblige them to beg or drink or take drugs need to be removed. And these will never disappear, because the heartless, unequal system eternally denies the deprived according to the John Pilgers of this world – who, like the poor, are forever with us. Rough sleepers and beggars must not be involuntarily removed from public gaze, since they are too valuable as radical propaganda, or a conspicuous demonstration of the unresponsiveness and bankruptcy of state housing policy, benefits and social services. If our public spaces are hijacked and despoiled, then it serves us right. The dispossessed are just getting their own back

A report on begging from Luton University to the Rough Sleepers Unit, claims that three-quarters of the public 'gave a clear message' to the government: they did not feel that enough was being 'done' and 'that government action was required' to help the 'needy'. Babies are useful pocket openers, as are dogs, looking desperate, ill, disabled, being very young or upset. One sees a mother instructing her children on the virtues of helping society's victims as she ostentatiously hands money to a heavily tattooed man with Mohican hair, grog blossoms and large dog. A short time later he is rolling in the road, trying to brain another drunk with a bottle. People give even when knowing that the money will be spent on drugs or drink, and when claiming that they would not give if it went on drink and drugs! Around 70 per cent of those who give believe that begging is a last resort; 67 per cent believe that those who do are homeless and certainly not lazy; over a half think that beggars have no other form of income.

Research on begging in five cities, found that 84 per cent of those not on benefit begged most days, compared to 79 per cent of those on benefits – not a big difference – and neither was there between those who slept rough or who had a hostel place. Only a fifth had no other means of income apart from begging, although the likelihood of receiving benefit is lowest for those under 19. Housing benefit is on top of other benefits, although this is restricted to a single room rent for the under 25s.

Estimates are that 20 per cent of beggars make more than £20 in an average day, with 12 per cent mentioning more than £50. Surveyed in 2000/1, around 15 per cent had total (declared) incomes of £70-100 per week, 35 per cent had £100-200 and 25 per cent over £200. Only 16 per

cent who received benefit, and 30 per cent of those who did not, made less than £70. Getting Income Support or not, three quarters of those interviewed received about half or more of their money from begging (76 per cent in London).

Necessities are often free. Helpers seem to be falling over each other to find derelicts to care for. One of the 'challenges' mentioned by the progress report on rough sleeping by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, was the 'vast number of soup runs'. At well as drawing people into the cities, the amount of food that has to be thrown away fosters the feral fox, rat and pigeon population. Over 100 runs were delivering to five sites in London in 2000/1 and had to be persuaded to give services at more local drop-in centres and hostels. Compassion is clearly more conspicuous in the West End than in Crawley or Tooting.

Begging may not be necessary for essentials, while the link with drug or alcohol problems is cast iron. Something on which everyone agrees is that begging is mainly carried out for the sole purpose of buying drink or drugs. In the Luton University sample, well over a half reported a significant drug problem (mostly heroin) and those who knew them put alcohol or drug addiction at 70 to 90 per cent.

John Bird, founder of the *Big Issue* magazine, insists that the compassionate public 'might just as well have given the beggars poison to play with'. Money for people on the streets just maintains them there, and helps them to an early grave. Their lives become and stay broken because they are supported in their self destruction and discouraged from leading a normal life. Bird claims never to have 'met a healthy beggar who was a healthy beggar a year later. I never met a healthy temporary resident of the street who, once caught, didn't become a permanent fixture... caught by drink and drugs and by the endless supply of money from a generous public'. In less indulgent times, the street fraternity knew how to look after itself. With drink and drugs now inseparable from street life, there is no way the individual can survive the damage that is done – so there are few, if any, old hands. A 'four week rule' is the process by which newly homeless people become acclimatised to life on the street – and it becomes difficult to move them back into mainstream society.

In a vicious circle, dependence upon drugs or alcohol excludes people from homelessness services. Many cannot sustain a tenancy. Hostels may be disliked because of bans on alcohol and shooting up, and people may be excluded because of past behaviour. But there are probably as many, especially among the young, who do not want to live with other 'junkies' and 'alkies', and always in fear of bullying, rape and assault. Although rough sleepers are likely to be drunk, addicted or mad, not all such people although beggars are homeless rough sleepers. Under a half of beggars sleep rough – although many more will be in unstable accommodation. Numbers have fallen dramatically since the early 1990s, with help from government and the voluntary sector. However, rough sleeping may have declined, but street activity by people

who may or may not be homeless has increased.

Helping people to find somewhere to live does not address any other problems. The government insists that the closure of long term psychiatric hospitals did not result in former patients living rough. This misses the point – which is that people who are *presently* disturbed, retarded or chaotic would once have lived in long stay hospitals, but now often live (if not sleep) uncared for on the streets. Not long ago I saw a woman with Downs Syndrome, breasts exposed, streaked with excrement, begging in the lavatory at Waterloo station.

The mentally ill who are likely to harm themselves (or others) can be 'sectioned' (detained under section 3 or 4 of the Mental Health Act 1983). However it is often undone to allow insane or retarded people the freedom to 'choose' how to live. The police complain about the futility of the present arrangements for the mentally ill; someone has to come within a hair's breadth of killing themselves or someone else before invoking the 'danger to self or others' standard. Social services should look after such people, but they are wilfully ineffective in refusing to be 'coercive'. Deranged, and dangerously deranged, people are continually put through criminal proceedings – even just for their own protection – because there are no medical or welfare authorities available or willing to deal with them. When not on the streets, they are in the prisons, where the rates of mental health problems are at least three times as high as for the general population. Released, many of the mentally disordered will be among the homeless prisoners who filter into the rough sleeping and begging population. Would it not be better for the mentally ill to receive treatment in a mental hospital, instead of shunting between the prison and the gutter? Prison is more secure and safer than life outside. Most of those using drugs are not getting help from drug-related services, or do not use these because drug use is as rife there as in the shelters. When people have mental health problems which overlap with drug/alcohol problems, they may fall outside organisation boundaries resulting in little or no aftercare. Some areas are heavily populated by dealers who will seek out customers they have not seen, and get them back onto drugs. Drug possession seldom leads to action; the police may only intervene if beggars start fighting each other.

The large number of services dealing with aspects of the homeless/drug/drink problem seem aimed more at maintaining than addressing the situation; pandering to vice and assisting people in self-destruction. Outreach teams try for ever to persuade individuals to take advantage of what is on offer, or gain their confidence. The police are advised to copy, give advice and guidance and put people in touch with the agencies that can help meet their 'needs' – educating their fellow officers in a caring, non-punitive approach. If street people are not to be 'persuaded', then they must be content with what they are doing and left alone. Expectations that people give up drugs are often described as 'unrealistic'. Instead there should be harm

reduction messages, discrete services with more specialist outreach workers, and safer injecting practices, or a wider range of types of accommodation to suit the 'needs' of people at different stages of their drug/alcohol use 'patterns'. If councils impose 'no-drinking zones', then 'alkies' must be catered for in wet centres, and 'druggies' in shooting galleries. Interestingly, those whose drug use has decreased or stopped mention the lack of money, less availability, becoming more responsible and fears surrounding addiction.

The impact on the neighbourhood gets scant consideration. It may get dismissed by reference to a worse alternative: won't those who are prevented from begging, steal instead? Everything points to a permissive, minimum intervention strategy. 'Never use compulsion' a Quaker outreach worker told me; just 'understand where they are coming from' – he was referring to the insane. The result: the most 'needy' of people remain on the streets, which become no go areas. Schemes to stop street living invariably fail because people are allowed to remain there.

Existing laws are not enforced and courts have only limited powers, unless there is another associated offence; the sentence is either a conditional discharge, small fine, or a day's imprisonment, which usually means an immediate release because they have already been in custody. Guidelines laid down by the Crown Prosecution Service specify a series of warnings, followed by a formal caution, before any prosecution can be considered – further fuelling the bureaucratisation of police work and reinforcing the opinion of officers that arrest is futile. Under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) Drug Treatment and Testing Orders are available to the Courts as a means of disposal for offences committed by drug addicts. There are also Anti-Social Behaviour Orders as a means of stricter control over persistent beggars. It is a civil procedure and the court has to be satisfied that the behaviour 'caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons'. As if to illustrate the crux of the problem facing any remedial action – a beggar in Nottingham appealed under the Human Rights Act 1998 that her movement was being unfairly restricted and was granted legal aid to fight an order after being arrested 20 times. Faced with such realities, much 'street activity' is ignored.

The post-modern agenda does not acknowledge the importance or legitimacy of the public realm and is not prepared to defend it. If the present government appears to flirt with Broken Windows, and then backs off, it is because public disorder is seen as essentially a phoney problem and not actually criminal, or a cause of crime. It is only worth reducing because it suggests to people that there is more crime around than there is ('moral panic'). The government's own 'initiatives' are sucked into the same processes which have made disorder on the streets impossible to counter.

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Tom Nolan

What is it like to be truly destitute? In 1991 I found myself penniless in Lyon. The agency that was supposed to find me work – I had been a waiter – had failed to do so. When I was down to my last three hundred francs I decided to go round to its offices in person to see if my imploring face might make more impact than my telephone calls had on its middle aged tobacco-stained proprietress. Unfortunately I was reading a book on Nazi-French war-time collaboration. She caught a glimpse of the title and told me that she found my interest in such matters an affront, and to come back some other time – without the book.

My money would not last long if I continued in my down-at-heel *pension* so I checked out the next morning. The few hundred francs I would save on rent would give me a fortnight or so of food. By then the agency would have found me a job. I lingered for hours over a coffee and sandwich in a bar behind the town hall. But as the hours passed I began to realise that the cold, which had seemed merely a bit 'nippy', would become insufferably bitter after a few hours of unrelieved exposure. That evening, having eaten a last abundant meal in a restaurant, I paid the bill and walked out into the night and a new existence.

I headed for the main railway station, the Gare de Perrache, with the intention of spending the night in one of its waiting rooms; but when I reached it I found that it was a walkway above the platforms, draughtier than the streets, glassed-in but with open spaces around its motionless escalators. On either side of the walkway a hundred or so of Lyon's homeless tried to relax on narrow, tipping seats specifically designed to make relaxation impossible. I sat on one, my legs propped hard and straight against the floor, and, undistracted by the continuing monologues and occasional quarrels of my fellow vagrants, felt myself going cold. Unlike my fellow sleepers I was wearing just a coat and pullover. Before long my whole carcass was tightening with gooseflesh. Fearing sleep, should it by some miracle intervene, would bring hypothermia and death, I knew I had to keep moving. I began the first of many night-time patrols of the city.

Constant walking, although it keeps hypothermia at bay, is physically exhausting if you have had no sleep. I compromised. I would walk – by the sides of arterial roads, through suburban housing estates, up and down the steep alleys and flights of stairs of the Croix Rousse – until I felt ready to drop, and then find somewhere to

sit. I would drowse for a while, but then, just before losing consciousness, and just as sensation threatened to ebb completely from my fingers and toes, I would struggle to my feet again and begin another hike.

Days were better than nights. There were plenty of places to sit and relax, churches and shopping centres, but few places where you could really sleep. For although I no longer had to hold myself back from slumbering into hypothermia, I knew that if a sacristan or a security guard caught me napping they would certainly throw me out into the cold; so that I had to be careful not to slump in my seat or to snore. Better in this regard were the employment agency's offices. Whenever I called by, which I did every morning it was open, I had to wait an hour or so in an ante-room before anyone could find the time to see me – the place was filled with people desperate for work – which meant sixty minutes of deep, untroubled sleep.

It is a cliché to say 'the time passed in a blur' but it did. I was too tired to think straight and the simple pattern of my existence – sit, walk, sit, walk, eat a little, walk etc – was so empty of distinguishing events that I soon lost all sense of time and consequence.

The wind howled incessantly. Around the 23rd of December the temperature hovered around zero during the day before falling to ten degrees below or even lower at night. Walking, even brisk walking, was not enough to counter the effects of the cold. My hands would lose all sensation before the night was really on. It made no difference that I kept them balled tight in my pockets, or banged them together with as little consideration as one might two bricks, they just kept dying on me. My legs felt prosthetic. I had mental blackouts. I found myself moving in jump-cuts along the deserted nocturnal streets, re-emerging into consciousness to find that my un-piloted body had brought me to somewhere I didn't recognise, then sinking again into pitch blackness until the next moment of disorientated wakefulness.

More by instinct than judgement I discovered a remedy for these symptoms; a gruelling one – climbing at top speed the many ramps and stairways which ascend from the river Saône to the summit of the Fourvière, the hill which dominates Lyon from the east. I would set off at a shambling run and manage to get to the top without a single pause, though I had slowed to a walk by the time I reached it. This took about fifteen minutes, for the path zigzags erratically up the hillside before stiffening into

steep flights of stone stairs for the final ascent. As I became closer to the Church on the summit – Notre Dame de la Fourvière – I'd feel the warmth returning painfully but gratefully to my fingers and toes. Having made it to the top I would have five minutes of warmth to enjoy before encroaching numbness goaded me into movement once again. I passed whole nights like that: slow descents from the Fourvière to get my breath back alternating with swift ascents to reignite my body-heat.

At six-thirty in the morning the doors of Notre Dame de la Fourvière would open and I could totter inside. There was a large, circular, bronze air-vent set in the middle of the nave, and I would come to a stop over it and let the heated air swarm up through my clothing in a revivifying draught.

This went on for five nights, though some good news passed on to me by the agency – that a job would be available for me in l'Alpe d'Huez before the New Year – psychologically alleviated the experience (which was just as well, because the weather did not improve). The patriotic proprietress, to whom my daily appearances were about as welcome as Banquo's ghost, had evidently decided

that this was the only way to get me permanently out of her sight. I spent my final night in the city – the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh of December – not trudging up the Fourvière but in an out-of-the-way corner of a heated shopping arcade which had been left open at night in response to the high rate of hypothermia-fatalities amongst France's homeless that year.

The two weeks cut me off entirely from normality. Just as I now find it hard to recreate that fortnight from a vantage point of security and comfort, so I couldn't then imagine the possibility of anything but relentless weariness and cold. Weariness and cold made me their own. I lost the self confidence that anyone with money in his pocket and a home unconsciously enjoys. But after a couple of days I had forgotten to regret such things. Even the idea of finding my way back to a wage and a bed seemed pure fantasy. I was boxed in by cold, weariness and hunger. I came to feel an inescapable reality which it was futile to try to think beyond. Destitution deprived me of more than the normal comforts and dignities; it deprived me of the ability to aspire to them.

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The Missing Dimension

Reflections on World Affairs

Alfred Sherman

Contemporary Britain is a secular society, one of the most secularised in the world. This has many implications: the one which I pursue here is the tendency in this country to view the wider world through a secularised prism, underplaying and denigrating the role of religion, ascribing its influence to material and social factors or to backwardness due to be swept aside by the tide of history. This is a form of parochialism which leads to distorted views of world developments. Whatever history's final verdict, if there can be such thing, human history so far, and for that matter pre-history, have been dominantly shaped by religion. The present revolt of Islam, symbolised by al-Qa'eda but going much further, is less exception than rule.

For millennia, priests wielding scientific knowledge as well as ethical precepts and sharing power with sovereigns shaped the cradles of civilisation in Mesopotamia and the Nile and built great cohesive empires with wonders of the world. The code of Hamurabi resurfaced in the Hebrew Bible and thence shaped Christianity and Western values and institutions. India produced its own religiously-based society which survived conquests and socialism and now once again dominates the Republic of India. Buddhism flourished and shaped society, and then retreated in face of Islam, which also spread at the

expense of Christianity, once-mighty Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and animism. The religion of Egypt collapsed and disappeared. In its early years, the religion created by one man in Arabia out of second-hand fragments of Judaism and Christianity plus Arab mythology led the world in science, philosophy, architecture, civics and war, and then subsided into fanaticism and stagnation, overdependent on sub-soil oil deposits. Yet it continued to enjoy the unalloyed allegiance of a fifth of mankind and shaped their behaviour. To understand why this should have transpired is a task for the future, a reminder of how much more remains for us to understand about the human condition.

Unlike citizens in most Western societies, most Moslems consider themselves Moslems first, members of the world-wide Moslem umma, community, ranking their national identity or citizenship second, if at all. For them, territorial patriotism and a sense of co-citizenship with non-Moslems is tantamount to 'kufr', apostasy. The distinction between nation and religion or between the religious and the political, a staple of modern Western society, does not exist in Islam. Your Moslem is *homo religiosus*; mass emigration to the West has given no sign of changing him. He believes that it is his duty to further God's rule over the world, an aspiration that most Christians once shared but have long since abandoned.

To understand Islam's turbulent present, or at least to find parallels, we must turn back centuries into the European past, its all-embracing Christian character for centuries, and to its turbulence: the Great Schism, the crusades, the Reformation and Counter-reformation, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War which killed off over a third of the Empire's inhabitants, ending with the Peace of Westphalia, *cuius regio ejus religio*. It took centuries for Western society to evolve into its present shape. As late as the Second World War, Christian Europe murdered over six million Jews. The Croat Nationalist-Catholic Ustasi regime established in Croatia and Bosnia by the Germans killed three quarters of a million Orthodox Serbs, and forcibly converted others to the Roman Catholic faith.

Universal suffrage and the rule of law are very recent arrivals in much of Europe. The process of post-Christianisation or de-Christianisation is by no means complete; nor can we assume that the present direction will continue; the Christian Right in the USA is gaining in strength. It may yet grow stronger. Christianity survived seventy years of Soviet rule, corrupted and demoralised but resurgent, and fifty years in Eastern Europe. The breakup of Yugoslavia led to a resurgence of Serbian and Macedonian Orthodoxy, as identity no less than faith. By contrast, Latin America, which is European and Christian, has not got far in modernising its institutions, but still shares many features with the Moslem world, including the weakness of civil society.

It is safe to predict that there will be no overnight changes in the Moslem world, whatever the longer-term future may bring. No major forces working for change can be discerned, no Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Copernicus or Darwin, not within the timescale in which political directions can be plotted. Whatever relevance Marxist and other socialist world views may have for Europe and North America, they are wholly irrelevant to the Moslem world, which is religiously oriented and trapped deep in its own Middle Ages. Secularisation and the growth of civil rights in Europe and the USA were intricately connected with social change, the emergence of self-confident urban middle classes, who though deeply Christian created their own versions of Christianity alongside the monastic and aristocratic versions which had been shaped by feudal society and helped shape it. There have been no parallel developments in the Moslem world, no emergence of civil society. Without the underpinning of a strong self-sustaining civil society, democratic institutions and rights have no foundation. In Egypt, in many ways the most advanced of the Moslem countries, imitation European institutions collapsed because they lacked roots. The only present alternative to the present army-based bureaucracy which rules there is radical reactionary fundamentalism, which enjoys wide middle class support, as elections to professional associations demonstrate, as well total support by the lower income groups. French and Spanish rule in North Africa has left few traces.

It was earlier supposed that economic development,

science, education, urbanisation and industrialisation would lead to some measure of convergence between Moslem and Western societies. But half a century of independence and increased oil wealth have not moved Moslem society in those directions; on the contrary, radical fundamentalism has grown. During the nineteenth century, European institutions attracted support, or at least aspiration, in Moslem societies. But the crisis of Western society expressed in sexual licence no less than political convulsions undermined its appeal. The 'old time religion' seemed safer by contrast. Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism all see this life as one stage in a much longer process. This turns all calculations on their head. In recent years, the suicide-bomber has come to symbolise Islam; perhaps this is an obstacle to appreciating and coming to terms with Islam.

For a time, Stalinist society seemed to offer a good partner in anti-Western conflict, similarities between Islam and Communist society spoke louder than ideology. Tito's alleged non-aligned movement helped cement the Islamic-Soviet alliances. But the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and then the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact took the wind out of their sails.

Relations between social classes interact with relations between the sexes and between generations. Moslem society has always embodied strong 'gynophobia', fear of women, compared with Christian Europe in similar stages of development. Its manifestations, in polygamy, dress code, capital punishment for alleged adultery, low legal status of women, are a major obstacle to Westernisation. Gynophobia embodies the deep fear that licence for women can bring about social disintegration. Popular male anti-feminist feeling, particularly among the lower income and educational groups, is a major bulwark of Islamic conservatism and fundamentalism.

The ending of British rule in India did not bring about the hoped-for rapprochement between Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Christians, but the very opposite. Further religious wars between increasingly Hinduised (or re-Hinduised) India and militantly-Moslem Pakistan, with possible nuclear dimensions, cannot be ruled out. With powerful forces at work, we should be well advised to avoid the conceit of involvement. The spread of Islam in Africa is also leading to pressures on Christians backed by violence and lawlessness, sanctioned by reference to the Koran, *pace* pious references to the contrary by Bush and his echo Blair. This is evoking a measure of African Christian assertiveness and militancy. Anti-Christian violence is serious in Indonesia, and has reached the Southern Philippines from that source. The tens of millions of Moslems in Western China, some Turkic, some ethnic Chinese converts, have largely kept their heads down; when Communist dictatorship relaxes, they can be expected to raise their heads.

Nature abhors a vacuum. The decline of religious belief in the West has been accompanied by the rise of quasi religions there: Marxist and other varieties of socialism,

new-ageism, and the elevation of sport to levels of identification once reserved to religion and patriotism. Socialism in any of its forms has the inherent disadvantage compared with revealed religions that it will be judged by results. 'Europeanism', which also bore characteristics of a faith for jaded socialists, is still with us, though its appeal in Britain seems to have peaked. Aldous Huxley wrote of the 'God-shaped blank' in people's minds when they lost traditional Christian faith. Chesterton's dictum that when men cease to believe in God they will believe in anything has not lost its force. The Gods of the copybook headings still rule. In many ways we know less about the present and future of Christianity in Britain, a country whose whole history is intimately and inextricably bound up with Christianity, than we do about Islam. Our political parties have think-tanks and departments dealing with various phenomena: economics; education; ethnic relations; but none on religious affairs, on British Christianity in the twenty-first century. The implications are worth pondering.

On several occasions early in her leadership, Margaret Thatcher, who was a believing Christian, raised religious questions, but her colleagues and the party machine did their best to discourage it, thereby leaving the field to the Socialists or untitled. Paradoxically, while Britain ignores or plays down her Christianity, the Moslem world cites it as the motivation for British attitudes and policies. We

should understand Moslem behaviour better by contrast if we recognised the Christian roots of British society and their implications for Moslem behaviour patterns and relations with the Moslem world.

This essay is designed as descriptive, not prescriptive. It casts doubt on the current American (or Anglo-American) drive to impose democracy on the Arab world by armed force. Machiavelli argued that a country's institutions reflect the character of its people. I take it for granted that social evolution in the Moslem world will produce something different from representative democracy as we know it in the West. We should address it phenomenologically. Experience of our failed prophecies over the years should deter prediction and curb the temptation to rush to value judgment: *de omnibus dubitandum*. The Moslem world will have to work out its own solution over the next generations, our emotional and political involvement fuelled by UN-mania and over-estimation of our vapid formulae will do us more harm than it will do them good. The West should neither play down its Christian roots nor apologise for them nor yet expect the Moslem world to hasten to adopt our ways.

Alfred Sherman has lived in the Middle East and studied Arabic.

The Hidden Menace of Morality

Norman Barry

Morality was something that used to be hidden away on the *Today* programme before a much more important item – the weather forecast. In the days when the BBC wasn't multicultural it consisted of unthreatening homilies by vicars or from an occasional rabbi or Catholic priest. Now all sorts of religions have their say. And, as we have become richer, we have a real surfeit of morality or ethics (sounds much smarter). And it is menacing.

All the time we are harangued by lawyers, social workers, politicians (of all people) and other assorted *soi-disant* arbiters of public virtue, on the need to maintain proper moral standards; especially if we haven't done anything obviously wrong. So we have professional ethics, medical ethics and business ethics. The last is especially important. It is just about OK to make a profit as long as you give 60 per cent of it away and it is even acceptable to run a firm as long as it satisfies the ever-shifting criteria of 'corporate social responsibility'.

We had an ethical foreign policy for a while. Whatever

it means it would have made Machiavelli laugh. While we are debating the 'just war' the enemy moves in. We have learned that in international affairs the preservation of security defeats all moral claims. It is not that we, in the West, are particularly heinous in our actions but we can be sure that others will be. If we were to be *consistently* moral, a large part of national income and all our troops would be exhausted in spreading virtue to all corners of the world.

But we all know how to live, at home or abroad, without the pompous decrees of professors of moral philosophy or the pious entreaties of opinion formers. We certainly don't need Kant's 'Categorical Imperative' or even Jeremy Bentham's 'Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number' principle to lead lives of reasonable probity. We conduct ourselves according to *conventions*, standards of behaviour that are easily learnt and are not too difficult to fulfil. They are too obvious to name. We used to understand that morality was something extra, an action that might cost us something and which was especially deserving of high praise for that reason. Now it has become

almost compulsory, like telling the truth and not stealing.

But in our prosperous and stable society, morality has become a consumer's good, like a nice dinner or a new suit. Virtue gives us *utility*, a sense of satisfaction and well-being. And like all wanted goods and services, it is subject to the law of supply and demand: as price falls demand goes up. And the price of morality seems to have fallen over the past two decades. It doesn't cost a lot to be virtuous these days. It normally consists of having the right opinions when talking to outrageous reactionaries (quite intelligent people) at smart dinner parties. After an evening lambasting uncaring capitalism, praising Third World dictators for their good intentions and pledging unstinting support for the National Health Service you can go home feeling quite good about yourself. And the middle classes can afford to go private for health care, anyway.

The secret of Labour's success (ignored by psephologists) has been its appeal to middle class moral vanity. And, unlike real socialism, it seems not to be too costly *at the moment*. The moralists can even support capitalism as long as it is European and its brute individualism is leavened with communitarianism. A version that puts the interests of stakeholders (people who don't risk their money in the company) above those of greedy shareholders is especially preferred. Labour has only slightly increased the cost of virtue, although it is steadily rising.

We can learn a lot about ethics from the recent spate of business scandals in America. Most of the dishonourable corporate executives involved had very high public moral profiles. They donated to charity, were socially responsible and most were regular churchgoers. One particularly egregious character regularly lectured to business students on the importance of 'conscience in commercial life' and was very generous to schools for deprived children. Of course, all of this virtue was paid for with shareholders' money. What was forgotten was a basic business convention (embodied in law): that executives should always act in the interests of the owners of the company, the shareholders. Any virtuous, profit-reducing, activity should be sanctioned by them. It would then be genuinely moral, for they would be paying the cost.

We should remember that despite the reduction in the price of morality, it is not costless. There really is no such thing as a free good. It is, like the National Health Service, only free at the point of consumption. We all have to finance it eventually with real money, as taxpayers or shareholders. And although Labour has gained electorally with its patina of morality, sooner or later the costs that it imposes will reduce its popularity. The moralistic middle classes eventually succumb to self-interest and elect a Tory government that will tax them a

little less and make it easier for them to opt out of state monopolies in education or health. Tories got the reputation for being the 'nasty party' precisely because they regularly had to put right the costs of previous governments' moral profligacy. People will never like a real Tory government when it presents them with the costs of reality but one will eventually be elected. More retained income will eventually beat feeling good about yourself. To adapt an image from Harold Wilson: 'the Tory Party is the nasty party or it is nothing.'

All this means that the Tory party will have to be really nasty and start charging for things like higher education. Its retreat on the question of tuition fees for undergraduates was a classic example of middle class morality masking the theft of the incomes of those who don't normally go to university, the working class. The moralists have always dressed up this theft by saying that the country benefited from higher education. In fact, the economy certainly would improve if there were less of it.

Conventions are not glamorous, like ethics, but following them is the only way an essentially depraved man can be civilised and some of his liberty preserved. So forget about Aristotle or St Thomas Aquinas and look to some of our own philosophers who were not afraid to utter the truth about the human condition. It was David Hume who first alerted us to the danger of moral 'enthusiasms' and prescribed those conventions I am recommending as better guides to conduct. As he showed, even the most fractious of people can develop the practices of promise-keeping and respect for justly acquired property just to get through the day. It is not that people are

particularly virtuous, it is that the following of such conventions will advance their interests. It is when we are compelled to love each other, as in socialist society, that the natural egoism, that characterises the human condition, turns out to be socially disruptive.

The greatest *immoraliste* of all was Bernard Mandeville, the author of the metaphorical poem, *The Fable of the Bees*, first published in 1705. When the bees were selfish and uncaring, they developed the division of labour, free trade and the market economy: as he put it, 'Every part was full of vice,/ But the whole mass, a paradise.' But the success of the bees induced guilt, they 'got morality' and dissipated their prosperity in the fruitless quest for virtue. They quarrelled a lot, too.

We are experiencing something similar today for morality is really the luxury of the rich and successful. Alfred Doolittle, in *Pygmalion*, when questioned about his morality by Professor Higgins, surely said the last word on the subject. 'Morals, gov'nor? I can't afford them and neither could you if you was as poor as me.'

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The secret of Labour's success (ignored by psephologists) has been its appeal to middle class moral vanity. And, unlike real socialism, it seems not to be too costly at the moment.

When I was at school, my geography lessons stated that there were about 600 million Chinese, and about 400 million Indians. These populations, of course, have by now doubled or more.

Eyebrows would therefore be raised, and questions justifiably asked about how I could have the presumption to describe myself as the last Indian. Up to my generation, most Indians like myself in the Punjab were brought up and educated into our scriptures, our culture and our language. We were also educated in English and England's culture at its peak, not the trite and trivial trash into which it has been reduced by the transatlantic intrusion of Coca Cola synthesis, aided by television which has reduced it to the lowest common denominator. The degeneration and contrast with England within recent memory is marked. Everything to do with England at the time was a hallmark for excellence. We would have laughed if somebody had mentioned a Japanese made motor car, or suggested that we lunch or dine on that American culinary creation called a hamburger – the very idea! I have consciously used the term 'England' which was in common usage then, in preference to Britain or UK plc; the latter is said to have originated with some of our diplomats trying to sell England abroad.

We were bilingual from birth, slipping easily from one language into the other. We knew our religion and ancient customs which have held India together for centuries, notwithstanding its size and disparity. We loved and respected these, as much as we did the England that was. I have no embarrassment in saying that at the time we accepted a foreign monarch as our Emperor. In fact, for those with a romantic streak, it provided a strain of historical interest. It was a perfectly natural thing to witness in my childhood the festivities of King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935, later to see my father and others wearing black armbands in mourning when he died, and later still to wear another black armband myself, in uniform as a young cavalry officer with my regiment, the 2nd Royal Lancers (G.H.), when King George VI died in 1952, although India was then no longer a part of the Raj. The Regiment was at the time out in the field, but its tailoring section produced over 600 armbands within a few hours. Where on earth did they get the cloth out in the wilderness?

We were brought up in two cultures, Indian and English, and were at home in both. Many years later, the late Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk told me that historically this was not uncommon. After the Norman Conquest, the court language in England was French for a long time; after the Act of Union in 1707, the Scottish aristocracy

deferred to London, and adopted English ways. Equally so, during the Mughal Empire in India, leading families adopted Mughal culture. It is only because British rule is within living memory that an understandable sensitivity and a chip on their shoulder is why many Indians today do not wish to understand or accept this. Families with property and traditions have always understood that in order to pass on to succeeding generations they should defer to central authority.

The initiative and move for Indian freedom came mainly from the middle classes, who were much more Anglicised than we were. Of course the peasants and the Punjab aristocracy desired freedom as well, but in an orderly and unhurried fashion. It has to be said that the wealthy urban middle classes in the Punjab were far less vociferous in their demands for the British to depart than were their counterparts in the United Provinces, where the Nehru family and others provided a focal and rallying point with chatter about freedom, immediately, without giving much thought to what could follow. They would find much in common with the chattering classes of Britain today, whose spiritual home appears recently to have moved from Hampstead to Islington. The vast majority of the people of the villages, who were and still are the real India, were in no hurry to get rid of the British; and apart from a few unfortunate exceptions the majority of the Princely States were well ruled – the affection and respect that their populations show for their erstwhile rulers is still marked and manifest in India today. Successive British Governments since the First World War dithered and procrastinated about granting India Dominion Status, which was justifiably deserved and expected in the 1920s. I think history will describe it as one of the biggest blunders of the twentieth century, and equally so the refusal of the Indian leaders to accept the offer made by the Cripps mission in 1942. Their refusal to co-operate in the War effort in 1939-45 showed lack of sagacity. This cry for self-government came from those who were desperate for power and therefore had the desire to erase the British connection. They set about after 1947 to destroy wilfully the fabric of Indian society, by legislating undue social and agricultural reform, and the creation of states on a linguistic basis to replace the old provinces. It was a veneration of change and so-called progress for its own sake, as is, again, currently happening in Britain. Members of the traditional ruling and governing families were virtually excluded from politics and the corridors of power by subtle means. As an example, the newly formed

Indian Foreign Service was initially largely recruited from Nehru's coterie of friends. Even those who, like some princes, offered India their services for free were spurned at the time. It is not difficult to draw an analogy with the thoughtless and unnecessary recent expulsion of hereditary peers from the House of Lords. I do hope that India will accept the British Raj as a fact of history, as much as the Roman occupation of Britain has been accepted here for centuries. India owes more to Britain than it is fashionable to acknowledge. Its elite schools, universities, its civil service, its army, its press and its parliamentary system all originate from British seeds and nurture. Every few generations, throughout history, one class has replaced an earlier one. But until now, the newcomers accepted and tried to emulate the traditions and values of what existed previously. If you destroy all that totally, as was done in India, and is today happening in Britain, the successors to wealth and power have no rules which they can see to follow. They have no heroes, only role models who tend to be celebrities. The result, in India, is the growth of a rudderless society without much taste, with marked vulgarity, and with no God but mammon. Whenever I have been obliged, for political or business reasons, to accept social invitations from the new rich, I have wondered about their extreme hedonism, their lack of interest in history, their lack of general compassion, their lack of a sense of duty to those less fortunate than themselves, and particularly their lack of style. Those in a position to make decisions showed a lack of maturity in their rush to erase the British connection, as is evident by the fervour to change the names of cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, each one of them a British creation. When history is obliterated, truth is vanquished.

This is the society bequeathed in India to descendants of the zealous reforming forbears. There must be an element of poetic justice in this; the gap between rich and poor is larger, corruption is rampant, and the only duty that most of the new ruling classes recognise is to themselves. On numerous visits to Delhi in the 70s and 80s, comments to me from villagers, from pensioners of my old Regiment and from taxi drivers, were the same, 'Sahib, it is just as well that you left India; someone like you could now no longer even take a step forward here'.

The generations since 1947 are mainly responsible for the current bazaar levels to which the political and social spheres have been obliged to succumb. The seeds were laid by Nehru, his contemporaries and immediate successors. Change is inevitable, but it has been too drastic. I feel saddened that only over a generation ago, Indian society had a harmony and stability which produced a civilised vibrancy. Good God! I could as well be talking about Blair's Britain.

I take some solace and comfort from being of a generation of Indians that has almost gone. We loved the

country of our birth and all it had to offer then. We loved England as it was, inspiring the rest of the world with its language, literature, institutions, fortitude, and above all else its freedom of speech, its encouragement of individuality, and particularly its eccentricity. It should then be no surprise that PG Wodehouse's largest following in the world flourishes in India today. Indian humour is not as subtle as English humour, but they know instinctively that laughter is a great gift, they like to laugh even when there is nothing to laugh at. I don't know how else to define the Last Indian. If Bertie Wooster had asked Jeeves to define it, I would love to know the answer.

'The Punjab was a dream', John Glendevon told me once, quoting his father Lord Linlithgow talking about his Viceroyalty. 'It was the most stable province, and better administered than any other territory in the Empire, probably including the Home Country'. The cream of the Indian Civil Service, British and Indian, opted to serve there. It was the granary of India, with a climate although punishing in the summer, that was judged to be amongst the best anywhere in the winter months, thereby nurturing Punjabi hardihood. Its people were and are a mixture of Aryan, Greek and every Central Asian invader who has passed through it on the way to the spoils offered eastwards by Delhi. A very large percentage of the population belonged to the second tier of the Hindu caste system, one

which throughout history has provided the farmers, warriors, rulers and administrators. No wonder that about 90 per cent of the Indian Army was recruited from the Punjab.

There were the three main religions, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh all living in near perfect

harmony in towns and villages, participating in each other's festivals, and tacitly admitting to themselves, but not publicly, that they all shared a common ancestry. Until the Muslim invasions from about the ninth century onwards, all had been Hindu; then some converted to being Muslim, and a few centuries later some converted to Sikhism. But they shared the same blood, then and now. Surnames were common between all three, a notable example being the name Tiwana. The only Indian Herald during the British Raj was a Tiwana, and it was Sir Umar who proclaimed Queen Victoria, Edward VII and also George V. His grandson, Sir Khizar was the last Premier of undivided Punjab until 1947. There are Hindu and Sikh Tiwanas, one of them being a Judge of the Indian Punjab High Court until recently.

The Punjab, so called because it was the land of five rivers flowing from their respective Himalayan sources, three into the Arabian Sea and two into the Bay of Bengal, had enjoyed a remarkable stability since the mid nineteenth century when the British took it over from the Sikhs. From this time until the transfer of power in 1947, it had on its borders, the deserts of Sind in the south west, Tibet in the

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north east and the Khyber Pass just over a day's journey away to the north west. It has never had any mineral wealth, and to this day precious little heavy industry. Its fertile soil had been improved even further by the irrigation schemes introduced from about the 1860s onwards, harnessing the Himalayan waters flowing through it. It was the most imaginative and successful irrigation scheme in the world, looked upon as a model by the rest, including America. It has never produced much of renown in the arts or other cultural activities, giving rise to the jibe from other jealous parts of India that the only culture that the Punjab has is agriculture. Whatever we did not have was balanced by the main trait of character that we do have, and that is a sense of humour; earthy maybe but an overwhelming ability and desire to laugh. We would not have fitted into Hitler's concept of the Aryan race.

Its society was mainly clannish cum feudal. There was a strong clannish feeling at times straddling differences of religion, not very different from having two Plunkets, one Catholic and the other Protestant. The feudal strain was not quite that strong, because the Punjabi character is not naturally inclined to admit or accept another's superiority. Hence there was little servility, but a large measure, when deserved, of deference, and respect mingled with affection, all of which contributed to making good soldiers. As one of the eleven provinces of British India, it had been governed from the early 1920s by the Unionist Party of India, under the system of dyarchy whereby Delhi reserved

areas like Defence and Foreign Policy for itself, but progressively ceded authority over others like Education to Provincial Elected Assemblies. As its name implies, the Unionist Party of India believed that religion should not come into politics, that common political interests and objectives should not allow religious differences to make waters murky. It had been founded by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh stalwarts, working together. Sir Fazli Hussain, Sir Chottu Ram, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and Sir Sundan Singh Majithia; all had the same vision. The Punjab was predominantly agricultural and the interests of the tiller of the soil, the prime producer came first. The urban middle classes consisting of moneylenders and traders thought otherwise. The local press controlled by them dubbed the Unionist Government as 'Rule by the Squirearchy'. In years when monsoons, on which the poor farmer depended, were poor or failed, almost all his possessions including land could be in hock to the moneylender at extortionate rates of interest. Along with several other pieces of legislation, the Unionist Government removed this evil with

its Land Alienation Act, which prohibited anyone other than the tiller of soil from owning any farming land. For almost half a century, its stability, its hard working population and its other attributes justified Linlithgow's description of a 'dream province'.

The sub-continent has never really achieved unity as one country and entity. In recent history, the two Central powers have been the Moghuls and the British. The former did not control South India, and the British Indian territory was smaller than what was controlled by the Princely states. It is sad to reflect that let alone the fact being well acknowledged, very few know that the only man who came close to uniting India was the Marquess of Linlithgow. During his Viceroyalty he was attempting to implement the Government of India Act 1935, passed at Westminster earlier.



This envisaged a Federated India, with the existing eleven British provinces and the Princely territories in a Federation where the only powers reserved to the centre in Delhi would be Defence, Foreign Affairs and Transport. The rest would be entirely delegated, with each constituent of democratically elected assemblies being completely autonomous in the remaining responsibilities. Alas! It was not to be. As my father, and years later, John Glendevon told me, the Viceroy was thwarted by two intractable individuals – Gandhi in India, paying lip service, but yet arriving at crucial meetings with the Viceroy, with Agendas having been earlier agreed, for his acolytes to say 'Your Excellency,

the Mahatma has declared today as a non-speaking day'; and in England, Churchill at his most vehement against Indian independence, exhorting the Indian Princes not to federate, egging them on to feel that they would lose all. They were fools to listen to him. Only twelve years later they did lose all to Nehru and his socialism. If they had decided to accept Federation is one of the biggest what ifs in Britain's and India's history. When Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948, John Glendevon asked his father whether he was truly a great man. The former Viceroy replied, 'Yes, he was, but he treated me badly'. This was a *cri de coeur*. When John Glendevon, as Lord John Hope, entered the Commons in the 1945 election, Churchill asked him to be his PPS. Hope refused, and said privately to me years later that it was inconceivable that he would serve a man, great as he was, who with Gandhi had made his father's life very difficult, possibly even hastened his premature death.

Linlithgow's strenuous efforts to bring about Federation had to be abandoned with the declaration of war in 1939. At

that time, out of the eleven Indian provinces, nine were controlled by a democratically elected Indian Congress Government. The two exceptions were the Punjab and Sind, the latter by a coalition, and the Punjab by the traditional Unionist party. On 3 September 1939, a number of things happened simultaneously. The Viceroy went on All India Radio to announce that India was at war with Germany; the nine Congress Ministries in the respective provinces resigned saying they had not been consulted; Sir Chottu Ram (my great uncle) in the Punjab went on the air on All India Radio, to announce, 'If Britain fights, the Punjab fights alongside'. In their pique and short-sightedness in resigning power in the nine provinces, the Congress Party missed great opportunities, which were to have lasting and serious repercussions some years later. By their policy of non-cooperation in the War Effort, they allowed the Muslim League under Mr Jinnah to become more prominent, shot themselves in the foot by going into the wilderness and denying themselves six years' experience of governing and ruling, while the British were still there. I am certain that this would have set a higher tone to their administration after Independence, and India was the loser. Meanwhile, the Punjab went full steam ahead with its War Effort, recruiting being stepped up, War Bonds being sold etc. The two stalwarts of the Unionist Party and in the Punjab Cabinet were Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan (a direct descendant of the man who tried to save John Nicholson outside Kashmir Gate in Delhi in 1857), and Sir Chottu Ram. This strong Hindu-Muslim axis kept Jinnah out of the Punjab. The Punjab was crucial to his concept of Pakistan, the core without which the rest could not exist. He left Lahore chastened in 1944 after a well-publicised meeting with my great uncle, who asked him to define his concept, since in the Punjab there was 'Pakistan' already. The Cabinet had a Muslim majority, as did the Legislative Assembly. Sir Chottu also took issue with Gandhi about the latter's attitude towards the War Effort. I quote from his letter dated 15 August 1944: 'Your policy of non-cooperation should be given up, once and for all. An ounce of Churchill will do the Congress greater good than tons of Chamberlain ... Russia has a greater interest in the spread of its ideology than in the freedom of India ... America has a deeper and more abiding interest in its trade than in India's freedom.'

Sir Chottu was a far-sighted man, given to Churchillian romantic sweeps of imagination. Sadly, the two never met, but Sir Sikandar went to Egypt in 1941 to visit Indian troops, and had a meeting with Winston Churchill and F M Smuts in Cairo. He conveyed a message from my great uncle, with words to the effect that when the time came for the British to leave India, the Punjab should not be partitioned; give it an access to the sea (probably Karachi), and notwithstanding lack of industry it could survive on its own; Punjabi bellies have always been full. Secondly, 'Allow me to resettle demobilised Punjabi soldiers after the War in the Tigris Euphrates basin. They will turn the land green, and in a crucial geographical position, Britain will have a population basically sympathetic to it.' I remember listening to him

at dinner, allowed to sit at table during school holidays, when he said he felt the British would and should leave India around 1965, by which time India would have had time to put its house in order. If this scenario had actually occurred, Africa would probably not have 'gone' until the mid-1970s, with corresponding effect on the politics and history of the last four decades of the twentieth century.

Alas! it was not to be. Sir Sikandar died in 1942, and Sir Chottu in January 1945. The Unionist Party, under Sir Khizar Tiwana, gamely carried on, but being progressively undermined by Jinnah who was bullying its Muslim members to join his League, and the Congress Party wooing away its Hindu members. In the 1946 election, the Unionist Party returned without a majority to rule, formed a coalition with the Congress, which was short-lived. The then Premier (as they were called) Sir Khizar pleaded the Unionist Case to British delegates at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, and in San Francisco, but as he said to me in the Cavalry Club a few weeks before he died in 1974, 'My dearest boy, we didn't have to wait for '46 or '47. The moment Labour won the 1945 Election, we knew we had lost, and that Partition was inevitable.' Gandhi said he would rather have chaos than foreign rule, and Jinnah said he must have Pakistan even if it meant bloodshed. Both got their wish.

It was a privilege to have grown up and matured in that epoch. There was order and no corruption at political levels and only probably very little at junior bureaucratic levels. A telling example of the changes was in 1962, on my first visit since 1947, to our erstwhile lands in Pakistan. The local Deputy Commissioner entertained me to dinner. He had worked under my grandfather (as I referred to Sir Chottu) and my father. He said that in their days when they came on tour, at the end of the day they would turn to all the officers – like the District Commissioner, who had been on duty during the day, and say 'I hope all of you will dine with me tonight', whereas in 1962, a Minister in a corresponding situation would look at the faces around him and enquire 'Where am I having dinner tonight?' I told him that the situation was the same over the border in India.

I hope that in the context of what I have briefly tried to describe I may be allowed to call myself the Last Indian. But then Fate, as often happens, intervenes. In 1974, when I was adopted to fight Greenwich for the 1979 General Election, the media's description was the first Asian (I would have preferred Indian) Tory parliamentary Candidate of the twentieth century.

I had suddenly metamorphosed and been catapulted into becoming The First Indian.

Narindar Saroop was a soldier, in the City, and active in politics when he founded the Anglo-Asian Conservative Society and the Durbar club. He was the first Asian Conservative Parliamentary Candidate in the 20th Century. His book The Last Indian will be published by New European Publications this year

At the foot of Nelson's column a loudspeaker the size of a bread van gave an electronic grunt and began to chant 'Kill Bush, Kill Bush!' at 150 decibels. Overhead an animated puppet of Bush jerked across a huge plasma screen. A crowd which had been gathering in the square all the afternoon roared enthusiastically. At intervals across the screen the sentence 'You are being lied to' kept appearing. Nobody seemed to think this might have a double meaning.

Standing next to the screen was a forty foot golden papier mâché effigy of George Bush, ropes attached to his neck. At seven when the square was full he would be pulled down in an imitation of the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. Advancing ten abreast up Whitehall to witness this was a crowd of over 100,000.

The square was set out with stalls offering leaflets supporting Palestine's war on Israel. There were calls to boycott Marks and Spencers, denunciations of the Zionists and demands for the overthrow of British and American capitalism. The US and Britain, according to one pamphlet, 'were plundering the world'. The whole gamut of the old anti-semitic, anti-American delusions of the Stalinist left were on display. Even Robin Cook was marked out as an agent of British Imperialism. No position was too radical. I asked one stall holder if he was a member of the Socialist Worker's Party. The little man shuddered. 'No comrade, they sold out to the Americans and capitalism years ago'. I asked him what he would do about Iraq. He shuffled uneasily and muttered something about letting the people of Iraq make a democratic choice. The only important thing was for the Americans to leave. I looked at the screen again. The jerking Bush puppet was now being occasionally outlined in the cross hairs of a rifle.

The huge speakers roared about Guantanamo Bay being a concentration camp, and a black woman sang 'Bush 'im got blood on his hands.' The crowd went wild. Young men eyed the female talent, a group of Sloanes pretended not to know what the demonstration was about and in the centre of the square some elderly hippies sat in a circle smoking pot. A Church of England vicar in a soutane walked past wearing a white and black chequered bandana used by Palestinian demonstrators you see chanting at the funerals of 'martyrs' on TV. On the ground a few yards away a young Muslim on his hands and knees, his eyes alight with faith, prayed toward Mecca. He was praying among people who al-Qa'eda hopes will one day be 'White Moors,' western converts to Islam who will bring the veil

to all Britain's women, the closure of our cinemas, the cleansing of our newspapers and books, and if God is good, the switching off of our TV sets.

Two elderly, white, middle class Englishmen next to me stood watching the crowd coming up Whitehall. One, looking wistfully at a young couple embracing in a cloud of pot, said 'This reminds me of the Vietnam demonstrations.' The other smiled. 'My wife says we old people don't get out enough. This has done me so much good'. 'Americans are stupid' said the first. 'It is all about oil' said the second. They both nodded.

I heard this everywhere. America, the Fascists and Zionists had caused the war to get their hands on Iraq's oil. Nobody mentioned September the 11th. I was not going to ask. The reply would have been that America brought it on herself.

There were speeches from the rostrum. If any of the upper class moneyed voices at the microphone expressed a single regret for 9/11 it was fleeting and qualified by hysterical denunciations of America. Nobody dwelt on the horror of people throwing themselves from the windows of the twin towers, of the last phone calls to children and wives, or of people trapped in burning rooms watching their friends burning to death while waiting the same fate themselves. Nor was there a mention of the 300,000 graves of the victims of Saddam found in Iraq.

I left before the toppling of the statue, but I heard the roar of approval as I walked up St Martin's Lane. I felt I could have been leaving the stadium of a liberals' version of Nuremberg. An enormous wrong had been done to America and Iraq, and here was a crowd of 100,000 English people trying to lay the blame solely on America. Could any of them have walked up Whitehall if it had been lined with the relatives of those killed in the Twin Towers? Did any of the demonstrators consider that if Saddam's recently discovered victims could be raised from their mass graves they would be three times as many as the numbers on the march? But at Hitler's rallies nobody thought of the Jews being bundled into freight cars or heard the cries of gypsy children as they were herded into gas chambers. Those at Nuremberg were, like the demonstrators in Trafalgar Square, gripped by a delusion that the world had a secret, all-powerful, all-knowing enemy. In 1938 it was the Jews, now it is America. There is a price for such foolishness. Like the Germans in 1938, five years from now the demonstrators may wake to see their cities in ruins.

Myles Harris is a practising doctor

Rolling back the state

Why Conservative educational policies won't work

Tom Burkard

Dennis O'Keeffe and I have argued in these pages that education is a private good, and that the Stalinist command-and-control structure of schools in Britain will never produce good schools. This analysis has since become commonplace; the failure of high-profile reforms such as the National Literacy Strategy has left the current system with few defenders. Government is caught in a cross-fire between conservatives who oppose the anti-intellectual and leftist bias of the curriculum, libertarians who oppose state controls, and teachers who have to meet meaningless but onerous targets while attempting to cope with pupils whose behaviour or disability absorbs virtually all of their mental energy.

Despite suffering direct hits from every journal from *The Telegraph* to *The Guardian*, the education system remains incorrigible. The power of the Department for Education and Skills, local education authorities and educational quangos continues to expand. Even the Department of Health and Safety is getting its oar in, imposing yet more asinine restrictions on schools. Tony Blair, whose opinion of comprehensive education and progressive pedagogy was made clear by his decision to send Euan to the London Oratory School, appears unable to stem the rot. Andrew Adonis, now head of his policy unit, has proposed a number of reforms such as the now-moribund Education Action Zones which were designed to breathe fresh air into the foetid chambers of our educational elite. It should be noted that Education Action Zones failed because Blunkett's masters in the DfES ensured that the private contractors brought in to manage failing schools lacked the power to discipline or sack incompetent administrators or teachers. So all that happened was that failing schools were saddled with yet another layer of management, which was the last thing they needed.

Although Conservative policy is now aimed at restoring limited markets for schooling and they no longer favour top-down reforms, it is highly unlikely that many of their proposals would actually prove effective. An enormous amount of staff work is needed to unravel the complex structures now in place. Merely giving civil servants orders which, in effect, require them to disband their empires, simply won't do. Consider Frank Field's brave attempt to place our benefits system on a rational basis: alarmist articles appeared as though by magic, Field's political career was over, and New Labour quietly abandoned a much-heralded policy.

How did our civil servants obtain such control over the way we are governed? Prior to 1870, very few people

in Britain worked for government, directly or indirectly. Relatively few businesses, other than munitions manufacturers and shipyards, depended on government contracts to survive. The civil service was rudimentary, and government was controlled by an elite which had a vested interest in low taxes and limited government. However, the common problem of the European powers in the 19th century was containing radical revolt. Although France and England are generally thought of as the liberal, whiggish states which contained radicalism with a progressive political programme, the arch-conservative Otto von Bismarck is the true architect of the political settlement which prevails to this day.

Bismarck was not actually interested in domestic politics at all, but he had a peculiar genius for turning radical causes into conservative ones. Prior to 1848, nationalism was a radical political idea which challenged the right of monarchs to trade off duchies and principalities irrespective of the language and culture of their inhabitants. Bismarck saw no problem with nationalism; Prussia, as the smallest of the five powers of the Vienna system, had few non-German subjects other than the Polish minorities in Pomerania and Silesia, and the nationalist fervour of the times enabled Prussia to absorb territories from Denmark and Austria (and eventually to swallow Bavaria whole). Bismarck succeeded in transforming nationalism from a radical to a conservative idea, much against the instincts of his Hohenzollern sovereigns.

Bismarck's social security programme was a similar stroke of genius. These days, we do not often think of politics in terms of patronage – the more fools we. Bismarck understood that the best way to contain social unrest was to institute a system of universal patronage. Although social security was first proposed by radical deputies, Bismarck quickly saw the attraction of a measure that would bind the German workers to the state by bribing them with other people's money. Although modern public choice theory describes the behaviour of rent-seekers, those who actively seek patronage – an activity which is as old as civilisation – Bismarck was playing a wider game involving almost every German citizen, even the most humble. Few workers lived long enough to collect their pensions, but the odds for a 19th century German *arbeiter* were still infinitely better than those now offered by our National Lottery. Ironically, one of our major political problems today is that nearly everybody lives long enough to collect their pensions for an inconveniently long time.

But in binding the worker to the state, Bismarck helped to start a new phenomenon in government, *one which manifested itself under radical and conservative governments alike*. The agencies which administered social security grew to unprecedented dimensions. As the systems which gave succour to the poor became more complex, ministers of state lost touch with the minutiae of policy. They found that their servants became difficult to control because they knew so much more than they did. And what is more, bureaucracies developed public relations expertise which enabled them to grow independently of the government of the day. Effectively, much of the patronage of the state passed into their hands. Now, the support of an MP or the leader of a county council is all but useless to anyone wishing to sell services or goods to schools — whereas a cosy relationship with a middle-ranking LEA official will do very nicely, thank you.

Most people shrug off the growth of the state as inevitable. Ever-closer union with continental kleptocracies is taken as read. We are barely aware that the state now bribes us with our own money. Yet in the course of the 20th century there has been one episode in which the power of the state contracted sharply — a phenomenon which started in Britain with the ascendancy of free-market economists in the '80s. Privatisation was the mother of the collapse of socialism world-wide. State ownership of production lasted a long time, in spite of inefficiency, corruption and unfairness. By 1989 state socialism was so rotten that even the *nomenklatura* of the USSR revolted against a system whose paltry privileges simply were not worth having.

Unfortunately, the rent-seeking tendency in Britain (and elsewhere) was not slow to react. Changing over from running businesses to regulating them was, for them, a huge advance; they discovered that in the post-Thatcher settlement, (echoing Kipling's immortal assault on Beaverbrook) power without responsibility was indeed the prerogative of the rent-seeker. The retreat of the state, so hopefully proclaimed in the 80s, has been reversed. Government spending as a percentage of GDP now exceeds pre-Thatcher levels, which is quite remarkable when you consider how much money British Leyland and British Steel managed to squander. All we have for this massive increase in our taxes is rank after rank of rent-seekers, flushed with new-found powers so carelessly granted by Westminster and Brussels. Reading *The Guardian* Appointments section is a bit like contemplating infinity — the head hurts. The Georgians and Victorians at least acquired magnificent buildings for their taxes.

We are now at a peculiar conjunction of events where the limitations of the state are once again sharply

exposed. Education and health are the two major areas of economic activity where the state is the dominant provider, and both are obviously in terminal decline, not in terms of the demand for educational and health services, of course, but in terms of their efficacy as they are arranged at present. The longer the *status quo* persists, the more radical the eventual surgery will need to be. Tony Blair recognises that change is inevitable, if only to preserve a measure of state control and ownership, but his party does not. Like Wellington opposing reform, and like the post-Peel Tories longing for restoration of the Corn Laws, Old Labour are fighting a losing battle. Even though the Tories have embraced radical policies, they seem really to have no understanding of the nature or the scope of the problem.

Merely adapting — say — the Dutch or Danish model will not help. After all, schools in the Netherlands and in Denmark are infected with the same anti-intellectual 'child development' theories that permeate our own teacher-training system. For that matter, our own independent schools are far from immune from these influences. A journalist reported (privately) that on his visit to a top prep school (linked to St Paul's) he noted that until year five or six, pupils sat around tables, rather than facing the teacher. He wrote:

I remarked on this to the new deputy head and she looked at me pityingly and said that facing the teacher was out of date. I said that it works better academically. She replied that they were not just thinking of academic performance. They were concerned to encourage working together. (I was not quick enough to ask if she could point to any evidence that this made a significant difference to the social skills of children.)

We should not suppose that eliminating bureaucracies and bringing market forces into play will automatically bring about a change in the intellectual climate in British education. Private enterprise produces much that is meretricious. We can, however, be sure that no reform is possible *so long as the current regulatory apparatus remains in place*. Politicians are attracted to foreign models, because it saves them the trouble of doing their own thinking. All they need do is employ a few Dutch or Danish experts to sit around the table at the DfES and hammer out a new settlement which will inevitably create more jobs and more power for the education establishment.

Unfortunately, politicians do not further their careers by merely stepping out of the way and letting Adam Smith's invisible hand work its wonders. A leading Conservative education spokesman recently commented privately that he was only interested in ideas that would please his constituents. Britain will not get the root-and-branch reforms it needs unless the solution comes from outside the confines of party politics.

Government spending as a percentage of GDP now exceeds pre-Thatcher levels, which is quite remarkable when you consider how much money British Leyland and British Steel managed to squander.

This might seem an impossible task but for the Thatcherite revolution. At the time, conventional wisdom was that Britain, as a mature industrial society, was in terminal decline, and that no political solution was possible without the agreement of our unions and without stringent regulation by Keynesian economists and Common Market officials. Although Margaret Thatcher had the political steel to see her revolution through, the ideas came from think-tanks, and most particularly from Arthur Seldon and (Sir) Alfred Sherman. The best account of that process is *Just In Time* by Sir John Hoskyns, whose work as chief of staff and head of the Number 10 Policy Unit was the essential bridge between the intellectuals, the cabinet and the civil service. Hoskyns was a businessman with first-hand experience of what it was like to run a sunrise industry in the bureaucratic morass of socialist Britain, and without his cogent insights, it would have proved impossible to have developed the 'stepping stones' policies which guided us out of the morass created by establishment politicians such as Gilmour, Prior and their Labour equivalents.

In Education, we do not lack theorists capable of producing trenchant critiques of what is wrong with our schools – our right-of-centre think-tanks produce quite a volume of excellent pamphlets. What we lack is a commanding figure such as Sherman to draw a blueprint for reform. Plans need to be set out in a logical order, and they need to be drawn in detail. For instance, abolishing the QCA would not be likely to prove much of a political minefield. Our examination system is in such disrepute that few would mourn the passing of those who control it. Giving schools, exam boards, UCAS and universities the freedom to contract as they see fit would not be without its political hazards, but with good staff work the

political damage would almost certainly be more than offset by the positive results of such a policy.

On the other hand, the reform of LEAs – seemingly an urgent priority – needs very careful and considered handling. LEAs are responsible for special needs provision, which is a very emotive issue. In fact, 'special needs' spending is the fastest-growing areas in education, one which is rapidly creating new bureaucratic empires; but because it is such an emotive subject it needs to be handled with kid gloves. The abolition of LEAs is fine insofar as powers are delegated to schools (which, for the most part, couldn't possibly do a worse job), but the delegation of residual functions to the DfES – an idea currently mooted at Central Office – is mad. How is a bureaucrat in London supposed to decide what to do with a school refuser from Sunderland or a paraplegic from Preston? Without good staff work by people who know how the system works, and how it is dictated by the relevant legislation and regulations, the best ideas in the world will remain abstractions.

Of course, staff work is tedious and costs money. It may not be exciting, and there is no way that such things can be left to Central Office or to naive, spin-obsessed politicians. But without this attention to detail, no theory – however compelling or attractive – can ever become reality. I have no doubt that Britain has legions of teachers who are exasperated with being told what to do by idiots. Chris Woodhead's criticisms of our schools rankle in the hearts of these idiots because he has actually taught, and knows whereof he speaks. It is high time that this expertise was mobilised to restore the civic society that existed before bureaucrats arrogated the rights of free-born Britons.

Tom Burkhard is Director of the Promethean Trust

What Is a Samurai?

Roy Kerridge

I read a very interesting book recently, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, by Isabella Bird (John Murray, 1905). The redoubtable Miss Bird, in staunch Victorian lady traveller tradition, rode around northern Japan on a succession of ill-tempered horses. Her chronicle, illustrated with fascinating woodcuts, is cast in the form of letters to a friend. It is full of surprises. I knew that most Japanese people are very polite, but apparently this rule does not apply to peasants in remote places. Not only did they crowd rudely around Miss Bird at all times, having never seen a Westerner before, but they tried to spy on her as she undressed and went to bed. Most extraordinary of all is the fact that on hot sunny

days, many of the men calmly walked around out of doors with no clothes on at all. Miss Bird partly blamed their boorishness on the lack of aristocratic influence, for the Samurai had been abolished, their castles crumbling like Irish mansions.

The best part of the book begins halfway, when Miss Bird visits the forest homes of the Ainu tribesmen, sometimes known as the Hairy Ainu. Regarded by the Japanese as 'primitive tribesmen', the Ainu, at that time as now, are wards of the Japanese government, rather like Red Indians in America. Miss Bird commented that the Ainu were better treated by their rulers than were the conquered Indian tribes she had encountered in the

Rockies. All the same, the Ainu she met regarded the Japanese government with horror. Though they divulged their customs to her, they begged her not to report them to the Japanese.

Scorned by the Japanese as barely human, the hut-dwelling Ainu lived by hunting and fishing, their religion a mixture of bear worship, fire worship and ceremonial wine-drinking. In Miss Bird's day, the men sported enormous luxuriant moustaches, beards and leonine manes of hair, while the women were tattooed. These attributes were associated in Ainu minds with their religion.

Bear worship, to judge by evidence found in caves, was practised by Neanderthal man during the ice ages. It would be strange but all-too-likely if the brutal ape-like Neanderthaler of 'science' could be proved to have resembled the sweet-natured almost saintly Ainu, with their lustrous eyes and quiet, soft-spoken manners. However, bear-worship has taken place in all northern countries where bears live, and may still exist among Siberian tribesmen (who used to claim that Lenin had been a bear in a previous life). Berne, the capital of Switzerland, began as the centre of a bear-cult, and bears are kept in the city today (as wolves are in Rome and ravens in London).

The Ainu, until recently, captured bear cubs, fattened them and petted them, but finally killed them. Before stabbing a tame bear, the Ainu would shower it with presents, and make long speeches full of praise for the animal. Then the bear spirit would go up to God and tell Him what fine people the Ainu were, and how richly they deserved a reward in the shape of success at hunting and fishing and so on. An echo of this idea survived among the bear-baiters of England from ancient times to the eighteenth century. The bearward, or keeper, would make a ceremonial speech to the bear, addressing it as 'Sir Bear' and telling it how well it had been treated, prior to the dogs being let loose and the 'sport' begun. Many sports, including bear-baiting and possibly football, began as religious rituals.

Throughout the book, Miss Bird refers to the Ainu as 'savages', even though they last fought the Japanese (and lost) in the defensive war of 878 A.D., and even though they politely invited her into their huts. She stayed with an Ainu family, who treated her with great reverence, the chivalrous young man of the household, Pipichari, kneeling adoringly at her feet. So, to the English readers of 1905, 'savages' did not have to be

savage, only 'primitive' or unsophisticated.

Here Miss Bird discourses on 'savages.'

.....'.... as we were talking, Pipichari, who is a very 'untutored' savage, dropped his coat from one shoulder, and at once Shinondi signed to him to put it on again. Again, a woman was sent to a distant village for some oil as soon as they heard that I usually burned a light all night. Little acts of courtesy were constantly being performed, but I really appreciated nothing more than the quiet way in which they went on with the routine of their ordinary lives.'

'After saluting me, he (Pipichari) threw himself down in the place of honour by the fire, with the easy grace of a staghound, a savage all over.' *'... they have no letters* (my italics) or any numbers above a thousand, they are clothed in the bark of trees and the untanned skins of beasts, they worship the bear, the sun, moon, fire, water, and I know not what, they are uncivilisable and altogether irreclaimable savages, yet they are attractive, and in some ways fascinating, and I hope I shall never forget the music of their low, sweet voices, the soft light of their mild, brown eyes, and the wonderful sweetness of their smile.'

Nevertheless, Isabella Bird concludes her chapters on the Ainu with these remarks, as she saddles up and bids faithful



Pipichari farewell: 'They are charming in many ways, but make one sad, too, by their stupidity, apathy and hopelessness, and all the sadder that their numbers appear to be again increasing; and as their physique is very fine, there does not appear to be a prospect of the race dying out at present.'

Since Miss Bird regarded her stay among the Ainu as the high point of her Japanese visit, why did she apparently want them to die out? Why is she perplexed by the fact that they were *not* dying out? Elsewhere in her book, Miss Bird makes it clear that she is a believing Christian. Perhaps a strain of Darwinism had seeped into her soul, for imperial evolutionists often believed that 'savages', losers to the white man in the survival-of-the-fittest stakes, were doomed to evolve into extinction. Victorian melancholy and fatalism also played a part in this outlook. In Southern Africa, writers as diverse as Olive Schreiner and David Livingstone occasionally observed with regret that the black races were bound to die out before long. Nowadays many

Westerners believe that Africans and other non-white races will soon all die of Aids.

According to a Japanese friend, the Ainu today are a ruined people, now truly apathetic, their forests denuded of game; bears and wolves gone, the dole and sale of tourist souvenirs their only livelihood. Of course, the Ainu are white people, often a criterion for non savagery in Western eyes. For instance, in the South Seas, the Melanesians (or black people) of one island were traditionally 'savages' to white people, while golden-skinned Polynesian neighbours of near-identical customs were regarded as Adam and Eve-like human gods, sought out by Western bohemians who hoped to find a land of pre-Edenic free love. There is no hard and fast rule to explain why some people are thought to be 'savages' and others not, but Miss Bird's phrase 'they have no letters' is an important qualification.

In the great days of Western adventurers, freebooters and empire-builders, nobody from Europe ever landed in India, China, Persia, Burma or Japan and simply set up flags, planted colonies or ploughed virgin soil with no more ado. Diplomats, delicate negotiations and signed contracts were the order of the day because the people were 'not savages'. Oriental people built cities, issued both coins and taxes, and more importantly, possessed the art of writing. This art, writing, seems to be the unacknowledged, instinctively-recognised badge of non-savagery to a Westerner.

In a literate world, people with no writing have no rights. Land can be stolen from literate people by stealth, or won in conquest, but where a people have no writing, taking their land 'isn't stealing'. It is Colonising Virgin Soil in New Territories. All the nineteenth and early twentieth century colonists did to such people was plant a flag in their midst and start settling. Sometimes a perfunctory thumb-print treaty was negotiated with a chief in smiling ill-faith, but on the whole the 'natives' in desirable areas were regarded as dumb lookers-on, along with the flora and fauna. Any retaliation, however, was met with by horrified cries of 'attacked by savages'! No wonder that Africans have since undergone a Scramble for Education! He who wields the pen writes the title deed. The most complex legal and religious ideas and codes, if committed only to memory and to song, and not to paper, carry no weight of authority to People of the Pen. In an instant, as a pre-literate generation passes, they are gone, replaced by the Penman's beliefs and systems.

Unlike the Ainu, the Bushman and the Aborigine, the Negro African is traditionally a herdsman or farmer. No Africans simply 'lived wild in the jungle'. Yet most Africans had no writing at the time of their fateful encounters with white people.

Following the pioneering work of Chinua Achebe in Nigeria, literate Africans today are writing evocative novels set in the pre-imperial or pre-'independent' past. These excellent novels are not read very much by other Africans. In a way, they are addressed to white people and say 'See! You misunderstood us! *This* is how we thought, and *this* is what we were doing, when first you came among us.'

In the Western *Boys' Own Paper* – *Wide World Magazine* view of things, savages who leap out on the unsuspecting chums around a camp fire, and shout 'Wonga wonga!' are doing just that (shouting 'Wonga wonga'). 'Wonga wonga' cannot mean anything, it is not shouted in a language, but is at worst a 'savage cry', at best a 'jabbering'. The savages are not 'foreigners' who cannot make themselves understood, they are savages, forever unpredictable. In a northern story, their place would be taken by wolves. Both wolves and story-book savages howl.

It seems odd now to remember reading an autobiographical account of African life in a forest village entitled *I Was a Savage*. If I remember rightly, a book of this name was published in the early nineteen fifties. The author's insight into his own mind, and his memory of his pre-literate days, were deemed sensational at the time. So savages had minds after all, and acted on ideas

which to them seemed rational! In effect, an African to whom literacy came late, anthropologised his younger self! In the happy ending, the narrator left Africa and came to New York, gazing at the Statue of Liberty in wonder.

The Harlem or Brooklyn sequel has not yet been published. Chinua Achebe and friends have long rendered books of this kind obsolete.

Another interesting book I have read recently is a 'biography' of an African village, from pre-colonial days to the present. The author is Lawrence Vambe, a member of the Mashona people of Chishawasha, a beautiful downland country of rippling grass in Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. His own earliest memories hark back to the nineteen twenties, but in *An Ill-Fated People* (Heinemann, 1972) he draws from the recollections of elderly relatives and recreates the ill-fated day when white people arrived at Mashonganyika village and calmly took possession of the land.

In some boys' adventure stories 'savages' are pitied and excused their barbaric behaviour because they know nothing of Jesus. Whether in stories or in real life, the missionary approach to 'wild people' did those people the honour of recognising their souls as human and 'saveable' and of recognising their speech as a language that could be learned and transcribed.

This brings me neatly to my last book, one that I have not yet finished reading, *In the Heart of Savagery*,

imperial evolutionists often believed that 'savages', losers to the white man in the survival-of-the-fittest stakes, were doomed to evolve into extinction.

subtitled *Reminiscences of Life and Adventure During a Quarter of a Century of Pioneering and Missionary Labours in the Wilds of East Equatorial Africa*, by Rachel Stuart Watt. (Published by Pickering and Inglis. No date, but the paper smells nineteen thirtyish).

Set mainly in Kenya, this book is replete with page headings – ‘Retreats of the Savages’, ‘Masai and Treacherous Wakikuyu’ and ‘Bloodthirsty Marauders’. Nevertheless, on page 104, I find some of the ideas that occurred to me when reading Miss Bird’s account of Japan. In Rachel Watt’s view, the Japanese are a people who need Christ just as much as do Africans and everyone else. Yet she would not dream of calling Japan ‘The Heart of Savagedom’. This is what she has to say:

If the Missionary goes to China or Japan he finds there not only a written language, but an extensive literature, with native schools and colleges, a people possessing many of the arts and refinements of civil life, who in fact were civilised long before Britons had emerged from rude barbarism. In those countries one can sit down and apply oneself immediately to the learning of the language, and having acquired it can go through the length and breadth of the land delivering the message of the Gospel to the

people in their own tongue, dwelling in their houses, partaking of their food and wearing their garments.

How vastly different are these conditions from those which prevail in the interior of Africa. In the Dark Continent there are multitudinous savage tribes, speaking over six hundred different languages, and not one of these tribes have any written signs or characters with which to express their ideas. To them writing is an unknown art. Hence, the first necessary work of the pioneer Missionary is to reduce to writing the language of the tribe among whom he is to labour, a work which entails at least several years of devoted application

Nobody in England or Africa refers to tribesmen as ‘savages’ any more. My title query, ‘What is a Savage?’, may now seem out of date. However, it is easier to scramble an egg or Scramble for Africa than it is to unscramble either one. Many Africans still feel humiliated at being once called ‘savages’, and do themselves an injustice by thinking of all the old ways as ‘savage’.

Roy Kerridge’s latest book Subjects of the Queen is published by Duckworth

The consent of the governed A conservative view David Webb

Historically speaking, few societies have sought their legitimacy in the consent of the governed. Ancient Greece may have invented the concept of democracy, and Roman Emperors may have ruled in the name of ‘Senatus Populusque Romanus’, but in both those societies the ‘people’ were not the broad mass of the population, but free men only. In Christendom, the legitimacy of government was sought in divine authority, in government by an anointed monarch. In a relatively short time (just over a couple of hundred years), however, it seems that all sides of political debate have conceded the notion that government should be representative of the people. The left-liberal establishment is now attempting to move towards a supposedly ‘post-democratic’ form of governance, where the legitimacy of the state is underpinned by the concepts of multi-culturalism and human rights, which form an ideology that has to be enforced by unelected commissions and bureaucracies. The aim of post-democracy is not that we should get rid of parliament and accept rule by appointed commissions. Left-liberals pay lip-service to the consent of the governed, but aim to use new post-democratic institutions to create a

new cultural consensus the better to manipulate the democratic process. Similarly, on the right, supporters of aristocratic government *tout court* are nowadays few and far between, even though consent of the governed is by no means an essential feature of Tory ideology. We support ‘leadership’ when we feel our principles to be out of line with the wishes of the population, but permit ourselves to rediscover the principle of the consent of the governed when things are not going our way.

The changing cultural settlement

Conservatives have traditionally been conscious of the challenge to their principles that the idea of the consent of the governed threw up. This is because Enlightenment thinkers saw the question of the consent of the governed in terms of resolving the potential conflict between the individual and society. According to Rousseau ‘Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains.’ However, to a conservative, man is not born free. We are all born, not as members of the universal human race, but as members of particular societies living in particular periods. From our earliest years, society shapes who we are, makes us become who and what we become. Man is everywhere

born in chains, but the chains are chains of culture and civilisation, without which society would be unimaginable except as a war of all against all. Therefore, the Enlightenment tenet that society has to justify its strictures to each and every individual – this is the basic idea behind the Rousseauian ‘social contract’ – in order to be legitimate, forms no part of conservative thought. Far from believing that man is perfectible, conservatives have traditionally understood the possibility of conflict between the individual and society in terms of preventing a slide back into barbarism. The norms of society passed down by countless generations are there for a reason, culture and civilisation are *meant* to exert a restraining influence on the individual.

A withdrawal of consent for the social system by the lower orders needs to be averted, and in certain circumstances a democratic mechanism might be required to accomplish this, but what really counts is not the arithmetical consent of the governed as such, but the reaching of a cultural settlement to underpin the polity, whether democratic or otherwise. The cultural settlement underlying a *stable* society might never have received the arithmetical support of the majority of the population, never having been voted upon and being merely accepted by the governed as ‘the way things are’. By contrast, democratic assent, through elections or referendums, to social changes proposed by the left-liberal elite carries no guarantee that the changes will not jeopardise social stability, as unforeseen consequences of radical change work themselves through. This is why as conservatives, we are interested, not in democracy as such, or in a society based on the consent of the majority, but in a coherent cultural framework that provides a stable society. Once a cultural settlement is reached and accepted, uncivilised behaviour is checked by social restraints, government follows an understood pattern, and subjects can be accorded their traditional rights.

There is an overlap between the concepts of the consent of the governed and a cultural settlement, as a cultural settlement needs to be accepted by the governed. Furthermore, as we have been raised in a particular society and a particular historical period, the policies and principles that we give our consent to through the democratic process are coloured by our cultural assumptions, and our right to representation in Parliament in itself forms part of the cultural settlement in this Kingdom. But the two concepts, one left-wing, the other right-wing, are logically distinct, and increasingly so in the current period of rapid social and cultural change, where formal democracy is maintained, thus enabling the elite to claim the consent of the governed. However, the cultural goalposts are continually shifted in waves of social-engineering designed to produce a multi-cultural society. It is awkward for us to argue against changes that – apparently – have the (passive) support of the electorate, but the real question for us is the weakening cultural settlement, the attenuation of the traditional rights of the

subjects of the British Crown that ought to be protected if we are to continue to be a nation-state. The problem with our membership of the European Union, mass immigration and the piecemeal abolition of the common law is not that democratic consent as such has never been given to these developments, but that they represent a sudden removal of the rights that we had under the cultural settlement that was in place as late as the 1960s. If these changes remain then this country is no longer ours.

The new British elite that finally took power in 1997 – but which had exercised increasing influence on government policy since the 1950s – behaves as if it has reached a *new* cultural settlement, one where unelected bodies enforce their views on racial, national, cultural and other issues, and is pressing on with its agenda although the new settlement has not been accepted by large sections of the population. As democracy gives way to ‘post-democracy’, the democratic form (robbed of any real content) is retained merely in order to endow the new order with some very thin veneer of rhetorical support. But the real justification of the rule of quangos, international commissions and judges exceeding their remit is provided in terms of a proposed cultural settlement based on human rights and multi-culturalism. The new elite believes itself to be morally superior and thus views the good society as one where the parameters of social debate are controlled within boundaries acceptable to it, allowing it to remain in power democratically. However, its claim to rule is essentially moral; it does not depend on popular support for justification.

All elites make moral claims to back up their right to rule, although the cultural settlement under which an elite operates under can only be said to exist once the elite’s values, and thus its right to rule, have been accepted by the wider population. The previous British elite (1688-1997, with the 1950s-1990s marking a transition to the new elite with its new set of supporting values) justified its rule in terms of the Protestant religion and the nation-state, not in terms of popular support as such, despite the gradual adoption of more democratic forms of governance. Just as blasphemy, treason and sedition represented a challenge to the governing structures of the past, today ‘racism’, xenophobia and offensive language are a clear challenge to the new elite’s legitimacy, and therefore need to be repressed. Andrew Marr, the thinking man’s left-liberal, has penned a fascinating article on this subject, arguing that state repression has the potential to crush certain opinions and create a new society:

The final answer, frankly, is the vigorous use of state power to coerce and repress. It may be my Presbyterian background, but I firmly believe that repression can be a great, civilising instrument for good. Stamp hard on certain “natural” beliefs for long enough and you can almost kill them off. The police are first in line to be burdened further, but a new Race Relations Act will impose the will of the state on millions of other lives too. (‘Poor? Stupid?

Racist? Then don't listen to a pampered white liberal like me', *The Observer*, February 28th, 1999).

Although Tories may be outraged by such open advocacy of political repression – the frankness with which Marr states his case allows us to wrap our objections up in the language of the consent of the governed – objectively speaking it is equivalent to the repression of treason and blasphemy under the previous elite. The question is not can political repression be justified? Rather it is, can multi-culturalism form a cultural settlement that can become accepted by the broad mass of the population? If political repression works this time, and society comes round to accept the views of the left-liberal elite, a dwindling band of Tories could become like the recusants and Jacobites who clung on to an earlier conception of social legitimacy in the 17th and 18th centuries, as the Hanoverian settlement became accepted.

Losing our inherited rights

Multi-culturalism is not a true cultural settlement, as it aims to destroy the pre-existing culture without installing a common culture in its place. With a population that suddenly accepts the supposedly anti-racist principles of our new betters, the new elite can reign supreme, an elite divorced for the first time from any cultural ties or obligations to the people over whom it rules. But why should we come to see things the left-liberal way? What is in it for us? To create the new dispensation, the left-liberal elite has to be able to convince ordinary people, not only that it has an ideological stance that is genuinely moral, but that the rights and lifestyle of the people are in some sense bound up with the elite's continuing to rule, just as the 17th century Protestant settlement was connected with the maintenance of a free society. Many English people have been persuaded, to at least a superficial extent, by one of the key tenets of multi-culturalism – anti-racism – which holds that it is 'wrong' to discriminate against people on the grounds of their colour, even though a nation-state is logically founded on a distinction between people who are and people who are not members of the nation. But the other key tenet of multi-culturalism – the value of diversity – seems to contradict the anti-racism concept, and provokes more resistance. We dimly recognise that we stand to lose rights that we thought were guaranteed to us, as we realise that all cultures are worth promoting, save our own; that all ethnic groups are entitled to celebrate their cultural and racial origins, except us; and that our rights to freedom of speech, expression and association are subject to the more important universal 'rights' now being assiduously promoted. It is seldom suggested that our rights under previous constitutional 'settlements' – Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, the Bill of Rights, the Act of Settlement, the Acts of Union, etc – should all be summarily repealed; left-lib-

If society comes round to accept the views of the left-liberal elite, a dwindling band of Tories could become like the recusants and Jacobites who clung on to an earlier conception of social legitimacy in the 17th and 18th centuries

erals probably see 'human rights' as the culmination of a process of extension of rights to the population that they suppose began with Magna Carta. The slow-motion revolution is being accomplished by means of court judgments that are hard to reconcile with previous understandings of the law and by decisions being taken at the pan-European level. *Habeas corpus*, the right to a jury trial, the right to cross-examine witnesses, the right to freedom of speech and freedom of association, the right to defend one's property and the right to bear arms – all these rights have been limited by Parliament, the courts or the European Union in recent years. Under the old cultural settlement these rights were the Englishman's birthright; no legitimate government or courts could rob us of them. Some of us even took the Coronation Oath literally and believed that the Queen had sworn to uphold the rights of every single one of her subjects.

Instead of the traditional rights of the Englishman, we are being offered universal 'human rights', which amount to much less than the liberties to which we have been accustomed. 'Human rights', are often rights gained by the authorities to regulate private behaviour, a state of affairs that overturns the traditional idea of a 'right' as something that is held against the state, limiting bureaucratic interference in the lives of the population. This gathering of rights into the hands of the state bureau-

cracy has been contrived by the immigration of millions of people from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. Multi-racialism as such is an irrelevance to the new elite, but it is the battering ram whereby a society of free individuals, each endowed with inherited

rights including the freedom of speech, the freedom of expression, the freedom of association and the right to bear arms, can be destroyed. Of course, there are individual blacks and Asians who believe in the political ideals represented by England, but the arrival of immigrants has destroyed the basis of the pre-existing cultural settlement that once undergirded the English nation. One could argue that the presence of large numbers of non-white people has necessitated the transition to a new 'social contract' – a shift in the basis of the state's legitimacy away from the concept of a nation-state – for it to gain legitimacy in the eyes of newcomers, and so avoid the creation of a large minority that does not accept the cultural settlement on which government in our islands is based. To smooth the way to this new form of society, the state has then assumed the right to monitor relations between the races, if you please, and intervene where appropriate. This is in fact the most positive gloss that can be put on the multi-cultural project. However, interestingly, the task of accommodating others, while failing to 'include' newcomers effectively, has alienated large numbers of our own people. If adjustments needed to be made

in order to include the ethnic minorities, why are no adjustments needed in order to re-include nationalist whites on the housing estates who object to the multicultural project itself? The answer lies in the project of post-democracy. Anti-racism, multi-culturalism and human rights have been introduced, not to favour ethnic-minority residents but to bolster the moral pretensions of the new elite, handily shifting power out of democratic forums into the hands of a non-elected elite.

The fragmented multi-cultures that we are now building are non-inclusive, centrifugal social formations that lack legitimacy, with little connection between the ruling elite and the broad mass of the people. But as more is held by international bodies and the various commissions, it is harder to challenge the rule of the illegitimate left-liberal elite. But why should the new elite seek to destroy our freedoms? It is important not to ascribe the loss of our liberties to a scarcely credible left-liberal 'conspiracy'. The new 'values' represented by the new elite involve a move towards post-democracy. For the Anglican nation-state had positive values that could be inculcated in all, through Sunday school, support for families, and a Reithian BBC. The prohibition of treason and blasphemy tended to glue society together by emphasising our common national-cultural origins. The gradual loss of belief in Christianity, sexual morality and national particularisms has, by contrast, led logically to a situation where an elite that gains strength from its feelings of moral superiority because of its stance on racism and diversity fears the supposedly atavistic attachments of the lower orders, who threaten to destroy the smooth progress to a new order. The propagation of such ideas as multi-culturalism, the celebration of diversity and opposition to organised religion is incapable of producing a free, yet united population, because the new values rob society of any *real* sense of community and fail to provide the next generation with a moral compass. By atomising the population, the realm can be cohered only by an elite of interfering moralisers. The logic of the new values is suspicion of other people, and the gradual loss of personal autonomy to the state bureaucracy.

Bureaucratic rule over atomised individuals

The supposed liberal outlook of our governing classes is unrecognisable from the standpoint of the intellectual debates that surrounded the Enlightenment. Universal human rights proclaimed during the French Revolution have turned out to be the mechanism whereby we are subjected to a new form of tyranny. Today our lives are intimately connected with the state to an extent unthinkable in ages past. The government spends around 40 percent of our gross domestic product; one-quarter of the workforce is directly employed by the government and 7-8 million people, excluding pensioners, live on handouts. Employers, local councils, and quangos all attempt to have their say on how we live our lives, what we think and say, and what we do in our free time. Some unfortunate people face even grosser interventions in their daily

lives that directly raise the question of the legitimacy of the politically correct state. Numerous examples could be given, but a good example is the unfortunate man, divorced or separated from his wife, who has to pay for the maintenance of his child, but was recently told by the High Court in a fatuous 'judgment' handed down by a female judge that he could never see his child again, because access to the child 'distressed' the mother. To such people, the state is a tyranny, a powerful group of misguided interventionists that gets its way because of its monopoly on power; these judgments are a violation of the old cultural settlement, although fully in accordance with the multi-cultural settlement that seeks to replace it.

To say that the new dispensation is a tyranny is not to pretend that we are controlled by a left-wing military dictatorship, or that the torture and mass imprisonment of political dissenters takes place in England today. The new elite found the older morality of nation and family discredited and has come to believe passionately in its new *ersatz* morality characterised by anti-racism, feminism and environmentalism. But however passionately they make themselves believe in their mission statements and equal opportunities policies, there is a large ingredient of hypocrisy in any off-the-shelf, made-to-measure moral system. The new morality is a comfort blanket clutched by an elite that is casting round for a means of justifying itself to itself. The government may not be torturing its opponents, but if we allow the new elite untrammelled rights of intervention in our personal lives, then we will no longer be free. Will conservatives be able to challenge the increasing bureaucratisation of our lives, which proceeds in the name of a new morality? The post-democratic dispensation has been largely put in place, and key facets of it such as the demographic reconfiguration of our country are irreversible. But a much more acute problem is the failure of conservatives themselves – particularly the Conservative Party – to develop clear cultural goals that could lead a path out of the post-democratic nightmare.

That we no longer conceive of society in terms of nation and families, but in terms of individuals subject to the might of the state, is clear from Conservative policies on crime which emphasise punishment. Few Tories would oppose the implementation of proper punishments for criminals – but the party has no policies to address the breakdown in the fabric of society itself, which is the real source of crime. What about the church? What about divorce, abortion, illegitimacy and homosexuality? What about the corrosive role of the education system and the broadcast media? The Conservative Party either has no policies in these areas, or has policies that actively encourage social disintegration. The key problem in Conservative ideology is the assumption that a 'free' society can be based on individuals, rather than on families within the overarching structure of the nation-state. Atomised individuals can be free to make their consumer-level decisions, but need to be 'regulated' by a state

bureaucracy. A society with a strong identity, a common culture and an agreed moral framework produces individuals integrated into the social fabric whose individual choices are less likely to be of the anti-social variety. Democracy itself is meaningless in the absence of a cultural settlement, as there is no reason why opposition parties should accept the verdict of the majority in the absence of a shared identity. As atomised individuals can point to no shared values, perpetual conflict – especially cultural conflict – becomes etched into the bones of society. The democratic form itself becomes devoid of substance and power drifts away into the hands of the quangocracy. Attempts by some Conservatives to

counterpose libertarian ideas to the bureaucratic tyranny under which we live do not represent a way forward. We cannot pin our hopes on a sort of warmed-up liberalism that promises free markets as well as sexual licence and educational ‘opportunity for all’. A genuinely free society, one that needs no closed-circuit television cameras and anti-harassment codes, can develop only in the context of moral restraints and the love of one’s country and nation. Only when these cultural foundations have been sunk can ‘democracy’ and the ‘consent of the governed’ come to mean anything at all.

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Alfred Sherman

The Diane Abbott MP *cause celebre* has several dimensions, besides her double standards. Having denounced fellow Labour MP’s for sending their children away from local State schools, she sends her son to a prestigious fee-paying school, which she can finance only thanks to her perquisites of office as Member of Parliament for an inner-city social quagmire. Could Orwell have imagined anything more blatant? She is, of course, right in complaining that Afro-Caribbean children do badly in inner London State schools, though she could have added that other children in Hackney do almost as badly.

We have the interaction of Afro-Caribbean community problems and the parlous condition of State education. I know it at first hand. I was born and brought up in Hackney after the first world war, the child of a poor (Jewish) immigrant family. Educational opportunities were much better for all children than now. Illiteracy and innumeracy were almost unheard of, discipline was much better. Those children whose parents could afford it transferred at the age of eleven from elementary school (now called ‘Secondary Modern’) to Secondary (now called ‘grammar’, where they still exist) or to Central Schools (a half-way house) or junior technical colleges. Bright children whose parents could not afford it received scholarships, which included maintenance grants.

I benefited from this. So did Diane Abbot, member of one of the last age-cohorts to benefit from these arrangements before they were destroyed to make way for comprehensives. Thanks to them, she made her way from Grammar School to Cambridge, and thence onward and upward, till she can afford the fees at an independent school, to avoid her son having to suffer at what the top Downing Street spokesman called ‘bog standard comprehensive’.

Why did the Wilson government destroy an education

system which Labour had largely pioneered and which disproportionately benefited children of the poor? Why did the Conservatives tamely collude? Crosland was no fool; he knew very well what he was doing, and why. It was nothing to do with bogus claims to be advancing equality, but cynical personal politicking. Crosland had his eyes on the party leadership. Since Jenkins and Healey had the Right and Centre tied up, the author of *The Future of Socialism* switched orientations and did a deal with the Labour Left and fellow travellers, choosing the far-Left MP Frank Allaun as his cheer-leader

Now the Far Left disagreed violently with ‘bread and butter socialists’ over grammar schools. They claimed that selection and grammar schools channelled bright working-class children into the middle classes, turning them into class traitors, and depriving the working class of potential leaders. ‘Let them rise with their class, not out of it!’ was their slogan. The Left and egalitarians *à l’outrance* rallied round Crosland’s initiative. Wilson was preoccupied with economics. The Conservatives, who mainly patronised fee-paying schools anyway, concluded that comprehensives would be popular with their voters because they would provide grammar-school type education free in the leafy suburbs.

Now forty years on, we are still living with the results. Schools which had provided avenues of opportunity for thousands of poor children over generations, like my own *alma mater*, Hackney Downs, were comprehensivised and later closed down. Nothing took their place. All over the country, while university entrance expanded several fold, working class intake into university, particularly Oxbridge and London, declined. The present government complains that naturally-talented working class children do badly in the university-entrance stakes because of inferior schooling.

They therefore propose devious remedial schemes which are tantamount to ignoring examination-results in favour of speculation regarding what they might have achieved had they been better schooled. The idea that talent might be selected and fostered as it had been before 1965 has escaped these crusaders, who prefer the crystal ball.

Diane Abbott's contortions, like the behaviour of comrades she had previously criticised, including Anthony Blair and Harriet Harman, can be seen as fruits of the confrontation between ideology and self-interest. They are all the more telling because socialist ideology and representing the working class partake of the nature of a profession, an avenue for social mobility. What could be more natural than that its practitioners should aspire to professional life-styles, or more inherently dichotomous? Ruling in the name of the working class, they escape its travails. But whereas what Milovan Djilas dubbed the

'new class' was exempted from media comment, our politicians live in a goldfish bowl. The tribune of the people of Hackney will have some explaining to do *in situ*. She is sitting on a valuable and much coveted asset. She could argue in her defence that many of her comrades do the same while exempt from the glare of publicity. But unlike them she lives by publicity.

The Bible records that God singled out Moab for destruction because its nobles sacrificed their infants to the God Moloch, burning them to death. But note well, it was their own children that they sacrificed, not lesser people's! By contrast, our socialist chieftains sacrifice the children of others to their strange gods, like comprehensivisation, while sparing their own. What a pity that the Conservatives cannot escape from their past shortcomings and take the opportunity to speak up for real people.

Roger Kershaw

The sexes are proving to be more of a battle-ground in the 'Clash of Civilizations' than we may have guessed.

As a young Nigerian journalist recently found to her cost, 'gender' is not a joking matter for Muslim zealots. After Isioma Daniel wrote in *This Day*, with a mixture of good humour and not (I would say) disrespectful insight, that she could believe the Prophet Mohamed capable of taking one of the Miss World contestants as a wife, attacks on Christians in Kaduna and the Christian counter-attack left 220 dead, the contest was transferred to London, and Ms Daniel herself fled abroad with a fatwa on her head. The introduction of Shari'a law in northern Nigeria seems to have been the beginning of the story for Islamic resurgence, not the end of it.

For the Western layman, and even an aspirant (academic) Islamist, the persistent puzzle about the religion is the great variety of interpretations of God's Word, defying any search for 'the true essence of Islam'. Each doctrinal position invokes the absolute authority of the Koran. But one comes to understand that both the 'Tradition' of the Prophet as recorded by his Companions, and the 'Consensus' of the early scholars, are authoritative too. Within all three categories of source there is guidance of both a gentler, and a more militant, tendency. Later authorities anywhere can therefore 'pick and choose' according to current need and inclination. In prescribing any adaptation to local circumstance within limited parameters, an authority may

on occasion be more accommodating to either pre-Islamic custom or modern life-styles than the early scholars envisaged, but will generally also be influenced by its perception of threat – to morality, the religion, or the physical survival of the Muslim community (umma) near or far – from the Infidel (kafir) environment. In the present condition of world tension, it is not surprising if we hear more about the martial, as opposed to the spiritual, conception of holy war (jihad); more about ritual purity than the 'modernism' which characterised some of the intellectual responses to the West in the early twentieth century. In any case, as if to confuse the eager learner, there was always 'reformism' in the sense of a 'return to the purity of the early faith' (as, for instance, by Wahhabi puritanism), rejecting Arabian 'superstition' in order more effectively to resist Western 'secularism'.

It will sound banal, but is not often stated in print, that there is no major religion, nor a secular ideology, which does not provide a cloak of pious deception and self-justification for its more egoistical, if not evil, members. And with regard to Islam, I have been warned time and again, by proselytizing Malays, not to take the life of the mass of Muslims as the model of 'the real Islam'. But it may be true to say that any divergence between protestation and practice is somewhat fostered by Islam's emphasis on ritual and the basic confession of faith as the keys to paradise. The variety of doctrinal positions makes it fairly easy to select a virtuous rationalisation for an aggressive or in some way self-serving behaviour: not

only as in the example of martial *jihad* being justified for self-defence, but because that term simultaneously carries a non-martial connotation; and not only in relation to the dual meanings of *jihad*, but in connection with other areas of behaviour with more than one function, such as the control of women.

The status of Muslim women has been subject to progressive change since the beginnings of 'modernist' thinking. David Blunkett's bold statements on female circumcision and forced marriages seemed at the time to evoke stronger objection from British-educated Muslims denying that such practices are 'typical' any more, than from traditionalists wanting to preserve them. Outside Britain, the education of girls has become widely accepted (not only in secularist Turkey), and the religious authorities of the more outward-looking societies can and do point to the dignity afforded to women in the Prophet's teaching, by contrast with the Arabian 'era of ignorance' which went before.

Yet manifestly, that 'enhanced status of women' was only relative to its own time. The Koran gives uncompromising sanction to the dominance of husbands over their wives. The Prophet married several young women, polygamously, after the death of his first spouse, Khadijah, and the Koranic rule handed down for all Muslim males allows up to four at any one time. The condition that requires the husband to have 'adequate economic and physical means' to maintain and satisfy four, has not been enforced by the religious hierarchy of every modern nation. A huge pseudo-scientific literature circulates, explaining that because of the overwhelming sexual drives of the human male, only the opportunity of multiple legitimate partners can guarantee social order and indeed the safety of women. The principle of instant divorce has also proved very difficult to gainsay in the almost-by-definition male-dominated societies of the Muslim world – however much the enlightened clerics and women's groups may today struggle to stem the crisis of family life where the abandonment of mothers with their young children is rife.

Meanwhile, a potentially least-attractive provision of the Shari'a in the eyes of the non-Muslim observer – vying with sentences of stoning for rape as a focus of condemnation or incredulity – is the criterion for proof of the rape itself. As was explained to me by the chief Islamic-judicial officer (qadi) of Brunei, it must be seen in almost 'hard-core' close-up by no less than four other men of recognised probity, who are then prepared to give testimony in a religious court. I should add that the implicit point being made was probably that in some respects it would be wrong to introduce full Shari'a into a society of modern Southeast Asia.

However, no amount of moderate adaptation and com-

promise can alter the fact that for the libidinous male in particular, Islam offers a specific kind of advantage in the very variety of its doctrine. On the one hand, he is given to believe that strong sexual urges are God-given and not amenable to curbing (simply, a form of purgation is provided, under the reviving rule of ablution and prayer following intercourse). On the other hand, the equally God-given institution of polygamy which 'accommodates' these urges with no requirement of self-control, casts the male of the species himself in the virtuous role of a guardian of the safety of the females. The sense of virtue and the sense of prerogative are both increased by way of defensively conservative selection or interpretation of scripture, at a time when the females are exposed to commercially-promoted Western life-styles which, if adopted, would make their dress and behaviour more 'provocative' to the males, and thus 'place them at greater risk from rape'.

Nor is it necessarily a coincidence that the jihadi-like outburst in Nigeria occurred at a time of heightened Muslim-Western 'clash' and tension, on the 'civilizational' and strategic fronts respectively. Long-festering anxieties about threats to traditional culture, including male status and power, will have seen a ready allegorical or structural counterpart in the Anglo-American challenge to Saddam. But there was already the directly cultural

challenge of foreign campaigners against the rite of clitorodectomy for the eradication of female sexual desire, found in several parts of the African continent from Egypt to Nigeria.

One of the greatest achievements of Islamic revival on the

new anti-Western battle-ground over 'modest dress' has been to mobilise female support for the hijab – for instance among professionals and office-workers in Egypt, but also among ethnic-British converts in the UK – on the argument, which these women have embraced, that covering the head protects them from flirtation and harassment. In a generally excellent Supplement to *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 2001, *Understanding Islam*, it was thus curious to meet the assertion, by a professional woman publicist for modernist interpretation, that the hijab (veiling) may be the result of a mistaken valuation of the authoritative source. It may well be true that the 'veil' first made its appearance as recently as the 1930s, in Egypt, but like so much else in Muslim 'tradition', ancient or modern, it shows signs of great resilience precisely because female practitioners are convinced that they are upholding what the Prophet prescribed, in their own interest as understood by the Creator.

Such a conviction is not shaken by the fact, now observable by all races at the pilgrimage (Hadj), that there are substantial national differences in the degree of

One of the greatest achievements of Islamic revival on the new anti-Western battle-ground over 'modest dress' has been to mobilise female support for the hijab

female facial seclusion, ranging from symbolic headscarves in Europe to the total burqa of Afghanistan. Most Malay and Indonesian women do not see in this the arbitrary intervention of contemporary human agency. Instead, they rationalise the difference between their own authorities 'framed-face' solution and the black purdah with eye-slit of Arabia, by saying that Arab men must have a streak of violence, cultural or biological, from which the ill-fated Arab woman simply needs greater protection. Incidentally, Malay women themselves seem to avoid taking any risks with males who are not their close kin, too close to marry (mahram); but in their case the motivation is very likely fear of prosecution for 'close proximity' (khalwat), the state having taken upon itself to uphold virtue through the legislative regulation of male/female interaction.

As to Nigeria and 'Miss World', a Muslim spokesman from the north of England, as briefly heard on BBC radio, condemned any beauty competition, wherever

held. But his argument was indistinguishable from the 'flesh-mart' objections of ethnic-British feminists. Predictably, he condemned the murderous violence which Ms Daniel's remark, or indirectly the Miss World competition, had unleashed. Still, it is open to speculation whether his failure of solidarity would be accepted as a 'correct' response in other quarters of the umma. We need to ponder the depressing possibility that, at least in the explosive political and sociological context of northern Nigeria, symptoms of social breakdown or 'moral decline' which could be a product of the structure of gender relations under scriptural command, found an alibi-cum-scapegoat in the all-culpable influence of 'the other civilization'. This was symbolised by a linking of the good name of the Prophet to the sinful flaunting of female charms.

Roger Kershaw has retired from a career in academic Southeast Asian Studies. He has spent many years in the Malay world.

John Jamison

Imagine that residents of several islands in the vicinity of Bermuda report a bright object streaking down from the night sky and appearing to plunge into the ocean. Two days later something unusual is discovered floating near where the sighting occurred. The Navy sends vessels to the coordinates reported by a passing freighter, and there they find a silver coloured metal capsule three feet long and one foot in diameter, bobbing about in the ocean's swell. After a field test for radioactivity, a Navy vessel recovers the capsule and brings it to Norfolk, where alerted personnel from NASA, the FBI, and the CIA are waiting.

There begins a round of investigations and suppositions about this object – where it came from, what type of metal it is made of, and most of all, what might be inside it. After a week the experts have determined that it is made of no known metal. Two weeks further along, they manage to open the capsule. Inside it, protected by heavy insulation, they find forty-three compact disks very much like those used by today's CD players and computers. Almost two years go by before anyone can establish what is on the disks, since they are in a code that is almost impossible to decipher. But persistence prevails, and the mystery of the disks is solved. What they contain is a large, organized body of information. In only a few days the scientists begin to refer to it as an encyclopedia.

The information on the disks is arranged in something much like our own alphabetical order, and runs to some 240

million letters – 40 million words. If the information were printed, it would fill 30 volumes, 25,000 maps, illustrations and photographs. It appears that more than 4,000 different authors took part in creating this body of information. Several people note that this body of information is about the same size as our Encyclopedia Britannica.

The questions echoing through scientists' minds begin with 'Who created this?' Then come the secondary questions of where they are, how they got it to us, why they sent it, and finally, how we could let them know that we've received it. With the exception of a few cynics, it is a foregone conclusion that behind this body of information there lies a source with intelligence. To think otherwise is preposterous.

As for the cynics, they simply refuse to accept the notion of intelligence having created the information. They view it as nothing more than the result of random molecular and cosmic activity taking place over millions of years, simply the product of chance, of colliding, joining, and fusing bits of matter and anti-matter throughout the reaches of the universe.

Setting this imaginary story aside for a moment, look at some of the fundamental facts about the universe and the human body itself. This look is assisted by Bill Bryson's marvellous book, entitled *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, a work that pulls together a massive body of information.

We live in a universe so complex that the best minds

have yet to learn its ingredients. We are held in place on the earth by gravity, a force not yet understood. Our galaxy occupies less than one trillionth of known space, yet getting to its outer edge would take more than 10,000 years at the 35,000 mph speed of today's spacecraft. And beyond that edge lie 140 billion galaxies in the visible universe.

As to the human body, trillions of atoms have assembled in an intricate pattern to constitute each individual, atoms so tiny that half a million of them, side by side, could hide behind a human hair. The human body is composed of approximately ten thousand trillion cells. That's the number 10 followed by 15 zeroes. Each cell contains at least 100 million protein molecules that zip about the cell at incredible speeds, bumping together up to a billion times a second. Enzymes are equally active, taking on a thousand tasks per second. The human genome in each of us, located in the nucleus of each cell, and some six feet in length, is comprised of information amounting to 3.2 billion letters. The number of possible genetic combinations would be the number '1' followed by 3 billion zeroes, a number so large that simply to print it would require five thousand average sized books.

Now bring together the imaginary and the actual – the silvery capsule floating in the waves, full of computer

disks, and a mere beginning of what is known about our world and our bodies. Two hundred and forty million letters compared to 3.2 billion letters. Thirty volumes in total, compared to five thousand volumes required merely to express one number about one microscopic aspect of the human body. A compendium of information small enough to fit on 43 compact disks, compared to a single human cell that may contain 100 million protein molecules.

Ask now the same questions that the world asked about that imaginary silver canister and its contents: who created this? Who could possibly insist that it is not the product of intelligence?

Sceptics will insist that it all came about by random activity among inert materials. These are the types who used to claim that ten million chimpanzees banging away on typewriters for millions of years would sooner or later produce the sonnets of William Shakespeare. (We note, however, that to date the Hubble Telescope has not yet sighted one ape toiling over an Underwood.)

Naysayers notwithstanding, in the final analysis, the question of an originating intelligence answers itself, and thereby provides for humankind a fundamental level of curious comfort.

John Jamison is a prolific author of opinion pieces & the author of The Back Side of God (2002)

ST GEORGE'S DAY 2004

The St George's Day Dinner
will be held on Thursday
April 22nd 7.30 pm
At the New Cavendish Club,
44, Great Cumberland Place W.1

Christopher Gill, the Chairman of
the Freedom Association, will
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EDITOR

Sophist's Corner

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Roger Scruton

I met David when both of us were conscious of our divergence from the orthodoxies of our professions – he as an academic sociologist, I as an academic philosopher. I was struck by the way in which he had resolutely pursued his own path as an intellectual dissident, in a discipline where ideological censorship prevails over scientific truth. David's interest in social emotions had led him in a philosophical direction, and he devoted himself entirely to the world of ideas. He lived the life of an intellectual, and I never ceased to learn from him – both from the arcane literature that he discovered and expounded, and from the carefree eccentricity with which he addressed the problems of life and the world.

David developed his own style, and sought out his own authorities. His was an enquiring, but not an open mind. On the contrary, he admired nothing more than a mind that had closed on consoling certainties, while he roamed the sea of ideas like a great whale, closing his intellectual jaws on anything that looked like a useful prejudice. He was not a chauvinist, but he loved the chauvinism of others, since he saw it always as the authentic expression of real social needs.

His authorities were mostly Central European – Hans Jonas, about whom he wrote an illuminating book, Leo Strauss and above all Eric Voegelin. Under David's influence I struggled to understand Voegelin's theory of gnosticism, as a recurring error of the spirit, and the root of our current social and intellectual malaise. Like many commonsensical Anglo-Saxons, I was more amused than enlightened by Voegelin's diagnosis of modern social disintegration as stemming from 'the immanentization of the eschaton'. For David, however, such words would convey an immediate and self-evident truth. He was one of the few people who could seize on such a phrase and make it live – make you see that, yes, just this is what is wrong with our civilisation, and just this must be put right. As you talked to him these abstract words and arguments would unfold through his long solemn sentences and culminate in sudden visions of light.

David's approach to experience and to ideas was, or at any rate became, religious. Not that he subscribed to any orthodox faith; nevertheless he looked always behind phenomena, to the play of forces on which the world depends. The transcendental was real to him, and became ever more real as the empirical world dissolved under the impact of his illness.

I knew David as an intellectual force, but also as a friend and collaborator, whom it was my good fortune to meet in the days when I had first been entrusted with the task of editing the *Salisbury Review*. Without him I doubt that I could have managed it: he provided essays, ideas, and a perspective on European conservatism that helped me to shape the journal

as something more than a parochial voice of English Toryism. We collaborated too in helping the clandestine educational networks in Eastern Europe, and David travelled frequently to Poland and Czechoslovakia (as it then was) to lecture and to deliver money, books and equipment to dissident circles. In Prague and Brno he was especially welcome. For he found himself among dissidents who reacted to prevailing orthodoxies as he did, by looking behind the ephemeral nonsense of politics to the great forces that guide and also mislead us. Thanks to David the philosophy of Voegelin became, perhaps for the first time, a real force in Central European politics, with samizdat translations promoted by his own eager lectures, and circulated among people who were later to form one of the emerging political elites.

David's heart went out to the dissidents, as theirs did to him. His popularity was great and his books were translated and published in samizdat editions. He devoted himself to the dissident cause, and was always ready to take personal risks in furthering it. Once, when I needed to communicate with Petr Pithart in Prague, at a time when I had no hope of a visa, I rang David to ask if he could take a message to a friend in Prague. He came round a short while later to receive instructions, went to the embassy for a visa, and flew off, regardless of the danger.

That was typical of his character – courageous, humane, with a deep concern for the world, though the world conceived in the strange and slightly abstract terms that inspired him. I said earlier that he loved the chauvinism of others, and a naive observer might have therefore believed him to be a lover too of aggression. But this would be the opposite of the truth. Look at the two hymns that he chose on his deathbed for his funeral. One, 'God the Omnipotent' is set to the old Russian national anthem; the other 'I vow to thee my country' is our unofficial national anthem. Chauvinist, true, but endorsing rival loyalties and endorsing them because they are truly human. Moreover, look at the words of these two hymns and you will find their real meaning for David. Both of them are invocations of peace, and urge us to set aside our earthly antagonisms in order to attain that higher and transcendental condition. David once said to David Martin: 'I so dislike prophets like Elijah who wish to destroy their rivals.' To him the voice of prophecy was everywhere and spoke in many tongues. Even when he disagreed with it, he accepted it as the human echo of a transcendental message.

We should thank God for the life of someone who lived without a trace of malice, whose concern was always to restore vital things and never to destroy them, and whose life was, in its own way, dedicated to the eternal truths.



There is no doubt that poverty is a problem in the sense that to be so poor as to have nothing to eat is a dire predicament. But this is not what is meant by poverty in the sense used by the ideological socialists in the General Synod of the Church of England. These ideologues use a vocabulary derived not so much from the words of Our Lord in the New Testament, but from Marxist theory. The key document in modern times is the Synod's *Faith in the City* (1985) where there is much talk of 'structures of power', 'dynamics of economy' and 'underprivilege'. This last word is interesting because, though it is forever bandied about, it is meaningless.

In a direct reference to *Faith in the City*, Adrian Hastings wrote in his book *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*: 'Work among the poor is most effective when most professional and most carefully grounded within a homogenous and recognisably Christian strategy. It is least effective when too obviously amateur and over-ambitious or open to attack as neo-Marxist.' Too often in recent times the response of the church to 'social deprivation' has been to throw more and more money at the problem. This is about as good as endlessly tipping bundles of £10 notes into a raging fire.

So what is poverty today? I was sitting at lunch in the Stock Exchange between two knights of the realm who had both reached the highest rank in the City financial sector. Now semi-retired, they were giving their time and expertise to helping poor communities in the East End. They told me that there is no poverty in the traditional sense. How could there be when many people described as poor go around in £70 trainers, drive motor cars, watch wide screen televisions sets and spend half the day ringing up their friends on the mobile phone? Rather there is a poverty of understanding – a cultural lack of knowledge as to how to manage daily life.

Fifty years ago there was genuine poverty. I know, because I was brought up in it. But poor people were aware and informed – because they had been taught by their parents how to make a little go a long way. These people did not have motor cars and designer running shoes, but they did have common sense. They would buy ten pounds of potatoes at a time; the cheap cuts of meat and 'mousetrap' cheese. They knew about the mysteries of baking bread, making stews and flavouring dumplings. They would be careful to turn the light out when they left a room and shut the door behind them. These basic arts and skills no longer exist among those who are today defined as poor.

Today's so-called poor consists of an uneducated and untrained underclass who buy expensive (and inferior) processed food in the supermarket and send out for pizzas and curries which they eat while watching television. No wonder they soon run through what money they have. As Dickens remarked, the twin of poverty is ignorance.

Ignorance breeds frustration and frustration breeds violence. So much of what is regarded as poverty is really the brutalised yob culture which now defaces all our towns and cities. Those who live in the yob culture are not only ignorant about how to make ends meet: they also have no concept of morals and ordinary human courtesy – let alone of religion. And this is because in the cultural decline which has overtaken this country, a great mass of humanity has never been taught anything. They have been deprived by the very institutions which were historically set up to educate and civilise them – the church and the schools.

As well as the negative meaning of poverty there is a positive connotation as well in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Christ said, 'Blessed are the poor.' The willing renunciation of material wealth has long been seen as the true path to spiritual enlightenment. If I may put this epigrammatically, there is a world of difference between two conditions which look alike: starving and fasting. We are urged, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink or wherewithal shall we be clothed?' It is a counsel of perfection, but surely preferable to the consumer culture which urges us through 24 hour TV advertisements and the colour supplements to take thought about nothing else except eating, drinking and dressing up in the latest designer clobber.

We have forgotten that there is such a thing as holy poverty whose patron saint is St Francis, the holy fool, the court-juggler in the kingdom of God. Chesterton reminds us, 'In plain fact St Francis really was ready to live on refuse; and it was probably something much uglier than the refined simplicity which vegetarians and water drinkers call the simple life. He meant to strike the note of collecting his clothes like rags from a succession of dustbins. Ten years later, that makeshift costume was the uniform of five thousand men; and a hundred years later, in that, for a pontifical panoply, they laid great Dante in the grave.'

Synodical ideologues, please take note.

Peter Mullen

Reputations - 4

Philip Larkin

Nicky Charlish

Philip Larkin, the Great Man of Hull, has been very much in the public eye this year. Although it is 18 years after the poet's death – and he was famously reclusive – this unlikely subject for media coverage has been portrayed on stage by Tom Courtenay in his West End play *Pretending to be Me* and on television by Hugh Bonneville in Richard Cottan's BBC film *Larkin – Love Again*. He has also been the subject of a Channel 4 documentary, *Love and Death in Hull*. As a result, his private life has given the pundits a chance to sound-off about all the old, familiar Larkin stuff: the Feydeauesque balancing-act of his relationships with women; that especially modern sin, fear of commitment; the dirty mags; the drinking. And the right-wing politics. (Had his politics been well to the left, his personal life would probably have been glossed-over as a matter of mere peccadilloes.). This has meant that another love of his life, libraries, has been overlooked. In view of the current culture wars, this omission is important.

If anyone seeking a job in today's library service were to come out at an interview with the words Larkin once expressed in the *Observer*: 'I've always been right-wing. It is difficult to say why, but not being a political thinker I suppose I identify the Right with certain virtues and the Left with certain vices. All very unfair, no doubt', they would be lucky to get a job as a Saturday assistant. And having an interest in top-shelf magazines wouldn't go down too well either; think what such a person might get up to on the 'People's Network' computers! But this state of affairs goes to the heart of why Larkin the Librarian is relevant for – and vital for the survival of – the modern public library today. For all the talk of 'inclusivity' that has been the watchword of social policy under the present government – although the thought-process behind it goes back much earlier – public libraries today are at the mercy of political correctness with attendant dumbing-down to increase their number of 'users', a term which, significantly, has replaced the traditional one of 'readers'.

During his working life, Larkin liked to portray himself as a skiver, working as a librarian only because he had to. The reality was rather different. When, at the start of his library career, he arrived at Wellington

library in 1943 it had issued, on average, 300 books per month. By the time he left in 1946 this figure had risen to 1000. The library's stock had increased from 3000 to almost 5,500, including books by Isherwood, Lawrence, Joyce and Forster – whilst the number of registered borrowers rose from 1000 to nearly 2500, dramatic changes that laid the foundations for its later improvement in fortune when it became a county branch library. All this was achieved against a background of wartime shortages and dislocation, and, as his choice of authors shows, without any concession to the cosy or the conventional.

At University College of Leicester Library he worked well. At Queen's University Library, Belfast – where, possibly, he was most happy, he was praised by his boss for his ability to assess and solve problems, as well as implementing their solutions without delay. At Hull where he arrived in 1955, he was, as his biographer Andrew Motion says, 'thorough, incisive and autocratic'. There, he went through the grind of committee-meetings and chivvying not only to make the best of and improve the resources he

found in place when he arrived but also to establish a much-needed new library, the Brynmor Jones Library at Hull University, completed in 1970. He knew what he wanted, a library which would meet every need of its readers, and he achieved it, with great success! In his *Memoirs*, Kingsley Amis recalls how, in his Swansea days, he overheard two lecturers in engineering ('by common consent philistines') discussing Larkin's transforming work at Hull. One of them was awed by Larkin having designed a building to hold a million volumes, praising him as 'a real live wire, *myn*'.

Larkin was a determined enemy of the erosion of educational standards, and was associated with the famous Black Papers on education. In his later years, Larkin was dispirited by the financial cuts which affected his library. He could probably see the way the wind was blowing for university libraries and was not optimistic. Public libraries were going the same way. Today, the internet-cafe-cum-advice-centre-cum-video-store ethos influences them to varying degrees. Anything supposedly militating against 'inclusivity' is downgraded – the substitution of the term 'user' for that of 'reader' is arguably symptomatic

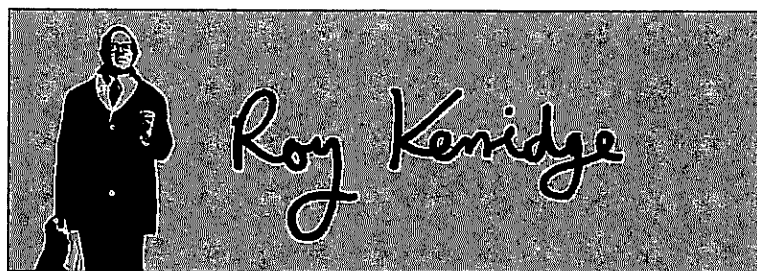
'I've always been right-wing. It is difficult to say why, but not being a political thinker I suppose I identify the Right with certain virtues and the Left with certain vices. All very unfair, no doubt'

of this, the traditional term perhaps having the same connotations of intellectual freedom for politically-correct library administrators that spectacle-wearing had for Pol Pot's henchmen; and would probably be completely excluded if at all possible. I once heard a reader say to a library assistant 'You can travel the whole world in your library'. She was referring to the reading matter available, but such sentiments have a small place at best in a world where libraries exist either to give enough 'knowledge' to enable 'users' to obtain Mickey Mouse 'qualifications' or to provide a level of socially-comforting, non-'elitist' culture that hardly rises above the level of *Big Brother*. The cold reality that our culture is dominated by the promotion of the lowest kind of taste among the thickest sort of people cannot be allowed to upset the illusion that we are all one big happy family, however ignorant or fragmented it is.

Larkin's poetry, as well as his librarianship, is the antithesis of this dehumanising trend. As he famously remarked, 'Deprivation is for me what daffodils were for Wordsworth.' And he could make deprivation – a major conceptual stumbling-block for facile optimists, fruitful with insights from material or experiences usually overlooked or considered humdrum at best. That is why he can take for his poems unlikely subjects like bedsits (*Mr Bleaney*), work (*Toads, Toads Revisited*) and travel posters (*Sunny Prestatyn*) and unsettle us with his reflections. That is why in *An Arundel Tomb* – a title leading us to expect the worst clichés of the guidebook – he can tell us that 'What will survive of us is love' without sounding the least bit corny. That his poems are masterpieces of clarity, the phrase is, for once, not hackneyed, helps too. Larkin's poetry is more famous than his library career, but they worked in tandem.

It is easy to say that Larkin, if he was so keen on libraries, should have done more in his final years to defend and propagate them. And not being a defender-to-the death of the principle of free public library loans was not exactly helpful to the cause of libraries. Perhaps the latter criticism is valid. But the author of *Aubade* would probably have needed a life-change of monumental proportions to shake-off the despair that engulfed his life in its final stages and enter the fray on behalf of his profession.

Nicky Charlish is a freelance journalist.



During Mrs Thatcher's reign, her enemies publicised endless figures about 'the homeless'. Every name on the council house waiting lists became a 'homeless statistic', despite the fact that all such listees lived somewhere, however inconvenient. 'The homeless' of propaganda were assumed to be decent working men, not alcoholics, drug addicts or runaway children. These real homeless never became statistics.

A burly young man approached me in a Tube station not long ago, and held up a placard reading 'Help the Homeless'.

'Well, are you going to help me?' he asked indignantly, a moment later.

'No'

'But I'm starving!' he roared, then lost interest in me and vaulted over a ticket barrier, shouting abuse at the startled ticket man.

Wild homeless black youths, from eleven years old upward, roam London. They sleep here and there, often on landings in council flats. These youngsters nearly all have mothers or other relatives anxious about their whereabouts and willing to take them in. Now and then London councils give 'astronomical' fees to Black Experts who pretend to run Homes for the Black Homeless. The men in charge of such Homes are often very sinister.

Some young men pretend they are Homeless so that kind-hearted girls will take them home. Usually, the girl says 'I'll sleep in the next room,' whereupon the furious, cheated young man leaves early in the morning after stealing something.

More horror stories of the Homeless: one dour young man on a London Tube train walked from passenger to passenger as if taking the collection at church, holding out a cap for money. He did very good business, for the notice he carried read: 'Help the Homeless – Help me to go back to Liverpool.' People would clearly pay anything to get him out of London and as far away as possible.

There has been a police blitz on the underage-homeless, and children are now seldom seen sleeping in doorways. About fifteen years ago, I saw two very cheerful thirteen year old boys wrapped in new white Salvation Army blankets in a Strand doorway. They greeted some other boys with whoops of joy, and may have been 'homeless' just for a lark. Near St Martin's in the Fields, a listless coloured girl in a doorway told me, I'm on the street 'cos of my stepfather. The Salvation Army gave me the blanket – they go round with blankets'. She looked about fifteen years old.

Conservative Classic: - 13

Arnold Bennett's 'The Old Wives' Tale'

Jeremy Worman

The *Old Wives' Tale* (1908) is one of the most underrated novels in English literature, about the kind of people who were once the backbone of the Conservative Party, hard-working shopkeepers and traders. The world of the central characters is underpinned by a code of Nonconformist Christian values. Old Mr Baines hated 'the modern craze for unscrupulous self advertisement', and in our age obsessed with celebrity it is refreshing to read about ordinary people, real heroes in their struggles and celebrations of life.

The Old Wives' Tale tells the vivid but down-to-earth stories of two sisters, Constance and Sophia, whose lives take radically different directions. Their father was a well-respected draper in 'Bursley', at the heart of the Potteries. It is a deeply-woven historical novel, full of atmospheric details, and begins in the 1860s and ends in the early years of the twentieth century. The novel gives a picture of the type of moral, regional community that should surely be the core constituency with which Conservatives must reconnect, or recreate, if they are to become again a convincing political force.

One must first bring the novel out of the shadow of the patronising criticism that has always hung over it. Henry James's long essay in the *Times Literary Supplement* of March 1914, 'The Younger Generation', elegantly undermined Bennett's writing style. James complained that *The Old Wives' Tale* was 'vividly covered by an exhibition of innumerable small facts', which 'exhausts our reaction'. He could detect no deeper artistic form to the novel than its 'solidity'. Virginia Woolf, in an article in *The Criterion* of July 1924, 'Character in Fiction', attacked the novelistic 'conventions' of 'Mr Bennett, Mr Wells and Mr Galsworthy': 'They have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things. They have given us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live there.'

Both these writers were condemning Bennett from the rarefied heights of Modernist criticism. Their key ideological demands were that the true literary work must both eschew authorial commentary and show the world the

from inner perspective of character. They condemned Bennett on both points. Their judgement was also that of an upper-class elite against the lower-middle-class Bennett whom they did not consider to be 'one of us'. They thought of Bennett as a hack rather than an artist. Nothing could be further from the truth. In *The Old Wives' Tale* Bennett does show the world from the inner perspective of character. But he also has a sociological range, and a precision of analysis about his culture, beyond the scope of Henry James or Virginia Woolf.

The importance of belonging to a particular place, as a way of conferring special affirmation to our sense of personal identity, is a deeply conservative value. The opening chapter of *The Old Wives' Tale* expresses this theme. Near Bursley 'rose the river Trent, the calm and characteristic stream of Middle England'. But the reader's focus is drawn to a 'district' and then to the 'square' where the central characters live. There is great lyricism in the first chapter, showing

the relationship between the small, constrained world of the characters and the wider, potent images of an historical idea of England that is always present at the edges of the narrative. The importance given in the novel to the geographical roots of characters is intensified because Arnold Bennett was himself brought up in the Potteries.

D.H. Lawrence seems clearly to have developed this theme, of characters set in a provincial setting and their relationship to a broader concept of England, in the first chapter of *The Rainbow* (1915). The central difference between the two writers is that Bennett does not allow his characters the spiritual or sexual release that Lawrence explores in *The Rainbow*. Bennett's characters are internally shaped by the values of the Wesleyan chapel and the harshness of puritan morality: 'Sophia had sinned, it was therefore inevitable that she should suffer.'

Sophia elopes to France in 1866 with a salesman who has pretensions to be a gentleman. He then abandons her. Sophia lives through the siege of Paris in 1870, successfully running a *pension*. Bennett, who knew Paris well, writes dramatically



about Sophia's time in France, and subtly draws out the different values between French people and those of a working English woman. The novel implicitly demonstrates a faith in status, order, and fair play in business, that are distinctly conservative. At the age of fifty Sophia returns to Bursley.

Her sister had married Samuel Povey and they run the draper's shop. The details of their small lives, as they grow older, are revealed so acutely that we can almost taste and touch the fabric of their world, as well as understanding their inner motivations and disquiets. Bennett's ability to explore the interpenetrations between public and private worlds demonstrates an artistry like that of a more regional Tolstoy. Rarely have the internal dynamics of a lower-middle-class world been better revealed than in *The Old Wives' Tale*. Larger historical events, for example the balloonists escaping the siege of Paris, the 'Free Library' opened by Gladstone, electric trams in Bursley, are drawn subtly into the story, always keeping the characters at the centre of the stage, as they struggle with the events of history that work through them.

The Old Wives' Tale is obsessed with the negative implications of change. The author successfully breaks the rules of Modernist fiction by inserting authorial interjections, for example, 'How can you be so blind to our fleeting existence?' It is as if Bennett feels an awful sense of urgency about what is coming to the world of his characters. The author's occasional use of a prophetic voice intensifies rather than diminishes the themes of the novel, and illustrates his insistent tirade against progress.

This fear of progress is linked to a horror of death. His description of a dead body chills the reader with its physical accuracy. Time and death, the sense of an inevitable erosion to individuals and communities, haunt the book, and the reader feels a deep melancholy at the death of the central characters.

In a more political sense, *The Old Wives' Tale* asks the difficult question of how a conservative vision of a small community can hold on to a sense of continuity in a world of increasing national commercialism that threatens regional solidarity. At the end, the sisters live together. Bennett's concrete, pictorial imagery strikingly expresses the contrast between the sisters' memories of stability in their youth and the juggernaut of inevitable change that is destabilising their community.

The Old Wives' Tale offers a kind of narrative meditation on conservative beliefs. For the underlying values of the novel – thrift, hard work, civic pride, the importance of duty – were those at the roots of Thatcherism. Margaret Thatcher's father, Councillor Roberts, would have grown up in a regional urban community similar to that depicted in *The Old Wives' Tale*. But in an increasingly uprooted world of vapid E.U. values and global capitalism, how can such communities survive, or be restored? And what now, in a post-Thatcher world, is the relationship between Conservatism and the bleak Nonconformist values of the novel? However, *The Old Wives' Tale* should be read first as a brilliant and moving story about a particular vision of Englishness.

LETTERS

Sir,

I found Tony Leach's letter very interesting, (SR Winter 2003) but I wonder why his remedy for the Income Tax fiasco was not to urge its complete replacement? As he indicates, income tax costs tens of millions of pound to assess and collect. An unknown amount of tax is 'lost' to the revenue by tax avoidance and evasion. A vast ammount of professional time is wasted on either avoidance and evasion or on the thwarting of avoidance and evasion. Income Tax is not so much a source of revenue as a means of Government espionage and control.

Instead of Income Tax why not a tax on money at its point of origin? It has been estimated that a tax of 1 per cent on all sums passing through the clearing banks would yield more revenue than the present complex system. It would be non-avoidable and non-evadable and, since all the calculations are done by the banking system as an indispensable part of its accountancy system the only cost of collecting it would be the salary of a junior executive equipped with a lap top. The liberation of initiative would astonish us. If Michael Howard pledges the abolition of Income Tax, he will win the next General Election hands down.

Anthony Cooney, Liverpool

Sir

Concurring with your editorial, Barry Bracewell-Milnes states that benefits are too high, rising and ideally should be frozen (SR Winter 2003). But this would be very hard on those out of work in areas not awash with jobs or genuinely unfit for work, although it is right to halt the rise in spending on social security. Claimants should instead take part in a workfare programme. Some would be more likely to find work and the rest would have something to get up for. Many people on very low incomes with nothing to do is a recipe for crime. I was idle at school and then had schizophrenia; I would not find it easy to get another job if I was made redundant. I would not feel so depressed and stigmatised if I had to do something in return for benefits.

Furthermore, incapacity benefits should be taken out of the hands of general practitioners, who owing to lack of time, sympathy or fear, 'sign' people on too easily. Freezing benefits will not eradicate the 'Welfare trap' and these measures would better serve claimants and society as a whole.

Rupert Fast, Surrey

A Degree of Common Sense

Michael Redman

The undergraduate bubble had to burst eventually. For too long, British students and their parents have deluded themselves that education can rely indefinitely, and even effectively, on state largesse. Urged on by that interest-group extraordinary, the National Union of Students, they have taken higher education for granted, indeed as a right. This idea is as daft as the policy whereby 50 per cent of every annual cohort leaving school goes to 'university'. There is no such right among the natural ones we all have qua human beings. Educational rights are purely administrative and conventional. Everyone has a right to pursue knowledge. This does not mean half the students should go to places called 'universities' nor that the state should pay.

Graduates will now be learning the harsh reality of British higher education and its meretricious appeals. Equality of access confines most of its alleged beneficiaries to intellectual mediocrity and private debts, in places which are not proper academic institutions. Everyone else bears the public debt stemming from this wrong policy.

Anyone who has attended university recently knows that the quality both of students and studies has fallen dramatically. In university once, intellectual tools acquired at school could be sharpened, and knowledge of particular subjects deepened. Employment was at least likely to follow, if not assured. Today, university is for many merely the final stage on the education conveyor belt, the end point in a system of testing now constituting a yearly event for most young people. There is an overwhelming case for fees in proper higher education. For lower income students at feeble institutions, fees merely add to their debts without securing them work. The Bachelors degree is now taken for granted by employers who pay small salaries to people who would be well qualified only if universities all had high standards. In this sense the 'bubble' metaphor is not acute enough; it does not capture the pathological character of the situation. Higher education is actually sick.

The logic of the system is painfully flawed and easily exposed as such under objective scrutiny. The present Labour government wants more students at university and pressurises admissions staff to ensure targets are reached, whether the students are up to it or not. The government restricts funding, however, to a uniform figure per student which is not only inadequate but does not allow for the extra financial burdens faced by the institution in meeting Whitehall's goals, by way of more staff and classrooms and other resources. Not only are these universities poorly provided for by the state; their fund-raising is also restricted in scope by the latter, leaving the way open for dubious

corporate sponsorship deals in Nottingham and elsewhere.

The increased numbers damage the institutions of learning, qualitatively and financially. Gone is the relationship built up with staff, many of whom are forced to view students as an unfortunate distraction from their research, the real source of funding. If as little as half a point is dropped in the far too frequent research assessments which central government demands, it can cost a department and a university thousands of pounds in funding. With the breakdown in the student-staff relationship, and the resentment young people feel on discovering their degrees are worth less than they had imagined, few students view their alma mater with either pride or fondness. The lack of corporate identity in the weaker institutions has been a scandal for years. No wonder today so few students choose to participate actively in Alumni associations. Nor do even the best universities enjoy the generous endowments so common in America. Universities are denied adequate state funding in the course of educating Britain's youth and deprived of voluntary contributions once these same people have succeeded professionally and could give something back.

The British economy does not require half of its population to be educated to degree level. What this country is crying out for are professionally qualified, skilled people; the nurses, chefs and tradesmen once provided by the network of respected polytechnics, technical colleges and our long-lost apprenticeships. The polytechnics sadly were abolished in the name of equality and in the belief that a two tier system in higher education is bad for student morale. This means that graduates can now be grateful that they attended a 'university' and picked up a 2.2 in Media Studies, while they are serving French fries. Just which circumstance is more demoralising? As for Technical Colleges, they sit in neglected disarray with the rest of Further Education, while the lack of apprenticeships keeps us permanently short of plumbers, carpenters and electricians.

The lesson of the last twenty years is that the education of a nation's youth is achieved best by evolution rather than revolution. A realistic policy will require real political courage to resist the highly politicised students' unions and a willingness to resist the anger of the parents of these aspiring and frustrated graduates. Higher education is just such a set of bad habits, one that can be corrected only by elitist policy. Elitism increases competition among employers to secure the best graduates, signifying also an increased ability to repay the heavy debt burden quickly, and inherently increasing the value of a modern university degree. This is a lesson in common sense more well-meaning politicians should learn.

BOOK REVIEWS

Monnet's Dream Europe's Nightmare Oliver Wright

**The Great Deception:
The Secret History of the European Union,**
Christopher Booker and Richard North,
Continuum, 2003, £25

In his elegant autumnal work, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, Robert Conquest, peerless historian of the Soviet Union, ruminates on Communism and Nazism. He concludes, wisely, that the disasters of the 20th century stem not so much from problems as from solutions, not from forces beyond human control, but from ideas, and actions dictated by ideas. 'Humanity', he writes, 'has been ravaged and trampled on by rogue ideologies.'

In his penultimate chapter Conquest considers the 'European Idea'. He considers that Europe too seems to be informed by a rogue ideology. The 'idealism' of the sponsors of a united Europe has the frequent faults of idealism: excessive devotion to an aim, disregard of legitimate public feeling, implicit falsification of particular moves. Although it threatens to become authoritarian, Conquest exempts the EU from the charge of likely potential for the outcomes of the Gulag or Auschwitz type, but he concludes that recent negotiations (he was writing in 1999) have been extremely defective, 'to the point in some cases of deception'.

Prompt on cue enters *The Great Deception* to supply chapter and verse in support of Conquest's charges. This admirable book analyses and dissects the excessive devotion to an aim – the abolition of ancient European nations in favour of a supra-national state – traced back to two ideas merchants of the 1930's, an English civil servant, Arthur Salter, and a French brandy-salesman turned one-man-think tank, Jean Monnet. The problem, as they saw it, was the failure of the League of Nations due to intergovernmentalism: their solution a supranational state. Booker and North chart the long course of disrespect for legitimate public feeling in the way the institutions of the Union have

developed: aka the democratic deficit. It establishes the implicit falsification of particular moves by cataloguing the deceptions and self-deceptions perpetrated by successive British (and other) governments, with varying degrees of complicity, from Macmillan to Blair. In doing so, they have rendered the nation some service.

The Great Deception is lucidly written and combines a compelling narrative drive with an authoritative basis of fact. Every serious student of Europe should keep it ready to hand; the layman will find it an engrossing read; politicians a salutary one.

Of course, we must not be too uptight about the devotion to the truth of politicians. If politics is the art of the possible, it is not least because in democratic societies on the Anglo-Saxon model the general public may not be ready and willing to go in the direction the politician desires or even the national interest may seem to dictate. In my lifetime, an early example was Stanley Baldwin's famous remark after the Fulham by-election of 1934 that if he had advocated re-armament (in the face of the Nazi menace) he would not have won the 1935 election. Of course, winning elections is what democratic politics is about.

And not only British politics. A year or two ago, in a late night discussion show chaired by Jon Snow, a German MEP, Elmar Brok, was asked how it was that although every opinion poll indicated that German public opinion wanted to keep the Deutschmark, the German government nonetheless intended to sign up to the euro. Herr Brok replied: 'If the German political class had listened to public opinion, Germany would not have had the success it has had.' A lesser example, but in the same vein, was the recent admission by a Secretary of the Cabinet, no doubt on instructions, that he had in evidence, been 'economical with the truth'. It is still, fortunately, a resigning matter if a minister is caught out actually lying to Parliament, but the skills of the *suppressio veri* – not telling the whole truth – and the *suggestio falsi* – the bum steer – thrive. Perhaps both are necessary to lubricate the machinery of political as well as private life.

But Booker and North's tale is of deception lasting decades on a far more important subject, since it concerns the abolition of British independence and of our right to govern ourselves. Minor culprits perhaps were Macmillan and Wilson: both encouraged serious debates on the subject in both Houses. Margaret Thatcher was deceived by her own ministers, but she

holds an unchallenged record of repatriating some power from Brussels: getting some of 'her money' back, worth about £30 billion to date to the British taxpayer. Heath, with his 'swallow the lot and swallow it now' instructions to his negotiators, and Blair with his on-going record are without doubt the main villains.

Callaghan's was an interesting case. As Foreign Secretary he came to the Foreign Office as a European agnostic. 'I want no euro-fanaticism' were his instructions to his Permanent Under-Secretary, Tom Brimelow. I think his conversion to an acceptance of the *status quo* came at a private meeting in Political Cooperation at Schloss Gymnich outside Bonn during the German presidency. He asked his fellow foreign ministers: 'what do you mean by ever closer union?' Walter Scheel, chairman of the meeting, called for a 'tour de table'. The seven ministers offered seven differing interpretations and Ortoli, President of the Commission, offered an eighth. At the end the French foreign minister, Michel Jobert, summed up by saying: 'it was a term of art designed to paper over cracks'. Jim Callaghan was one for keeping his own counsel, but I think he drew the conclusion that nothing was settled, all was to play for, so we might as well stay in as pull out. The upshot was the referendum of 1975 and we stayed in. Curiously enough, this meeting is mentioned neither in Kenneth Morgan's biography of Callaghan nor in Jobert's Memoirs. But it took place: I was there. Which prompts the thought: who was tricking whom?

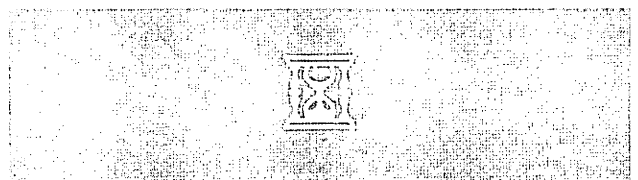
Booker and North offer many insights into why Britain seems always condemned to playing the role of 'awkward squad' at Brussels. One is that we have the defects of our qualities. The British pride themselves on their pragmatism: they deal with problems as they arise on the basis of the known facts and common sense. Our continental friends have a quite different mindset: they deal in Cartesian logic. They can accept almost anything in principle and then fight like tigers for their national interest in practice. They deal in ideas and seek solutions only to problems which further the progress of their idea. When Ambassador in Bonn, I was frequently instructed to get an off-the-cuff reaction to a new development. I had as often to explain that the Germans did not do off-the-cuff reactions. What they had was a *Gesamtkonzept*, an overall framework of policy. After much serious thought they would incorporate the new development into a modified *Gesamtkonzept* which they would then expound at great length. At one stage Lord Carrington when Foreign Secretary told me that he would shoot me if I uttered the word *Gesamtkonzept* again. He was only joking, but British pragmatism has proved utterly unequal to the task of coping with the inexorable march of continental ideology.

This goes hand in hand with another aspect of British political life: the sheer shallowness of our thinking about the ways of our continental partners. British politicians concern themselves only with the broad

lines of policy: East of Calais they know that the devil is in the detail. French *énarques*, products of the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration*, double up happily as politicians or officials. When Roy Jenkins was appointed President of the Commission in 1977, he wrote in his diary, 'my conviction was complete, but my experience was negligible. I was an enthusiast for the *grandes lignes* of Europe but an amateur within the complexities of the signalling system.' Others with conviction who had not done their homework included Kenneth Clarke. He boasted that he had not read the Maastricht treaty, but was greatly in its favour. Douglas Hurd joked to journalists after he had signed the treaty: 'now we've signed it, we'd better read it.' Amateur Britain has been taken for a ride by professional Brussels politicians who have an aim and know how to exploit the system. It is no joking matter.

Booker and North unavoidably bring their narrative to a close before the Intergovernment Conference (IGC) of December 2003 broke up in disarray. But the deception continued right up to the end. Peter Hain described its work, for home consumption, as a 'tidying up process'. In Brussels he told his fellow delegates: 'our task is nothing less than the creation of a new constitutional order for a new united Europe.' He speaks with a forked tongue. John Prescott is busy organising a referendum for a new regional government for the North East, in response to a supposed demand for such a body, but in fact it is to set in train a plan for the division of England into eight regions, in readiness for a Europe of the Regions, under which England will disappear as a geographical entity. Tony Blair has no difficulty with referendums when it comes to electing a Mayor of Newcastle, but has problems about a referendum for a new treaty which will set Britain on the road to abolishing its right to self-government. One never doubted the patriotism of Old Labour whatever one thought of some of its domestic policies. One seriously doubts the patriotism of New Labour – the Scots' revenge for Culloden?

One thing is pretty certain. The IGC may have been kicked into touch by the Polish boot, but balls kicked into touch are retrieved and play restarts. As Daniel Hannan recently pointed out, there is no Plan B in Brussels. The jobsworths there will do all they can to protect their jobs. 'They always respond in the same way; by carrying on until they bludgeon their way through.' So I hope Booker and North will keep their eyes on the ball and let us have in due course their account of future deceptions and self-deceptions. Volume 1 has made an excellent and very necessary start.



The Last Tory?

Robin Brodhurst

Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden,
DR Thorpe, Chatto and Windus, 2003,
£25

Richard Thorpe comes to his task from an excellent starting point, having written studies of Austen Chamberlain, Lord Curzon and RAB Butler, as well as biographies of Selwyn Lloyd and Alec Douglas-Home. His bibliography is 30 pages long, while his notes run to 69 pages. Obviously no stone has been left unturned, and his manuscript was certainly approved by the Eden family; they can feel thoroughly justified in the trust that they reposed in Thorpe.

Eden was in many opinions the best Foreign Secretary of the twentieth century, and made a profound impact in three of those spells. I would rank him first, with Bevin as a very close second. Certainly his accurate appraisal of Mussolini as 'the complete gangster and his pledged word means nothing' was a great deal more realistic than Chamberlain's. At the meetings Eden had with the Italian *Duce* in 1934 and 1935 he saw only bullying arrogance and the complete absence of social graces, where the Italian diplomats saw charisma and salvation. He believed in the League of Nations initially, but by 1937 it was obvious that collective security had failed. Chamberlain and Eden both wanted to keep Britain out of a European war; they differed in how to achieve this. Chamberlain wanted Italy as an ally; Eden saw Mussolini as an untrustworthy aggressor. Here was a classic case of mistrust between the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street. Eden's resignation in February 1938 was a brave act for a 40 year old, as he probably gave up any possible future in a Chamberlain-run Conservative Party. It drew a line between him and Chamberlain over how to deal with the dictators, and Thorpe emphasizes how 'on all the key foreign policy issues of the previous year Eden's judgement had been sound and perspicacious, whereas Chamberlain's had been muddled and naive.' Certainly with Eden out of the way there was nobody to act as a brake on Chamberlain's reliance on personal shuttle diplomacy.

Eden's second spell at the Foreign Office (1941-45) was in the shadow of Churchill's domination of Britain's war-time diplomacy. Being Foreign Secretary must have been extremely difficult under Churchill as he kept all the reins in his own hands, both as Minister of Defence and by insisting on dealing with both Roosevelt and Stalin personally. Eden's role was more powerful than those of his

opposite numbers Hull and Molotov, but there must have begun to creep in a feeling of exasperation which can have been only partially modified by his being identified as the successor to Churchill were the latter to die in an airplane crash during one of his all too frequent visits abroad.

After defeat in the 1945 election Eden was the power behind Churchill's throne in opposition. Thorpe reminds us that only three of Churchill's Conservative ministers were returned at the election (Churchill, Eden and Oliver Lyttelton), and that one reason Churchill did not resign as party leader in 1945 was that he was determined to be elected as Prime Minister (unlike Chamberlain or Balfour). As a result it was Eden who carried out the unglamorous business of opposition, while Churchill made the headline speeches in the House of Commons, wrote his memoirs (for very considerable sums) and travelled abroad making important speeches while being treated as a hero. For someone wholly immersed in foreign affairs for the previous 15 years this was the period when he returned to the field of domestic concerns. However on 27th October 1951, Eden returned to the Foreign Office, and for the next four years Thorpe reminds us that 'the central theme of Eden's Foreign Secretaryship was that of maintaining Britain as a front rank power in the face of superpower competition and economic difficulty'. Here was a triumphant display not of Britain's power – there was almost none left – but of diplomacy of the old style – of Castlereagh rather than of Canning. Eden led the way in settling the dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia over Trieste, was the instigator of the Western European Union, but above all else was his performance in 1954 at the Geneva Conference, both restraining the Americans, while saving the French from humiliation. Not only that, but unlike 1941-45 he did so without Churchill interfering, possibly much to Churchill's relief ('I have lived seventy-eight years without hearing of bloody places like Cambodia,' Churchill told his doctor.)

If Eden had died in 1954 he would have been considered one of the most successful politicians but of the second rank. Thorpe adds to his political triumphs a fine portrait of the private person behind the political and diplomatic mask. The charming ladies' man comes across, as well as the scholar. Eden gained a first class degree in oriental languages at Oxford, and while an undergraduate gave a paper on Cezanne, believed by that Oxford *eminence grise* JC Masterman, to be one of the most brilliant ever delivered by an Oxford undergraduate. Thorpe possibly underplays Eden's dramatic temper, which could amaze those who only knew the diplomat.

All of this, however, is to leave out his premiership and Suez. A recent survey of Prime Ministers in the 50 years since the war by that doyen of political commentators, Peter Hennessey, rated Eden last of all twelve: 'He falls into a catastrophic category of his own... He brought his party, his country and the office of Prime Minister to an, albeit temporary, low and all over an area of governance, foreign policy and diplomacy, where he had once shone to

the point of near radiance.' Unquestionably Suez was the most divisive political event since Munich. Thorpe takes the reader over the well worn territory in considerable detail, and his account of it is a *tour de force*. At the end of it he states that 'Suez brought out the worst in nearly all who were involved in it, either as participants or as commentators'. Thorpe points out that Eisenhower was in the middle of an election campaign, and not prepared to risk his re-election by supporting what appeared to be a colonial power re-acquiring its colonies. Later he admitted that not supporting Eden was his greatest foreign policy mistake. Eden was let down by too many people, from John Foster Dulles to Mountbatten, from Macmillan to Monckton. However, one is left asking whether Eden had actually thought through what the British and the French were going to do once they had seized the Suez Canal, even if the Americans had been less hostile. I searched in vain for an answer.

The other major event when Eden was Prime Minister was the Messina Conference in 1955 leading to the Brussels negotiations and the birth of the EEC. Like Churchill, he favoured the Council of Europe as it was founded on inter-governmental principles unlike the supra-governmental objectives of Monnet. In Eden's view subordinating British institutions to supra-national authorities on the Continent was an entanglement too great. Again like Churchill, he believed that more of Britain's interests, especially in trade, were beyond Europe. At some point the present Conservative party will have to make up its mind whether Churchill and Eden were right or wrong.

Although foreign policy was Eden's primary interest, he was one of the original advocates of a property-owning democracy in the 1930's. Some share of the nation's wealth gave people much more than an incentive, some security and self-respect: it also gave those who went down to the Polling Station a sense of responsibility. The third Lord Salisbury would have agreed. Among the next generation to be inspired by this idea was Margaret Thatcher who virtually achieved his aim. The sale of council houses and the privatisation of state industries gave several millions a stake in their country.

I am left with one over-riding feeling after reading this tremendous book. To what extent do our present politicians understand the history of their own country? So often when teaching twentieth century history, I am tempted to say to my students that 'this' is the same, or a similar, problem that our politicians face today, and they appear to make the same mistakes as their predecessors did. Eden had fought bravely in the First World War, and understood only too well the consequences of going to war, and the failure of diplomacy. His foreign policy was dominated by that, and yet he fell down on that issue, over-estimating the threat of Nasser, and under-estimating the collapse of Britain's power. Has the present occupant of 10 Downing Street read about Eden and his failure in the Middle East? He could do a lot worse than start with this book.

Comrade Criminal

Frank Ellis

Darkness at Dawn: The Rise of the Russian Criminal State,

David Satter, Yale University Press, 2003,
£22.50

Darkness at Dawn is a meticulously researched piece of work and an unflinching look at a Hobbesian, frightening world of grand corruption, total collapse in moral standards, and widespread tolerance of violence. Satter demonstrates, in often bloody detail, that crime has infected the entire Russian state, from top to bottom. Weimar Germany appears tame by comparison. Obvious and highly public manifestations of Russia's descent into criminality are the various mafia gangs, fighting and murdering one another, and anyone else who gets in their way, as they strive to control businesses big and small – from petty street traders to the big industrial enterprises in the Siberian oilfields. What is happening in the large car factories in Togliatti is symptomatic of Russia as a whole: 'The situation in the Avtovaz factory reflects a central fact of Russian life, the power and savagery of organised crime. Gangsters in Russia are not a marginal phenomenon confined to such areas of the illegal economy as narcotics, prostitution and gun running. They control large parts of the legitimate economy, and neither a powerless public nor the organs of law enforcement have the means to bring them under control'.

Powerful and illicitly wealthy criminal gangs in Russia do not really see the police as a threat, more of a potential ally. Key officers can be bought. Those who cannot be suborned are murdered. Some of the evidence cited by Satter leaves you with the impression that the Russian police behave a bit like the anti-heroes in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*; that is they are, or too many of them are, criminals in uniform. Police corruption is not confined to extorting payments from the vulnerable, being bought by criminals or just looking the other way. It affects Russia's security as well. In 1995, notes Satter, a convoy of Chechen terrorists was able to bribe its way through 22 checkpoints on their way to raid the city of Budennovsk. How many US dollars, one wonders, would buy a Russian nuclear weapon? A lot, but reading this book you get the impression that some corrupt official would deliver the goods if the price was right. And Bin Laden has the money.

The Chechen connection also points to something sinister in post-communist Russia. In 1999 apartment blocks were bombed in Moscow, Volgograd and Buinaksk with heavy loss of life. An identical type of attack in Ryazan was only

averted when residents saw people acting suspiciously and called the local police. A massive bomb made up of hexogen (an explosive only available to the Russian special forces and subject to tightly controlled access), primed and ready, was disarmed by the local bomb squad. In a subsequent police dragnet two of the terrorist suspects were detained. Both were members of the FSB (The Russian Security Services). Forced to explain, the FSB claimed it was an exercise. 'It is', observes Satter, 'very difficult to establish the facts indisputably', yet the evidence assembled and painstakingly analysed by Satter and the many inconsistencies in the official explanation does, unbelievably, point to the FSB, not Chechen terrorists, as the most likely perpetrator. The implications for the earlier bombings are horrific: the Russian security services deliberately murdered ordinary Russians. Why? Almost certainly to blame Chechen terrorists and so justify a resumption of hostilities against Chechnya. Putin would then be shown as the leader standing up for Russia.

Apart from the ubiquitous gangs Russia is also bedeviled by unbelievable incompetence in daily life, often a consequence of rampant crime and corruption. Satter reports pedestrians' being boiled alive after having fallen into holes in the streets which have been filled with water from burst mains pipes, and doctors watching helplessly as patients die because of power failures in hospitals. Things are not much better in the armed forces. Both Chechen wars showed the Russian Army to be in complete disarray. Morale was, and is, low, training poor, and soldiers have been badly led. In 1993 four sailors, based on Russky Island in the Far East, died of starvation. Another 1,000 were hospitalised for malnutrition. In August 2000 the submarine, the *Kursk*, the pride of the Northern Fleet, sank on an exercise. From the moment news of the disaster broke the Russian authorities started dissembling and lying about the state of the submarine and the chances for the crew. It was claimed that the sinking was caused by a collision with a foreign submarine. Then the Norwegian rescue team was deliberately misled by the Russian naval authorities about how to open the pressure vents. Handwritten messages in plastic found on 23 bodies contradicted one of the official statements that all the crew had died in the initial explosion. These messages implied that had the Russian authorities accepted foreign help as soon as the offer was made by the British and Norwegians, some of the crew could have been rescued.

The loss of the *Kursk* and the belated explanation forced out of the FSB regarding the bomb in Ryazan, show that Russian officialdom still suffers from what one might call the Chernobyl syndrome: fear of responsibility; incompetence; drip feeding of information, much of it inconsistent with what comes later; deliberate lying; fear of losing face; and worst of all, utter contempt for the lives of Russians, be they civilians or service personnel. Satter has sought an explanation for this indifference to the loss of human life in the all powerful state. Historically, Russians have always existed for the benefit of the state, not the other way round. The absence of a strong Russian tradition of private property must also be cited since the growth of the institution of

private property leads to checks and balances being imposed on the power of the state, and, crucially, being able to hold the state responsible for its actions and inactions.

And it is here that Satter's title is slightly misleading for he implies that the rise of the Russian criminal state is a consequence of the fall of the Soviet Union. To the extent that the party could no longer impose its will on Russia and the non-Russian republics, fair enough. However we might also see contemporary Russian criminality as a continuation of the criminal, illegitimate Soviet state and its one-party state apparatus. Lenin and his gang seized power in 1917 and then murdered their opponents and rivals for power. When the Soviet state collapsed, a new batch of criminals emerged, many of them former Communist party members, who had long ago abandoned Lenin as the guide to anything practical. The conspiratorial mindset of the party, a state within a state, and its ruthless pursuit of its own narrow, selfish interests, did however serve as a useful induction into the world of the secret criminal gang and getting one's hands on the loot. Since 1991, two extreme fringe groups have come together: members of the former *nomenklatura* with their administrative expertise and connections and the professional non-political criminals who act as enforcers. The effect on Russian life and on ordinary citizens has led, in Satter's words, to 'a degrading submission so widespread that it assumes the attributes of normality'. True, without the rule of law, as Satter makes clear, you get a kleptocracy and institutionalised violence. The trouble is that one cannot just declare the rule of law: it has to be widely accepted by the population. (Has this not been one of the main lessons of postcolonial Africa?). Where a majority of the people do not accept the rule of law then the minority that do, the honest people in Russia to whom Satter dedicates his book, the insulted and injured, are trampled on. If they resist they are gunned down.

What does the future hold? Satter presents three scenarios none of which is encouraging. One inherent in Russia's Soviet past would be a reversion to dictatorship. In this respect the closing down of the independent management of the NTV and TV-6 television networks was ominous. So was the Russian government's recent seizure of stock in the Yukos oil company. Maybe its head, Mikhail Khodorkovskii, does have a case to answer but we are right to be thoroughly suspicious of the way the authorities have behaved. A second danger for Russia would be a collapse in the price of oil which could, according to a study of the Swedish Research Defence Institute, discussed by Satter, lead to a collapse in basic infrastructure and even to failed harvests. Satter himself sees depopulation as Russia's biggest danger since it will affect the economy and armed forces and will tempt more populous states on Russia's borders to enter Russia in the knowledge that Russia lacks the manpower to stop them. Whatever the outcome, or combination of outcomes, the chief executive of any Western company planning to invest in Russia or to do business there would be well advised to study the picture of Russia offered in *Darkness at Dawn*, and then think long and hard before coming to any firm decisions.

The Uses of History

Audrey Parry

Our Shadowed Present,

Jonathan Clark, Atlantic Books, 2003,
£25

David Blunkett intends to introduce tests for citizenship which will involve some knowledge of the constitution and hence by extension English history. If you enjoin tolerance as an English tradition it would help to have some reference to the religious wars of earlier centuries. In all this he has gainsaid his former mentor, Prof. Bernard Crick, fresh from his turf wars in which he has tried to establish his unique possession of George Orwell. Blunkett has also to combat the mores of his government which gave instructions that the Millennium Dome was to contain no reference to the national past, or to the person whose anniversary was commemorated. 'We don't do religion.'

Teaching history to immigrants or their descendants is no easy matter. Imperial history is better dodged. The teachers themselves often have strange views of reality. Some medieval churl is pronounced more 'real' than kings or warriors and students are invited to empathise with his dreary life. Consonant with this view is the dislike of linear history, the Grand Narrative, so that the passage of time and the differences created by the passage of time are hardly important. The long march of Everyman is no more. Of course this has much to do with the decline of the belief in progress. The choice of special study is revealing. Medieval history is not favoured, the Reformation hardly counts and there is a rush to Holocaust Studies, to the dismay of the German Ambassador. Yet history is more popular than ever in terms of TV. Grandees of the medium like Starkey and Schama, followed by Holmes, Fergusson and Hart-Davis (for science) command wide audiences, and are sufficiently numerous to cover the ground and achieve some balance.

The author of this elegantly written book was horrified by the reaction of the more conventional academics to the displays of mass emotion evoked by the Falklands War. They were incredulous and indignant. He tries to analyse some of their preconceptions and to show how they distort, possibly unconsciously, the material in order to support their views. In their eyes, all traditions and identities are invented to meet the needs of the moment. Not surprisingly the author opposes the ideas of those like Linda Colley that the concept of Britain is transient, dependent on a short period when the development of Empire gave

great opportunities to the Scots as well as the English. After the Union of 1707, it is argued, war played a vital part in this, and the common investment in Protestantism. Yet the latter was hardly a factor. England was always an ally of Portugal and often France, both Catholic. Protestant Holland and Prussia were often rivals and the latter an enemy.

This provokes the general question of what nationality is. Shared identity and a sense of collective awareness are often thought to depend on ethnic identity and language. Yet in earlier times religion, not race, was often central. In England since its borders were maritime and there were no disputed border areas, the concept of nationality was not a problem. If, as Clark argues, states have functional origins as perhaps in Tudor England, identities can look after themselves. Race was not an issue in England. The term 'ethnic' meant 'pertaining to nations not Christian or Jewish'. English objections to Scots were not based on race. The Christian belief in monogenesis, that all people were descended from Adam and Eve, makes racial prejudice hard to maintain.

Clark will not allow the easy associations so often made by determinists, often of a Marxist origin. Thus he points out that aristocratic and monarchical regimes were not inimical to industrial progress. To help this argument he has a useful tool, counterfactual analysis, imagining what would have happened if history had gone another way, for example if Mary Tudor had had a child or the Archduke had not gone to Sarajevo. This has become a popular parlour game but if it is applied rigorously it can have a devastating effect on interpretations of history. Nothing is seen as inevitable.

The technique is brilliantly displayed when he discusses the American War of Independence, an event which the British view with either benign resignation or neglect, their counterfactuals, if any, being concerned with differences that could have been made in George III's Cabinets. The Americans have no such doubts. They see it as the fulfilment of destiny, their Divine Mission. Furthermore they saw revolution as their gift to France, although if that country had not burdened itself with heavy military costs the *ancien régime* might have staggered on. Clark points out that the French loss of Canada to England meant that the colonists no longer had to fear an external foe, 'A Neighbour that keeps us in awe is not necessarily the worst of neighbours'. Incredibly we considered giving Canada back to France in exchange for Guadeloupe. The acquisition of Canada was a necessary but not a sufficient cause of the revolution. Yet the colonists were not anti-monarchical or anti-aristocratic; there was a good deal of affection for the old country and they did not much like each other. There was a multiplicity of causes and the Divine Destiny was not one of them. Clark reminds us that the British were mindful of black slaves and Native Americans and this infuriated the colonists. If our policies on slavery had prevailed in the USA might the Civil War have been averted?

A Plague of Modernisms

Andrew Fear

Al-Qa'eda and What It Means to be Modern,

John Gray, Faber & Faber, 2003,
£10.99

Al-Qa'eda's spectacular attack on New York in 2001 has provoked a flood of writing, most of it being unreadable or simply self-pitying. Gray's short, well-written book is an exception. The title of the book is a little deceptive in the sense that Gray uses al-Qa'eda as a heuristic device for a meditation on modernity in general. It is one of the few treatments of this phenomenon from a genuinely conservative perspective.

For Gray, modernity is defined by the belief that the meaning of the world can be reduced to a single, simple set of axioms. These are knowable, applicable at all times and in all places, and their implementation will necessarily produce a previously foreseen set of results which will change the world. Such a set of beliefs are just that: they eschew reason for dogmatic certitude. Modernism is a mode of thought rather than specific ideology and Gray would see communism, fascism, and importantly modern 'liberalism' as particular instantiations of it.

Al-Qa'eda too, it is argued, is a modernist ideology. Tracing its genesis to the writings of the radical Egyptian Islamist, Sayyid Qutb, Gray notes how Qutb's notions of an Islamic vanguard, and, indeed, his general approach to his faith, owe much more to modern and western thought than to that of traditional Islam. In short Gray sees al-Qa'eda's ideology as 'a typical modern hybrid'. Though they claim to be an indigenous tradition, its founders have reinterpreted Islam in the light of contemporary western thought. Al-Qa'eda's style of action is also modern, having more in common with a modern multinational company than localised terrorist groupings or millenarian Islamic sects. Unlike more naïve commentators, Gray sees a simple truth: al-Qa'eda wants to move the clock forward, not push it back.

So we have a clash of modernist movements, as the west (to use a convenient shorthand) is equally modernist, and through its modernism has created and exacerbated some of the problems it now faces. The long-forgotten philosophical cult of positivism created by Saint-Simon and Comte, Gray argues, is the unrecognised midwife of modern western political thought. Positivism centred on the worship of 'humanity', holding

that all problems could be solved by science, leading to a uniform utopia where all problems, including ethical ones, could be definitively solved by human endeavour. The power of this strand of thought can easily be seen in socialist systems. The strength of Gray's argument is to demonstrate that positivism is equally the progenitor of the modern *soi-disant* right which insists that the 'free market' (or, in the words of the present American government, the 'single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise' – a model conveniently close to the US's perception of itself), has the same wonder-working powers that were once claimed for 'scientific socialism'. Yet, as Gray shows, this claim is simply false. It is wrong in principle, as there is no value-free, scientific way of showing which economic system is best. It is also wrong in fact, as dogmatic attempts to foist the 'free market' on various countries, such as Russia and Argentina, have had appalling consequences. But there is no room for empiricism in the positivist creed. As Gray puts it, 'The social engineers who labour to install free markets in every last corner of the globe see themselves as scientific rationalists, but they are actually disciples of a forgotten cult.' At times Gray flirts with the idea that Christianity is at the root of the positivist intellectual movement. In part he is correct, Christianity, and its more vigorous offspring, Islam, are indeed universalising creeds, but Gray notes they have a saving grace in that they seek to prepare man for an otherworldly utopia, not to create one in this world. Positivism with its uncritical worship of man's abilities is closer to Pelagianism than orthodox Christianity: perhaps we can see St Augustine's finest achievement as saving Europe from positivism.

Ironically, one particular consequence of western modernist dogma has been the destruction of nations in the name of free trade, creating semi-anarchic 'failed nations' which have been a breeding ground for al-Qa'eda. Another is the support al-Qa'eda gains from the resentment produced, even in Europe, at the insistence, as can be seen from the hubristic statement quoted above, that the 'American way' is the only valid way of life. Liberal intolerance of anything not liberal, will naturally, to conservative eyes, lead to hostility, but to those blinded by positivism, which regards all humanity as identical, it will only produce the confusion now all too commonly embodied in the question asked by Americans, 'why do they hate us?' As Gray points out 'It is not American *realpolitik* that the world most resents. It is American universalism.'

So what is the solution? Gray is pessimistic and rightly so. He sees the coming century as full as many threats as the 20th century and holds out no chance of a definitive victory in the 'war against terror'. Moreover, the power of positivism will make things worse than they ought to be, as it sustains a myth 'which tethers us to a hope of unity, when we should be learning to live with conflict'. Tragically, the greater the power of that myth,

the more conflict and disunity it will provoke. Gray makes a plea for the ancient world where it was accepted that history had no purpose, that different men lived in different ways, and that conflict and tragedy were an unavoidable part of life, to be managed not abolished. It is difficult to see such a vision supplanting the positivist myth in the short term, but it is a good reason to argue for an increase in the teaching of Classics in schools.

Intelligence & National Prosperity

Chris Brand

IQ and the Wealth of Nations,

Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen, Praeger, (Human Evolution, Behavior and Intelligence series, ed. Seymour W. Itzkoff). 2002, \$67.95

British psychologist Richard Lynn and Finnish political scientist Tatu Vanhanen find that recent IQ data from scores of countries world-wide show really strong correlations, of around $r = .65$, with national prosperity – : whether Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated for 1820 or for the 1990s. Quite contrary to the theorizing of most Western economists of the past fifty years, the underdeveloped (later, ‘developing’) countries of fifty years ago have not generally closed the gap with the help of ongoing Western handouts and advice. Clearly, several East Asian countries have in that time made enormous strides – as may also happen soon in the ex-Communist countries of Eastern Europe; but in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa (largely Black Africa), mean IQ estimates hover around 70 and progress has been slight. Of the world’s 21 countries which steadily tripled their GDP from 1983 through 1990 and 1993 to 1996, none was on or near the African mainland; whereas of the 27 countries whose GDP decreased by 50%, ten were African (Angola, Burkina Faso, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Madagascar, Somalia, Sudan, Zambia and Sao Tome & Principe).

Yet will Lynn and Vanhanen prove persuasive about causation? Doubters will raise four particular problems. First, *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* is published by an American mail order house which charges heavily for the book. Terrorized by the politically correct, mainstream Western ‘publishers’ have for ten years been entirely unwilling to bring out books that touch on race – whether by Arthur Jensen, Phil Rushton or myself. Recently, it turned out that top psychologist Steven Pinker

(Massachusetts Institute of Technology), who had converted to hereditarianism after hearing from friends how a second child was often very different from a first, felt he had to remove a chapter about race from the final draft of his new pro-heredity book, *The Blank Slate*. Lynn and Vanhanen are not alone in finding themselves up against the *Zeitgeist*, and the reception of their book has not so far been auspicious. Lynn and Vanhanen’s reply will have to be that such repression indicates that the liberal-left consensus (which in 1950 persuaded the United Nations to declare all races to be of equal intelligence) is a hysteria that must one day lift.

Secondly, some will doubtless try to quibble with the IQ estimates that are the central novelty of *IQ and the Wealth of Nations*. Lynn and Vanhanen typically present some three ‘normative’ IQ studies for each of the countries they discuss; they do not provide details of social sampling; and they estimate IQs for some nations by taking the average of the IQs in neighbouring countries – crediting Afghanistan with IQ 83 as an average of India’s 81 and Iran’s 84. Surprisingly, Lynn and Vanhanen maintain that the mean IQ in Israel is only 94 – ignoring the possibility that Sephardic Jews, like other Africans, may have special deficits in the visuo-spatial abilities that are needed to do well on ‘culture-fair’ intelligence tests like the famous Raven’s Matrices. None of this is ideal. However, Lynn and Vanhanen have a very strong reply from both the general consistency of their IQ estimates and the sheer strength of IQ’s correlations with national productivity. If workers had seriously confounded their assessments of national IQ, Lynn and Vanhanen would simply have had to present the usual miserably low correlations of around .25 that obtain throughout psychology and the social sciences. As it is, Lynn and Vanhanen have plainly struck gold.

Thirdly, there is the question of cause and effect. Can Lynn and Vanhanen convince us that IQ actually causes national wealth, rather than vice versa? The literature on the causal importance of IQ is only partially covered here, and Lynn and Vanhanen settle rather easily for the view that IQ and wealth will both tend to cause each other. This concession will weaken their case in the eyes of those who already deplore the idea that IQ is causal. Lynn and Vanhanen would have done better to point to the exceedingly slight IQ advantages accruing to Black children in the USA even when their fathers are seriously rich, and to the failure of the American Black-White gap in intelligence to decrease despite many billions of American dollars being thrown at the problem for the past forty years. Even a century of national impoverishment does not lower IQ – as shown by the cases of mainland China, Poland and Russia in Lynn and Vanhanen’s own data. By contrast, IQ correlates .50 with individual upward social mobility, relative to the position of the testee’s father (Touhey, 1972). The simple truth is that a normal national IQ is neces-

sary though not sufficient for prosperity; and that a low IQ holds whole countries back even if individuals can compensate for dullness by good looks or hard work. Neglecting such points, as also the full range of arguments that race differences are of substantially genetic origin, Lynn and Vanhanen will have partly themselves to blame if their book is set aside.

Lastly, Lynn and Vanhanen show remarkable modesty about the implications of their findings. This may have been intended as placatory; but it, too, will win them few friends. Rather than stress the need for eugenics in Africa, Lynn and Vanhanen conclude their book with two bizarrely half-hearted recommendations. The first is that the West should recognize continuing IQ differences and thus continue pumping subsidies into Africa as a matter of 'ethical obligation'. The second is that some fraction of this conscience money should be spent not on eugenics but on 'improvements in nutrition and the like'. No change there, then, for this is what the West has been doing ever since it abandoned the responsible idea of empire! It is remarkable that Lynn and Vanhanen should have troubled to write a 'controversial' book which cannot be published by a mainstream publisher only to come to such feeble practical recommendations. Lynn and Vanhanen have provided a way of forgetting their book which social-environmentalist ideologues will be desperately eager to take.

Rule and Divide

Christie Davies

**Race Warriors;
The Perverse Results of Anti-Racism,**
Russell Lewis, New European, 2003,
£11.95

Russell Lewis, a member of one of Britain's autochthonous ethnic minorities, has written an excellent account of the bad and perverse consequences both of anti-racism as an ideology and of anti-racist institutions. Lewis's analysis applies across the board from the well entrenched Campaign for Racial Equality which acts like an arm of a corporate state, to the malevolent Trotskyites who foment trouble between sections of Her Majesty's subjects.

In an ideal world British people of all ancestries would enjoy equal rights as individuals, share a common loyalty to their ancient society and its continuity and have a single dominant public culture combined

with whatever private identities they choose. Anti-racism is a threat to this ideal as Russell Lewis clearly shows. It encourages people to see themselves not as individuals responsible for their own fate but as racialised entities whose fortunes lie not in their own efforts in the anonymous market place and examination hall but in the politics of communalism and in the seeking of legal privilege. Anti-racism is simply a version of racism.

One of the worst examples of anti-racist racism lies in the increased adoption of quotas for different groups such that each institution matches the ethnic proportions of the population. Such measures are unjust. The achievements of those members of British ethnic minorities such as the Jews, the Chinese, the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Parsees who on average occupationally and in ownership and income or in education and qualifications are doing better than the indigenous population also render them foolish. Are we to drag them back down to equality with the Anglo-Saxons which is a logical extension of the anti-racist principle? Are they to be penalised for their unfair cultural advantages, the possession of a work ethic that enables them to work hard and long at tasks that are both tedious and mentally demanding and their willingness to eschew the cheap excitements of violence, promiscuity and football? Cultures do differ in instrumental value and it is not the proper function of a liberal democratic society to undermine the values of culturally successful groups and individuals and to encourage the culturally dysfunctional thereby perpetuating their inadequacies to their own detriment. We should not go down Swann's way. Those who think I exaggerate should read Russell Lewis's comments on the Council for Racial Equality's demeaning research report on Britain's Chinese population, who are condemned for their traditional family values and unwillingness to live on welfare benefits. The Chinese respect for education is mocked as 'you'll find wealth and beautiful wives in books, so study well'. The Chinese are admonished by the CRE to learn from the other cultures of our wonderful multi-cultural society. Why the Chinese should be expected to learn the virtues of bookless poverty and family instability from our outer barbarians is not made clear.

Ironically as Lewis shows the one institution where the principle of proportionality is most horribly violated is the Council for Racial Equality itself where only 10 per cent of the ruling junta are of European ancestry even though 94 per cent of the taxpayers are. However, it would be very interesting to know how well the diverse non-Europeans get on within the CRE. Is it a haven of harmony in which ethnic equity prevails now that the white oppressor has been excluded?

What is equally racist is the failure of the race warriors to deal with other kinds of racism than those allegedly perpetrated by white people. Let me add an example of my own in support of Russell Lewis'

argument. I can remember confronting the Home Office with the fact (based on their own statistics) that blacks were proportionately far more likely than whites to commit racial assaults against and racial harassment of Asian shopkeepers. The Home Office 'satsumas' were literally frightened when I first went to see them about it; they assumed that I was a race warrior come to castigate them for ever studying the subject at all. They were even more flustered when I congratulated a senior official on the perspicacity of the researchers. Over a canteen meal in which enormous quantities of vitamins and dietary supplements were consumed (the person concerned lined bottles up alongside the cutlery, selenium and vitamin A next to the forks, iron and vitamin C alongside the knives, calcium and vitamin E behind the bread roll) the official tried to blame a minor technical fault in the statistics for the horrid result that had emerged. I was not convinced. Then in desperation it was asserted that *by definition* no black person could be guilty of racism because they constituted a minority. Having already seen a great deal of anti-Asian racism in Africa I was not impressed. The Asian victims in Britain certainly saw it as racism for they had been insulted and humiliated and items had been openly stolen from their shops with physical threats and racial abuse. They did not dare to tell the police for fear of reprisals. I came to the same conclusion as Russell Lewis: for the race warriors it isn't what you do that counts but what your face is like.

As a consequence of the special attention paid to ethnic minorities white working people have become alienated and resentment has recently flared up in places like Oldham, Rochdale and Bradford. As Lewis shows anti-racism has led to group conflict. The local Muslims live in segregated areas created by collusion between their leaders and the politically correct local councils. I have found within these enclaves grocers' shops who stock copies of *The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion* next to the till for a quick sale. No doubt they have come to some agreement with the British extremists who print it (without scholarly notes as to its lack of authenticity) with a Jewish snake encircling the world on the cover. But the racial equality brigade assure us that it is only anti-Zionism.

In the twenty-first century it is more important than ever to know the facts and heed the warnings given in Russell Lewis' excellent and well-informed book. If we do not assimilate those who have chosen to live in Britain to form a truly United Kingdom we will be torn apart by tribal warfare stirred up by the race warriors who rule and divide.



The Ship's Surgeon

Jeremy Worman

Tobias Smollett

Jeremy Lewis, Jonathan Cape, 2003,
£20.00

Tobias Smollett, 'the quintessential man of letters' as Jeremy Lewis describes him in this engaging and well-researched biography, died in 1771, aged 50. He was worn out and broken in spirit from 'his remorseless addiction to work', which included plays, novels, historical works, journalism, translations and travel writing.

Smollett's contemporaries, Defoe, Fielding, Richardson and Sterne are generally considered to be important initiators of the English novel, and are widely studied in universities, while Smollett has almost slipped out of the picture. It is American scholars, notably Lewis Knapp, who have done most to keep an interest in Smollett alive.

Smollett was well trained as a doctor in Glasgow. He came to London in 1739, then had a stint as a ship's surgeon in the Royal Navy, before settling down as a full-time writer. The Scottish Smollett experienced prejudice against him for his nationality, and yet he wrote about foreigners with a passion worthy of a splenetic country squire.

Smollett described his first novel, the bawdy, often very funny, and sometimes scatological *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), about a young man on the make, as 'a satire on mankind'. The book was well received and sold well.

The pace of Smollett's writing life increased after this and he became editor of the *Critical Review* in 1756. Lewis is especially illuminating on this new world of the literary magazine, of the quarrels and feuds between editors, and of the cultural status of small magazines. Lewis has a particular expertise in this area, as he was Deputy Editor of the *London Magazine* from 1990 – 1994 and is now Commissioning Editor at *The Oldie*.

An interesting addition to this biography might have been for some comparisons to be made between the cultural world of literary magazines now and in Smollett's time. For Smollett has suffered partly because he is not considered to have much relevance to the present literary world. Lewis could have expanded Smollett's reputation by showing some similarities, or significant differences, in today's world of literary journalism. In contrast, Sterne's reputation is guaranteed by the connections scholars so often explore between his narrative style and the development of James Joyce's aesthetic. Lewis

touches lightly on Smollett's influence on the picaresque novel, and on Dickens, who as a boy read and admired all of Smollett's novels.

Smollett's writings did not make him rich and he wrote to George Macaulay about his debts in 1756: 'I have been last week threatened with writs of arrest'. Smollett's *A Complete History of England*, published in four volumes between 1757-58 helped financially, but he was never free of money worries. In the midst of his busy working life, Smollett kept alive his passionately-held idea to set up an English equivalent to the Académie Française, which would regulate, codify and improve the English language. But nothing came of this. Lewis writes poignantly about the grinding workload of a hack journalist, and of Smollett's life in Chelsea with his wife and their only child, Elizabeth, who died when she was fifteen. The range of Smollett's social world was impressive and included David Garrick, John Wilkes, Samuel Johnson, Adam Smith. Although vituperative in print, he was known for his generosity and kindness to his friends.

Lewis is also judicious in his general judgement of Smollett's writing and helpfully steers the reader away from the lesser novels, and warns us that the plethora of journalism is often not very interesting. He suggests rightly that Matthew Bramble, a character in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), is Smollett's 'most rounded, sympathetic and plausible central character.' This was his last novel and also illustrates most clearly his political and ethical positions. Smollett had a lifelong yearning for a pre-industrial England. He wrote prophetically in *Humphry Clinker* about the continual building of houses in London and noted that 'if it continues for half a century, I suppose the whole county of Middlesex will be covered with brick.' Smollett's moral tirade against banking and commerce – against the new Britain emerging rapidly in

his times – was even more forceful.

Lewis suggests that Smollett was a 'deeply conservative man,' while a contemporary of Smollett's criticised 'his partiality to the Tory party.' Smollett had a gloomy Hobbesian view of human nature, and perhaps his political perspective could best be described in today's terminology as being like that of a 'Tory anarchist'. He was bitterly satirical about most of those involved in the political or commercial worlds, continually lambasting and undermining such people in print, and he longed for a prelapsarian, pastoral idyll. In many ways Tobias Smollett was the Richard Ingrams of his day.

Lewis writes with great insight about the travels of Smollett and his wife through Europe, drawing out the tensions and pleasures of their two years abroad. Smollett then published *Travels through France and Italy* (1766). The limitations of his cartoon style of characterisation, which sometimes makes the long novels feel claustrophobic and one dimensional, are a great strength here, and the various sketches can make the reader laugh out loud. The visual absurdity of some of his descriptions, and his brilliance at observing surface details, often feels like a verbal equivalence to the cartoons of his contemporary, Thomas Rowlandson. He is amusingly rude about the French, describing one individual as 'a true Frenchman in vanity, which is undoubtedly the ruling passion of this volatile people' and he dismisses 'the fopperies of their religion.' Some Eurosceptics may take a particular delight in the various descriptions of the French.

Jeremy Lewis has written an absorbing and comprehensive work, giving the reader fascinating insights into the life, world and writings of Tobias Smollett. This biography will surely encourage a re-evaluation of the unjustly neglected Smollett.

NOTES ON REVIEWERS

CHRIS BRAND IS CONSULTANT TO THE WOODHILL FOUNDATION

ROBIN BRODHURST TEACHES HISTORY AT PANGBOURNE COLLEGE

CHRISTIE DAVIES'S NEXT BOOK IS *THE STRANGE DEATH OF MORAL ENGLAND*

FRANK ELLIS IS LECTURER IN RUSSIAN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

ANDREW FEAR IS LECTURER IN CLASSICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KEELE

AUDREY PARRY WAS A RESEARCHER FOR THE BBC TV *GREAT WAR* SERIES

JEREMY WORMAN'S SHORT STORIES AND POEMS HAVE APPEARED WIDELY IN ANTHOLOGIES AND MAGAZINES.

SIR OLIVER WRIGHT WAS AMBASSADOR TO BONN AND WASHINGTON

Inside al-Qa'eda

Mohamed Sifaoui, Granta Books,
2003, £6.99

This is a record of an exceptionally brave man, as well as a terrifying book which should be read by craven politicians. Mohamed Sifaoui is an Algerian Muslim, now a journalist in Paris, who lived with the scourge of Islamic terrorism long before the West discovered it in 2001. For three months he pretended to be a pro-fundamentalist journalist, penetrating an al-Qa'eda cell without being detected. He recorded and filmed his 'colleagues', saw how they attracted new recruits, raised funds and identified targets for terrorist attacks. He came face to face with a mentality that preaches a language of hatred and a contempt for the life of infidels: 'We must have the Quran in one hand and a Kalashnikov in the other'. Perhaps the most risky part of his enterprise was his two journeys to London, the capital of al-Qa'eda: 'Don't forget, all the brains are in London'. At the Baker St. mosque, he met fanatics from all over the world, even one from his own district in Algiers. He is critical of the British police: one of his colleagues managed to get in with a false passport while Sifaoui himself was subjected to a rigorous check. After his book was published in France, he received death threats but also letters of thanks from French Muslims: Thank you for showing that not all Muslims are terrorists.

Merrie Cave

Ending Pensioner Poverty:

Reforming the State Pension System,
Charles Elphicke, Centre for Policy Studies,
2003, £7.50

Our current pension problems have been compounded partly by cyclical trends, (the downturn in stock markets) but also by secular trends, (the ageing population). Charles Elphicke's first suggested solution is to replace today's complex system with a universal pension: 'The contributory principle that underpins the Basic State Pension is discredited. It simply serves to punish those who were on lower incomes during their working lives'. If only! The BSP is, in fact, underpinned by today's taxpayers: the contributions made in their earlier working lives by our pensioners were long ago swallowed up by the welfare state.

Elphicke's two most bold proposals are, on the one

hand, to increase the BSP from £77 to £120 per week and, on the other hand, to raise the state pension age from 65 to 70. While a rise of over 50% sounds utopian, it is arithmetically feasible on the not unreasonable assumption that a third of our pensioners are aged 65-70 (for it is they who will be funding the increase). It is the politics which make his proposals less feasible. Elphicke is at pains to deny there would be winners or losers as his reforms would represent 'redistribution across the lifetimes of the individuals, not across groups of individuals as such'. However, since the rich have greater life expectancy than the poor, raising the pension age from 65 to 70 would be a *de facto* redistribution from the latter to the former.

Elphicke has much of value to say about our current problems: means-testing, for example, is intrusive, complex and creates significant moral hazard. It is less obvious, however, that a universal pension – let alone one of £120 per week – is the right solution.

Matthew O'Keeffe

Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation of France 1940-45,

Robert Gildea, Pan, 2003,
£8.99

This is the best book I have read about the German occupation of France. Its lively scholarship and meticulous research effectively nail the long-standing myth that the French were either cowardly collaborators or courageous resisters: 'good French, bad French or poor French' (the others). These convenient labels were invented in the aftermath of the war to help heal the rift between the Free French and the Petainistes. Gildea adopts a thematic rather than a chronological approach: Saints, Sinners, Trimmers, concentrating his research on departmental archives, other local records and memories of survivors in three departments of the Loire Valley. The author wished to record the experiences of ordinary people in small towns and villages of France; administrative records are often seen through the filter of the official mind and plenty has been written about the main players. The occupation even after fifty years still casts a long shadow on French political life, both at the national and local level. Gildea himself experienced this when he heard opposing views about it at a lunch of the Academy of Tours. The Secretary would not publish his paper because it underplayed the Occupation's severity and probably presented other unpalatable facts, but his wife opined that ordinary

people could go about their business without interference. Another at the lunch remembered French officers in his POW camp in 1940 who had with German officers toasted the death of the whore, (the Republic). The 1970 film *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* supported those historians who believed that most of the population supported the Vichy regime, and so challenged the idea of the good French that it was not shown on TV for ten years. Similarly *The Crow*, a film made during the war, depicting a poison pen letter writer in a town in Vichy France, was banned after the war; it took the director Clouzot many years to recover his reputation. Recently Resistance heroes have had their reputations tarnished; it has been suggested that Jean Moulin was a soviet agent. On the other side René Bosquet, Mitterand's friend, who was responsible for rounding up 12,000 Jews, was conveniently shot dead at his flat. The passage of time helped to produce many candid and vivid interviews: One man remembered that when the Germans arrived in his town and threw cigarettes to the crowd, he stamped and spat on the nearest one. Another insisted that most people supported Petain and still referred to the Resisters as bandits, terrorists or communist subversives.

Merrie Cave

**Managing not to Manage
(Management in the NHS),**
Harriet Sergeant, Centre for Policy Studies,
2003, £10

'Like any bureaucracy, the NHS has a history of hijacking policies that are supposed to benefit the patient, to its own purposes,' writes Harriet Sergeant in *Managing not to Manage*. As a doctor surrounded by increasing numbers of forms, brochures announcing bogus health initiatives and the arrival of yet more useless managers at the door I was struck by the truth of this statement. It has a sinister analogy in the method by which AIDS gets hold of its victims. The virus invades a healthy cell and hijacks its mechanism to make copies of itself, the patient being unaware of what is happening.

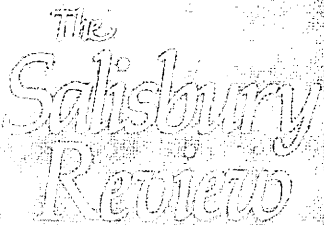
So it is with the NHS. In the absence of a market or ethical boundaries, NHS managers invade healthy administrative structures, use them to make copies of themselves and nobody seems to notice. It is why in one local health authority, managers are employed checking the credentials of doctors who have had their credentials checked by managers of a health authority two miles away. 'It is being seen to be doing something about accountability' I was told when I questioned a seemingly useless activity which could pay for two hundred cataract operations a year.

In Harriet Sergeant's brilliant and highly readable dissection of the ills of the NHS we discover that civil servants in the Department of Health have access to a privately run hospital in the Kent countryside, so they never have to suffer the indignities of lying unwashed in a public ward waiting for an operation which might be cancelled. We learn that nobody is effectively in charge anywhere in the NHS, that in some hospitals managers do not even have control over staff holidays, and hanging over all hospitals are centrally generated targets set by Whitehall that stifle all initiative.

These are administered, a better phrase would be 'visited on', front line staff and patients by an ever expanding layer of middle management. Three years ago the NHS paid a consultancy firm £500,000 to find out how many middle managers there were. Between 2001 and 2002 their numbers rose by three and half times that of nurses. This deadly hijack of the NHS continues apace. Harriet Sergeant writes 'The government has created the bizarre situation where hospitals take on managers to check and evaluate a service that is deteriorating because of their appointment.'

This is an excellent book and goes to the heart of the disease in the NHS. It is a terrific read and filled with telling anecdotes. Buy a copy and give it to a socialist friend. Books like this make a difference.

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