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How to Kill a Dissident
Boris Volodarsky

Adam Smith on a Pedestal
Andrew McKie

Freewill and Mill
Anthony Daniels

Time to Abolish Slavery
Caroline Cox and John Marks

A World First for Scotland
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Suffer the Little Children

The Sexual Orientation regulations being tagged on to the Equality Act 2006 by ministerial edict aim to stop those who supply services, goods or facilities from discriminating on grounds of sexual orientation. With the usual duplicity it is argued that the new arrangements mirror what is already the law in employment and occupation, and simply prohibit treating people less favourably, as with race. Teachers will risk prosecution if they do not treat homosexual activity as useful and desirable as heterosexual relations. Offence is subjectively defined and given where someone feels that their 'dignity has been violated'.

As Lord Tebbit remarked, this will inevitably 'create not only a shadow...but a wide fear of persecution': Home Office officials are preparing to identify schools which lack enthusiasm for rooting out 'homophobia' to be reported to the police, with 'hate crime co-ordinators' and reporting systems to be 'marketed and distributed' everywhere from GPS surgeries to shops to play schemes. With eight major statutes on gay rights passed since 1997, Lord Moran observed how sensitivity to homosexual lobbies has resulted in other interests and minorities being rebuffed. New gay rights were dictatorially imposed in Northern Ireland by executive fiat; avoiding primary legislation and any hope of amendment. The situation is little better in the UK — the leader of the Conservative Party has declared that he will support the measures.

The advent of civil unions has meant the term 'partner' replacing that of spouse/husband/wife (so all are perceived to be in transient couplings of convenience), something now imposed on adoption agencies. The influential British Association for Adoption and Fostering, which provides training and advice, has long been as eager to further same sex adoption as it has been circumspect about transracial adoption — condemned in social work as a threat to black children's cultural integrity. In BAAF's 'good practice' guide to recruiting gay carers, the needs and interests of children hardly figure. It is not just asking for gays to have equal chances with other candidates, but making war on the 'traditional nuclear family' as something invented in the interests of colonial expansion, and not a way people actually live. Heterosexuality is 'based on myths and stereotypes, and 'gender is not biological', but 'a social, cultural, psychological and historical construct'. The external world is as unpredictable and illusory as the law.

While the heterosexual married family is treated with contempt, misgivings about homosexuality are characterised as a morbid fear to be fixed with re-education sessions. Practitioners must 'challenge' the 'homophobic assumptions', of birth family and panel members, and children must be reconciled to having gay carers. All contravene guidelines about consultation. Consider if this were a black child being placed with white adoptive parents against his will.

Christians and Christian churches, schools, charities, printers and venues are directly in the firing line, since they are being coerced to provide services that aid and abet behaviours that conflict with their fundamental beliefs. The future of Catholic and Jewish adoption agencies is in the balance, and the withdrawal of public money will mean the end of their voluntary work with children and families.

The obliteration of all standards of right and wrong, true or false extends to empirical criteria and considerations. Might we expect some objective research on comparative outcomes for children placed with gay adopters? I think not. After the Bishop of Chester told his local newspaper in 2003 about research showing that some homosexuals do reorientate their sexuality (true), he was investigated by the police. The Crown Prosecution Service could not act since legislation did not then provide for specific offences based on sexuality. The counter culture neo-Marxists were right — the shock troops of gay liberation, in ridding us of the nuclear family, will sweep with it what the legacy of Western enlightenment meant by objectivity, in law or science, rationality or freedom.

Patricia Morgan

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In this issue we pay our respects to the anti-collectivist principles of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill and we analyse some threats to freedom in today's world.

Despite Tony Blair's sentimental apology for slavery, it persists in many countries and he has not put pressure on the governments that receive our aid money while allowing this vile practice, described by Baroness Cox and John Marks: a new campaign would be the only fit commemoration of Abolition. The moral case need not be re-stated but Adam Smith adds the practical case against slave labour as 'the dearest of any. A person who can acquire no property, can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible.' But rational ideas only apply where there is economic freedom: pity the serfs of today who are near-slaves to the State in the many neo-feudal and socialist countries of the world where they may not own property, from much of India to most of Africa. Women, of course, fare even worse.

Neo-feudalism is a better label for Russia's mis-named new capitalism and its ruthless politics: Vladimir Gladyshev uses the Yukos case to illustrate these malign developments. Its rulers' determination to rid themselves of troublesome courtiers is chillingly described by former Russian intelligence officer Boris Volodarsky, describing the operation to kill Alexander Litvinenko in London.

Capitalism was first defined by Adam Smith yet his statue is only now in preparation. Andrew McKie looks at the project honouring a man who embodies British Enlightenment, when reason was fixed in common sense and real outcomes, unlike the French version where reason is constrained by theory and where reality is at fault if outcomes fail to confom to the theories. The former leads to ideas, the latter to ideology, to three volumes on the *Wealth of Nations* or ten volumes on *Das Kapital*. The Adam Smith Institute think-tank brought the statue into being and promotes his thought. Even Oxfam and Christian Aid now cite his ideas as the ones to fight when defending their Statist and socialist notions that prevent the poor from improving their lot: this is an extraordinary compliment to Smith's resurgence. If you cannot wade through the full treatise, P J O'Rourke's new book *On The Wealth of Nations* provides the best of his arguments.

But the wealth of our nation is seriously threatened by the decline in education, particularly scientific education as we increasingly become a knowledge-economy. Christie Davies shows how egalitarianism puts 'unthinking bums on costly seats' and has damaged not just pupils and students but our economic capacity and professional credibility around the world. The tools for reversing that decline are readily available but are resisted by education apparatchiks: one huge victory is the revival of synthetic phonics in teaching English, described by Tom Burkard. Elsewhere, quality is being punished by bureaucracy and hypocrisy, by the red tape and tariffs that increasingly constrain independent schools. The government has chosen strangulation over elimination, while The Party Formerly Known As Conservative is not offering any support.

Anthony Daniels shows how J S Mill foresaw the consequences to modern Britain of turning his principles upside down, with maximum government and minimum protection from harm, maximum interference with minimum responsibility.

All these political, economic and social diseases come from socialism. Attempts to root out that subversion have been perverted into myths of repression, dubbed 'McCarthyism'. Even the term witch-hunt is a victory for the Left because witches do not exist but Reds are indeed under the beds. David Ashton shows how the fury against McCarthy reflected his efficacity and indeed fairness, rather as the furore over cruise missiles among peaceniks in the 80s demonstrated how effective the missiles would be in keeping the Soviets in their place.

Smith and Mill show us how to fight these threats by freeing trade and constricting government.

Was Slavery Abolished in 1807?

Caroline Cox and John Marks

2007 will be a year in which the commemoration of William Wilberforce's parliamentary achievement will inspire numerous activities here and abroad. There will be many celebrations reflecting admiration for his vision and dogged determination to end the barbaric practices of the slave trade. There will also be many activities commemorating the evils of that grisly phenomenon. Already, cities like Bristol and Liverpool are preparing themselves for diverse representations of their part in the history of the slave trade.

But what should be the most appropriate response for this bicentenary? Should we not focus primarily on the continuing evil of slavery today and complete Wilberforce's mission? Commitment to new initiatives to eradicate modern slavery does not preclude commemoration of past evils, but dwelling in the past may obliterate the horror of modern slavery and sideline effective action. We think Wilberforce would agree. It would be a tragedy if this anniversary were marked by our failure to follow in his footsteps to abolish contemporary slavery.

Around 27 million people today are suffering some form of enslavement, but it is hard to feel the reality from statistics. The experiences of modern-day slaves illustrate the horrors, and the dreadful aftermath, even for those who attain freedom: the destruction of their families and communities and the frequent costs in terms of broken relationships. We include one example from three countries where different forms of slavery persist — indeed flourish: Sudan, Uganda and Burma,

Sudan

Slavery has been practised in Sudan over the centuries. Often intertribal and/or racial: Arab enslavement of Africans. More recently, when the present National Islamic Front (NIF) regime took power by military coup in 1989, it became a weapon of war. The Islamist NIF regime quickly declared military jihad (Islamic holy war) against all who opposed it — many Muslims as well as Christians and traditional believers. In border areas between north and southern Sudan, such as Bahr-El-Ghazal and the Nuba Mountains, the NIF encouraged their forces — comprising Government troops, jihad warriors (mujahadin) and local tribesmen whom they armed and to whom they gave logistical support (murahaleen) — to take captives, especially women and children, into slavery. Slavery was deemed to be an effective means of achieving two of the objectives of the jihad: the forced Islamisation of those not already Muslims and the Arabisation of the African peoples.

If slavery is to be abolished we need to break the bonds of ignorance ... Far too many people are unaware of the examples of slavery — old and new. Nor are they aware that the number of slaves and the types of slavery are increasing, not decreasing

Tens of thousands of people were taken into slavery and the existence of this practice has been widely documented by many independent investigators, including Gasper Biro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Sudan. Although there is now a ceasefire in the south and the Nuba Mountains, many of those abducted have still not been returned to their homes.

Aluat Majok is a young mother with a baby son (Bikit Osman) conceived during sexual relationships imposed upon her by her slave master.

She had been kidnapped during a slave raid:

> *When the Arab militia came, their first target was the cattle but they also abducted many people, killing any who resisted and concentrating mainly on women and children. My master took 2 boys as well as me; I tried to escape but was beaten, so I surrendered. They came on horseback.*
>
> *My master's name is Osman Issa; the 2 boys who were captured with me are still there.'*

She had been used as a domestic servant, but when her master's wife went out to the market, she was summoned to his room and

> *he took advantage of me.*

She had to learn Arabic, and had to adopt Muslim practices.

She tried to escape twice but was caught and severely beaten. When her master's wife found she was pregnant and discovered the identity of the father, she was driven out of the house but managed to establish contact with an Arab trader who brought her and her baby back to the South, selling them to her family for 5 cows.

Now, she has been welcomed back her family, but having had sexual relations with her Arab master, she will not be able to marry a young Dinka husband. As many men have been killed, she may find an old man who will be willing to marry her — but any prospects of a 'normal' marriage are hopelessly blighted.

Uganda

After Idi Amin's brutal dictatorship, much of Uganda has become relatively stable and prosperous with successful policies to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS.

However, the situation in the north is in stark contrast to the rest of the country. The Lord's Resistance Army has turned this region into a land of devastation and deprivation. Villages have either been destroyed by fighting or abandoned because of LRA attacks, with killings, abductions and looting. 95 per cent of the one-and-a-quarter million population have been herded into overcrowded camps, without adequate water, sanitation, health care, education or food. The mortality rate is disturbingly high.

The LRA's brutal policy of systematic abduction of children has also created many thousands of 'Commuter Children' who have to walk to towns every night to the safety provided by Night Shelters where the children often sleep on concrete floors without mattresses or blankets and leave early in the morning to go to school on empty stomachs. But they are the lucky ones for they have avoided falling into the hands of the LRA. The terrifying experiences to which the latter are subjected are indescribable. At least 20,000 and possibly as many as 40,000 children have been abducted.

Monica, 18, from Lukole in Pader was abducted in 2003 from her home at night. Her brother had already been abducted — she eventually met him a year later in Sudan, before they were separated again. She was tied up, beaten and shot in the leg (scars still clearly visible) during an ambush. She was not given any treatment. She was taken to Sudan for military training and was 'given' to Commander Palaro. She became pregnant and gave birth with no help at all.

I was just treated like an animal.

She had to go to fight in Uganda, carrying her baby with her. She fought in Teso and Lango and was ordered to carry out abductions, especially children. If any resisted, they were immediately killed. She has had to kill time and again.

During one confrontation not far from her village she met a woman whom she knew and asked her to take her child, now 18 months old, because she could not continue to carry her gun and the child at the same time. She left her daughter in the area of Lacek Ocot and she has not seen her since. Monica's father was killed by a helicopter gunship. She desperately wants to go to school, as she was studying at secondary school when she was abducted.

The main types of slavery in the modern world are chattel slavery, debt bondage, forced labour, sex slavery and human trafficking. Chattel Slavery is the classic form, in which slave-owners maintain ownership of human beings through force and violence. Contemporary examples are found in Sudan, described above, and in Mauritania, where chattel slavery of black Africans has never ended. It started in the 13th century when Arab Berber raiders descended on Mauritania's indigenous African tribes, abducted women and children and then bred a new caste of slaves. A clandestine anti-slavery group (El Hor — literally 'The Free') organised by former slaves estimates that current numbers of haratine in Mauritania may be about one million with hundreds of thousands more in the bordering countries of Mali and Senegal.

Debt Bondage is perhaps the most widespread form of modern slavery. Sometimes, families are forced to offer the labour as collateral against a financial loan. In countries where there is a population boom, high unemployment and acute poverty, families may be driven to this as a last resort. Once trapped, it is very hard to escape. Their predicament is exacerbated by inflated interest rates, so that debts may be inherited, passing from one generation to the next. As many as 15-20 million people may be trapped in this kind of slavery in countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Coercion to work involuntarily — without payment, freedom to leave, or recognition of any rights — takes various forms in the modern world. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines 'Forced labour' as 'all work or service which is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily'. The ILO defines slavery as a form of forced labour and claims

that child labour amounts to forced labour in which the child's work is exacted from the family. An ILO Report in 2005 claimed that about 12.3 million people are in forced labour worldwide; about 2.4 million of them are victims of trafficking, and their labour generates profits of over $30bn. Forced labour is a global problem, in all regions and types of economy. The largest numbers are in poor Asian countries and Latin America, but there are more than 350,000 cases in the industrialised world. One example of forced labour is found in Burma (Myanmar) where the SDPC regime uses it as a systematic policy.

Burma

Burma (Myanmar) is ruled by a notorious military junta with the Orwellian name 'The State Peace and Development Council' (SPDC) — the Nobel Laureate pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has been under house arrest for over 10 years. The SPDC also oppresses the ethnic groups such as the Karen, Karenni and Shan peoples in the east and the Chin and Kachin people in the west.

People are rounded up and used for forced labour in conditions so harsh that many perish. Elderly people and pregnant women are forced to carry heavy loads (up to 30kg) of rice or ammunition for SPDC soldiers from dawn to dusk, with little rest and virtually no food or water. If they grow weary they are beaten and may be killed. Others are used as human minesweepers, forced to walk in front of columns of SPDC soldiers — many perish in the process. Others suffer SPDC policies of sexual exploitation. Well-documented reports give chilling evidence of systematic use of rape as a weapon of war: 'Catwalk to the Barracks' documents the horrors to which many Mon women have been subjected, 'Licence to Rape' describes the ordeal of many Shan women and 'Shattering Silences' is a similarly appalling account of the fate of many Karen women.

A 35-year old woman described her experiences:

> *My husband died or was killed when acting as a forced porter for the SPDC. I was never told how he died or allowed to see his body, but was merely told he had been buried in the forest. Portering could only be avoided or deferred by paying the local commander; if they could or would not comply they were beaten; then, if they still could or would not comply, they were shot. I had to do portering duties twice after my husband's death, leaving my children with relatives while I was away. We started work at 8am and had a 15-minute break at mid-day and then worked until 4 pm. We slept on mats on the jungle floor and soldiers would come at night and take any women they chose for the night (I was not one of them).*

Another form of forced labour occurs where vulnerable people, trapped in poverty in places where unemployment is so endemic that they can see no way out of the poverty trap, are lured by offers of work and a better life to leave home and accept promises which prove to be cruelly false. Once away from home, they may be ruthlessly exploited; if taken abroad they may have their passports taken; they are often subjected to imprisonment and physical maltreatment. Examples of this form of enslavement include those who are lured into prostitution. They are often very young and become 'sex slaves'. Sometimes, their families may sell them to traffickers who may reassure the parents that they will provide a better quality of life for their child. In other situations, husbands, fathers or brothers may force a girl into prostitution to earn money for them to pay off their loans to local moneylenders. Such sex slavery is found in many parts of the world, including South Asia, India and Europe.

Trafficking is increasing of young women from countries in the former Soviet Union to other European countries, including the UK. In the USA, the CIA estimates that as many as 50-60,000 girls and women may be brought in as slaves for sexual exploitation every year. In January social services in Manchester, Newcastle and Birmingham identified eighty children from Africa, China, South Asia and Eastern Europe who were trafficked to work as prostitutes, domestic servants and cannabis farmers. Most of them vanished from emergency care.

> *.....the governments, international organisations, and activist groups that track these flows agree on one thing: the number of people crossing borders illegally today, often in coerced conditions, has no precedent in human history....*

If slavery is to be abolished we need to break the bonds of ignorance, silence, interest, ideology, complacency and complicity. Far too many people are unaware of the examples of slavery — old and new. Nor are they aware that the number of slaves and the types of slavery are increasing, not decreasing. The public must be better informed so it can bring pressure to bear on the media and on governments.

Many forms of modern slavery are not mentioned in some quarters because to do so might upset governments or major international organisations. The refusal of the NIF regime in Sudan and the SPDC regime in Burma to allow international aid organisations to go to large areas of countries where slavery is practised are examples of regimes that are perpetrating major abuses of human rights, while being allowed to censor information about them. The United Nations, despite issuing clarion calls about the fiftieth anniversary of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1998, has failed to reform the UN Human Rights Commission whose recent membership has included Sudan, Cuba, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Syria — five of the ten countries rated the 'worst of the worst' in Freedom House's annual survey of political rights and civil liberties. In 2005 Sudan's membership was further renewed until 2007. Commercial interests and economic investment supports, directly or indirectly, regimes which perpetrate slavery.

Many in the West are unwilling to face a public debate about the practice of slavery in the Islamic world. It is too easy for us to withdraw into our comfort zones and to leave it to someone else to deal with the problem. International companies and governments often turn a blind eye. Examples include oil companies in Sudan — or the inadequate response of many governments, including the British government, or the ASEAN nations who have failed to act effectively against Burma.

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Wilberforce's key assets were publicity, the use of Parliament backed by national and international diplomacy and the power of the British navy. Today we should lobby our MPs, and use campaigning organisations and the information they provide on the internet. (See below)

We now have international agreements and organisations undreamt of in Wilberforce's time. There is the Slavery Convention of 1927 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948. And there are international and national organisations — such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the US State Department which is required by United States Congress to publish its *Trafficking in Persons Report* each year. The most fundamental international agreement is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which was agreed to by all UN members with the solitary exception of Saudi Arabia. Yet many of its provisions, including Article 4 on slavery, are disregarded by many member countries. It is time to call such nations to account and to bring pressure to bear on them to change their ways either within the UN or without.

We should reinvigorate the principle of linkage in national and international policies in which desirable incentives such as aid are linked to progress on human rights. The best known recent examples are the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in the US Congress which linked US trade benefits to the emigration and human rights policies of Communist or formerly Communist countries, and the Helsinki agreements of 1975 between the former Soviet Union and its satellites and the countries of NATO. In what was called Basket 3, there were provisions about individual freedoms which were skilfully used by human rights activists in Eastern Europe, most notably by Charter 77 in former Czechoslovakia, to continually draw attention to violations of these legally binding agreements. The Communist authorities were placed on the defensive and were forced to speak the language of law and due process rather than that of force and arbitrary power. It should be possible to use the principle of linkage in an anti-slavery campaign.

Remember the lengthy and difficult campaign to eliminate apartheid from South Africa? In this campaign organisations of all shades around the world united to bring moral pressure backed by international demonstrations and sanctions to hasten the end of apartheid. Why have we been so silent about slavery? It is as great an evil. We want a similar movement, with backing from both grassroots and governments, to end the scourge of slavery from the world. There could be no better way to celebrate Wilberforce's political victory than to work towards completing the mission to which he dedicated his life.

Baroness Cox and John Marks are the authors of This Immoral Trade: Slavery in the 21st Century, *Monarch Publications, October 2006.*

For more information see:

- American Anti-Slavery Group at http://www.iabolish.com;
- Abolish Slavery - Soon at http://uk.geocities.com/abolishslaverysoon/;
- Anti-Slavery International at http://www.antislavery.org/;
- Set All Free at http://www.setallfree.net/;
- Coalition to abolish Slavery and Trafficking at http://www.castla.org

The YUKOS Case, the Russian State and the West

Vladimir Gladyshev

The recent news from Russia begs the question of how exactly the Russian experiment with democracy went sour. It is clear that the turning point was the YUKOS affair. In 2004, I was invited to act as an expert witness in Bow Street magistrates court. The Russian procurator was seeking the extradition of two former YUKOS managers (properly denied), and UK solicitors asked me to assess the YUKOS tax case for the benefit of the British court. I thus had access to the complete record of the case.

'The YUKOS case' is shorthand for more than fifty spurious tax cases heard all over Russia, complemented by criminal persecution and illegal harassment of scores of innocent people. The huge operation was minutely coordinated personally by Vladimir Putin and was designed to destroy the company and expropriate its assets, while concealing the mechanics of the operation behind a façade of legality. YUKOS was attacked because it was seen as a base for a Western orientated political project hostile to the designs of the KGB officers who ruled and still are ruling the country.

As Henry Kissinger noted, Vladimir Putin came to power as a result of a skilful manipulation of the Russian constitution. Attaining supreme power through internal Kremlin intrigue reinforced Putin's disdain for constitutional democracy and confirmed the ideas current among KGB officers. These ideas are a cruder version of the theories of Carl Schmitt — a law professor in Cologne University in the late 1930s who provided a theoretical underpinning for the contemporary political regime in Russia. They comprise legal procedures as a hypocritical cover for business interests, adherence to the law as being a source of weakness for the state, the supreme leader as the only legitimate source of power, emergency rule as a true manifestation of sovereignty — and especially the sharp distinction of friend/enemy as a basis of political life. Such notions formed the ethos surrounding the YUKOS case.

After the two fateful years that started with the arrest of Alexei Pichug on June 16th and Platon Lebedev on July 2, 2003 and ended with the sentencing of Khodorkovsky and Lebedev in May 2005, the Russian political system has drastically changed. It has evolved into a strange structure resembling Mussolini's Italy and better understood with the help of Eric Voegelin and Astolphe de Custine than by reading any standard text on constitutional law. Its primitive ideology, or rather gnosis, is based on the visceral anti-Americanism implanted in the ruling group during their service in Andropov's KGB.

Before Putin, the Russian state had developed some fair and predictable tax laws and a judicial system that delivered a satisfactory level of judgments. In a memorable phrase of the US Chief Justice John Marshall in *McCulloch v Maryland*, the power to tax involves the power to destroy. Pre-YUKOS, the Russian state managed to develop some judicial safeguards against abuses of this awesome power. The courts took pains to ensure that the Russian tax and property rights disputes would be adjudicated fairly and consistently in line with the principles of the Western legal tradition. The Tax Code, enacted in 1999, incorporated a 'taxpayer's bill of rights'. Important principles were established — presumption of innocence of the taxpayer, a mandatory judicial review for tax penalties — and an opportunity to submit tax assessments to independent judicial scrutiny. All of them were swept away in the YUKOS case.

Of course, Putin's apologists in the West misrepresent Russian law, pre-YUKOS, as primitive and chaotic. For them, the YUKOS case was an opportunity to 'develop' Russian laws that were 'full of paradoxes and loopholes'; the YUKOS judges were not following the dictates of the executive, but rather 'struggling with novel issues'; and blatant arbitrariness becomes 'substance over form law enforcement'. By this device we are told that Russian laws lack objective criteria by which to judge the Kremlin's behavior in the YUKOS case, and the whole problem should be dismissed, to use a historic phrase, as 'a quarrel in a far away country, among people of whom we know nothing'.

The Russian tax authorities suggested that they 'caught' YUKOS after years of hunting. That is not true. A company like YUKOS was constantly and intrusively monitored, with statutory tax reports being met with barrages of requests for additional information, and was subject to more thorough controls than would be customary in Britain. This permanent

audit was helped by the emphasis on openness and transparency that was a distinguishing feature of Mikhail Khodorkovsky's management.

Since the State could not hope to find anything new and dubious, it focused on the company's central trading arrangements that were used by almost every company in the oil industry and were tedious in their normality. The state therefore had to criminalise the company's daily commercial operations as a central line of attack. There are parallels between the YUKOS tax case and the Soviet show trials of the 1930's. According to the legal historians V Kudryavtsev and A Trusov, the surprising feature of the Soviet terror was the contradiction between the obvious innocence of the victims and the obvious lack of interest on the part of the state in establishing the facts. Even the prosecutors did not pretend that their evidence bore any relation to reality. These traditions were repeated in the YUKOS case. During the courtroom deliberations, the YUKOS lawyers repeatedly asked to see the evidence that would back up the accusations, to call witnesses who might corroborate the government's case, to examine the documentary proof, to appoint experts — in short, they asked for the normal course of justice to take place. They were consistently rebuffed. The government just declared the company's liability, and courts, in dozens of cases all over the country, rubber stamped the fiat. Judges who refused to collaborate were purged; in some instances criminal prosecution was threatened. More than once, the government officials who acted as prosecutors were appointed to vacant judicial positions. Pliant judges were decorated and promoted.

The implementation of the judicial decisions was even more scandalous. As the Council of Europe Rapporteur described the process, 'It seems at present that the scenario unfolding before our eyes is the following: YUKOS was first confronted with huge tax reassessments that were made executory in a very short time, through astonishingly rapid procedures in the competent arbitrage courts. The authorities then promptly froze YUKOS' accounts, creating pressure to sell off its assets'. The principal asset was YUGANSKNEFTEGAZ (YuNG)), a company that commands a sea of oil in Western Siberia. The Kremlin, using the judicial process as a cover, fraudulently sold YuNG to itself through a shell company in a rigged auction.

To smooth the way, the Kremlin attacked YUKOS' legal department, and the intimidation culminated in the arrest of Svetlana Bakhmina, who was its virtual head after her superiors were driven out of the company. She had been appointed both because of her sterling professional qualifications and because she was an unlikely candidate for persecution, since in her previous position she was not involved in any high-level decision making.

However, in the end, the identity of the chief lawyer in the Moscow office did not make any difference. The expropriation of YuNG was justified by a tax audit resolution presented some 48 hours before the auction was announced. If YUKOS had challenged the auction and formally asked to suspend it for the duration of court proceedings, the sale would have been more embarrassing to conduct. The solution was to prevent a challenge to the auction by disrupting the operation of the legal department.

Svetlana Bakhmina was arrested on December 7. The auction duly took place on December 19, and YUKOS challenged it only on December 27. No stay order request was presented. Bakhmina was submitted to physical and psychological torture. Perhaps most tragic was the interrogators' refusal to allow her to make a phone call to her family when her three-year-old son was gravely ill. Eventually Svetlana went on hunger strike, which her lawyers begged her to stop since it was clear that the Russian State would rather let her die than allow her to phone her children. In 2006, Svetlana Bakhmina was sentenced to seven years in prison. Judge Korneeva, in her enthusiasm, announced that Bakhmina was to serve her sentence in a special 'strict regime' prison camp — the highest type of punishment which, by law, is not applicable to women. The embarrassed prosecutor promised to rectify this mistake. In a bizarre sadistic twist, a reviewing court publicly advised Bakhmina to apply for suspension of sentence until her small children reached legal age, and promised to satisfy the request. When the petition was presented, the court quickly threw it out.

Ironically, by illegally expanding the powers of the Russian state, Putin delegitimized it. As Beetham has noted, legitimate power is limited power. Power loses legitimacy when the powerful fail to observe its inherent limits. The signs are everywhere — from the widespread cynicism about government institutions to the increasing reliance on Sharia courts in areas with a large Muslim population, seen as the practical alternative to the discredited State courts.

Roger Scruton describes the type of state that is emerging in Russia:

> *A government may be to some extent constrained by law, even if it is able to overrule the law in special cases; it may present itself behind the mask of the constitution, even if the constitution is of only limited effectiveness in reducing its power. The important point is not the extent of the totalitarian lawlessness, but the absence of any fundamental constraint on the central authority, and the assumption that every aspect of society, however remote from the normal*

concern of the government, is one over which the central government can, should it choose, exert control.

The legal action of the Kremlin against YUKOS involved *thousands* of judges, police officers and civil servants in the largest single operation against an internal adversary since the Stalinist purges. All the participants for the prosecution were thoroughly permeated with a cynical attitude towards the legal judicial system. From now on, they justifiably view the Russian state described in the Constitution of 1993 as a giant charade. After expropriating YUKOS' assets and destroying innocent lives, the Kremlin cannot contemplate a democratic change of government without acknowledging its role in the YUKOS operation. Thus, any future national election will or is bound to be a sham.

By acquiescing in the destruction of YUKOS, the West cannot seriously claim either moral superiority or political legitimacy in the challenges that lie ahead.

This case aggravated the degree of corruption, which is now much worse than in the Yeltsin era. As Georgy Satarov, an academic studying corruption and a former advisor to Yeltsin, said in a television appearance, 'During the Yeltsin era, I knew of a couple of cases where the position of a cabinet minister was actually sold for money. Now I know of a couple of cases when they were not'. Mr Satarov has not been seen on TV lately. The underlying cause of corruption is the fact that the Kremlin gave free rein to the comrades who helped it to destroy YUKOS. The surest sign of belonging to the ruling 'élite' in today's Russia is a person's ability to stand above the law in all matters, big and small. The preferred tool for keeping people in line is the threat to withdraw this privilege.

The information landscape has changed for ever. The Kremlin cannot afford to loosen its grip on the principal media, especially TV, and will be forced, by the logic of its predicament, eventually to control all significant information channels, including the internet. Sharing the loot acquired by Rosneft's IPO in London last year, the Kremlin has made the gross indecencies of the YUKOS case acceptable, but only at the cost of condemning Russia to moral devastation, which she is unlikely to survive.

Does this affect the West? Examine the thesis that Phillip Bobbit put forward in his book *The Shield of Achilles*; he argues that the final Cold War settlement was not about territories or armaments — it was about constitutional arrangements. The peace treaty that ended the Cold War was the Charter of Paris, signed in 1991. 'The peace of Paris provides the source of an overarching constitutional order that sets the standard to which all national legal and political institutions must conform.' It lists the rule of law, respect for ownership rights and the creation of an independent judiciary as obligations of all its parties. Breaking the basic precepts of the Charter is the equivalent of the violation of the Treaty of Versailles. By conceding to the Kremlin the right to destroy YUKOS by means of a vast illegal operation, the West is facilitating the destruction of the Cold War settlement.

The YUKOS affair happened at a time when the constitutional foundations of the West are under pressure. The European Union has entered a period of constitutional uncertainty and the concurrent erosion of the legitimacy of national and supranational institutions. The US is engaged in the 'war on terror' that, politically, is predicated on the adherence to the basic precepts of republican government as it has developed in the last two hundred or so years. The YUKOS case is a test of whether Western countries are serious about their fundamental political values.

And it is Putin who does the testing. He does not expect the West to believe his version of the YUKOS case; he is inviting the West to be his accomplice. Note what Chris Patten tells us about his encounters with Putin: Patten asked Putin, during one of the EU-Russia meetings, about an act of terror that had taken place in Russia that day – and Putin lied to him:

At lunch he sat between Javier Solana and me. We quizzed him about this response. He looked us in the eye and repeated the story. It was odd. I had never been so blatantly lied to at a meeting like this. Normally, mendacity comes in a better disguise... We knew that Putin was lying. He knew that we knew that he was lying. He did not give a damn — and we all let him go away with it — on that occasion, and again and again.

When lying about YUKOS, the Kremlin is confident that Western governments are engaged in similar cynical practices and, in the end, would extend a wink and a nod. Western protestations of the rule of law are regarded by the Kremlin as sham accoutrements of Potemkin villages, not as genuine manifestations of core political values. By acquiescing in the destruction of YUKOS, the West cannot seriously claim either moral superiority or political legitimacy in the challenges that lie ahead.

Vladimir Gladyshev is a lawyer living in Moscow

Alexander Stoddart Reimagines Adam Smith for Edinburgh

Andrew McKie

Modern Scotland has a peculiar notion of its geniuses, who have not been in short supply in the past. But dominance in industry and engineering during the expansion of the British Empire all but displaced other aspects of Scotland, just as the subsequent manufacturing decline has swapped innovation, enterprise and Presbyterian self-reliance for dependence on subsidy and chippiness about imagined wrongs done by the English.

So inventors are properly lauded — not surprisingly, given the huge number of everyday items, from television and the telephone to tarmacadam and trains, which came directly or indirectly from Scots engineers. For those who dealt in ideas it is a different matter: the mediocre have been raised up, and the real giants ignored.

For some years now Glasgow has had a dreadful statue of Donald Dewar, a jobbing politician whose claim to fame was having pushed through devolution: giving us a crop of fifth rate political hacks and a real chance of destroying the Union on its 300th anniversary. The immense intellectual achievement of Adam Smith, meanwhile, had no monument in his own country. There was once a sign outside Kirkcaldy, birthplace of Smith (and of Gordon Brown), but the council took it down.

Now the neoclassical sculptor Alexander Stoddart, whose previous commissions have included remodelling the Queen's Galleries at Buckingham Palace with a long Homeric frieze, and a statue of David Hume in Edinburgh — another figure the Scottish political establishment was slow to recognize — has produced a twice-lifesize statue of Smith to stand, appropriately enough, near the capital's old Mercat Cross. It is, as I write, being cast — in Essex — and is expected to be unveiled in the summer.

I went to Stoddart's studio in Paisley last year when the full-sized clay model was almost completed; the sculptor was knocking out bees in clay from a small plaster mould and making adjustments to the drapery. These were, he explained, physical representations of Smith's ideas.

'The great thing for me was coming up with the attributes to incorporate in the design,' he says. 'Here is a plough behind the figure to indicate the physiocratic background from which Smith came — the notion that the wealth of a country springs from the land. In classical myth this is prevelant: one knows that Nestor of Argos is a rich king, for example, because the Homeric epithet is 'deep-soiled', while Odysseus is a poor king because he is from 'rocky' Ithaca.'

Stoddart's studio is crammed with indicators of classicism, including sections of plaster from previous work, with busts of scholars such as Roger Scruton, Robert Grant and David Watkin. More surprisingly, he has produced a bust of Henry Moore, in response to the kind of unthinking art criticism which claims Moore is in the classical tradition. 'It was a way of showing what the classical tradition actually is.'

The plough has been designed to be visible from every point from which the statue can be viewed. 'It juts and

protrudes; it's extensive and insistent, as a reminder that no matter how far we travel into the Enlightenment view of progress, the triumph of markets, the march of reason and so on, we never entirely lose sight of the farm. There is always that homesickness, the investment in the land.' Stoddart acknowledges the power of investment in territory through working it, claiming ownership and inheritance, being buried in it. 'Cremation,' he says, 'is the Communist ideal.'

Before the plough — the old model — is the figure of Smith himself with his hand on a beehive, the new paradigm. 'It is an allusion to the view that private vices bring public benefits and so on,' says Stoddart. 'It doesn't look like a modern beehive, of course, and when Eamonn Butler [of the Adam Smith Institute, which commissioned and raised the funds for the statue] saw it he said, 'What's that?' When I explained what it was he immediately said 'Wonderful. Bernard Mandeville.' I have to say it was a relief dealing with people who understand what you're attempting to do. That's a rare thing with most commissions.'

Stoddart has found the Smith project a welcome contrast with many of his previous projects. 'I have to say it was a very efficient procedure. We discussed the whole question of how I might go about the work, then I had a small study budget to produce a model. After that I just started the piece itself. It was a paradigm of how public sculpture should be done. There was no committee but a recognition that the sculptor knew his business; funding quietly followed. Lady Thatcher wrote a letter calling for its support, and a good deal came from America.' One major donor was the late Milton Friedman.

Unlike Hume, Smith is not a pure classical sculpture. 'Hume is a philosopher and since perennial questions are their concern he could be stripped of sartorial trivia and presented in an entirely classical form,' says Stoddart. 'Smith has a more quotidian remit — notwithstanding the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which is a great work. But through economics he trucks with the world, so he wears the world's coat. Fully modern clothing is a difficulty, though. The key struggle in a sculptor's career is the battle against trousers.'

To avoid the dangers of a costume piece Stoddart provided drapery with an academic gown over the shoulder. It reminds us that Smith was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow and provides a lovely touch by covering his hand. Ralph Harris, who refused to have a coat of arms drawn up when he was ennobled because heraldry could not represent the invisible hand, might have liked this solution.

'Drapery also literally supplies gravity to the piece because it illustrates the way the cloth would be pulled to the ground,' Stoddart adds. 'It's very important for a statue to have gravity; drapery provides the grand outline, the seriousness, which modern statues, because of modern clothing, can't. The interior can be surrendered to the trivia of costume, but there must be no dynamism.'

'There's a revolting modern, lifesize statue on the pavement in the Royal Mile, cast as if the subject were walking along. So of course people shove chewing gum up its nose. That's the vulgarity of thinking we must relate to a statue. We don't relate to it; it's moronic, chavvish Blairite drivel. The statue has a *cordon sanitaire* in its plinth. We wander around in our modern dynamic clothing while the statue stands above us, aloof, chaste, unmoving, to underline the difference between our pathetic, trivial lives and his stupendous achievement.'

Hence also Smith's stern outlook. 'He has a serious demeanour because he is designed to be eternal. Only idiots smile when no one else is about,' says Stoddart with obvious contempt. 'A smile would also be fake. This statue is not about advancing Smith's economics or his world view, it's about recognising his greatness. It isn't a party political broadcast; a smile on a statue cheapens it, it says 'Hey, vote for me!' As if Smith would stand there saying 'I'm on Cameron's team — or Brown's.'

This statue is not about advancing Smith's economics or his world view, it's about recognising his greatness. It isn't a party political broadcast; a smile on a statue cheapens it, it says 'Hey, vote for me!'

When it is *in situ*, there will be two views of the statue. From what Stoddart calls the temporal side, the background will be the City Chambers. The coat and waistcoat and braid and the other fripperies Stoddart dislikes will be to the fore. 'That will probably be the one people like, because they can imagine themselves in those kinds of clothes. This is the worldly view. But from the other side, with the drapery, the statue stands against St Giles Cathedral; this is the transcendent aspect. It reminds us of the empathy and compassion, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* side.'

Stoddart has made his own allegiance clear by ensuring that the invisible hand, cloaked by the academic gown, creeps into the material side. 'And I found that private vices — the desire of Smith's advocates for this statue — do supply through the invisible hand a kind of welfare, a virtuous welfare,' Stoddart concludes. 'In this case, keeping Sandy alive by putting bread on his family's table.'

Andrew McKie works for The Daily Telegraph

A World First for Scotland?

Tom Burkard

Throughout the Anglophone world, educators take it for granted that around 20 per cent of their pupils will spend 12 years in school without learning to read. The human misery that lies behind this statistic can scarcely be imagined by those who have not endured the daily humiliation of colouring in worksheets designed for 'dummies'. Nor can many people fully appreciate the daunting task faced by secondary school teachers who are expected to 'differentiate' the curriculum for the benefit of children who can barely read or write.

Yet we have known for some time that all children can be taught to read with a method now known as *synthetic phonics*. Schools like Woods Loke in Lowestoft and Kobi Nazrul in Whitechapel have been doing this for years — and Kobi Nazrul serves one of Britain's most disadvantaged areas. As I wrote eleven years ago, 'If education were a private enterprise, [these schools] would be crawling with industrial spies'. Instead, Sue Lloyd and Ruth Miskin — the teachers responsible for these outstanding results — have campaigned tirelessly, with precious little result. All the while, the DfES staunchly defended its own National Literacy Strategy, a dog's breakfast consisting of every fashionable idea ever to emerge from an education college. With breathtaking mendacity, they deflected criticism with the claim that 'synthetic phonics is at the heart of the NLS'. And so it was, buried so deeply in a web of conflicting teaching objectives that few teachers ever noticed it.

The DfES defended the NLS to the last. But the evidence for synthetic phonics was so overwhelming that even the *Independent* and the *Observer* were convinced. The House Education Committee found against them. And finally, Tony Blair — who has experienced the benefits of synthetic phonics in his own family — struck. He elevated Andrew Adonis, his chief policy adviser, and made him a Schools Minister. In June 2005, Education Secretary Ruth Kelly — clearly speaking through gritted teeth — announced that synthetic phonics would replace the old NLS. She appointed Jim Rose, a former chief schools inspector with a reputation for handling educational hot potatoes, to head a commission to study the matter. When his interim report was released in November 2005, there was great jubilation amongst the doughty warriors who had fought for so long against the sheer stupidity of a system that needlessly tolerates a failure rate of at least 20 per cent. Contrary to what many of us had feared, he did not fudge the issues.

Although the NLS has now been replaced by a new Primary National Strategy which more accurately outlines the methods employed by synthetic phonics teachers, it would be foolish in the extreme to expect the DfES to implement this with any real enthusiasm. Patronage is still firmly in their hands, and the teachers who developed synthetic phonics have not been given significant roles. It is rather as though Napoleon had been asked to draft the Treaty of Vienna in 1815.

Fortunately, it looks as though the DfES will be outflanked from the North. This year, the impoverished Scottish authority of West Dunbartonshire is expected to announce that *all* children leaving their primary schools will have a reading age of at least 9½. To put this in perspective, this is good enough to read anything in the *Daily Mail* (or, since the Barclay brothers took over, almost anything in the *Daily Telegraph*). Reading scores beyond this age are mostly a measure of verbal intelligence. A child with a reading age of 9½ should be able to read a sentence like 'Civil servants occupy powerful positions in governing the country's affairs'.

In a recent Centre for Policy Studies booklet I explained that eliminating reading failure across an entire local authority is an astounding achievement. The Clackmannanshire synthetic phonics project — which provided much of the ammunition that blew apart the old NLS — only involved an experimental group of 200 pupils in five schools. Clearly, it is one thing to achieve outstanding results on a small scale, when talented teachers can ensure a high fidelity of implementation, but it is quite another matter to do the same thing across an entire education authority. Especially when you have to convince everyone from the council leaders down to the lowliest teaching assistants that it is *not* normal for at least 20 per cent of your pupils to fail, and that all children from dysfunctional homes *can* be taught to read.

This kind of change cannot be enforced from above. Dr Tommy MacKay, the consultant psychologist who engineered the West Dunbartonshire miracle, distinguishes between 'restructuring' and 'reculturing'. The former is the stock-in-trade of managerialists the world over, and it rests upon the illusion that improvement is merely a matter of technocratic competence. Reculturing, on the other hand, is the

process by which people come to question the sort of beliefs mentioned above. It can only be achieved through leadership. Leaders inspire their colleagues by example, whereas managers tell their subordinates what to do. On top of this, Dr MacKay had to overcome all of the usual difficulties encountered in large bureaucracies, the 'friction' that upsets the most carefully-laid plans — matters like staff-turnover, competing demands of other initiatives, and breakdowns of communication.

He could never have done this but for the relative freedom of local authorities in Scotland. Typically, the Scottish executive will ask local authorities to draw up plans for dealing with problems, whereas in England the DfES stubbornly persists in thinking that it can always determine 'best practice', equally applicable in Hampstead, Hackney, Henley and Hull. Although many DfES policies are 'advisory', careers are not advanced by ignoring their advice. The freedom of LEAs in England is further constricted by central control of spending; possibly no more than 5 per cent of local authority spending is determined locally.

The full significance of the West Dunbartonshire miracle has yet to be fully appreciated in Scotland, let alone England or Wales. It has passed virtually without notice in other Anglophone countries. This should not surprise us: for as long as I can remember, educators have been announcing miraculous results for their initiatives — and where are they now? I recently bought an old paperback which excitedly extolled the virtues of 'open education' — schools without internal walls, where children wandered from one activity area to another as they pleased. Teachers, and the general public, can be excused their scepticism.

Nonetheless, Britain is blessed with unusually perceptive education editors and journalists, and the significance of West Dunbartonshire is beginning to sink in. A few correspondents who questioned me about my Centre for Policy Studies booklet were puzzled: was I suggesting that the DfES was wrong to promote synthetic phonics? It was not an easy question to answer, for we have all been gulled by the technocratic myth that change can be centrally directed — and most people wrongly assume that synthetic phonics is nothing more than a return to traditional methods. The teaching materials we produce are vastly more sophisticated and efficient than the rough-and-ready phonics used in the immediate post-war era. If, in 1950, the government had presumed to decide 'best practice' in the automobile industry, we would still be driving Ford Populars. Progress comes from competition, not consensus. In 20 years, we expect that our current books will look as outdated as a Ford Cortina does now. There are a lot of very good synthetic phonics materials on the market, with considerable differences in approach — and we need healthy competition to make them even better.

The next step is to stimulate competition to convince other Scottish authorities to work for a 'World First for Scotland'. This would set a precedent that could no longer be ignored, or dismissed as a fluke. Moves are now afoot to galvanise the political nation behind this objective. Dr MacKay's miracle came cheap, at about £13 per year for each pupil, and in years to come huge savings will be realised as the cost of 'special needs provision' dwindles. There is absolutely no excuse for any local authority — anywhere — that does not attempt to do as well or even better. And the only way they can do this is to ignore the armchair experts in the DfES and employ the people who have proved that they can do the job.

Tom Burkard is Director of the Promethean Trust

Reflections on J S Mill

Anthony Daniels

Mill's most celebrated work (most celebrated nowadays, that is, not necessarily in his own lifetime) is his short but eloquent tract, *On Liberty*. Mill is an exemplary writer of prose, in that his style is exactly suited to his purposes; he says what he has to say, and then stops. His clarity is not merely a stylistic quality, but a moral one: nothing would be more alien to him that to evade criticism by resort to obscurity. Physiognomy is not a science, though all of us resort to it (for if we are not to judge by appearances, what are we to judge by?), but I do not think anyone could look at George Frederick Watts' portrait of Mill in the last year of his life and not conclude that he was a man of equally deep intellect and character.

But *On Liberty* is a troubling book, especially for conservatives who believe that conservatism is more than just low taxes and the corollary of low taxes, small government. The latter is necessary, of course, but not

just that taxes may be kept low.

The most famous principle enunciated in the book is the following:

> *...the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection.*

In other words, you can do what you like so long as it does not harm others, or harm them very much. This is the fundamental principle of political philosophy.

It can be seen how easily this principle can be turned into a warrant for licentiousness, of many different kinds, when it is applied in a simple-minded and egotistical fashion. No man could have been less licentious than Mill, who was in many ways a product of puritanical protestantism. It is true that he formed what in his day would have been regarded as an irregular liaison with the woman who later became his wife, but Mill was so much a Victorian that he could not really envisage a time when the fundamental structure of family relations would be undermined to the point (in a large part of the population) of demolition, and in which mass abandonment of their children by fathers, for example, would occur. In any case, Mill's principle of liberty quite explicitly did permit irresponsible fathers, much as Mill was in favour of what he called 'experiments in living'. Here is what he has to say on the subject:

> *The fact... of causing the existence of a human being, is one of the most responsible in the range of human life. To undertake this responsibility — to bestow a life which may be either a curse or a blessing — unless the being on whom it is to be bestowed will have at least the ordinary chances of a desirable existence, is a crime against that being. The laws which, in many countries on the Continent, forbid marriage unless the parties can show that they have the means of supporting a family do not exceed the legitimate powers of the state...*

Mill did not foresee that 'experiments in living' — what one might call the existential supermarket — would result in mass bastardy, and mass abandonment of paternal responsibility: he was too much the Victorian to do so. But in individual cases, he was quite clear: a father who did not support his child should be made to do so, even — if necessary — by forced labour. This is not the message that most people remember who have read *On Liberty*, probably because they do not want to.

Where, I think, most conservatives would agree with Mill is in the final section of the book, on Applications. Here Mill is a better prophet than in previous sections of the book. He discusses, with considerable imagination, foresight and accuracy, the effect of the extension of the powers of government into ever more aspects of the population's life. His concern is not so much economic, though he is well-aware of the economic consequences of excessive governmental interference, but on the character of the people once they have abandoned their responsibilities to, or had them removed by, the government. In other words, his principal anxiety is cultural and psychological, rather than economic.

Mill tells us that, even where people do not arrange things well for themselves, it is nevertheless good that they should do so, because it is in this way that they may strengthen 'their active faculties' and improve their judgement. 'Without these habits and powers, a free constitution can neither be worked nor preserved, as is exemplified by the too-often transitory nature of political freedom in countries where it does not rest upon a sufficient basis of local liberties.'

Most importantly, Mill says (and he could have been writing of the Britain of today): 'Every function superadded to those already exercised by the government causes its influence over hopes and fears to be more widely diffused, and converts, more and more, the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers-on of the government, or of some party which aims at becoming the government.' Of course, what for Mill is a fear is a hope for government; and it must be confessed that, so far in century and a half since the publication of his book, the tide has been all against his hope.

Mill has profound and prophetic comments on the bureaucracy that an active government must needs create:

> *Under this regime not only is the outside public ill-qualified, for want of practical experience, to criticize or check the mode of operation of the bureaucracy, but even if the accidents of despotic or the natural workings of popular institutions occasionally rise to the summit a ruler or rulers of reforming inclinations, no reform can be effected which is contrary to the interest of the bureaucracy... The Czar himself is powerless against the bureaucratic body: he can send any one of them to Siberia, but he cannot govern without them, or against their will... the governors are as much slaves of their organization and discipline as the governed are of their governors.*

In a small way, I have seen this precisely borne out in the hospitals in which I have worked. Respected and intelligent doctors, who talk in a normal fashion and use language properly, have a sense of humour and a knowledge of human nature, immediately become mental zombies, apparatchiks or slab-faced members of some invisible politburo, once they agree to join the administration of the health service as it is at present

constituted, usually under the misapprehension that they can make a difference.

Let us continue with Mill, for he said if not all, then a great deal, of what needs to be said about the condition of Britain today:

> *... the absorption of all the principal ability of the country into the governing body is fatal, sooner or later, to the mental activity of the body itself. Banded together as they are — working a system which, like all systems, necessarily proceeds in a great measure by fixed rules — the official body are under the constant temptation of sinking into indolent routine, or, if then now and then they desert that mill-horse round, of rushing into some half-examined crudity which has struck the fancy of some leading member of the corps...*

And Mill grasps, what so many of our politicians do not want to grasp because it threatens their power and self-importance, that good public administration requires not a large, but a small body of men:

> *If we would possess permanently a skilful and efficient body of functionaries — above all a body able to originate and willing to adopt improvements — if we would not have our bureaucracy degenerate into a pedantocracy, this body must not engross all the occupations which form and cultivate the faculties required for the government of mankind.*

I doubt whether this have ever been better said. And Mill understands that if you treat people as children, they will behave like children; and if as slaves, then as slaves. He doesn't touch on the bread-and-circuses nature of modern Britain, or predict the childishness that has resulted in so much loss of self-control over appetites of every kind, but none of this would have surprised him, given the usurpation of all the serious business of life by the government.

Not that Mill is straightforwardly or crudely against all governmental activity. He recognises that some kind of balance must be struck, that it is a delicate and shifting balance, and is not fixed once and for all:

> *To determine the point at which evils, so formidable to human freedom and advancement, begin, or rather at which they begin to predominate over the benefits attending the collective force of society... to secure as much of the advantages of centralized power and intelligence as can be had without turning into governmental channels too great a proportion of the general activity — is one of the most difficult and complicated questions in the art of government... no absolute rule can be laid down.*

In other words, judgement must always be exercised: but judgement is precisely what the present time-servers and opportunists of all our political parties lack, precisely because they have no interest in having it, rather the reverse.

What we need is a Reform Act in reverse, a subject to which I shall return.

Anthony Daniels is a practising doctor

How to Kill a Dissident

Boris Volodarsky

I am a former Soviet intelligence officer and an expert on special operations, including operations abroad. This is how an assassination such as Alexander Litvinenko's murder in London would be planned by the Russian intelligence service, now called the FSB. Every operation starts with the order — written or verbal — and this task must be clearly formulated. A task may be simple like the one given to FSB Lt Colonel Alexander Litvinenko in 1998 to go and kill Berezovsky. It was a clear order in spite of the fact that Boris Berezovsky was a deputy chairman of the Russian National Security council at the time. To murder him would have been easy, despite his bodyguards. A much more complex job is to murder somebody on foreign soil, especially in a free country such as Britain (it would be much simpler in any former republic of the Soviet Union or any country of the former Warsaw Pact).

In response to this order, I would write an operational plan that must be approved by my commanding officer in writing. This senior officer will be at least the chief of the department. In the former KGB it was Department 8 (assassinations on foreign soil) of Directorate S (undercover operations) that was in charge of the so-called 'illegals', the agents and officers who operated abroad under assumed identities. The most recent example of a Russian illegal was a man identified as Paul William Hampel who posed as a Canadian subject. Hampel, who was arrested in Canada just before the Litvinenko operation to the great embarrassment of

the Russian intelligence service, confessed and was expelled to Moscow. The Russian media did everything to silence the case as the Hampel story was developing in November 2006, when Sasha Litvinenko was already dying in hospital.

After the department chief approves the plan, it goes up and is finally presented to the President by the Director General of the service. In this case, it would have been Sergey Lebedev presenting the operational plan to Vladimir Putin. Under normal circumstances, the President may be spared the necessity of knowing the details. He would be given a document that would say: 'A dangerous enemy of our country will be eliminated on the territory of a major adversary. The plan of the operation has been studied and signed by appropriate senior officers. We are seeking your approval.' The document is classified 'Top Secret' and there will be only two copies. Later, one will go to the presidential archive that is never opened to the press or public, and the second will be filed in the foreign intelligence archives with the stamp 'Never to be declassified'.

The operational plan will consist of three main parts and will include the aim of the operation, the target, the country and the participants. It will also specify the time necessary to prepare such an operation plus, of course, the weapon. It will be assigned a codename. While the operation is being prepared, the special laboratory will be given orders to develop a weapon. This may be a special weapon as in the cases of Nikolai Khokhlov, Bogdan Stashinsky or Georgi Markov, or a poison. The last case is well known — a prominent critic of the Zhivkov regime, Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian dissident, was killed in London in 1978 by a ricin-poisoned pellet shot from an umbrella. The poison and the special weapon were produced and delivered by Soviet foreign intelligence while the operation itself was carried out by Bulgarian colleagues. Khokhlov's and Stashinsky's stories have been less publicised.

In 1954 an officer of the Special Tasks group, Nikolai Khokhlov, was sent to West Germany to organise the assassination of a Russian émigré. He was given a silenced gun with poisonous bullets masked as a cigarette packet. Khokhlov refused to fulfil the order and defected to the West. Three years later he was poisoned by the KGB in Frankfurt am Main. It was discovered that radio-activated thallium had been used. This was the first recorded case of the Soviets using a radioactive substance as a clandestine weapon. In 1957 another officer of the same group, Bogdan Stashinsky, was sent to Germany to murder one, and then in 1959 another, prominent Ukrainian anti-Soviet émigré. Stashinsky killed them both using a special pistol that fired lethal gas. If Stashinsky had not defected, we would never have known that these people died of poisoning. The doctors diagnosed natural causes.

It is important to bear in mind that a tailor-made poison is created by the special laboratory individually for each particular case, the only constant feature being to ensure that the victim's death or illness appears natural or at least produces symptoms that will baffle doctors long enough to delay proper treatment. In Litvinenko's case the poison was a tasteless jelly which contained a lethal dose of radioactive polonium-210. If Alexander had died as planned after about two weeks of undiagnosed illness, as he would have done had he not been a keep fit addict, we would never have found out what caused his death and no one would ever have heard about him or his case again.

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To return to the three-part plan, the first part would include choosing the participants and planning an approach to the target. I would choose somebody whom Alexander trusted, who worked with him or with his patron Boris Berezovsky and — ideally — who had suffered from the Russian authorities. For me, Andrei Lugovoy would be an ideal figure. He is a former KGB officer (Department 9 — personal guards) who later served in the FSO (Federal Protection Service), once or twice acting as a personal bodyguard to Berezovsky, at that time a high-ranking Russian government official. When Lugovoy left the FSO, Berezovsky invited him to head the security service of his TV channel. Lugovoy also maintained good relations with Badri Patarkatsishvili, Berezovsky's business associate who lives in Georgia. When approached by the SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service) Lugovoy would recommend his two best friends with whom he had studied at military school, Dmitri Kovtun and Vyacheslav Sokolenko.

Kovtun, who might have been recruited as a KGB informer for the Special Department (Soviet secret police watchdog in the army), served first in the Czech Republic and then in East Germany. After the collapse of the Soviet Union he decided to stay in Germany and was granted political asylum. He soon married Marina Wall. After several years he divorced his wife and returned to Russia. Sokolenko, as far as is known, also served in the FSO, as a commissioned officer of the Soviet and then Russian security services. Lugovoy's great advantage is that he is quite young, not stupid,

though under-educated and not too intelligent, and had been in a Russian jail for several months accused of preparing the escape of a business associate of Berezovsky. In the autumn of 2005, Lugovoy, who had known Litvinenko since 1998 but had not had any contact with him since Sasha defected to Britain with his family in October 2000, suddenly called him in London suggesting a meeting. It is not very difficult to understand where Lugovoy got Litvinenko's mobile phone number and how and why he had suddenly become a successful businessman.

In January 2006 Lugovoy not only re-established personal relations with Berezovsky, who now lived in London, but was also invited to his former boss's birthday party where he was introduced to Marina Litvinenko. During this one year Lugovoy visited London twelve times. His only business here was Litvinenko, as Lugovoy speaks no foreign languages and has no known entrepreneurial abilities.

Part two was the operation itself. It started with a small test. On 7 October 2006, the famous Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was shot dead in the lift of the apartment block where she lived in Moscow. The PR experiment began. First, Western governments barely reacted to the violent death of a prominent critic of Putin, a prize-winning journalist of international fame, and an American citizen. Secondly, within seven days the Russian media either completely forgot about Politkovskaya or started to call her 'a traitor and an American spy'. *La commedia era finita* — Putin and his chief Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov concluded that they enjoyed unlimited power. The go-ahead was given for the London operation to enter its executive phase.

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In every professional operation there are always Plan A and Plan B. Ideally, there are also several groups of players, a cover team and one or two cleaners to clean the room after the liquidation is over. Both scripts would be rehearsed and rehearsed again several times with every second measured and all video-filmed by the trainers. Only a professional and well-trained officer would be trusted to administer the poison while others would divert the attention of the victim and be used as a smokescreen. In any intelligence service the final rehearsal is conducted with combat weapons in a situation as close to real as possible. In the Litvinenko case, it would have been then — most probably on 15 October 2006 in Moscow — when Lugovoy and Kovtun operated with real polonium-210. There would have been no need to bother to tell them that it was radioactive.

Next day, 16 October, both Lugovoy and Kovtun came to London. The aeroplanes that brought them here and, three days later, took them back to Moscow were found to be contaminated with polonium as was the London hotel where they stayed. During the meeting with Litvinenko, where Kovtun was introduced to Alexander for the first time, both 'Biznesmeny from Moskva' were given the task of collecting some background information on certain Russian businesses and business people who were planning a serious deal in the UK. A similar commission Litvinenko received himself but decided to share it out, giving a small part to Lugovoy, a major part to his acquaintance Yuri Shvets, a former Soviet foreign intelligence officer now living in the USA, and keeping the remaining part of the job for himself Since his friend, KGB-FSB General Anatoly Trofimov, had been machine-gunned in Moscow in April 2005, Sasha did not have any reliable source within the Russian security services. Lugovoy returned to London on 25 October to report the results. Litvinenko found them to be very poor. No wonder: the documents were concocted by the FSB. Shvets and those he worked with wrote a much more impressive report. In London, every place visited by Lugovoy tested positive for polonium-210.

On 28 October Kovtun left Moscow for Hamburg. Though the Russian authorities refused to provide the aeroplane that took him there for testing, his car and every house that Kovtun visited in Hamburg showed radioactive traces. On 30 October, Evgeny Limaryov alias Eugenio Lomov sent an e-mail to Mario Scaramella, an Italian lawyer and an adviser to the Mitrokhin Commission of the Italian parliament: it contained a false warning claiming that the lives of Paolo Guzzanti, chairman of the commission, and of Scaramella himself were in danger. On the following day, when Scaramella was due to fly to London to take part in a conference of the International Maritime Organization, he received a second e-mail from Limaryov informing him that a sinister Spetsnaz instructor was in Naples masterminding the attack on Guzzanti and Scaramella and on Berezovsky and Litvinenko. Limaryov begged Scaramella not to show this sensitive document to Berezovsky's people and above all, not to former FSB operative Litvinenko. As expected, as soon as Mario arrived in London, he phoned his friend Sasha.

If asked which day of the year 2006 would be the best for a special operation, I would say 1 November. On this day the soccer club CSKA Moscow, representing

the Russian army, played a final in London with Arsenal. Obviously, many people came from Moscow to see the match. A perfect pretext. All the participants were in place: the day before, Lugovoy, his wife and children, and Sokolenko arrived from Moscow. Mario Scaramella arrived from Naples. Kovtun arrived from Hamburg. I would send the killer by a separate route on a neutral set of documents – Latvian, Lithuanian or Austrian, for example. It is important that such documents should not require a British visa and not be registered at the entry point.

It would be logical for Lugovoy to call Litvinenko early in the morning to arrange a meeting. Nothing unusual. I would call it Plan A and would prefer Lugovoy's hotel room as an ideal location for a deadly meeting. Why? There are no CCTV cameras or microphones and the victim is alone with the murderer and his assistant. I would also say that I could hardly have selected a better hotel than the Millennium Mayfair. During two previous meetings, Lugovoy and Kovtun stayed in two luxury hotels not far from theBerezovsky's London offices. This time it was a modest one just yards away from the well-guarded US Embassy on Grosvenor Square. It must have seemed perfectly secure to Alexander, who expected to meet Lugovoy alone. Something of a pattern had been established as he had met him quite regularly during that year.

It would not be too difficult for a professional killer to enter the hotel unnoticed. He should then have proceeded to Lugovoy's room, where they both waited for Sasha to arrive. If I were on such a mission, I would not speak much. Rather, I would introduce myself as Lugovoy's business associate from Moscow named, say, Vladimir (like Lenin or, better, Putin) and sit quietly in the corner while the two discuss their business. In the middle of the talk I might suggest serving a cup of tea (everybody knew that Litvinenko drank only tea) and would do it pouring from the hotel thermos or teapot. Once the tea was drunk by the victim, my mission would be over. I would immediately leave London on a different set of documents, preferably going by car or train.

There are only two ways to deliver such an extremely sensitive thing as this poison to any destination outside Russia. It is either the diplomatic bag or a Volna (wave) channel. While the first is absolutely clear, the second involves the captain of an Aeroflot 'plane. The poisonous jelly would most certainly be sealed in a glass capsule and placed in a container. It would be left for me in a dead drop by an officer of the illegal support (Line N) group from the SVR London station in the Russian embassy.

After the operation based on Plan A was successfully completed, I would tell Lugovoy and Kovtun that Plan B could be abandoned. At the same time, Litvinenko would meet Scaramella, who is not only part of a wide-scale cover-up operation but a future victim himself. As we know, Litvinenko met Mario at 3 pm at the Itsu sushi bar opposite Burlington Arcade on Piccadilly. Frightened to death, Scaramella showed Limaryov's messages to his Russian friend and immediately received an intelligence evaluation from a security professional.

'This is shit', said Sasha.

Boris Volodarsky is a former Soviet intelligence officer and an expert on special operations.

Failing Physics

Christie Davies

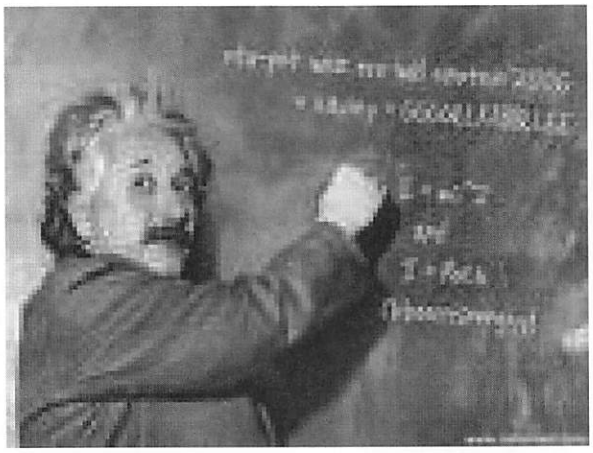
I know two people guilty of seriously failing physics. One is me and the other is Tony Blair (with a lot of help from Dr Gordon Brown). Let me tell you about mine first, for it was instant and obvious and not as in Mr Blair's case drawn out and fudged.

I can still remember the December morning on which I failed physics. Like many other candidates for a university place, I had obtained three grade As at A level in science subjects, including physics, and a grade A at S-level. The Colleges were faced with the problem of how to choose between us and so I had to stay on an unwelcome extra three months at school and sit the December scholarship examination. No prominent enemy of science took an interest in me, as Dr Gordon Brown quite improperly did, when he spluttered that it was 'an absolute scandal' that a Miss Spence of deepest Tyneside with three As had not been offered a place at Oxford. Dr Brown added with a display of the innumeracy that had characterised his entire Chancellorship that she had 'the best A-level qualifications you can have'. What business was it of his, anyway?

The last of the four papers that I sat in the scholarship examination was physics. The previous three in

mathematics, chemistry and essays and translation had been straightforward. Then came physics. I could not answer a single question on the paper. Indeed I could not even understand what the questions were about. I tried for three hours to answer each question in turn and failed to answer any of them. It was not a case of 'deferred success', nor of only just missing a pass but of total abject failure, end of the road failure. The doors of the Cavendish were slammed in my face and quite right too.

I trudged back to lunch and said to the candidate sitting opposite me, tucking into the fat-and-gristle left-over cold meats of a traditional College lunch, that I thought it had been a difficult paper. 'I thought it was rather easy,' he replied courteously. He won an open scholarship and I received a letter telling me that I had failed physics — disastrously. I could have blamed my worthy but obscure school in a decaying, provincial town or cursed the perfectly competent man who taught me physics, but I knew the truth. I had got to the point where I was no longer good enough to continue with physics. I lacked the necessary innate ability to do so. Most failure is like that, something educationalists refuse to recognise. Failing people is the most important task education has, for only in this way can we be assured of the competence and quality of the others. An examination that everyone passes has no meaning.



Tony Blair has also failed physics, if in a different sense. He has destroyed it as part of his policy of Education! Education! Education! Since he came to power, seventy science departments have been closed and 10 per cent of all single honours degree courses in science discontinued. It has just been confirmed that the prestigious Physics Department at my local university is to close because it has been losing something of the order of £500,000 per annum for many years. I do not blame the University for closing this much respected department. I blame Tony Blair — hypocrite. He is constantly telling us that education is important if Britain is to have a competitive, knowledge-based economy, providing the world with sophisticated products and services. He has done nothing to bring this about and productivity in Britain lags well behind France and Germany. Some will say Blair is a liar, as in the case of the Iraq war. Some will say he is a fool, as in the Iraq war. In fairness the truth is probably a bit of both.

When Tony Blair proclaimed 'education, education, education' (what I say three times must be lies) he did not mean that the subjects pupils and students were intended to learn and know would be either useful or a worthwhile part of a liberal education — and physics is both of these. He meant that the government would spend a very large amount of taxpayers' money forcing reluctant children to remain in school learning nothing in particular, and for half of our young adults to proceed to tertiary education to place unthinking bums on costly seats. They emerge even less fitted for gainful employment than they were before and just as devoid of high culture — including physics. That is why it is possible to have an education budget that rises mightily year on year but for science departments regularly to be closed. It is called socialism.

The reason that physics departments get closed is that they have no students. They have no students because serious science teaching within the state secondary system has largely collapsed, and because schoolchildren choose to take other subjects which they see as more congenial, less demanding, more 'rellyvent' (contentious). Physics has declined in school along with mathematics, German and Spanish. Some 'knowledge economy'! At university level some degree subjects can be said actively to prevent progress towards a knowledge economy, just as they undermine the very basis of a liberal education, either because they deny the very possibility of reason and knowledge or because they deceive students into thinking that learning how to deploy an abstract, 'critical' vocabulary constitutes analytical thinking. Yet these are the subjects which students choose because this is the culture that led to Tony Blair in the first place. Physics isn't like that and students don't take it. The government is making noises, setting up committees and plans to deal with the 'crisis in science'. None of it will have any effect.

Yet there are two practical, available solutions but which happen to be ideologically unacceptable to our hegemonic educational establishment. The first is to reintroduce selective schooling on the basis of general ability and to insist that these schools have a *broad* curriculum but one also rich in mathematics and science. The second is to provide financial incentives to able students who are willing to study mathematics and physics, both at school and at university, which

will not be available to those choosing other subjects. Mathematics and science are a necessary part of a liberal education and vital to an understanding the world. You cannot merely pick them up on your own and you have to begin them seriously when you are quite young. It does not matter that very few of us are ever going to be employed as mathematicians or scientists. We live in a quantitative-knowledge based economy and the skills that have been acquired can be applied in any vocation, scientific or not, by those who are willing to study mathematics and physics.

These solutions would work but they involve recognising aspects of reality that our educational ruling class are not willing to consider. The first is that individuals differ immensely in innate ability. Many people can't do physics at all and very few people can do it really well. I learned the latter when I failed the physics scholarship exam. Physics sorts people out much more decisively than most other school subjects. What is worse for the progressive-minded, it also sorts them out in a very politically incorrect way by gender and ethnicity. All this is so unmentionable that the educationalists have agreed that it is better to let physics founder and thus destroy the evidence.

The reason that physics cannot be taught properly in most comprehensive schools is that it is impossible to segregate those who are capable of studying it and give them the proper intensive teaching that they need, not just from the age of 16 but from the age of 12 or even much earlier. You have to spot the bright ones young and give them a sense that they are special as an incentive to getting them to master something difficult. This raises another nasty question for educationalists — why do people work hard to achieve knowledge in the first place? Children study difficult things for many reasons and not just because of their intrinsic interest — coercion by adults, to obtain esteem, or because it brings financial rewards. In any case, these are the main forces that make adult society work and it is absurd not to make full use of them within our schools and colleges. Physics can only be made attractive by segregating bright students at a young age in a relatively small institution providing a broad and demanding education. At the moment we are in the absurd situation where the government is willing to shell out £30 a week to worthless students to study worthless subjects if they will stay on at school after the age of 16, rather than leaving and doing a proper job that contributes to the economy. Why waste funding on those who are learning nothing? Would it not make more sense to channel this money into providing living allowances and expenses for students in selective schools, with the corresponding penalty that should you prove to be persistently lazy or occasionally violent, then you will be kicked out and lose the allowance altogether? It is no different from the work for money bargain that most people make in the market place. Why should schools be any different?

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When orderly schools with keen and intelligent pupils have been set up, there will be no difficulty in recruiting good mathematics and science teachers and teachers of modern oriental languages for them. At present those who have a background in mathematics and science and a gift for communication can always find more attractive jobs than teaching an undesired subject in a chaotic school where the pupil's culture is working against them. Even if such a job were well paid who would want to do it? Who believes those mendacious advertisements showing keen and joyful pupils strung alongside the escalators on the London underground? The big lie is the pretence that these pupils want to learn.

Yet they did once. My father took his first degree in English Literature but during the great depression he agreed also to teach basic mathematics, in order to get a job at all. He turned out to be good at it. When the second world war broke out, having a perforated ear-drum, he joined the ATC (Air Training Corps) to teach mathematics including trigonometry and allied subjects such as aeronautics, which he had to learn from the old black and yellow *Teach Yourself* Books. He was teaching younger teenagers the basic mathematical skills they needed, in order that when at the age of 18 they were conscripted into the RAF to become pilots, navigators and air crew generally, they would be able to go straight into learning their fighting skills, without having to waste more time on mathematics. My father mastered entire areas of mathematics of which he had previously been ignorant out of a sense of patriotism. If he had not been such a good teacher, many of those lads would be alive today. His students worked hard because they shared that patriotism — they were motivated.

In the twenty-first century young people have no such desire for selfless struggling with difficult things. Given that stick has been irrevocably abolished, carrots must be provided.

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain, *New Brunswick NJ, Transaction, 2006.*

Not as Safe as They Think?

Michael St John Parker

The independent schools of England appear to be in fine fettle — full of pupils, rich in facilities, and apparently applauded (rather wistfully in most cases,) by some two thirds of the population. But are they really so secure?

It was very different in the 1950s. We called them 'public schools' and enjoyed the bewilderment which this manifestly absurd usage caused to visiting Americans. (The expression 'private school' was a term of art, used by those in the know to denote their proprietary junior school.) They were the acknowledged apex of the English educational system, and were slavishly imitated by the grammar schools which served the aspirant, as opposed to the established, classes.

But if the schools liked to be described as 'public', they were hardly popular. Their premises frequently resembled barracks, or even prisons, and their denizens were required, in the interest of character formation, to endure living conditions that were sometimes barbaric. Their classics-bound syllabuses seemed irrelevant, and their manners snobbish, to a society which was preoccupied with the possibilities of technology and the prospects of egalitarianism. Traditionally they had been training grounds for an imperial ruling class; but the Empire was disintegrating, and the mood of the times was the reverse of imperialistic. And as for their morals! — publishers' ante-rooms were crowded with embittered Old Boys competing for a chance to expose the homosexuality, sadism and general depravity that had scarred their tender years.

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So unpopular were the public schools in the immediate post-war period, that few informed observers would have bet much money on their chances of surviving to the end of the century. The Labour party was committed to a policy of abolishing such nurseries of class privilege. The Conservatives, uncertainly seeking a middle ground, applauded the compromise of the Direct Grant System, which made subsidised places available at many of the ancient grammar schools, while slinking away from confrontation on the fate of the indefensible establishments where most of their MPs had been educated. The end of the public schools seemed to be nigh.

Threats can stimulate the bold to action, and there were some, like the dynamic Donald Lindsay, Headmaster of Malvern, who were prepared to attempt a counter-offensive. Lindsay led a resolute group in a publicity campaign which corrected misrepresentations and highlighted the best qualities of the public schools. The methods employed by these valiant activists might seem naïve to the spin-doctors of today, but they were advanced for their time. They included a deliberate abandonment of the tainted label 'public' for the schools, and insistence instead on the use of the word 'independent', with its connotations of objectivity and uprightness. A remarkable rehabilitation followed. With skilled guidance from a talented journalist, Tim Devlin, the press, both local and national, changed its tone from one of automatic, sneering hostility towards independent schools, and became, if not respectful, at least interested. The politicians began to adjust their policies to a shift in public opinion thanks to ISIS, the Independent Schools' Information Service, in the later 1960s and 1970s.

Paradoxically, the most powerful fillips received by the independent sector in the last quarter of the twentieth century were administered by Labour party policies. The flawed idealism which brought about the destruction of many good grammar schools and secondary modern schools for the sake of a 'comprehensive' theory that turned out to be a catastrophic failure, followed by the abolition of the Direct Grant Scheme in 1975, drove masses of anxious parents into the arms of the independent schools, and hugely invigorated their previously failing economies. The reinforcement brought by the Direct Grant schools — almost all of which shunned state control in favour of full independence — was particularly dramatic; their academic strength, broad social base, and traditions of involvement with their local communities all acted directly to enhance the image of the independent sector.

When the Thatcherites of the 1980s rediscovered enterprise as the mainspring of economic success, their gospel was nowhere more popular than among the reinvigorated independent schools. Headmasters restyled themselves as Chief Executives, 'marketing'

became a buzz word, demand-led syllabuses replaced the classical rigidities, and the pursuit of excellence began to be proclaimed in terms of examination results. In this world, endeavour was to be rewarded by affluence, rather than esteem — and since affluence encouraged investment in staff and facilities, further success was likely to follow. It was not always a pretty process, but it was true independence in operation. By the 1990s the performance of the independent sector had outstripped that of the state sector to an extent which was seen as scandalous — so much so, that new waves of guilt were generated among the perpetually puritanical ranks of schoolmasters, and voices were raised in the Head Masters Conference proposing a new concordat with the state.

When New Labour took power in 1997 under an ambitious leader who had been given a flying start by his scholarship-aided education at Fettes, education was proclaimed as its leading priority. The charismatic charm which Blair had deployed to persuade the Socialists to drop Clause Four was equally effective in dropping the policy of abolishing independent schools. Indeed, New Labour announced its willingness to operate a mixed economy, and occasionally even applauded the excellence of the independent schools. The Prime Minister ostentatiously proclaimed his regard for his old housemaster in an advertisement aimed at attracting recruits to the teaching profession. Liberal minds in the independent sector were delighted — the end of hostilities seemed to be in sight.

The flawed idealism which brought about the destruction of many good grammar schools ... drove masses of anxious parents into the arms of the independent schools, and hugely invigorated their previously failing economies

But the chalice of reconciliation contained a drugged drink. As the price of friendship, the government insisted that there must be convergence between the practices of the two sectors. Common standards must apply in areas such as employment, health and safety, and the care of children. The earlier efforts of Conservative Education Secretaries like Kenneth Baker to improve the quality of teaching, and to bring a coherence into the curriculum of state schools, were developed into an over-arching and increasingly prescriptive regime of supervision that eventually covered schools of every sort. And the examinations system, which had already been subjected to Procrustean tortures by well-meaning Conservatives, was further adjusted to ensure that all products of the state schools could secure the same results as those of the independent schools. Most of these moves towards central management were warmly welcomed, at first, by guilt-ridden *Guardian*-readers within the independent sector.

Inspection was bound to play a central part in the state's campaign to take control of independent education, and here again, with the wisdom of hindsight, the schools were too trusting. They remembered that their predecessors had taken leading parts in establishing the Victorian Inspectorate, as they had in developing public examinations; by the late twentieth century the Inspectorate was in decay, and over-taxed HMI's were willing to ignore independent schools with adequate reputations. In the heady years of Thatcherite prosperity, it was sensible for the independent sector to collaborate with the government in setting up a new inspection scheme of their own — the origin of today's Independent Schools Inspectorate. But New Labour took advantage of this obvious *point d'appui*, working stealthily to ensure that ISI complied with the requirements of the state, as expressed through OFSTED. Criteria of marginal relevance are now enforced on independent schools, at enormous cost — a full inspection of a fair-sized school can cost well over £20,000, which has to be found by the (tax-paying) parents at the time of the inspectors' visit.

With every round of inspection, the burden of regulation increases. Staffing — the true heart of the independent school offering — becomes more sclerotic by employment law, by rulings on maternity and paternity leave, and by instructions about race, sex and age discrimination. Religious commitments which have been regarded as the *raison d'être* of many independent schools are treated coldly by a state machine which is often overtly secularist and sometimes covertly politically biased towards non-Christian faiths.

The latest threat to educational independence takes the form of the unsavourily named 'Sexual Orientation Regulations'. These purport to prevent discrimination against homosexuals of any sort in the 'provision of goods and services'. They could entail a requirement not only to employ people whom they have previously considered unsuitable for work as teachers, but also to give equal prominence in their curricula to homosexual and heterosexual practices and preferences. Individuals who wish to claim that their 'dignity has been violated' at school because of their sexual orientation will be entitled to bring actions for harassment. These regulations are already being fast-tracked in Northern Ireland, and have just come before the Westminster Parliament. Will the independent schools challenge them?

Pressure to conform comes not merely from the 'collaborationist' tendency within the independent sector. But more worryingly still, the cumulative effect

of state action over the last two decades has made it impossible for schools to contemplate independent action, simply on grounds of expense. It is easy to advocate the setting up of independent examining systems, but the cost would be staggering. Still more prohibitive are any attempts to fight for exemption from legal requirements imposed by Westminster and backed by Brussels — or vice versa. Who would pay, if not the already hard-pressed parents of independent school pupils?

The status of the independent schools has changed fundamentally, perhaps irreversibly. They are no longer truly independent, but are regulated, and directed, by a state machine which treats them like mercenary auxiliaries were treated by eighteenth-century kings The changed relationship has been reflected in a subtle, but significant, alteration of nomenclature. The government no longer employs the designation 'independent' — the schools are described as 'private'; it is a word implying a clientage which many of those in the independent sector seem happy to accept. What's in a name? Sometimes, a great deal. Independent schools could lay claim to charitable status as of ancient right; private schools could all too easily be cast as unacceptable manifestations of commercialism.

With hindsight, we can see that parental demand encouraged the independent schools into the bear-hug of the state in the 1980s and 1990s. Anxious parents sought the safety of government approval for the practices of their children's schools, ambitious parents wanted the validation of state-sponsored league tables for their children's examination successes. The price of regulations has been a critical loss of freedom.

There are signs that over-regulation is proving to be self-defeating in the state sector. The government's own Implementation Review Unit, commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills to examine the effects of bureaucracy on schools, has recently warned that red-tape is strangling the educational process. The absurdity of the targets has been exposed by the revelation that two out of three secondary pupils nationally fail to achieve the modest requirement of a sound GCSE pass in English and mathematics — and as many as 26,000 in each cohort are not even taking these subjects. Grade inflation has been recognised as a reality, and the much vaunted league tables seem about to be effectively discarded.

There might be some compensation for the pain of these failures if parents were liberated to choose the schooling that they wanted for their children. Matching educational approaches to pupils' needs, — often involving the dreaded word 'selection' — has been recognised by Ruth Kelly. Now the efforts of less well-placed parents to find good state schools are to be thwarted by lottery methods of allocating places. Meanwhile independent schools seem content to compete with each other in pricing themselves out of the reach of ordinary families.

Even when the state shows a willingness to review its mistakes, the independent sector seems perversely disposed to dig a deeper hole. Christine Gilbert, the Chief Inspector of Schools, has advocated the segregation of the sexes to achieve the most effective teaching; meanwhile, the independent schools are jostling each other in their haste to become co-educational.

Hardline opponents of state schooling used to look forward to the day when the system would collapse under the weight of its inefficiency, leaving the independents proudly intact; but that presumed a degree of difference which no longer exists. It is difficult to detect any real evidence of support for the principle of independency among the political and opinion-forming classes. The fudged outcome of negotiations over the educational sections of the new Charities Act leaves the independent sector vulnerable at various points; a Brown government might make these schools a burnt-offering to the Left, much as the Blair government did with the foxhunters. Nor is there much comfort to be had from the official Opposition: the utterances of the Cameroons on education only illustrate that Notting Hill is closer to Islington than it is to Witney — there is much soft emotion, but little hard substance or principle. Nick Gibb, Shadow Minister for Schools, said in a recent interview that 'our policy is not skewed in any way towards the independent sector' — which meant, that the Conservatives intend to concentrate entirely on assisting the state sector.

The status of the independent schools has changed fundamentally, perhaps irreversibly. They are no longer truly independent, but are regulated, and directed, by a state machine which treats them like mercenary auxiliaries

The Blair legacy in education seems likely to be a dangerous and unstable mess — and in such situations, the best sometimes suffer along with the worst. Will the 'private' schools go the way of the King's German Legion at Waterloo? Or will they summon up the vigour and willpower to recover true independence? In any case, they may not be as safe as they think.

Michael St John Parker was Headmaster of Abingdon School

Letter from Tanzania

Merrie Cave

In the Autumn 2006 issue, Mark Baillie reported a few glimmers of hope coming out of Africa. In the same month the *Economist* described Tanzania 'as an African country that deserves the money it gets. If Tanzania can haul itself out of poverty, others can too'. *Newsnight* recently ran a film about mobile phones empowering people in Kenya. Certainly when we visited Tanzania last autumn we saw how cell phones help ordinary people in Tanzania, particularly small businessmen and market folk. Cutting out the middleman is now possible. Altogether this country is slowly climbing out of the hell that it experienced during the Nyerere years. When our friends returned in the early nineties after 25 years of exile in London (*v SR*, Vol 9 No 4 and Vol 12 No 2) everybody walked around with their eyes on the ground and was generally living in fear. A member of the family remembers when he returned to Tanzania after a decade or so in Eastern Europe he had all his clothes stolen on the beach while he had a swim, such was the desperate need for basic clothing. These days everybody seems cheerful even when they are living in abject poverty. In 1985 after thirty years of empty rhetoric and the consequent ruin of his country, Nyerere was eased out by the international establishment and replaced by Mr Mwinyni who liberalized the economy. Things did not really start to improve significantly until Nyerere's malign presence was removed in 1999.

On our first visit in 2004 we were surprised to find signs of economic health like garden centres and a good standard of restaurants in Dar es Salaam, the capital and the main tourist centres. This time (2006) the main change was a chronic traffic problem. Obviously the economy has grown and a great many more people have cars. The rudimentary road system cannot cope with the huge increase in the volume of traffic. It can take three hours to get from the centre to the outskirts — a distance of about eight miles. The long suffering Tanzanians seem to bear this manfully; I never saw one instance of road rage during our time there. A complete overhaul and new additions to the road system are necessities — at the end of the bad years even the tarmac in the centre of Dar had been pulled up. The authorities are very keen to extend the tourist sector and to offer locations other than the Ngorongoro crater, Mt Kilimanjaro and the Serengeti plains. The southern half of the country has Selous, the biggest game reserve in Africa and the second biggest in the world. Very few tourists visit the area because the infrastructure is so undeveloped — it takes eight hours to get there, a journey of only 225 kilometres from Dar. A four-day package in the south costs the same as a six-day package in the North. Investors need to put their money into hotels and also raise money to provide decent roads and other facilities.

The new President, Jakaya Kikwete, was elected at the end of 2005 with 80 per cent of the vote and already people are very excited about his record so far. He is obviously a skilled survivor of the Nyerere years and was known as the man who always smiled. 'Have you noticed', he asked his colleagues, 'I am no longer smiling.' He has visited the Kariakoo market in the centre of Dar to talk to the traders, an event unheard of for politicians. No government minister had ever talked to an ordinary person let alone a President. He also visited a traffic black spot near the Mwenge bus station and talked to people about the problems. He has announced a big fight against corruption as well as poverty and unemployment and certainly in only six months the taxation returns have doubled. A newspaper magnate has started an anti-corruption newspaper in which readers can report on gross cases of corruption in their district. Already a reform of the police force has taken place; hitherto a private driver could earn more than an ordinary policeman. Kikwete is committed to eradicating mismanagement in the public service and is keen to pay civil servants who engage with the public much more. He is dismantling the State Security system; he retired the Head of Security and changed many of the senior officials. Hitherto the CCM (the governing party) and the administration were not separate. The law which allowed parliamentary

candidates to offer hospitality to their electorate has therefore been repealed. Nearly all the opposition parties support the President's reforms.

The ruling establishment realize the importance of education. In Dar there are private schools mushrooming everywhere but many have a poor quality of teaching. We visited an excellent all-age school with traditional British teaching but it was fee-paying, modest, of course. Let us hope Tanzanian educators never get wind of our disastrous progressive theories. Colleges are independent of the government but there are not enough secondary schools and trained teachers. There has been a declining trend in infant mortality in recent years but it is still high. While treatment for malaria is more effective, it is still a bigger killer than AIDS. One million adults in Tanzania are HIV positive so many children are orphaned as a result and their numbers will increase rapidly. Less than half of rural households have access to clean sources of drinking water. 'It tortures our women,' remarked Kikwete. He promises to double access to water by 2010.

The task is huge; the ordinary tourist who flies into one of the game parks where the facilities are of a very high standard or who visits the beautiful spice island of Zanzibar, or the businessman in Dar where there are plenty of banks, telephones and commercial facilities has no idea what most of the country is really like. In his book *Dark Star Safari* Paul Theroux describes a journey taken by train from Lake Victoria to the capital with graphic descriptions of the empty bush landscape and remarks that not much has changed since Livingstone or Speke tramped this old slave route, nearly two centuries ago. We saw for ourselves numerous villages without water or power; indeed it seemed the same as when the Germans arrived. A prosperous middle class only comprises one per cent of the population and already the gap between the haves and the have-nots is growing. Until the problem of rural poverty is solved — and this applies to all African countries — there can be no real progress. In Tanzania most people in the country have no land rights as 80 per cent of the land is still state-owned. There is no affordable credit because interest rates are too high while banks are unwilling to take any risks. All along the main roads there are shanty towns — another sight unknown to the tourist. Obviously this informal economy keeps many people going but at some point it will have to be regulated. Paul Theroux describes meeting an educated man who worked for the Land Use Department in agriculture helping farmers make money by growing viable crops. In Tabora for example there were many small tobacco farms, but mismanagement and corruption by government agents and a drop in the price ruined the farms and the farmers returned to subsistence farming.

There is not much talk these days of the wicked colonialists and many people are aware that forty years of aid has left people much worse off except for African dictators' with their Swiss Bank accounts. Incidentally, Graham Hancock's book, *Lords of Poverty,* the brilliant exposé of aid policies, was on sale in all the bookshops I visited. Theroux avers that outsiders should not be doing jobs that Africans could do and that there is no concept of volunteerism or labour intensive projects. He describes donors, volunteers and bankers as agents of subversion. Peter Bauer would have appreciated that comment. Our hosts constantly repeat their favourite mantra: only Africans themselves can make a real difference to their nations.

Merrie Cave is our Managing Editor

The Wages of Nobility

Jonathan Tokeley

There seem to be three ways of coping with sex-offenders. With finding yourself in a sex-offenders' prison, that's to say. The first is to keep very quiet, on the assumption, I suppose, that it's the safest stone for you to be under. And having seen how efficiently a plastered arm was stomped and re-broken — in the exercise yard at Wormwood Scrubbs, and under the turnkeys' gaze, their gentle Nelsonian gaze, though nobody knew it belonged to a sex-offender, or not officially, and nobody knew it'd been 'ghosted in' after death threats — well, yes, I'd tend to agree.

But there is a second way. And that's to make a lot of noise, on the assumption that the others will give you the benefit of the doubt. My sex-offenders' prison was certainly noisy. But that was hardly surprising. The governors, or the system, or the bloody-minded gods, had remembered something useful. They'd remembered their childhood, and how they'd mixed red ants with the black. And they'd remembered the proportions. They'd taken a sex-offenders' prison, and added a quarter who weren't. Less than a quarter, you see, and run-of-the-mill criminals would pose no

threat to the sex-offenders. They'd be outnumbered. More than a quarter, and they'd have felt no need to make it so abundantly clear that they weren't the three-quarters. And they — the three-quarters — would've felt no need to ring the same changes.

Yes, somebody had discovered the Golden Mean. My three months of 'Induction' were three frenetic months of floor-show. Everybody was pretending to be somebody else. I've never met so many drug-barons and big bad bank-robbers. The only people who weren't lying were the Jamaicans, but they'd only raped white chicks, which was OK. It was *quid pro quo* for colonialism. Oh, and the date-rapists who weren't rapists at all, just stitched up by ex-girlfriends, or one-night girlfriends with regular boyfriends to appease. Which was also OK. Or almost.

And the Third Way? That was quitting the zoo altogether. Doing this by the book meant working your way to the 'D' Cat wing, where the windows were open, the doors un-locked, and salvation was close on hand, the imminent prospect of release. Reaching this haven, however, took eighteen months. Many never made it at all, and nobody had done it faster than a year. But there were other ways, it seemed. Call them privilege and panache, for now. Or call them Lord Brockett and Barry the Drug-Baron.

Had he shown leadership, had he grasped what Sandhurst had taught him — the duties of rank, rather than its privilege — he'd have done much that was good. And maybe something that was noble.

Now I never met Charlie Sprockett, as they called him. I never shook his hand. But I studied his performance, and I have to say it disappointed. I'd hoped for something better. With his advantages of rank and style — for his crime was stylish, after all, and prisoners appreciate such things — and they've an atavistic yearning for well-bred insouciance, for Raffles and the rest — he could have been immensely popular. Had he shown leadership, had he grasped what Sandhurst had taught him — the duties of rank, rather than its privilege — he'd have done much that was good. And maybe something that was noble.

What he actually did was Flashman. It was the same sad blend of funk and fanfare. He arrived as a 'vulnerable prisoner' — his own assessment, it seems — and was put on 'A' Wing, the place they hid the hard-core paederasts, the aged and infirm, and the occasional bent-copper. For a man of ordinary courage and pride, this could only be a disgrace. If nothing else, the staff and inmates were agreed about that.

And then his demeanour. He became slovenly. He let himself go dirty. This may have been a ruse — and yes, it might have worked on 'Get me out of here, I'm a Celebrity'. But Littlehay was a sex-offenders' prison. It was a place that demanded dignity. And it hardly went with his contempt for the 'peasantry', as he called the rest. And nor with his adopted companion, a bent-solicitor who was ever on hand to threaten the legal odds. As a form of bullying, by the way, this proved surprisingly effective, especially against the staff. It ensured Brockett privileges. But it hardly endeared him.

But Sprockett was not courting popularity. His sole concern seemed to be ensuring his own comfort. And about this he was commendably efficient. He rapidly obtained his 'D' Cat, for example. But not by serving the requisite time, nor by doing the requisite courses — by 'addressing his offending behaviour', in the argot. Oh no, none of that. He simply had a couple of fellow Lords come visit, the next day 'questions were asked' in the house, and his 'D' Cat appeared with unseemly haste.

But it was his famous pillow that caused the most derision. He later claimed he'd carried it for months, as a defence against the inevitable attack. Of course, there never was a pillow. The very idea was preposterous. He'd have been stopped at the first gate. And there never was an attack. And nor was there a wound. Well, there was a scratch upon the noble cheek, but the staff assumed it a shaving cut. It served its purpose, however, for Barbara Cartland was on hand to raise the hue and cry — 'for his immediate safety' — and have him shipped to an open prison. Exit Flashman on a Harley Davidson.

I did know Barry, however. That's to say, like all the rest, I knew about him after he'd gone. It was the manner of his leaving that caused us to know. It was so very special. One day he'd been behind the servery in his immaculate whites — a man of relaxed but powerful presence, the sort you took care to be on good terms with. The next he was gone over the fence, and all hell had broken loose. The helicopters were racketing a hundred feet above, and their searchlights were probing the fields. And Barry was on the ferry to Spain (he kindly sent us a postcard).

Now Barry was — well, he had been — serving seven years for something to do with drugs. He'd entered as a 'C' cat — which meant he was relatively harmless — but after a fortnight he was upgraded to 'A' cat — which meant officially dangerous. At this point, according to the rules, he should have been shipped to a high-security prison. And immediately. Instead of which he appeared behind our servery. Yes, on the 'D' Cat wing, the open-prison within the prison!

But he didn't grace us with his presence for long. Another week, and another trial looming to sequester

his assets, and his associates climbed in from outside, bearing good cheer, a firearm, and a sizeable spanner. They unscrewed the window guard in a matter of minutes, Barry shook hands with his friends — and myself, to my surprise, since we'd never exchanged a word — and they were gone into the night. And without disturbing the night-guard, who was safely ensconced with his telly.

All this was interesting. It relieved the tedium. But there was more to come. When the police interviewed me, three days into their investigation, they were still unaware that Barry was 'A' cat, that he'd been transferred — against all the rules, and outrageously — to the one place where escape was feasible. The prison had somehow omitted to mention the fact. I advised the police to check some bank-accounts, and not the inmates' ones.

And if we were to compare these two, the eighteenth century ennoblement, and the modern commoner? For prison allows of such judgement. It removes the modern distractions, that so confuse our moral sense. It shows us the man, stripped down and simplified, much as the army does, or any prolonged course of danger.

Both these men had bucked the system, had refused its constraints. One had acted with a boldness that would have seen him ennobled in the eighteenth century (if only to ensure he was on the inside pissing out, rather than outside and pissing in, to quote a later stylist). By contrast, the other had used his rank to avoid any boldness whatsoever. In this sense, therefore, I'd have to favour Barry, as by far the better man, whatever the criterion; whether inner-strength, or character, or the ability to bind others to his will. Barry is the man I'd have chosen as my officer. The man I'd have turned to in a tight spot.

All of which recalled my first squadron leader, himself a Sword of Honour, and a Royal Hussar. He'd once remarked, *sotto voce*, that the army still had pockets of bad officers — notably the cavalry and guards — officers who were selfish and ambitious, who put themselves before their men. Oh yes, they'd be exposed in a prolonged campaign. They'd simply disappear, and others less schooled in self-display would take their place. But it would require a prolonged campaign to flush them out. Or a sex-offenders' prison, I might have added, had I but known...

Jonathan Tokeley is the author of Rescuing the Past. The Cultural Heritage Crusade (see review on page 38)

Agatha Christie and the French

Sophie Masson

Something odd is going on. In her home country, the writer who, death, J K Rowling and Dan Brown notwithstanding, is still the world's most popular author, is disregarded by the literary establishment, if not by ordinary readers. Agatha Christie's classic status is surely no longer in doubt, with *two billion* copies of her books still in print thirty years after her death, but in Britain it's not enough to save her from being patronised — even by her literary-world fans — as a mere creator of 'cosy', ingenious puzzles, whose work 'lacks art'. Sometimes it seems that if you are a self-respecting member of the modern British literary world, you should hide a predilection for Christie, or at the very least, apologise for a taste for 'slumming it', not in the mean streets, but in — these days — much more despised bourgeois 'cosy'.

Across the Channel in France, however, it's quite a different story. There, she is highly respected, not only as a writer of consummately clever detective stories, but as an artist of rare gifts and distinction, worthy of serious study and acclaim. Not only do Christie's books sell four times as many copies in France as in Britain these days, but her work is championed by intellectuals and writers. Controversial writer Michel Houellebecq — who considers Christie to be one of the finest writers of the century — is only the latest to do so; others have included the late philosopher Roland Barthes and the French-American doyen of literary criticism, Jacques Barzun. Pierre Bayard, a professor of literature at the University of Paris, typifies the French approach to Christie in his 1998 book, *Qui a Tué Roger Ackroyd*? (published in English in 2001 by Fourth Estate as, naturally, *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd*?). In a daring *jeu d'ésprit* worthy of Christie herself, Bayard re-examines Christie's groundbreaking novel, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, and asks if Poirot could have got it wrong. This is the trigger for an unusual exploration of reading, and a detective story on the art of the Christie detective story itself: a fitting tribute to the intellectual brilliance and pleasurable artifice of a genius of popular art.

What can possibly explain this disjunction between French and British reactions to Christie as an artist? First, it is clear that the French, like the Americans, have always taken popular art much more seriously. Whether

it's, say, the work of Tin-Tin creator Hergé, the films of Alfred Hitchcock, or the books of Agatha Christie, the French have always been well ahead of the critical game. Second, Christie's distinctive combination of gifts — her light touch, plotting unpredictability, clarity, playful intelligence, sense of the ridiculous, economical but elegant style, the lightning vignettes of social comedy coupled with a paradoxical, underlying macabre sense of dread — appeal particularly to the Cartesian mind. French critics don't seem to resent the way she springs surprises, as all too many British critics seem to; the French *expect* the author to be cleverer than her readers, and delight in the intellectual challenge. Third, and perhaps most important in the context of our time, it seems to me that current British critical dismissal is very much a product of a shift in middle-class cultural attitudes. Far from reflecting a cosy, insular Little Englander mentality, as all too many British critics seem to imagine, Christie's work actually reflects a confident, middle-class cosmopolitan sensibility, more common in Britain before, say, the 1960's, than now.

These days, in Britain, cosmopolitanism has long been replaced by earnest multiculturalism, which is not at all the same thing. Multiculturalism in the Anglo-Saxon sense is not popular in France, where it is perceived as a threat to the one and indivisible French republic. But cosmopolitanism has long been something the French intellectual has prided himself or herself on, since at least the time of Voltaire. And so France has, willy-nilly, retained a kind of sensibility which to modern British eyes may well seem 'old-fashioned'.

In her personal life, Christie was far from being insular — her American father, frequent stays in France, other European countries, and the Middle East, and her second marriage to a cosmopolitan intellectual saw to that. She certainly knew far more about the world than her critics like to admit.

Of course, in her fiction she does indeed play with 'Englishness' but in rather more surprising ways than English critics generally give her credit for. It's true that the 'Englishness' of her books — the slightly fantastical, stylised, larger-than-life never-never world she creates — is exotic and charming to foreigners. But in the past, especially pre-1960's, British critics seemed to enter into the fun — they did not seriously entertain the idea that the world Christie created was meant to be social realism. They understood it was an artifice, a kind of modern fairytale setting, but with all mod cons, as it were. But modern British critics, brought up with more literalistic expectations of the realism of detective fiction, wince at what they take to be an 'old-fashioned' view of both the English and foreigners, and keen to promote other, more politically correct or expedient views, want to dissociate themselves from it.

Moreover, it seems to me that the 'Englishness' of Christie is very much overstated by embarrassed English people. The author actually casts a very cool eye indeed on her own culture, and her own people. This is especially so in the Hercule Poirot novels. There is a common view in Britain that Poirot represents a caricatured *English* view of the French, or at least Francophones, remembering Poirot's Belgian origins. But in my view, this could easily be turned around: what to an English eye might look like defects may very well, to a French eye, be seen as qualities. If Poirot is to be seen as a type at all, he could very well represent an archetype beloved of the French *themselves.* He is worldly, sophisticated, highly intelligent and logical, with a Cartesian clarity of thought. Fastidious and elegant to the point of dandy ridiculousness, but also a *bon vivant* who greatly appreciates good food, comfortable surroundings, and beautiful women, he has a superb Gallic self-confidence, even *braggadaccio* at times. He also has a touch of melancholy — he is essentially solitary — and a touch of the mysterious, almost otherworldly. Yet he is very much of this world: his name itself holds that paradox, with the mythological *Hercule* juxtaposed with the solidly bourgeois *Poirot.*

Above all, Poirot is cosmopolitan. He does not try to 'blend in' but enjoys his status as a foreigner long resident in England — both outsider and insider. He is often derided as 'ridiculous' and 'a mountebank' but always puts egg on the faces of the tweedy Little Englanders who do not take him seriously. We see England through his eyes as much as he is seen through English eyes; and it is he who unerringly goes to the heart of the matter, and never his English detractors. How delicious it is for French-speaking readers that it is the 'little grey cells' of a Francophone detective who should solve all these knotty cases and totally rout all these English criminals and English bigwigs and policemen!

But it's not just the fun elements of Christie, as relaxing and pleasurable to the mind as a Gershwin song, or a Baroque harmony, which appeal to French readers. In Michel Houellebecq's novel *Platform,* the narrator, also called Michel, spends two pages describing the 'Dickensian sense of wonder' and the 'magisterial portrayal of despair' which Christie evokes. Houellebecq takes seriously her exploration of human character. This goes against the grain of received British wisdom, which consistently mocks her characters as being 'cardboard'.

French commentators rarely criticise Christie's characterisation, whether because they believe, like

Jacques Barzun, that the traditional 'bourgeois novel of character', with its emphasis on 'Protestant' struggles with conscience and inwardness, is a poor, indeed, dangerous model for detective fiction (which he considers essentially to be an art form of its own, away from the novel), or because, like Houellebecq, they actually think Christie gets her characters right. They like Christie's understated, minimalist approach to characterisation, which gives the reader an airy space in which to construct their own understandings. Coming from a Christie, one can feel suffocated by the sheer humourless mass of psychological and other detail in the work of many of the most admired detective fiction writers these days.

Like Hitchcock, Christie believes that the Devil is in each of us — and that he may well find the whited sepulchre of hypocrite convention a more congenial abode than most.

It's not that Christie *isn't* interested in character. Character, to her, is *everything*, —it is what elucidates the mystery of *why*, as much as who, or how. But her fiction is animated by the deep-seated conviction that 'all the world's a stage' — that people play roles, in life as much as in art. Her characters seem like types because they *are* playing roles, conventional roles. Murder disrupts not 'order', as British critics patronisingly assume, but the roles people play. The detection reveals the evil hidden under the reassuring mask of respectability, the suffering hidden under the careless manner.

Like Hitchcock, Christie believes that the Devil is in each of us — and that he may well find the whited sepulchre of hypocrite convention a more congenial abode than most. But also like Hitchcock, she never lectures you about it — she lets you draw your own existential and metaphysical conclusions. It's a restrained approach that goes down well with French critics, who love the opportunity that's thus opened, to speculate endlessly on the philosophical meanings and unpredictable possibilities of the Christie canon — right up to asking, like Professeur Bayard, as to whether the author herself was tricked by the *real* murderer of Roger Ackroyd!

Sophie Masson's latest novel is Malvolio's Revenge, *Hodder Children's Books UK, a theatrical murder mystery with a hint of the supernatural, set in 1910 New Orleans.*

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Conservative Classic — 25

The Political Novels of Anthony Trollope

P D James

Anthony Trollope regarded the *Barchester Chronicles* novels and the *Palliser* political series as his two finest achievements and the Reverend Josiah Crawley, the hero of the first, and Plantagenet Palliser, later Duke of Omnium and Prime Minister, as the two most memorable characters. Trollope was interested in politics all his adult life, but in setting out to use contemporary politics as a leitmotif he was aware that readers might too easily be bored, as indeed some of the critics were. Accordingly, all the novels in the series have strong narratives interwoven with the political life they portray, including characters who usually, but not always, have some relevance to Trollope's principal concerns. Of these characters, the Irishman Phineas Finn, is the most attractive, and his entry to the House of Commons, his failures and successes and his fluctuating emotional involvements dominate two of the novels, *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux.*

Trollope had the highest opinion of the importance of the virtues, the privileges and the obligations of those with political power, and in his *Autobiography* wrote that 'to sit in the British Parliament should be the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman'. But his attempt to enter Parliament in 1868 at the age of 53 was as unhappy as it was unsuccessful. He stood at Beverley as a Liberal although he described himself in the *Autobiography* as a Conservative-Liberal, which he regarded 'not only as a possible, but as a rational and consistent phase of political existence'. He would thoroughly approve of the middle-of-the-road Liberal policies of the present Tory Opposition. It is difficult not to think of him as a Conservative. The Barchester series of novels is largely concerned with the values of the country as opposed to those of the town and his authorial preference for the high church Tory Archdeacon Grantly in the Archdeacon's campaign against the Whig evangelical Bishop Proudie is evident. The disaster at Beverley was not unexpected. Trollope knew that he had no skill at public speaking and he could ill-afford the £400 in expenses, which

he paid before returning unsuccessfully to London. At Beverley he made plain his views about the conduct of the election. 'There was something grand in the scorn which a leading Liberal there turned up his nose at me when I told him that there should be no bribery, no treating, not even a pot of beer on one side.'

The political world portrayed by Trollope is one in which breeding, particularly aristocracy, and money take precedence over ability. No one either then or now would suppose that Lord Silverbridge, although an agreeable and well-meaning youth, would have had a chance of winning the Silverbridge by-election had he not been the heir to the Duke. Then, as now, aristocracy opened its gates to the beautiful and talented, and the handsome and agreeable Phineas Finn was accorded support and privileges, particularly through the influence of women, that a less well-endowed man would certainly not have enjoyed. When Mr Gresham is forming his Cabinet, the plebeian Mr Bonteen's elevation is effectively blocked by Glencora, Duchess of Omnium, an implacable enemy who took trouble at a dinner party to ensure that Bonteen 'talked largely and with indiscretion.... and, in the presence of all who were there assembled, made himself an ass', offending 'all those feelings of official discretion and personal reticence which had been endeared to the old duke by the lessons which he had learned from former statesmen and by the experience of his own life.'

Similarly the Duke of St Bungay, like other aristocratic Whigs, had 'something of the feeling of high blood, of rank, and of living in a park with deer about it.... There must be Bonteens, but when any Bonteen came up who loomed before his eyes as especially disagreeable, it seemed to him to be a duty to close the door against such a one, if it could be closed without violence. A constant, gentle pressure against the door would tend to keep down the number of the Bonteens.' In the end, of course, they could not be kept down and in the Palliser novels the strong pressure of their palms is felt, not only on the park gates, but on the highest bastions of power.

But if political power was the natural prerogative of the privileged class, it was, of course, reserved for one sex only. The function of women in the Palliser series is to provide a calm and comfortable domestic environment in which the rigours of government can best be endured, and to be hostesses at dinner parties, receptions and garden parties where politics can be more agreeably discussed than in committee rooms and where useful alliances can be formed or cemented. Some women have influence but it is over personalities not over policy. Glencora, Duchess of Omnium, regards being the wife of the Prime Minister as the mainspring of an existence otherwise without sufficient excitement, intrigue or achievement. But her scheming to support Ferdinand Lopez in his ambition to get into the House of Commons almost destroys her husband's reputation, and when she uses her great wealth to give lavish entertainments designed to increase the Prime Minister's popularity, he distances himself from all this excess and, to the hurt and disgust of the Duchess, describes her efforts as vulgar.

The women also not infrequently provide the necessary money to bolster political ambitions. Indeed it seems to be expected in the novels that family money belongs by right to the male and that women should be ready to sacrifice themselves by handing over what might legally be theirs. Thus Lady Mabel Grex is poor because her father and brother are spendthrifts. Lady Laura Standish hands over her money to her brother and, although in love with the virtually penniless Phineas Finn, marries the rich Robert Kennedy, virtually selling herself into emotional and physical slavery. Lady Laura is the one with the keenest interest in politics and the one most aware of her intellectual and social impotence in this male world. Alice Vavasor courts disaster in her life for personal fulfilment. She eventually capitulates, accepts John Grey and becomes in time the supportive wife of a Liberal Member of Parliament, a fate which Trollope probably regarded as the height of feminine achievement.

Unlike Dickens, who is usually regarded as the greater writer, Trollope, that gruff, physically unprepossessing middle-aged man, had an almost uncanny ability to understand and convey female sensibilities. Jane Austen never described a meeting when men only were present, but with Trollope we can sit in Lady Glencora's boudoir listening to intimate conversations between her and Alice Vavasor and sympathise with their emotional indecision between social and sexual conformity and the personal freedom represented by such dangerous men as Burgo Fitzgerald, Ferdinand Lopez and George Vavasor. In the political novels it is the women without political power who have more vividly and successfully colonised our imagination than have the men, with the possible exception of Phineas Finn.

But if the women's lives are dominated by this conflict between private wishes and public duties, so to an extent are the political lives of the men. There is always conflict between the personal and official world, between the constraints of party and tradition and the imperatives of action. The temptation of controlled inertia is always there. Indeed the political philosophy endorsed in the series is one of careful inactivity. Glencora says that the Prime Minister should concern himself only with 'generalities about commerce, agriculture, peace and general philanthropy', and

the Duke himself, in conversations with Sir Orlando, responds to a suggestion that something should be done with the words, 'Things to be done offer themselves, I suppose, because they are in themselves desirable; not because it is desirable to have something to do.' And in fact nothing much is done and the Prime Minister does not even achieve the reform of the currency, which seems to be his main political ambition. At the end of his premiership, pondering on what he has achieved, the Duke of St Bungay consoles him by telling him that the Prime Minister's main responsibility was not to be a leader but to ensure that the political calm was never disturbed by others trying to do something. The best man for the job, he says, is 'cautious but never timid, bold but never venturesome; he should have good digestion, genial manners and, above all, a thick skin.' This is hardly a description of the ungenial and over-sensitive Omnium. Madame Max, always on the periphery of the political world until at last she marries Phineas Finn, casts a sceptical eye on male activities and says to Barington Erle, 'There never is anything special to be done, is there Mr Erle?' To which, gratified by her sagacity, he replies, 'You understand it all better than anyone else that I ever knew.'

The contrast between politics today and the political inertia portrayed by Trollope is startling. With the present government in particular, the electorate seems to be regarded as one great focus group on whom legislation and regulations, the implications of which are seldom thought out, can be tried out partly through the wish to be seen to be doing something, and partly to see if they will work. If they don't, there is always something new that can be tried, even before over-burdened administration comes to grips with the last initiative. This method of government by public experiment would have been anathema to the politicians in the Palliser series.

As a novelist Trollope was essentially a realist who wrote that it was the duty of a writer to wake up with his characters in the morning and live their lives intimately with them during the day. In the political novels we, the readers, participate in the normal routines of parliamentary life, the changing fortunes, the forming of alliances, the disappointed hopes, the fruitless enterprises. But would Trollope's contemporaries, in an age in which country and parliament had witnessed the great gladiatorial contests between Disraeli and Palmerston, ever have been satisfied with the inert, ultra-sensitive Duke of Omnium as Prime Minister?

The final book in the series, *The Duke's Children*, sees the Prime Minister no longer in office and finally resolving, but not without some reservations, to relinquish power. He can hardly look back on his political career with satisfaction, and indeed most readers find it difficult to share Trollope's admiration for the character on whom he lavished so much loving attention. Palliser was too scrupulous, too thin-skinned to endure the knocks of the political battle, and 'most fatefully knew himself to be without that general amiability which endears a man to his colleagues and ensures his popularity with the ordinary people whose welfare was one of his chief concerns'. This over-sensitivity and lack of charisma remain fatal disadvantages to modern aspirants to power. But the Duke and his duchess, Glencora, remain at the heart of the Palliser novels and it is them, the children and the fascinating group of men and women who surround them, not the politics, that have ensured that it is Trollope not Disraeli who remains the most popular of English political novelists.

Reputations - 16

Senator Joseph R McCarthy

David Ashton

During the so-called 'nightmare decade' after WW2, a 'great terror engulfed the land'. It targeted hundreds of guiltless citizens, nonconformist writers, Jewish anti-fascists, and alleged spies, many widely vilified, humiliated in show trials, brutally jailed or executed.

This was the 'politics of fear' not, as some imagine, in the United States, but in the communist territory forcibly extended from Prague to Pyongyang. In 1950 the Soviet gulags, for example, reached their peak population and by 1953 over 200,000 political prisoners were concentrated in special camps. At least 170,000 East Germans perished between 1945 and 1953, while within the same period China officially reported some 135,000 executions of 'counter-revolutionaries' and independent estimates later ran into millions. Comparable horrors occurred in every other European and Asian satellite.

American patriots were concerned at this loss of so many friendly nations to hostile dictatorship, at the evident contribution of senior officials, diplomats and advisers to this enormous transition, and at various

activities supervised by Joseph Stalin to pull in more countries, including eventually their own. The fortunate historical accident of defections from his communist parties and underground networks revealed not only the theft of military secrets but also a web of political treachery.

Public inquiries into overt and covert assistance given to Soviet Russia by recruited agents, fellow-travellers or dupes were seen by some simply as witch hunts and soon labelled 'McCarthyism', by liberal caricature and communist propaganda, after their so-called 'witch-finder general'. According to the *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* centenary edition, Joseph McCarthy became known for

> *Unsubstantiated accusations in the early 1950s that communists had infiltrated the State Department, and in 1953 became chairman of the House Committee on un-American Activities. By hectoring cross-examination and damaging innuendo he arraigned many innocent citizens and officials, overreaching himself when he came into direct conflict with the army.*

Here is a typical howler ignorantly linking the Senator with the wrong committee (he was Chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations) in an entry easily matched for its debatable comment by other reference works.

Three additional factors have in retrospect further distorted the historical picture. First, 'cold war revisionism', while not entirely without merit because foreign relations are necessarily interactive, has minimised the criminality of the communist system and its external operations, and has discounted the class war ideology of world revolution. Stalin's 'socialism in one country' was intended to secure a base for promoting 'proletarian dictatorship' elsewhere. During his 1950 'world peace' drive he carefully reminded party cognoscenti that he supported 'revolutionary war' although it 'abounds in horrors of bloodshed'.

Secondly, leftwing writers have played down the sinister activities and Soviet connections of the communist movement, depicting it simply as a vanguard for social and racial 'progress' despite the totalitarian brutality explicitly advocated in documents like *Toward Soviet America* (1932). A lively coterie still persists in arguing that the highly placed State Department official Alger Hiss, convicted in 1950 of perjury in denying espionage but whose case President Truman dismissed as a 'red herring', was the innocent victim of a complex frame-up.

Thirdly, the eponym 'McCarthyism', according to a 'liberal' biographer writing to encourage the process not long after the Senator's early death, evoked for many Americans anything 'repressive, reactionary, obscurantist, anti-intellectual, totalitarian or merely swinish'. In Britain the CND chairman said the world would give up on Christianity if the churches failed to come out strongly against 'McCarthyism'. Today all sorts of adversaries throw this boo-word around, from campus to councils, in complaints of mutual persecution — 'Islamists'/'neo-cons', 'gays'/'homophobes', 'evolutionists'/'creationists', 'greens'/'polluters', etc.

George Clooney's movie *Good Night, and Good Luck* illustrates how the popular imagination is maintained against McCarthy's 'interrogations' through excerpts cunningly selected to reinforce preconditioned, vaguely unfavourable impressions. The footage includes a humble 'black' lady supposedly smeared as yet another 'red' enemy. To well-informed viewers, however, this particular film-clip shows that what primarily perplexed him was not her disputed but conclusively proved party membership so much as her remarkably rapid promotion from dinner lady to Pentagon code-clerk. Maybe he showed her less consideration than he had displayed towards offenders as a young circuit judge — he was no 'racist' incidentally — but what about the transfer to a defence-sensitive post? Key issues were overshadowed, as in the later Army hearings whose coverage was likewise manipulated to bring him down.

The important objection has been that McCarthy's conduct carelessly played into communist hands. Truman, who nominated a particularly dangerous known agent in the Treasury for an IMF post, said this at the outset, well before the media developed the theme, not because of the Senator's proclaimed general purpose so much as his personal methods, manners and mistakes. This was a time when liberals parroted the CPUSA in claiming that Hiss, the atom spies and others had been falsely accused, and joined in its 'united attack' on the 'fascist poison' of anti-communism. Since then extensive declassified data has fully confirmed Moscow's effective penetration of the US government. While the 'conspiracy' may not have been as 'high' in every department as the 'McCarthy crowd' feared, it was certainly as 'immense'.

Professor Christopher Andrew, an authority on MI5 and KGB conversant with the evidence of 'interlocking subversion', asserts that McCarthy 'falsely claimed to have the names of 205 State Department Communists who were "shaping" American foreign policy' and then makes the extraordinary pronouncement that he 'did more for the Soviet cause than any agent of influence'. In *The Fight for America*, written with his wife Jean, McCarthy denied that specific quotation attributed to him, and their version of events has been dismissed rather than disproved. What happened, in

crude summary, was that an earlier Secretary of State had supplied a basic *number* of miscellaneous 'security risks'. When Truman was challenged to obtain their names and deal with any still active, the presidential response was to draft an insulting telegram and signal a campaign against the troublesome Republican from Wisconsin.

Was it really then so paranoid to think that help far beyond the needs of wartime duty, given by important persons to the 'democrat' Stalin and his 'agrarian reformer' comrade Mao, might have been covered up? The problem was that the Senator and his staff had to shoot at targets hiding in dark shadows without the judicial and forensic equivalent of a night-sight laser-gun. Top-level protection or promotion of suspected security risks, combined with calculated obstruction from slippery witnesses and lawyers, probably provoked much of the 'rage' that 'outraged' his critics.

In 1952 Professor William McGovern, a distinguished political scientist, referred to the protests from qualified experts against perilous post-war trends in foreign affairs that had been disregarded by governing circles, and to the welcome arrival of an opponent whose dynamism and eloquence might arouse the ordinary citizen against the official 'smother', even if thereby provoking animosity:

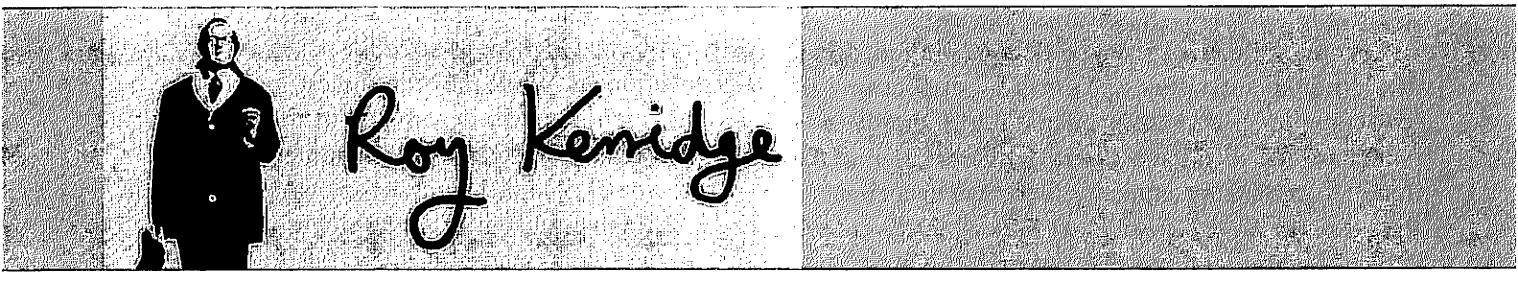
> *McCarthy was made the object of a barrage of venomous attacks. His ideas and his charges have been grossly twisted and misrepresented, and every conceivable effort has been made to smear his private life. Time after time I have heard people launch into a violent attack on McCarthy, and when I questioned them, I found they had only the haziest and most inaccurate notions of what the Senator had really said and really done.*

It may seem tasteless and ironic to attempt to reassess someone whose very name itself has become a convenient synonym for the destruction of reputations. He will never re-emerge as a self-effacing hero of flawless character, for no such politicians exist in the real universe. His inability to consume alcohol with the same control as his chief adversary in the Kremlin did him no good, and of course he had notoriously 'hairy hands'. Nevertheless, Arthur Herman, Stanton Evans and other recent researchers offer a more measured and accurate account of his complex personality and his investigations that definitely impaired CPUSA efforts to collaborate with foreign espionage.

Contrary to legend, it seems that attempts to *pin down* any actual cases of harmless patriots he allegedly 'slandered' mostly come to nothing, whereas on the other hand he did in fact discover concealed communists, if not enough.

Talk of a 'Red Scare' is ridiculous, except in so far as some disloyal 'reds' were scared of exposure. Neither media nor academia was intimidated into silence, despite the concurrent Korean War and occupation of Tibet. Press comment ranged from support to hostility, with liberal papers sometimes spinning dishonestly against him and taking cues from communists. European visitors to US universities encountered widespread conformity — *against* McCarthy. Several knowledgeable intellectuals, including some eminent ex-communists, did back him, however, and his so-called 'censure' and consequent ostracism were finally transcended by the moving tributes that accompanied his grand funeral.

'Uncle' Joe's main misdemeanour in Moscow was to put millions of people to death. 'Tail-gunner' Joe's high crime in Washington was to put deadly questions to fewer than a hundred people (especially Stalinists). 'Liberal left' mind-managers may not wish to dislodge Senator McCarthy from their museum of monsters alongside the Nazi judge Roland Freisler and Tomas de Torquemada. But serious historians could yet think differently.



At the moment I am looking after an exotic pet for my niece. It is a Leopard Gecko and it eats live crickets or locusts. I bought it some crickets, which flourished for a while in the gecko tank on a diet of popcorn. A few got eaten, more died of natural causes until there was only one cricket left.

This was a big black cricket with brown wings, adept at avoiding the gecko. As it would obviously never get eaten, I went out and bought some locusts. When I released them into the tank, the black cricket hurried out to meet them, then stopped, disappointed. Foreigners! Huffily, he ignored them and seemed to be lonely in their midst. By and by, the locusts got eaten. The gecko crunched them up, long legs and all,

obviously preferring them to crickets. So next time I bought locusts again. With a yearning air, the cricket came out of its hiding place when it recognised the familiar cellophane insect box. Seeing the locusts, it sadly went back into hiding. Two weeks later, I bought locusts again, but the old cricket seemed resigned to its lonely fate.

More as a treat for the old cricket than for the gecko, I bought a box full of crickets next time. At first, the old black cricket took little notice — then he suddenly recognised his fellow crickets. Reeling slightly he seemed overwhelmed. Did tears come to his eyes? Tentatively, he stumbled forward to greet them. A bunch of brash upstarts, the young crickets seemed unaware of his deep emotion.

'Hello old timer, what's the grub here like?' one of them may have chirped. Heedless of the old fellow, they rushed around chirping, eating drinking, climbing on the gecko's head, threatening one another and butting like mountain goats.

The old cricket didn't mind. He stood and watched them, his heart too full for words. Two days later he died, and they ate him except for his head.

ETERNAL LIFE

Three out of four firms refused to put up Christmas decorations last year. Most Christmas cards no longer show the Nativity scene. More shops and stores than ever opened for business on Christmas Day. These are just the outward signs of an increasingly militant secularism, for the progressive elite in Britain today detests Christianity. The country is not being destroyed by Islamic terrorism but our traditional way of life and self-understanding is being undermined by aggressive secularisation.

Chain bookshops marketed the atheist Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* as their 'Christmas Book'. Liberal newspapers, and especially the BBC, have established a pattern of debunking and sneering at traditional Christian doctrine. TV and radio documentaries repeatedly dismiss the belief that the world was created by God. That is, they explicitly deny the Christmas Gospel where St John states emphatically *All things were made by Him.* And, in case we are too dim to understand that, repeats *And without Him was not anything made that was made.*

St John was writing at a time when the biblical doctrine of God's creation was being attacked by fashionable Gnostic philosophers who claimed that the world was not made by God but by a lesser process called the Demiurge. We have our own Gnostics today and their Demiurge is a facile doctrine of evolution. These crass materialists like to claim that the argument for natural selection and blind chance has disproved intelligent design. It has not.

Modern physics reveals to us a world which does not look at all as if it's made of bits and pieces of matter, but is really rather ethereal. Moreover, it looks overwhelmingly as if the universe was made with us in mind, for, if it had been ever so minutely different, we wouldn't be here. The odds against the universe happening by accident to be so accommodating to us are so astronomical as to be virtually impossible. And, note, it is not theologians who are making this point, but scientists.

They have even coined a phrase to refer to the hospitableness of the universe which they call *The Anthropic Principle* — because the world seems to have been constructed with man in mind. Dawkins and his school might reflect on the fact that we are able to understand at least a little of the universe only because the universe is intelligible. It is the innate intelligibility of the universe which makes science possible. That intelligibility was not created by man or imposed on the universe — at least that much must be conceded if science itself is to be regarded as a way of discovering truth, and not merely a game. In a vivid sentence, the great astrophysicist Professor Fred Hoyle said, 'Life evolving by chance has the same likelihood as a tornado blowing through a scrap yard and leaving behind it a fully-formed jumbo jet'.

And once God and intellectual rigour have been discarded, morality is bound to collapse. And this is just what has happened. Promiscuity to the extent of casual sexual relationships among any number of people, regardless of their sexual orientation; drinking and shopping 24/7; rampant hedonism pursuing all that is merely trivial; an infantile and narcissistic cult of celebrities — and all built on a mountain of government and personal debt and an amnesiac culture of designer drugs and oblivion. We have replaced morality by lifestyle. Anything goes. The one remaining commandment left to us is *Wear a condom!*

The moral and social consequences of the crass materialist ideology are predictably horrific. Since human beings are nothing but bits of genetic material, they can be experimented upon, have their parts

transplanted, their embryos and DNA manipulated and frozen as if by the machinations of a latter day Frankenstein. Their very existence may be terminated when this existence is discovered to be inconvenient to the hedonistic careers of those who make up our society of utilitarian materialists — what F R Leavis called our 'technological-Benthamite culture'. The most disgraceful example of this nihilistic amoralism is of course abortion on demand, abortion used as a form of contraception, resulting in 200,000 embryos being ripped untimely from the womb every year in Britain alone.

It may surprise you to learn that teaching Christianity in state schools is now illegal. It is permitted only to teach *about* religions. Absolute relativism rules and all religions must be taught as equal. Christianity used to be at the centre of public life and it was strongly represented in the mass media, particularly in broadcasting. The BBC offers only a veneer of religion glossing over a soft left political agenda — secular social conscience as if there could be such a thing — a whiff of Third-worldism; the aroma of Fair Trade coffee and the infallible dogma of global warming.

At the centre of the secular atheistic project is the destruction of the historic basis of our way of life: marriage and the family. This has been achieved by the secular doctrines of rights and egalitarianism according to which childbearing and adoption procedures are extended to homosexual couples. Government economic and social policy consistently discriminates against marriage and in favour of any alternative cohabiting arrangement. It is getting to the stage when the Vicar will have to watch out for the politically-correct commissar before he ventures to preach against adultery.

The Christian era which held sway in this country for 2000 years was not oppressive — unlike the totalitarian secularism which threatens to replace it. Various Acts of Toleration allowed dissenters leeway provided they kept the peace. But it was always tacitly understood that you belonged to Christian civilisation unless you opted out.

What can be done? The antidote to the destruction of our society by rampant secularism is for the church to recover its wits and its confidence. The philosopher and President of the Italian Senate, Marcello Pera spells it out: 'Christianity is so consubstantial to the West that any surrender on its part would have devastating consequences. Will the Church and the clergy and the faithful be able to be purified of the relativism that has almost erased their identity and weakened their message and witness?'

Peter Mullen

LETTERS

Sir,

Plato's distinctive contribution to political theory (*SR* Winter 2006), does not fit into any recognisable concept of conservatism. Indeed, Plato maintains that society can never be reformed by gradual and conventional means, but only if it is governed in accordance with philosophical principles. Socrates' suspicions of democracy were confirmed by Plato. Although many people claim to know the good in politics, their opinions usually fail close examination. Actions are therefore often taken in error, because they are based on ignorance. According to Plato the central problem of politics, and government, is to ensure that society is organised and controlled by those who really know what good governance should be. The only salvation for society is the removal of government from the ordinary man, enabling the state to be directed according to the findings of the philosophers.

The philosopher-kings (the Perfect Guardians) described in *The Republic,* undergo a long and rigorous training in philosophy, and acquire an intimate knowledge of those moral norms that society must obey. They, and only they, have absolute and untrammelled power over the state and they, therefore, claim an exclusive entitlement to making all rules and regulations that prove to be necessary — in their opinion. Plato made an outstanding contribution to reform of the prevailing institutions of his day, and he frequently expressed political wisdom of a high order. But a close reading of *The Republic* and *The Laws* shows that he has more in common with Utilitarianism than conservatism.

Conservatism expresses a distinct mode of thought, and places emphasis on prudence and moderation in balancing political interests and shaping outcomes of social harmony. This classical conservative tradition insists that conservatives have no ideology, or utopian master-plan. Government based on tradition is the most secure foundation for sound governance, and is therefore superior to any form of government based on abstract reason. Tradition draws on the

distillate that flows from the collective wisdom of many generations, including long-standing validation, while reason may prove to be merely the preference of one individual, but at the very best represents the untested knowledge of one generation. Philosophers' deliberations are inadequate, because they draw on untested and unproven hypotheses and must therefore remain suspect. Existing, longstanding values and institutions have been modified and corrected by the influence of past experience and ought to be respected for that reason alone.

Conservatives insist that change should be organic. Any attempt to change the complex web of human relations that form and shape society, in response to some abstract theory, runs a risk of contravening the law of unintended consequences. Human society is something that is rooted and changes gradually and slowly over time. To shape society in accordance with the abstract plans of the ideologue is to invite unforeseen consequences. Plato adopted the mantle of the utopian ideologue and cannot be regarded as a true conservative.

Stuart Hopkins, Bristol

Sir,

One cannot allow Robert Harman's distortions (*SR* letters Winter 2006) of the Arab/Israeli Conflict to pass without correction.

He first gets the size of the original Palestine wrong. The country stretched to the Iraqi border and was regarded by the Arabs as part of Syria; not a separate country at all. The whole of Eastern Palestine, some 72 per cent of the total, was given to the Arabs in 1946. This eventually became the Kingdom of Jordan. The following year the United Nations passed the resolution dividing Western Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs. The Arab states then tried to overthrow that resolution by force and lost. They then corralled the Arab refugees from the war into camps as part of the process of creating a Palestinian People to be used as a weapon against Israel. Thus Harman's assumption that a Palestinian People already existed when Israel was created is wrong. Meanwhile they ethnically cleansed the Jewish populations from their countries. Most of those refugees were settled in Israel.

The creation of a Palestinian People came about in stages. Firstly during the Mandate period there was the steady flow of Arabs into the country from the surrounding territories to take advantage of the rapid economic development which greatly increased the indigenous Arab population. Then came the process mentioned above. By about 1960 some sort of Palestinian national identity emerged. It became clear, from a glance at Article 12 of the Palestine National Covenant, that this identity was only meant to be temporary and was created to do a specific job.

Robert Harman ignores the fact that Palestine is the traditional homeland of the Jewish People and that Jerusalem has had a Jewish majority since the middle of the 19th century. The Jewish population fluctuated over the centuries depending on Jewish relations with the different waves of conquerors.

He misunderstands Resolution 242 which calls for negotiations about the borders which the Arab states, with the exception of Egypt, have refused to carry out. Of course the separation barrier has caused problems for the Palestinians, but it has cut the appalling suicide bombings by over 90 per cent.

Putting out this type of tendentious propaganda merely encourages the Jihadists in their campaign to destroy Israel and helps to increase their threat to the West as a whole.

David M Jacobs, St Albans

Sir,

While I agree with much of Myles Harris's 'The Rhyme of the Young Cameron' and envy his apt, valid, metaphor of Cameron offering a political lifebelt full of lead, I must take issue with his comment that with globalisation: 'like Britain during the Industrial Revolution, it is the rich who are getting richer and the poor poorer.'

During the Industrial Revolution, despite leftist and anti-Capitalist mythologising, the poor as well as the rich got richer, and at a mighty swift rate, too! The great cotton-mills meant steady employment and wages and affordable clothes, for example. Further, Victorian England is full of stories of an unprecedentedly large and rapid degree of upward social mobility, even to the highest positions. Despite certain problems which need attention, Globalisation is tending to have the same effect today. Even in Communist Vietnam, the Nike and other multinational factories are giving poor rural Vietnamese their first steps up the ladder of opportunity. Walking to work has given way to bicycles, motor-scooters and now the first cars. Local factories have been raising wages to compete with Nike and other multinationals in attracting a well-motivated workforce. Globalisation is not a panacea and it does raise real problems about local and national identities, but in general it is a force for prosperity and peace. We tend to romanticise the pre-industrial past, forgetting that for all but a tiny elite, the general lot of humans in pre-industrial times was poverty, ignorance, disease

and a general life-expectancy of about 30 years. Britain in 1820 was by far the richest country in the world and for all the glittering balls and grand mansions of the aristocracy, the average income was half that of Egypt today. For a country where pre-industrial conditions have been restored, look at Zimbabwe.

Hal G P Colebatch, Western Australia

Sir,

May I question Mrs Cave's view that Penguins' 'leftwards leaning' reflected 'only' a 'Butskellite consensus'? Their political books, and too much in other books, during the 1930s and 1940s disproportionately reflected a pro-Soviet outlook, probably resulting from Krishna Menon's editorial influence. It is not enough to excuse their pro-communisrn as anti-fascism, if one considers for instance D N Pritt's 'Specials' during the Russo-German Pact.

This trend continued long after the war, until 'revelations' about Stalin affected the market, but even then books by communists (for example, the African Library) still poured out, plus an immense number of other Marxist or New Left publications, with rare exceptions in the opposite direction. This 'red flood' affected yesterday's 'students' who are today's 'rulers'.

However, this publishing house was deservedly a 'national institution', especially during the earlier decades when the carefully bound and therefore durable paperbacks, beautifully designed, were as pleasant to handle as to read. Many Pelicans still provide reliable expositions of their subjects, and educated adults must look back with affection to the classic translations pioneered by E V Rieu and the quality children's fiction edited by Kaye Webb. Those of us who retain scores of Penguin Books from their best decades can almost ignore the 'People's propaganda' in more than a few volumes because they all bring back memories of lost content, a 'Harmondsworth Heaven'.

Rex Gates
Cambridge

ARTS and BOOKS

Who Owns Antiquities?

John Boardman

Rescuing the Past. The Cultural Heritage Crusade, Jonathan Tokeley, Imprint Academic, 2006, £25.00.

Most instances of international smuggling, whether of banned substances or stolen objects, involve material whose survival is either of no intrinsic interest whatever, or objects whose home and original owners are easily identified. When the objects are 'new' antiquities, however recovered in the first place, we are dealing with material whose 'owners' are not always immediately obvious, and even if they are, as determined by legislation which differs from country to country, we have also to reckon that we are dealing with 'new' material of universal interest and importance, which testifies to man's past, his history and achievements. The antiquities market began when the first man plundered an old tomb and tried to exchange objects he found in it. It is one of the oldest of professions, natural to society and the recycling of its creations. Recent attempts to regulate it are doing more harm than good, to source countries, to recipients (public museums or private collectors), and to scholarship. 'The law', where it exists, is applied irregularly and often not at all in source countries, and it is easily flouted. The solution must lie in reasonable compromises, proper identification of the most damaging culprits and their submission to law, and not damnation of the very objects we wish to preserve and study, and yet this is what is happening. It is futile and unrealistic to pretend that all irregular or unplanned acquisition of antiquities can be either halted or policed, and the preservation, study and display of relics of our past are matters of profound importance for society at large, more important than rather hazy concepts about who 'owns' what. The problem lies behind the reason for this book.

The author is a restorer of antiquities and connoisseur of things Egyptian, who has been convicted of smuggling antiquities from Egypt (see *SR* Autumn 2006, p 26-8). His book is not an apology. He is a scholar, really expert about the Egyptian scene, and a fluent writer. His demonstration of the corrupt indifference to antiquities in Egypt shows clearly

enough what happens when a source country simply cannot be bothered with 'its past', whatever that means, except as a source of profit. He explores here the illogicalities and wretched foundations of the current 'Cultural Heritage Crusade', which is already crippling museums, denying scholars access to or censoring their use of sometimes crucial evidence, while not safeguarding antiquities in any significant way. Indeed, it is rather endangering them. There are signs by now, thankfully, that the tide is turning back in favour of protecting the public, scholarly and even collectors' legitimate interest in the material evidence for man's past. Tokeley shrewdly exposes and questions hypotheses about the sanctity of antiquities, their 'ownership', and the manipulation of the law by archaeologists who are indifferent to objects which can speak for themselves, through their art or inscriptions, wherever found, by the unthinking politically correct, and by lawyers to whom 'right and wrong' and the integrity of antiquities are irrelevancies.

There is no obvious ethical answer to the question 'Who owns Antiquities?'. Should it be the finder, the owner of the land on or in which they are found, the modern nation state where they are found, the home of their makers (for example, for Greek vases found in Italy), their spiritual home if not that of the modern state (Buddhist in Islamic countries — Afghanistan; pagan or Islamic in Christian — Greece). Current laws and attitudes, especially of prehistorians who are indifferent to objects *per se*, or by politicians indifferent to public interest (and surely our past belongs to *us* even when mediated by an official or scholar), and to what is almost a human right — to collect, bid fair to destroy more than they save. They already constitute a dire threat to the antiquities themselves. They are certainly starving museums of new material to study and display, and it is arguable that as much or more progress in understanding our past has been made by study of objects, excavated or not, than by excavation alone. The extreme view, that objects with no pedigree should not be conserved or even looked at by scholars or kept in public museums is totally philistine. Some would even hold that they should be destroyed.

The criminal aspects of theft from museums, of looting or deliberate targeting of sites for spectacular objects to sell, must be dealt with as such, by the existing criminal law. They make good headlines and offer evocative pictures of broken statues, desecrated monuments, and museum cases with objects missing, themselves most often the product of chance finds rather than controlled excavation. The most spectacular objects are usually found by chance. But the source countries have been slow to do anything, some have looked the other way too long, some profit from the trade, others have suddenly developed an interest in a past hitherto neglected, more for profit than patriotism. So now it is a few zealots in the recipient countries and a flabby UNESCO who think they should take up the cause against all trade in antiquities, most of which, except for flagrant examples of major theft, are innocuous and pose no threat to human life, health or freedom, while all are potentially important historically, whether their provenance is known or not. To pretend that it is a trade comparable with that in drugs is simply wrong, on both moral and financial grounds. And to stem the trade by attacking the ultimate buyer is like trying to stop the trade in drugs by jailing everyone who smokes pot. It has made the objects and their buyers guilty without trial — an odd stance for any just man to adopt. One answer to the legitimate urge to collect, view and understand, that collections might be fed from museum surpluses in source countries, has generally foundered on the dog-in-the-manger attitudes of their museum curators. In an imperfect world where far more dire attacks on the living are tolerated and even encouraged it seems odd for such venom to be directed against objects, collectors and museums, and ultimately against the public's right to view and study, and, if it wishes, collect, monuments of man's past — a right which many archaeologists have in the past done as much to hinder as promote. The growing practice of returning antiquities deemed stolen to their country of origin (whatever that may mean) is wholly proper in legal terms, but let no one imagine that as a result more people who want to see them, will see them.

Tokeley's description of the Egyptian scene would be hilarious were it not so serious and damaging. The prime casualties are the antiquities; then those who would be happy to buy them, preserve, them, study them, in either a public or private domain. Professional excavation is usually for other, academic ends, not treasure-hunting, and cannot anticipate what sometimes amounts to little more than the official tomb-robbing with which we are from time to time entertained on TV, under the guise of 'serious archaeology'.

On the whole this seems an area in which over-legislation which interferes with rights to buy, exhibit and publish, is likely to do (and already has done) more harm than good, while the professional despoilers of sites and museums, who are as often governments as private individuals, continue to escape, and not through the absence of adequate legislation. Tokeley is in a unique position to comment on the situation, but others, scholars and the public, need also to be heard before the threat to the safety and study of monuments of man's past is irretrievably ruined by misplaced legislation which cannot even try to distinguish between the truly innocent and the guilty and which cripples a legitimate trade.

Walden's Two

David Ashton

Time to Emigrate? George Walden, Gibson Square, 2006, £8.99.
New Elites: A Career in the Masses, George Walden, Gibson Square, 2006, £9.99.

> *America has taken the culture. Foreigners have taken the City. The Chinese are taking what's left of manufacturing. Immigrants will soon be running major cities . . . An entire nation liquidizing and melting and dissolving into what it mistakenly sees as the warm sea of humanity.*

Crude exaggeration, or an exemplary expression of unlicensed comment, delivered with lofty contempt for the 'nervy totalitarianism' of our tortured times? Small wonder its *Guardian* reviewer felt 'unwell'.

A highly educated former 'Mini'-Minister for Higher Education, once undervalued as a 'Tory Wet', George Walden is now seen as another 'Grumpy Old Man' — by those who refuse to admit or face up to the fetid facts of Breakdown Britain. In a set of candid, carefully composed 'imaginary' letters to a fictional son, he reviews the scenery of squalor, from our hideous concrete wastelands to that sentimentality-and-sovietism chimera called the NHS. Reflecting on the uncertain prospects particularly for well-motivated middle-income families, he wonders whether they should just get out, if they can.

The author was attacked for making the drawbacks of continuous immigration, still mostly from *outside* Europe, a major theme, though news reports soon vindicated his outspoken views on 'ethnic' crime. A YouGov poll of public expectations for 2007 found that despite considerable (debt-ridden?) private affluence, a majority considered this country a worse place to live than five years ago and were pessimistic about its future, with immigration and anti-social behaviour exceeding terrorism as their worst worries. Scarcely surprising when in our historic capital city three in five babies are born to mothers from abroad, never mind the uncounted numbers of diverse nationality sneaked in by organised crime, including 'hundreds of children' disclosed by a Nigerian ritual murder investigation. Little enthusiasm, or reason, exists for 'celebrating' an unending influx into our long overcrowded cities of 'random samples' from the enormous external population — Polish policemen, Filipino fiancées, Bulgarian buskers, Colombian coke-merchants, Hutu hatchet-grinders, Samoyed sled-menders . . . *ad infinitum.*

Last December's Home Office report on the appeal of crime-based 'employment' to inner-city youths reinforces Walden's observation of the

> *attractions for young underclass whites of the most violent kind of young black lifestyle. We're resigned to the fact that there are too many young blacks in our prisons, but we're beginning to see a disproportionate number of Muslims too. Often they may be victims of the rigidities of a religious culture which, when it falls apart under western pressure, leaves anarchy in its wake. Madrassas at ten, drug-dealing at twenty.*

And as for Islamic militants, they stay here '*because* they don't like it. Technically it's wrong for a Muslim to live in an infidel country except if he's there with the aim of converting it . . . Instead of developing and modernizing our society a stupendous effort will be needed to hold it together.'

Inside UK-PLC 'Brits are becoming little more than groundsmen rolling the pitch the foreigners play on.' Apart from multi-cultural problems, our 'inverted colony' incurs economic penalties. Such notions as regeneration through garden-centres and super-casinos are as risible as the overblown promise to 'educate the children of the world before we've managed to teach kids in this country to read' made by the 'Chancellor of the Exchequer' (regarded as 'Grumpy' Gordon by 7 in 10 'voters'). I would also cite the mantra that our 'intellectual capital' (sic) will enable our trade-dependent yet largely service-sector economy to defeat low-cost competition from oriental giants equipped by 'our own' financiers, backed by 'our own' government which meanwhile over-regulates our residual industry, especially as we remain the only 'world workshop' (*sic*) still infatuated by 'free global trade' after becoming the most disadvantaged by that outdated dogma.

How did our rulers allow us to sink into a stew far worse than expected from post-imperial 'decline management'? There is a clue in the author's updated study of our misgovernment by the oligarchy of 'professional egalitarians' that he calls the 'new élite', a relatively recent noxious growth that grafts illusions of 'cultural democracy' based on mass-deception on to old delusions about 'political democracy'.

While alien immigration has hardly ever been a 'commodity' greatly attractive to indigenous 'customers', the egalitarian ideology of the present political class, whether genuinely believed or hypocritically espoused as an instrumental tool, is conducive to the obliteration of national attachments and ultimately of racial distinctions. So too is commercialisation based on unrestrained and universal gratification of appetites and addictions. Behind the façade of the parliamentary shouting-shop and its electioneering charade, the banker-bureaucrat axis,

whose increasingly rootless hierarchies drive the whole system, requires global mobility of capital and labour on one hand and a constantly taxable populace on the other. The amoral acquisition of money by whatever merchandise yields a maximum return, though with 'sex, drugs and rock' being basic 'wants' widely shared by exploiter and exploited alike, becomes more important than individual self-improvement or the service to civilisation provided by pure science, creative art and independent thought. In status-obsessed Britain vulgarity not only pays, it is 'ennobled'. 'Egalitarianism plus the market gives you the lowest behavioural denominator, plus the highest regard for cash.' Social liberalism, and the dumbing-down of media content and exam standards, may make for 'gratifying anti-authoritarian stances' but not for 'cosy neighbours', a problem the disguised despotism itself avoids with school fees, gated residences and superior transport, at least in the short term.

The process whereby politicians sell themselves or their brand to the 'sovereign people' with the help of jokes and jingles has swollen in a society that combines weakened education with stronger communication to the point where the electoral face of politics has virtually become part of the entertainment business. This is well symbolised by shallow Tony and callow Dave, the condescending phoneys who figurehead our once great parties of state. The one in 'power' is a perpetual adolescent pop-idol *manqué* for whom 'all the world's a stage', even the theatres of desert war where in front of real men he primps and prances like Hugh Grant or Anthony Head before the camera, and who advocates more world-wide 'moral interventions' from on board HMS Albion in Devonport while mothballing half the Fleet. His possible successor is an ex-PR adman for what Walden calls 'ruthlessly profitable trash' who already had a 'reputation for a total absence of principle' before touting 'the scummiest stuff' on TV, and for whom future immigrants would provide millions of fresh clients for elite 'condescension', burnishing a 'humanitarian image' as he goes on purveying 'pap' to the punters at a similarly slick ultra-demotic level.

Walden writes brilliantly: his vignette of Norfolk 'natives' is a masterpiece. He is a master of deft description and withering wit — 'girls falling down drunk in the street . . . You can't call them legless because all legs is what they are.' Many a powerful paragraph ends with an additionally scathing sting in its tail. One hopes his punchy, sardonic style will help send his refreshing blast of honesty throughout the corridors of cant. They need it.

So what about moving elsewhere? Some urban 'Anglos' have already 'taken to the hills' around the island, but so have newcomer pickers-and-packers. A quarter of 18-25 year-olds would be happy to emigrate altogether, most junior doctors would consider doing so if they cannot find posts, and one in six who leave our shores has a degree. Should the British, sixty years after being told to 'quit' south Asia, now persuade themselves to quit Britain itself — and bequeath it to other colonisers? Nowhere on earth can now 'reproduce Walden's "golden era"', declares Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. Demographic dangers facing northern America, Western Europe and even Australia suggest that 'racial inundation' will be postponed only for a time, unless common sense results in common action — all round. The prospect of white genocide, however bloodless, should concentrate the mind wonderfully.

Whatever the difficulties in this society where farmers and preachers can be arrested, and lecturers can lose their livelihood, for opinions deemed incorrect, and even 'English National' ballerinas must watch their step, sooner or later it will have to be 'fight' *not* 'flight'. If there is a political road out of hell, George Walden's two books provide good paving stones.

Inspector of Sensations and Customs

Michael St John Parker

Adam Smith and the Pursuit of Perfect Liberty, James Buchan, Profile Books, 2006, £14.99.

Adam Smith was one of the most modest of men, peremptory only in the severity with which he judged his own achievement — he caused eighteen or more volumes of manuscript material to be destroyed before his death, and lamented to his friends that 'he had done so little'. Against such self-depreciation stands the extraordinary success of his published works, and the respect accorded to him in his own lifetime. A story describes Pitt the Younger, when Prime Minister, and Wilberforce rising to their feet at his entrance and refusing to seat themselves before him, 'for we are all your scholars'; Smith was certainly an exception to the rule that denies honour to a prophet in his own time and country.

Nor can he be said to have fallen out of favour after his death. In the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill composed his *Principles of Political Economy* in a spirit of emulation (and was derided by Karl Marx for his comparative insufficiency). The historian Henry Buckle described *The Wealth of Nations* as 'probably the most important book that has ever been written, and ... certainly the most valuable contribution ever made

by a single man towards establishing the principles on which government should be based'.

If the earlier twentieth century came to be dominated, in the field of politico-economic thought, by Alfred Marshall and John Maynard Keynes, the modern period has seen a resurgence of respect for Adam Smith, notably by Margaret Thatcher and her circle, and more recently still by such luminaries as Alan Greenspan and Gordon Brown — although their allusions to the works of the master have sometimes been couched in terms which suggest that their acquaintance with the original texts is neither extensive nor profound. Recently Melvyn Bragg has celebrated *The Wealth of Nations* as 'one of the twelve books that shook the world'.

The undeniably Scottish flavour of Smith's language, and perhaps even of his thought-processes, may serve to recommend him especially to certain circles now. The same flavour is conspicuous in James Buchan's new study. He comments with Caledonian directness in his introduction, on a certain fundamental ambivalence about Smith's reputation: 'We ... have a case of two Adam Smiths. One is cautious, voluminous, virtuous, qualified, liberal with a small 'l', and utterly disdained. One is brief, brash, Liberal with a large 'L', inaccurate, shady, and one of the most famous men who ever lived. What has happened? The vulgar answer is that Adam Smith fell among economists and politicians who constitute, even more than professional footballers, always the least-literate sections of English-speaking society... A more polite answer is that a historic change in attitudes which Adam Smith helped inaugurate has misled men and women who have studied hard to remove any trace of history from their reasonings.'

This is challenging stuff, and Buchan's later pages live up to his opening. His style remains sardonic and stimulating throughout, and his verdicts are fearless — perhaps we have always known that Voltaire was a snob, but it has not been fashionable to say so, and there is a Swiftian originality about the judgement that Mandeville 'wrote like a pimp'. He tells us that he wishes to re-establish 'the primacy of feeling over reason' in the story of Smith's life and writings and to show in particular 'that *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is not only good philosophy and literature but even, in the modern sense in which that word is understood, good *economics*'. He succeeds admirably in all these intentions.

Smith was what we have been taught to call 'a very private person'. He was unmarried and lived with his mother for much of an inconspicuous life, during which he travelled little and achieved only slight eminence in terms of professional preferment. His manner, always simple, was deemed quaint in his later years, and Walter Scott, among others, helped to create a myth of eccentricity around the aging Commissioner of Customs.

Yet Smith was the sharpest and shrewdest of observers, the most subtle analyst of social relations, and the most delicate recorder and theorist of human communication. His learning, particularly in the ancient classics, was truly magisterial, and more attractively — because more lightly — worn than was generally fashionable at the time. If he failed in his own eyes to achieve the fully synoptic view of the sciences and arts which was the ideal objective of the Scottish Enlightenment, Buchan makes us feel that he came as close to it as any one man could.

Buchan is particularly interesting on Smith's complex, and mostly veiled, position in religious matters, which he attributes to his fatherless upbringing. At the very end of his life, Smith added a passage to his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, using the word fatherless for the first and last time. 'Our goodwill can embrace the universe. Yet such universal benevolence will be productive only of misery and frustration unless we are convinced that an all-wise Being has ordered the universe for the best of all time. To this universal benevolence, on the contrary, the very suspicion of a fatherless world, must be the most melancholy of all reflections...' Smith's analysis surely penetrates to the core of early twenty-first-century materialistic atheism.

If *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is at the heart of Buchan's account, *The Wealth of Nations* is by no means neglected. The concept of the division of labour, so widely quoted as Smith's chief contribution to the development of economic thought, is carefully shown to be part of a pattern of ideas which runs back through the French *philosophes* to the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Buchan's analysis here is unsparing; he shows Smith deriving the division of labour from a human propensity to 'truck, barter and exchange one thing for another' — and then points out that this latter idea is taken from Grotius, and that Smith fails either to examine or to expand it (though he certainly intended to do both). 'It is a brittle foundation for a philosophical edifice....'

Throughout, of course, Smith is seen thinking in the received eighteenth-century mode, which proceeded from first principles towards an interpretation of the facts, rather than from discovered facts to a plausible and coherent explanation. The twentieth century derided such reasoning; perhaps we are less certain now about its inadequacies.

One is struck by the modernity of Smith's perceptions. For example, what have the Jacobins and New Labour in common? 'In politics, [the] man of system ... becomes so 'enamoured with the supposed beauty of

his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it .... He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board.'

This is a short book, but an exceptionally good one. It is a pity that Gordon Brown and Alan Greenspan did not read it before they exposed their shared ignorance of the real Adam Smith at Kirkcaldy on 6 February, 2005.

Not a delusion

John Jolliffe

Being Reasonable About Religion, William Charlton, Ashgate, 2006, £45.

It must be understood that this book, by a well qualified Christian philosopher, is written from the standpoint of a professional academic, and not by some cheerful layman urging the claims of common sense. A professional will naturally want to build up his position carefully, step by step. For those who are prepared to take the trouble to work through the author's approach to his themes there are considerable rewards, not least in his final conclusions, and also in his earlier thoughts on 'gods' in chapter 3, though the digression on magic and sorcery in the next chapter may seem to have a less strong connection with the book's main theme.

First, he shows that religion is not an identifiable, objective social phenomenon capable of detached study, as some of its enemies have made the mistake of assuming. 'Classical antiquity had no conception of religion, and we would have none but for Judaism and Christianity.' He demonstrates that to contrast 'religion' with science or rationality is to confuse the issue. And historians such as Gibbon who try to explain the worldwide conversion to Christianity in terms of an escape from anxiety are unreasonable, even though the early Christians were probably inspired, in a way impossible for totalitarian regimes, by a desire to belong to a community, at a time when the perimeter of the Roman Empire came under increasing and finally disastrous pressures. Ultimately, he claims, 'religion' as such does not exist. There are simply various creeds such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Magic and superstition are examined in later chapters and found to be inferior to 'our' religion as being either 'unscientific, malignant, silly or disgusting'; whereas Christianity has spread over all the world because many millions of people believe it to be true, rejecting the notion, once widely held, that history is a progress away from religion.

It is chiefly by examining the nature of science and its connection or otherwise with philosophy that the author seeks to lead the reader into a reasonable attitude towards religion. There are further brief chapters, often of no more than half a dozen pages, on selected elements in Christian belief: creation, the Trinity, salvation, baptism, the Eucharist, and finally morality. The recent revival of enthusiasm for 'religion', even in its most outrageous American forms, appears to be, at least in part, a reaction against the terrorist activities of a tiny minority of the Muslim world, and may indeed reflect a later, more desperate form of anxiety.

He stresses the importance of trust in the original accounts of the Resurrection, especially in the absence of any reason for *mis*trust. The objection to this seems to me to be that people often get so carried away by what they see as the crucial importance of their own experience that they fall into misleading enthusiasms and so become literally untrustworthy, which could in theory have happened after the death of Jesus. It has indeed often happened after the death of a loved one, as in the cases where widows and parents have come to believe that they are in touch with the spirit of the departed.

The author is careful to remind us that his book is not about the reasonableness of religion, still less the reasonableness of Christianity. In a very attractive passage, he feels that religious beliefs are like belief in one's spouse — the fruit of love and part of the explanation of it. In seeking to identify and remove preconceptions which hinder reasonableness about religion, he has undoubtedly performed a valuable task, not least when he concludes that 'reason is not strong enough to stand indefinitely against the pressures of society, or sustain us through poverty, loneliness and suffering'. To make life bearable, sooner or later a leap of faith is necessary.

Nevertheless, if there are those who in spite of the great professional intelligence and goodwill of the author feel at the end of the book that they are not much nearer being reasonable about religion than they were at the beginning, they should take comfort from the words of St Thomas à Kempis at the beginning of *The Imitation of Christ*: 'If you knew the whole Bible, and the maxims of all the philosophers, what would it profit you if you were destitute of the love of God and of His grace?' Finally, a hint to the publishers: one way of *not* being reasonable about religion is to charge £45 for a text of 161 pages, even if you provoke the would-be buyer by not stating the price of the book on the dust jacket.

Demystifying the Russian Enigma

Rodric Braithwaite

How Russia Really Works, Alena Ledeneva, Cornell University Press, 2006, pb $22.95 or £12.05

Alena Ledeneva is currently a Lecturer in Russian Politics and Society at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Her latest book is meticulously researched, lucidly written and argued, and a pleasure to read. And she knows what she is talking about: she took her first degree in economics at Novosibirsk State University and then worked under the wise guidance of the distinguished Russian sociologist Tatiana Zaslavskaya. Her insider's view is complemented by numerous interviews with Russians who are doing their best, against the odds, to make their businesses really work. Foreigners who want to do serious business in Russia should read her latest book; so should anyone who wants to understand why economic reform has worked so badly; so indeed should anyone who is baffled by today's confused and dispiriting Russian politics.

The Russian economic system forces those who operate within it to engage in practices which they regard as a logical and inevitable response to the constraints put upon them by government. These practices depend heavily on personal, rather than formal, relationships between economic operators. As Ledeneva puts it, they 'define the background of the Russian economy and block organised attempts to reform it.' They are 'absurd in purely economic terms and criminal in purely legal terms'. But if you do not have some inkling of them, you will be outmanoeuvred in the market, and many Russians will say that it serves you right for being so naïve.

The categories under which Ledeneva groups these practices can be divided into two. Some are weapons to be used against rivals for defence or offence, and are as applicable in politics as in business: they include 'Black PR', media and advertising against rivals; *'Kompromat'*, the collection or invention of compromising material to intimidate rivals; contract killing; and the age-old Russian practice of '*Krugovaia poruka*' or collective responsibility, which has been used for hundreds of years by the authorities to hold a group of people collectively responsible for service or taxes owed, or crimes committed; or defensively by the groups themselves to dilute or evade responsibility and to protect themselves against the insolence of office.

These practices are common in the political as well as the business world. Others are more directly tied to business, and are for the most part ways of evading the impossible financial demands of the state: double bookkeeping, common enough outside Russia; barter, which has been widely used in post-Soviet Russia as a device for evading taxes and coping with a chronic shortage of liquid assets; and the widespread use of middlemen to strike the illegal bargains needed to make Russian 'capitalism' work at all — a direct takeover from the Soviet past, when the central planning system would have ground to a halt without such people.

Ledeneva makes one subtle but important point easily missed by the outsider. She remarks that no society — not even one as dysfunctional as today's Russia — can run except on a basis of trust. If people do not trust the official institutions of the state, they will invest their trust in informal institutions of their own. This phenomenon of what one might call 'displaced trust' exists in all countries to a greater or lesser extent, even in the countries of North Western Europe which we like to think of as governed according to orderly rules and laws. And so, if we are prepared to exercise a bit of imagination, we may find that the Russian system today is not as incomprehensible as it may seem at first glance.

In Russia the state and its laws have never won much recognition or trust from the people. The immense size of the country, its poverty, the lack of convenient communication until recently, the vulnerability over much of its history to disruption from outside, all these have encouraged the creation of a state in which the interests of the authorities and the interests of the collective are more important than the interests of the individual. The recruitment of soldiers, the raising of taxes for war, and, of course, the personal aggrandisement of those in power have always ranked ahead of the welfare of the people. Discipline and order have always been the main political objectives of Russian governments which have always been afraid that at any moment their state could disintegrate around them.

The institutions and practices which have grown up in response to this environment may not be attractive, but they are not irrational. They have their parallels in many other countries where institutions are weak or oppressive, and where life is often lived at the margin. I myself am struck by how closely many of the practices and everyday attitudes of my sophisticated friends in Moscow resemble those which anthropologists find even today in the Russian village. This is yet another reminder that Russia has only recently become an urbanised country.

The question is of course: Where will all this lead? In recent decades Russia has been opened up to influences

from around the world as never before. It has embarked on a profound cultural revolution. How fast, and how far, can this revolution go? Can Russian institutions and attitudes evolve more closely towards those we like to think of as the institutions and norms of a sophisticated liberal democracy?

At the end of her book, Ledeneva offers a tentative answer to these conundrums. 'For an optimist', she remarks, 'an obvious question to ask is whether the post-Soviet era of domination of informal practices is over. For a pessimist, the question is whether it is possible to solve the governance puzzle and break up Russia's dependence on unwritten rules in principle ... [I]f one is forced to make a judgement, Putin's second term does not look too promising.' But in the end she lets herself go a little. 'The changes that informal practices have introduced into the post-Soviet system', she says, 'are associated with economic rationality, political competition, and the centrality of the law. It is crucial to see these practices not only as an impediment but also as a resource for Russia's modernisation.'

This last is a plausible but heroic judgement. The practices Alena Ledeneva describes are deeply rooted in Russia's history and culture which is changing under the pressures of the modern world. But even though history may have accelerated, cultures change at the rhythm of generations, not decades. I very much hope, and am inclined to believe, that Alena Ledeneva's optimism is justified, but I, and even she, are unlikely to live to see the outcome.

Front Line Moscow

Frank Ellis

Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War, Rodric Braithwaite, Profile Books, London, 2006, £20.

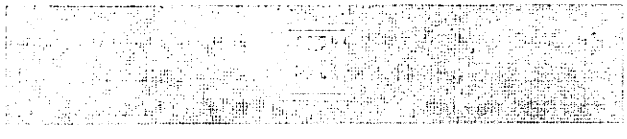
Sir Rodric Braithwaite has put together a gripping account of the German attempt to seize the capital before the onset of winter and the desperate defensive measures taken by Stalin and his commanders in the winter of 1941-1942. His analysis of the 'great panic' or 'great flight' (*bol'shoi drap*) which gripped Moscow on the 16th October 1941 and the Luftwaffe's air war against the city is luculent and instructive. The book contains some excellent photographs and the series of interviews conducted by the author adds enormously to the *gravitas* of his undertaking. *Moscow 1941* is far more than the account of the German assault on the Soviet capital: it is also a mini-social, cultural, educational and economic history of one of the world's great capital cities in war and in peace.

If there is a weakness then it lies perhaps with the author's willingness to argue, at times, the Soviet case too strongly. For example, Braithwaite thinks the battle for Moscow was the turning point of the war. In support of his thesis he cites the numbers of men involved on both sides, the duration of the battle, the area over which the battle was fought and the fact that the outcome marked the first strategic defeat for the Wehrmacht. By comparison, he argues, Britain's losses throughout the entire war were minimal. Soviet losses do indeed dwarf anything endured by the Americans and the British but such losses betray not just the scale of the fighting but also indifference on the part of Stalin and his generals to the lives of their soldiers and civilians. Moreover, the Soviet war was confined to the Eurasian land mass. Britain, unlike the Soviet Union, was involved in a truly global war. She fought in North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Far East as well as waging a strategic air offensive against the German heartland and a life-and-death struggle against the U-boats. Had Britain fallen in the summer of 1940, what would have stopped Hitler? Could the Soviet Union have survived the German onslaught, now drawing on the industrial capacity of all Western Europe and free of all other military and diplomatic considerations?

Braithwaite makes a good case for the view that Stalin's ruthlessness and that of the party apparatus which he shaped for his own ends is the key to the successful mobilization of Moscow's defences at the critical moment. Deserters and those who spread panic and rumours were liable to summary execution. Unfortunately, in making his case he has a tendency to play down some of the more savage measures adopted by the Soviet state in war time. When discussing Stalin's notorious Order No 270 issued on 16th August 1941, which provided for exceptionally harsh treatment of Soviet deserters, Braithwaite goes on to argue that: 'The provisions of Order No 270 have their equivalent in the military codes of other nations' (p164). He supports this contention by citing the disciplinary code of the Royal Navy in the nineteenth century. Again, even if these matters were not always settled by due process in Britain's Senior Service the comparison with Stalin's savage measures in World War Two misses the point. There was nothing remotely comparable in the Anglo-American armies. In World War One, when the disciplinary regime in the British Army was much harsher than in World War Two, a total of 3,080 British soldiers were condemned to death between 1914 and March 1920. 346 (11.23 per cent) were actually executed. There are unconfirmed reports that Chuikov, the commander of the 62nd Army at Stalingrad, had some 13,500 soldiers executed for

crimes of desertion and cowardice. Stalin, the NKVD and his generals executed their soldiers on a scale that bears no comparison with the Allied armies. Nor did Stalin's mindless vindictiveness stop with the lives of his soldiers. One of the more outrageous provisions of Order No 270 stipulated that the families of soldiers who were declared to be deserters were to be deprived of state aid, tantamount to a death sentence amid the scarcity of war-time rationing. No such measure would have been possible in either America or Britain. As for Beria's appointment as head of the NKVD, then Braithwaite is very wide of the mark when he asserts that Beria had been appointed 'to curb the excesses of the NKVD'. This was the man who organised the mass murder of Poles in the Katyn forest, in the Starobelsk and Ostashkovo camps, and in other sites throughout Western Ukraine and Belorussia. Later in the war Beria oversaw the mass deportation of national minorities deemed to have collaborated with the Nazis.

There are a number of errors in *Moscow 1941* which will require correction for any paperback edition. In his discussion of the infamous and demoralising TASS communiqué in which any suggestion of a rift in Soviet-German relations is dismissed Braithwaite gives the date as the 14th June 1941. The communiqué was in fact issued on 13th June 1941, the full text being published in the all-union press the following day. Another error is the incorrect date for Stalin's Order No 227. It was issued on 28th July 1942 not the 26th July. The initials of the author of *Udar po svoim: Krasnaia armiia 1938-1941* are cited as "I". My copy gives the full name as N S Cherushev. There are a number of transliteration and translation errors as well. Two transliterated versions of a Russian author's surname are used: 'Ponomarëv' and sometimes 'Ponamarev'. Nor is there any good reason for transliterating the adjectives for 'Russian' and 'Moscow', as respectively 'russki' and 'moskovski' instead of the usual '*russkii*' and '*moskovskii*'. '*Obshchevoiskovoi*' is translated as 'mixed' when it should be 'all-arms' and *narodnoe opolchenie* is translated as 'popular levy' when it should be 'people's militia'. Fortunately these errors can be easily remedied. They do not in any way diminish Rodric Braithwaite's achievement. *Moscow 1941* is a fine tribute to Moscow and its people. I trust that President Putin and the Mayor of Moscow will both receive signed copies from our former ambassador.



Idols but not idle

Jules Stewart

In Spite of the Gods, Edward Luce, Simon and Schuster, 2006, £20.

Edward Luce has provided us with a lively addition to the bibliography of contemporary India. As a journalist, the author has wisely steered clear of the turgid rhetoric that often and quite unnecessarily makes hard work of history. Eschewing 'the dismissive or the romantic' view that has characterised most westerners' approach to India and sparing no sacred cows, Luce offers an incisive, first-hand analysis of a country that, as he points out, is on course to become the world's third largest economy by 2020. An uncomfortable thought, when one considers the country's potential for calamity. The world can easily accommodate an Argentina in default — the idea of a country of more than one billion people, one half of whom live in 'absolute poverty', with less than 10 per cent of the workforce able to claim any sort of job security and vulnerable to powerful cadres of religious and nationalist fanatics, overtaking the Japanese economy in little more than a decade, conjures up disaster scenarios on an almost unthinkable scale. India's software industry, coupled with 'complex manufacturing', are pushing the country forward, Luce explains. But he earlier emphasises that only 0.25 per cent of India's labour pool is employed in information technology, software, back-office processing and call centres. This is not radically different from the City of London, which has all but become the engine of the British economy. Britain, however, has enjoyed four centuries of unbroken civil and political stability.

Yet India works. Things may not always work in the way you might want or expect, but there is a reasonable likelihood that sooner or later, that road will be re-opened to traffic, that planning permission will come through, or you will get a fair shake in the law courts. The wheels continue to grind, albeit cumbersomely, thanks in large measure to that precious gift of British colonialism, the civil service. 'Of the 35 million or so Indians with formal sector jobs...21 million are direct employees of the government,' says Luce. This provides a guarantee of continuity, no matter what. When prime minister Indira Gandhi was gunned down in 1984, there was no army takeover (the Indian Army, by the way, is surprisingly free of corruption), or mass roundups of dissidents. Civil servants carried on stamping papers and issuing permits, and India experienced none of the knee-jerk crackdowns associated with a Third World country catapulted into political turmoil.

Moreover, India inspires in most people who do business with the country a confidence they could never feel when dealing with China, Asia's other economic powerhouse. One of the key drivers of that confidence, if not the pre-eminent factor, is the English language. In spite of the films, the McMeals, the avalanche of Silicon Valley computer wallahs drifting home to big jobs and big bucks, it is the British version of that language that still prevails in the subcontinent. I once asked a friend in Darjeeling if he thought British English would eventually go the way of the British Raj. 'I wouldn't say that,' he mused, 'for us English is still Chaucer to Wordsworth'. Try that one on in the streets of any British city.

Thanks to the foresight of India's post-Partition leaders, Nehru being foremost amongst them, India has never lapsed into a backlash against British rule, a cheap expedient that was and is still being exploited by certain former colonies in Africa and elsewhere. As Luce notes, Nehru once described the English language as 'the glue of India'. Nehru, Jinnah, Gandhi, in their heart of hearts, hopeless Anglophiles, all. When it came to the crunch, even the ambiguous little Mahatma exhorted his countrymen to fight for Britain.

Luce's sense of journalistic balance is creditable. The author lays bare the shortcomings of a society that has lagged behind dictatorial China in protecting its poor from afflictions like illiteracy, tuberculosis and malnutrition. Yet he is quick to point out that the country is indeed the world's largest democracy, and as such it has managed to avoid famine since independence thanks to a democratic electoral system and a free media that bring pressure on the government to provide the distribution of emergency relief at times of acute shortage or crop failure. In almost the same breath, we are told of the corruption and incompetence that is behind food deficiencies, in contrast to free and fair elections involving more than 600 million voters, a system that 'bears comparison with any third world and most first world countries'. This is not to claim that India is immune to taking a step backward, as was seen from 1998 to 2004 during the BJP administration, when the country was ruled by a humourless lot of men who were determined 'to re-construct India's national identity along Hindu lines', ignoring the fact that the country is home to more Muslims than neighbouring Pakistan. For now, India is fortunate to have a capable team of professionals in office, once described to me as 'a Moslem President, a Sikh Prime Minister and an Italian Catholic running the show'.

In a way, the second set of photos in the book tells the story. We have Nehru and Gandhi sharing a moment of laughter, and below that Sonia Gandhi at the grave of her murdered mother-in-law Indira — symbolising the tragedy of fanatical violence that has erupted on a regular basis in post-Partition India. We see Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the quiet Oxford-educated intellectual who was instrumental in the early 1990s in opening the country's economy to modernisation and foreign investment. General Pervez Musharraf on the opposite page is a reminder of another running sore with which the country has had to contend in its sixty years of independence. The statue of a Hindu god towering above an elevated sector of Delhi's new metro, the veiled women outside the McDonald's, the Bollywood dancers and the young couple lounging over a drink in a rooftop bar, reflect the extraordinary contrasts and conflicts of this effervescent society.

The Shock: things can get better without getting worse

Mark Baillie

J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall, Ian Bremmer, Simon & Schuster, 2006, £17.99.

Habits of Highly Effective Countries, Leon Louw, Law Review Project (Sandton, South Africa), 2006, free from lrp@telkomsa.net or download from www.policynetwork.net.

The Improving State of the World, Indur Goklany, The Cato Institute, $19.95.

The J-Curve gives an interesting review of some worrying countries but it does not provide what it says on the cover, *A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall.* It offers a novel way of describing certain kinds of political and social turbulence but it is not a tool for understanding anything: the *J-Curve* is not measurable and it misconstrues the most important factor in progress or decline, economics.

Risk advisor Ian Bremmer's premise is that political improvement from tyranny to liberty must involve some turmoil in the middle, as control eases but new institutions are too weak to create social harmony, the rule of law and peaceful political debate.

This may be true of pure political reforms but they are not what makes the world go round. Would you prefer to be a citizen of democratic Bangladesh or authoritarian Singapore, democratic Kenya or feudal Bahrain? The differences that define these countries are not their politics but their wealth, caused by economics not by political conditions.

The good news for poor people everywhere is that even the smallest economic reforms have rapid results, whereas the timings and effects of political reforms

are unpredictable. This should not be startling but it did need demonstrating: *Habits of Highly Effective Countries*, a study by Leon Louw of the South African think-tank The Law Review Project, shows which economic freedoms have the most effect on growth and which restrictions cause the most poverty. Remember that poverty is created by bad policies, it is not a natural state of helpless deprivation. In the early 60's South Korea was poorer than Ghana; in 2006, famine-struck Kenya suffered an unsellable surplus of maize production. Bremmer's idea that liberty is just about politics is very American and has arguably led to the slaughter in Iraq, which demonstrates how democracy is not simply conjured into existence by elections. Liberty means little if you do not have economic freedoms, such as the English freedoms that colonial Americans fought to regain in a conflict that started over their incomes, not their ideas.

Prosperity and stability reinforce each other and both together often lead to political freedom (as in the Thirteen Colonies, although not in Singapore, Bahrain or Hong Kong) but political freedom does not create economic freedom (see Venezuela, India until very recently, Bangladesh or Ethiopia). Economic freedoms boil down to freedom to trade in an open market; the right to own property; the rights and obligations of contract law; all under the rule of law, meaning that the law is applied consistently, equally and fairly.

The poorer the country, the quicker and greater the growth, as Louw demonstrates. These improvements do not require any kind of political reform (although they may require political will, which can be difficult) or Bremmer's turmoil in order to achieve massive improvements for their people — as seen in Botswana, Mauritius, China and India, not just in the city States of Singapore, Hong Kong and Bahrain.

When Bremmer does address economics, like so many people who should know better, he falls into the inequality trap, whether because of sentimental or Lefty tendencies or because he is not good at sums. He says South Africa's poor have become poorer while the rich became richer: in fact, the gap has widened but the poor are richer than they were (partly due to the underground economy, which does not appear in official figures, and despite the growing curse of AIDS), like the poor in any country making economic progress. This phenomenon of improvement is described in Louw's study and in the revelatory *The Improving State of the World*, by Indur Goklany.

Wherever you get more economic freedoms, the poor get richer faster than the rich do — and Goklany shows how growth even improves the environment. To those who do not understand maths, however, the inequality gap appears to get wider.

It is essential to nail the inequality fallacies. Fidel Castro, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Oxfam will tell you that capitalism, liberalisation or globalisation mean the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. They and David Cameron also say that inequality of incomes or wealth is, in itself, a form of oppression that can and should be reduced, both domestically and internationally.

If you have £100 and I have £10 and we both get 10per cent richer, you will now have £99 pounds more than me whereas you used to have only £90 more — but you will still have exactly 10 times more money than me: the figure is higher but the percentages and the ratio are unchanged. Am I worse off because the gap has widened according to the infamous Gini coefficient of inequality? For me to catch up with you and acquire the same amount of capital, if you continued to get 10 per cent more per year I would need to get a return of 1,000 per cent a year for 13 years. Mathematics may be surprising, counter-intuitive or even disappointing but the results are indisputable (unless you are Castro or the Archbishop or a pre-Reformation Pope, preaching that an increase in one person's wealth must deprive someone else of that wealth).

As for the pseudo-moral argument that inequality is unfair or socially destabilising, there is no evidence of this: revolutions have been caused by lack of opportunity, by rigid divides of castes or classes, but not by simple differences in income or wealth. Morally, equality of opportunity is what matters, not equality of outcome. If the J-Curve is no tool for analysis or understanding, the book does offer some provocatively interesting reviews of Saudi Arabia, Russia, China and other dangerous countries, giving the standard of insight you would expect in the best of *The Economist*, but in most of these cases the political dangers he describes are stoked by economic oppression. Louw's and Goklany's practical economic analyses and case-studies disprove Bremmer's political premise that things have to get worse before they get better — a rare bit of cheerful news in geo-politics.

Church and State

Jeremy Black

Sacred Causes. Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to Al Qaeda, Michael Burleigh, Harper Collins, 2006, £25.

The sequel to *Earthly Powers: Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War*, is an impressive as well as instructive work that combines historical insight with an argument that is

directly pertinent today. Presenting the interaction of religion and politics, a major theme of the book is the need to consider religion seriously. The extent to which political movements had religious aspects and connotations is central to the thesis, as is the darkness of extremism that arises from this combination, whether displayed by the Nazis and Communists, or by the IRA, or today by the representatives of Islam. The argument is advanced with a fine grasp of the ideological and political realities of extremist movements, and evidence is skilfully deployed. For example, Hitler's belief in a special relationship with a supportive God is illustrated by a speech he delivered in 1937, 'when I look back on the five years behind us, I cannot help but say: this has not been the work of man alone. Had Providence not guided us, I surely would often have been unable to follow these dizzying paths'. Furthermore, Hermann Otto Hoyer's depiction of Hitler, *In the Beginning was the World* (1937), is tellingly reproduced.

In contrast to those who sympathised with the murderous faiths of Nazism and Communism, Burleigh finds much to praise in the churches. Their room for manoeuvre is shown as particularly restricted, and, if some behaved very foolishly, others had integrity. In 1941, Cardinal Baudrillart called for men to join the League of French Volunteers against Bolshevism, but his fellow French bishops responded icily and Pius XII refused to declare the war in Russia a 'crusade'. Instead, the situation in Portugal or Ireland was far more to the Vatican's taste. Burleigh makes clear the extent to which clerics helped Jews, alongside the shameful failure of others. He brings the argument up to date in claiming, 'Making use of the Holocaust as the biggest moral club to use against the Church, simply because one does not like its policies on abortion, contraception, homosexual priests or the Middle East, is as obscene as any attempt to exploit the deaths of six million European Jews for political purposes'. The equivalence is inappropriate, but Burleigh's case has considerable merit.

Communism is also harshly surveyed, and the pressure the churches suffered, particularly in the late 1940s and early 1950s, is discussed carefully. Burleigh is very critical of historians who put a positive gloss on the imposition of Communist totalitarianism, singling out Eric Hobsbawm and Mark Mazower for 'selective' accounts. He then moves on to a critical account of the self-indulgent 1960s. The culture of the period is presented as hitting religious continuity:

> *During the 1960s a distinctive youth culture fuelled by recent relative affluence displaced older ideals of domesticity, one consequence being that traditional religion lost the main site for its transmission through the generations, based as that was on the binary stereotypes of pious and respectable women corralling more wayward men into the traditional Christian home and family.*

After a discussion of the IRA as a vicious Fascist movement, and of the peace process in Northern Ireland as 'asymmetrical' appeasement, Burleigh considers the current crisis. He presents the argument that multiculturalism is a consequence and cause of cultural suicide, and suggests that the example of community restorative justice in Northern Ireland shows how entire communities can be handed over to very suspect leaders. A powerful and important book.

The Name's Bond

H E Taylor

The Man Who Saved Britain, Simon Winder, Picador, 2006, £14.99 hb, £9.99 pb.

Anyone who has ever felt a twinge of guilt at the historical fact of the British Empire will be grateful to Simon Winder for establishing himself at the pinnacle of national *apologismo*. So comprehensive is his work in this field that there is no longer any need for anyone else ever to say sorry again.

Notionally another book about James Bond, *The Man Who Saved Britain* is a commentary on British politics and society since the Second World War. It is Winder's contention that the juddering deflation of the empire found, and was made tolerable by, a palliative counterpart myth of national prowess and *savoir-faire*. In exploring this theme he has chosen as his instrument a compound of personal memoir, biography (Fleming) and critical analysis of the Bond canon.

This is an original approach, and it yields original insights, which are themselves counterbalanced by the author's stunningly conventional political views. He registers levels of all-round correctitude that can only be described as eye-watering. Again and again, and not for the first time, the evils of empire are hammered home. It is as if the author has revisited an ancient battlefield — Hastings, say — and nuked it. Just to make sure. One eventually wonders what the real purpose of all this un-nuanced overkill is. Perhaps Winder is concerned that from beneath the nuclear winter of his scorn and disparagement some minute proto-imperialistic life form will pop its head up, look around, and start appointing District Commissioners.

Although coherent, and consistently argued, the book's thesis benefits from stripping out a good deal of

common sense. To subscribe to its vision of Britain's unique evil and malfeasance in world affairs, one must also believe that every culture and polity with which Britain came into contact was an unspoilt Arcadia. At the same time Winder's approach is resolutely Britocentric — so much so that it eventually becomes the thing it affects to despise. The Grand Apology is distorted by an undercurrent of national pride. After all, what other country but Britain could apologize quite so magnificently well? It is impossible to imagine a Frenchman or an Indian coming close — or even bothering to make the effort.

'Bitterness' is Mr Winder's favourite term for those supposedly mourning the loss of empire. Perhaps his whole purpose is to purge himself of any trace of this disagreeable vice. This leads him into extolling the Attlee years as a period of hope and happiness, contrasted with the horrid bitterness of Conservative government. This particular insight was not shared by the electorate in 1951, but never mind. The wretched Conservatives come in for the sort of criticism that at times approaches bitterness itself. Not only do they shoulder the *entire* burden of appeasement (again), but even the guilt of Coronation Chicken is laid to their account. When poor old Anthony Eden speaks in French he does so incredibly, unforgivably, in an English accent, something that would oblige 'any quarter-way motivated French patriot...to gulp with anger and disbelief'.

But would it? Passages like this suggest a guilt-trip that has spiralled into a hugely enjoyable orgy of self-loathing. If we put Winder in context as part of an evolving national organism, what we see is the British people first eating their cake and later throwing it up again. A greedy, unabashed enjoyment of top-dog status is followed by an intemperate rejection of past pleasures. Both are equally gratifying in the appropriate time and place. An accident of history has placed Winder in the middle of Phase Two. Had he been born a couple of generations earlier he might have been just as happy lording it over a million square miles of nowhere in particular, armed only with a fly-whisk and a *stengah*.

One senses a certain resentment that Britain and the empire diverged in their reality from the patriotic self-image. They were meaner, shabbier more ramshackle than anyone dared to suggest at the time. No doubt. But that someone working in the media should be surprised at the yawning gulf between peddled myth and tawdry reality is, to borrow a term from the author's critical apparatus, 'slightly hilarious'.

It follows from all this that Winder revels in Britain's reduced status as an 'engagingly multicultural' add-on to the great continent of Europe. Even in our multiculturalism we are tepid. Neither our honour killings nor our tube bombings can elevate us above the level of merely 'engaging'.

The book, and the author does not pretend otherwise, is written from a purely middle-class perspective. We are told that 'in a generation nine hundred thousand cotton textile workers were reduced to two hundred thousand, leaving the once prosperous county of Lancashire almost without a point'. Funny enough, but indicative of a remoteness from actual people, whom one suspects Winder of viewing with the same detachment as the squads of plastic soldiers that he once marshalled around imaginary Alameins.

As for Bond, he starts to get a look in around page 77. Until then occasional references are bolted on to otherwise Bond-free sections, as if to remind any readers who bought the book for its cover that the author has not entirely forgotten them. It does not matter, since it is Bond (a bore), who serves the purposes of the book, and not the other way round.

Winder writes extremely well and with a distinctive style. Unpredicted outcomes enliven the ends of his leisurely sentences. His jokes are not contaminated by jokiness. His similes are under control. Irrespective of his ideological bias, he has a good grasp of the period, which allows him complete confidence in his angle of approach. His claim not to be a historian is unusual in a history graduate.

We should also be grateful to the publishers, Picador, who have had the good sense to issue something so radically different from the conventional productions of the genre-driven conveyor belt.

Desert Wars

Katharine Szamuely

Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy, Laura M. James, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, Hb £45.

It is appropriate that a title which starts with the word 'Nasser' should end with the word 'Enemy', as Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser had many of these. Britain, France, America, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemeni Royals, Yemeni Republicans, Iraq's leader Nuri Said; all experienced Nasser's fiery rhetoric at some point between 1952, the year of his coup, and 1970, the year of his death.

There are a few surprises in this list. Most obvious of these is the number of Arabs included (and Nasser's various enemies within Egypt have not even been mentioned here). The Egyptian radio station during Nasser's reign was called *Voice of the Arabs* and was described by Ahmad Said, its presenter and the proud holder of the sobriquet 'Mr Hate' in contemporary

British newspapers, as 'the voice of Nasser and the voice of the Arab people at the same time'. But is this possible when there was enmity between Nasser and so many other Arabs?

The Egyptian revolutionaries' response was, of course, that none of these others represented the people (although they would never have expressed it with such restraint). They followed the traditional revolutionary path of believing their own hype, which led them into trouble in Yemen:

'...Yemeni tribes should not bother us... Don't they know yet that we are about to send our storm troopers over there? Those are the troops we train to even eat serpents.' Egyptians had little knowledge of the geography, people or culture of Yemen. Their ideological predisposition was to believe that revolution against a corrupt and oppressive tyranny would be met with universal support. They had a fixed image of Yemeni tribes as backward and incapable of holding their own.

They believed that they were sending moral support to a revolution which was destined to succeed, and that any opposition would be from backward tribes people who could be largely ignored. So much for their interest in the Arab people.

In fact, they discovered there was considerable opposition to a revolution which, far from sending predominantly moral support, the Egyptians may well have manufactured, and to which they certainly ended up sending over a third of their army. It is hard to take the simple line that Nasser spoke for the Arab people. This has ramifications today, when we are again presented with the idea of a unified Arab entity.

Within the list of Nasser's enemies neither Israel nor America was necessarily his first hate. In fact he was known as 'Colonel Jimmy' because of his association with the US, and on the night he was directing the coup d'état he slipped 'occasionally into English as he gave his orders, on the grounds that "Arabic was not a suitable language to express the need for calm"'. Primarily he defined himself as anti-colonial, and as such was viewed with some goodwill by the US. One of the questions of counter-factual history must surely be what would have happened if the US had intervened in an alternative direction during the Suez crisis.

By 1967 this had clearly changed. To understand why, it is important to look at the role of the Soviet Union, one of a select group not on Nasser's list of enemies. Nasser was not a Communist and was quite ready to take what the Soviets offered without ever really being 'one of them'. Dr James gives the impression that Egypt turned to the Soviets out of practical need once the US had let them down. In fact, as early as 1956 Israel found evidence of Soviet weapons as they started to take over Egyptian positions. Arguably the link was stronger and more ideological than described in *Nasser at War*. This did not, of course, stop the large amounts of aid sent by the US throughout the 1960s, and to the present day, from being accepted.

James traces the enmity between Israel and Egypt carefully. For those of us brought up on the continuing fight between Israel and the Arab world (and there are now many generations of us) it is surprising to read how uninterested in Israel Nasser seemed to be, despite occasional rants against the 'imperialist base in the heart of the Arab homeland'. He then, seemingly intentionally, began to build them up as the enemy (supported, of course, by the arch-enemy) in order to provoke a war he believed Egypt would easily win.

His aims in 1967 are still unclear. It is probable that, due to the power of Nasser's great friend Marshal Amer (who swiftly entered the list of enemies after Egypt's catastrophic defeat) had managed to accumulate for himself, Nasser did not know much about the state of his own armed forces. Equally, the US intervention in 1956 had not allowed him to discover Israel's full military strength. But statements he made at the time suggest he was indeed aware of the odds against him (as quoted by James, he loved to give everything in terms of odds, possibly thinking that made his propositions sounds better thought out than they really were). Possibly Ahraf Ghorbal, Egyptian envoy to Washington after the defeat, was right when he said 'Nasser went to the brink, but wanted everyone to stop him'.

By portraying Nasser's regime as a series of attacks by and on various enemies, we are shown in *Nasser at War* the image that Nasser built up of himself, which is beautifully illustrated by the front cover picture of a mural of Nasser-as-martyr. We are also shown the contradictions inherent in this self-image. This book is intended to describe the Arab side of actions which led to the Suez Crisis, the Yemeni revolution and the Six Day War, and which continue to reverberate to this day. James has been able to do this because of vast quantities of research and insightful interviews with some of the protagonists, but has managed, while writing this down, to retain a light touch and a sense of humour.

Stones in Circles

John Michell

Megalithic Measures and Rhythms: Sacred Knowledge of The Ancient Britons, Anne Macaulay, Floris Books, 2006, £20.

Astro-archaeology, the study of ancient temples and

monuments from an astronomical point of view, was pioneered about a hundred years ago by Sir J Norman Lockyer, the founding editor of *Nature*. Egyptian and Greek temples, he found, were generally orientated to the rising or setting point of a star or planet that corresponded to the deity to whom they were dedicated. The same principles were discovered in Stonehenge and the stone circles of Britain and Brittany and Lockyer concluded that their prehistoric builders were well versed in astronomy, chronology and surveying. These ideas were incompatible with the Darwinian view of history, prevalent at the time, according to which our ancient ancestors were primitive, stupid and even (as archaeological illustrators depicted them) ape-like. This view took precedence over Lockyer's proofs and up to recently his evidence from ancient astronomers was derided by the professors.

Old-guard archaeologists were shocked when, in 1967, a book was published by the Oxford University Press called *Megalithic Sites in Britain*. Its author, a distinguished professor of engineering, Alexander Thom, had devoted spare time to analysing the surveys he had made of stone circles, mostly in his native Scotland. They confirmed everything that Lockyer and his followers had claimed, and Thom went even further, showing that stone circles were not only astronomically orientated but were designed mathematically with a common unit of measure. This unit, 2.72 feet, he called the 'megalithic yard'. Its occurrence in monuments from northern Europe to the outer Scottish islands indicated the existence of a unified science and culture in around 2000 BC.

Thom's proofs were established by statistics, and rival statisticians have since disputed them, so arguments still rage between his supporters and detractors. One of the former was Anne Macaulay, an Edinburgh scholar who died in 1998. She reviewed Thom's surveys and discovered further geometry in the megalithic designs, beautiful and ingenious. Her work remained unfinished, but Vivian Linacre, the anti-metric campaigner, and the geologist Richard Batchelor, have taken her notes and drawings and worked them up into this very handsome book. Illustrated throughout with plans and photographs of stone circles, it is a tribute to all concerned, Professor Thom, Anne Macaulay, the selfless editors, and above all, to the unknown scientific adepts who designed the stone rings, about a thousand of which still survive across the British Isles.

But was Thom right? Indisputable are the main features of his astronomical discoveries, the orientation of stones and circles to points on the horizon which mark seasonal transits of the heavenly bodies. Many researchers have since confirmed and extended this aspect of his work, most significantly in recreating the symbolic, mythological landscapes that were formed through the conjunction of stars and landmarks. There was doubtless a practical side to ancient astronomy, connected with the farmer's and hunter's year, but its overall meaning is far deeper, involving religious ritual and the mysteries of the soul. But these things are beyond the reach of the modern mind. A more accessible problem is that of the megalithic yard. Anne Macaulay accepted it without question, but its status is controversial and metrologists today are wary of Thom's claims in this respect. Most stone circles are too small, damaged and irregular for accurate measuring, and when Thom surveyed Stonehenge, hoping to find proof in its meticulous symmetry, the unit of 2.72 feet was not apparent. On the other hand, a similar unit, the 'step' or half-pace of 2½ feet was a feature of ancient European measuring systems, such as the Belgic foot whose step unit of 2.715428 feet is prominent in the Stonehenge plan. In one thing Thom was certainly right. The foot unit, still in use today, is at the root of all ancient measures, and by drawing attention to it in his definition of the megalithic yard rather than using the meaningless metre, he opened the way to subsequent discoveries in metrology. These not only justify his belief in prehistoric science but show it to have been far more sophisticated and universal than he could have imagined.

FILM

The Devil has the Best Tunes

Helen Szamuely

The Devil Wears Prada, Directed by David Frankel, On general release, available in DVD.

This is, in many ways a very odd film. One cannot help thinking that the intention of the film, to show how utterly despicable and superficial the fashion industry and fashion journalism are, somehow fell by the wayside as the director and the scriptwriter fell in love with the supposed villain, the hard-working, slave-driving, bitch-queen, Miranda Priestley, editor of the biggest and glossiest New York fashion magazine, *Runway*. As played by Meryl Streep, the woman is quite intoxicating. She has all the best lines, she looks superb without one ever noticing what she is wearing, and she understands what she is doing and its importance.

The sad truth is that we are, in one way or another, controlled by the fashion industry, as Miranda explains to her rather supercilious, young assistant, the supposed heroine of the film, Andy Sachs. Maybe, as some critics pointed out, Anne Hathaway is a tad inadequate for the part, but I think that the critics, who usually are part of the great Hollywood myth (we are not superficial, oh goodness me, no) were disappointed with the actual role.

Andy comes to New York and applies for journalistic jobs. Apparently, this does not involve finding out who the editors are of some of the biggest magazines around though *Runway* publishes feature articles on various subjects of interest to women. Going for an interview for a PA's job, she does not bother to find out whose PA she might become or what the magazine writes about. It is obvious to her and to her somewhat supercilious friends that she ought to be given the job on the basis of her rather average previous record in regional journalism. When Andy decides at the end that she cannot tolerate the ruthlessness of the fashion world, afraid that she may acquire those qualities herself, she walks away into "real" journalism and gets a job rather rapidly thanks to Miranda Priestley's imperious instructions to the editor of the fictitious *New York Mercury*. Does Andy really think that people do not get shafted in 'real' journalism? That appears to be the message of the film.

Of course, by this stage most of the audience has lost interest in Andy, her gorgeous smile and equally gorgeous ex-boyfriend and has become entirely fascinated by Meryl Streep's editor and her second in command, waspish but with a kind heart, played by Stanley Tucci. Not only do they come up with the best dialogue but they can actually explain what it is their work is about. All Andy and her hipster friends can do is feel superior. So, there we have it: a marvellous film but not quite in the way it was intended.

The Queen

Sarah Drury

The Queen, Directed and Produced by Stephen Frears and Peter Morgan. On general release.

This film could easily have been a disaster. Any enterprise touching Princess Diana seems to carry more than its fair share of risk but here the gamble has paid off richly, thanks to an extraordinary performance by Helen Mirren, and intelligent direction and writing from Stephen Frears and Peter Morgan. Although based on detailed research, one might have expected, at best, a balanced approach to the subject, at worst, a platform for lampooning the faults and foibles which afflict any institution. Instead, no dyed-in-the-wool supporter of constitutional monarchy versus its alternatives could have been more understanding. Understanding, not gentle. No-one escapes scot-free, thank goodness, but there is throughout that most graceful and rare of qualities, the spirit of compassion.

Excellent use is made of newsreel footage (only Diana plays Diana, as though she were actress enough). One can't help but wonder how different the scenario would have been had she died at another time, not during the Royals' summer break in Balmoral: it was this separation to the far north that the media and then the people seized upon as indicative of a lack of caring leadership. As the waves of emotion grew steadily greater, the public felt abandoned and rudderless, laying their flowers and lighting their candles around an empty House. They could no more understand the reticence that was keeping the royals at Balmoral than the royals could understand the festival of mourning in which the whole nation seemed to be indulging. Tony Blair (Michael Sheen, who played Blair in the television play 'The Deal', also directed and written by Frears/Morgan) was at first all wide eyes and grimaces; by the end he has earned our and the Queen's respect and in the process showed considerable feistiness and moral strength in standing up not only to his spin doctor, Alastair Campbell (authentically portrayed in all his cocky chippiness by Mark Bazeley) but, more interestingly, to his wife. From the moment Cherie comes on screen, reluctantly partnering Blair to his first audience with the Queen after the election, pulling faces and making mock curtseys, one knows he will not receive domestic support. 'Off with their heads' would be more acceptable to her than any strategy to save them from themselves. She even exasperates Blair who at one moment accuses her of not using her intelligence, so circumscribed is she by prejudice. She jealously retaliates by detecting a mother complex. The theme of motherhood runs through the film: if there is one thing the royal family is prepared to admit about Diana it is that she was an excellent mother, able to demonstrate a warmth and affection for her children which they might feel but are unable to express. (The young princes are only seen back view being bundled into vehicles for the deer stalking which Prince Philip seems to think the panacea for all grief.) The Queen's prickly relationship with Prince Charles and her undoubted closeness to her mother (a large, not necessarily benevolent ancient whose acerbic comments are almost a match for Philip's) afford little comparable comfort.

A line from Shakespeare's Henry IV, ii, introduces the action: 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown'

but the tears that run through Richard II seem more in keeping with its theme: 'Shall we play the wantons with our woes, And make some pretty match with shedding tears?' Grief has to be visible and communicable, especially in the television age. For those of us who freeze when convivially invited to *Exchange the sign of peace*, in Church, such behaviour does not come naturally. How much more difficult for a family locked into a tradition of privilege and formality. A nice contrast is made between the dress and manners of the Blair household, tee-shirts and fish fingers and feet up on the sofa, and the Windsors, who only look truly relaxed when heading outdoors. Television becomes the main medium for everyone trying to assess the public's feelings and reactions: all radios and televisions are instantly removed from the boys' rooms after the accident, but the adults keep a close if unbelieving eye on the small screen, as they do on the tabloid headlines.

The film is also extremely funny, one of the most hilarious moments being when the Queen's unfortunate private secretary (another skilled performance by Roger Allam) has to break the news that the funeral, now to be a public affair, will be run according to Tay Bridge rules, the plans devised for the obsequies of the Queen Mother. She is not amused.

HM certainly did her homework on HM. From the moment we see the Queen having her portrait painted, we sense ambiguity. She jokes with the artist and then as the camera settles on her face it assumes an imperiousness reminiscent of the first Elizabeth (who has also been memorably portrayed by Mirren). This is not someone who will take kindly to pressure, even if it is well-meant, but being practical, she would rather bend than break. Mirren commented admiringly, 'She's steady, true, honest and British.' In the closing scene she sits frostily as a bouncy Blair begins to adopt a too familiar air. She observes that humility is different to humiliation, before briskly announcing that she thinks much better on her feet and marching him out to walk in the garden with the corgis. Her only unguarded moment comes when she is on her own, having damaged her Land Rover mid-river. Confronted by the magnificent stag she knows is being hunted, her face breaks into a smile of joy. Diana the huntress and the hunted; yes, of course we are meant to pick up on the allusion, but as a response to an untamed thing of nature, this rang true. 'Shoo,' she said, waving her hand at it, and it went. To a sad fate wounded by an investment banker and finally dispatched by the neighbour's ghillies. Somehow it seems nobler to be done to deaths by princes, though I suppose it's all one to a stag.

Pallant House and Environs

Andrew Lambirth

Chichester is one of those Sussex market towns it is still a joy to visit: kempt and cared-for, with still a few decent shops and a good sprinkling of cultural resources. I wrote town, but Chichester is really a city with its own cathedral, its ancient precincts stuffed with splendid art from Romanesque carvings to Chagall stained glass, via the bright emotive splendours of John Piper and Graham Sutherland. Then there's the Chichester Festival Theatre, its programme and popularity revitalized after a period of indifference. There's even more than one second-hand bookshop, which just shows the quality of the place and its patrons. Small wonder then that Pallant House should be fast turning into the leading museum for 20th century British art.

What about the Tate, you may wonder. Well, it does of course have an unbeatable collection of work, but only a tiny proportion of it is ever on view. The fashion is to hang very few paintings to a gallery, and only change the displays after months of inaction. The greater part of the gallery space is taken up with temporary exhibitions which generate revenue: blockbusters of Constable or Hogarth with an admission fee of £10, and a catalogue at £29.99 in paperback and £40 in hardback. Meanwhile, the vast resources of modern British art that lurk in the basements and off-site stores (remembering the small amounts on show at the regional outposts of Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives) are never seen, seldom lent (draconian conservators permitted to rule the roost these days), with the result that the nation little knows what it possesses. For yes, these works are only held by the Tate (or any other public gallery) in trust for the nation, they are actually owned by us. And we are consistently deprived of access to them.

It is thus more than a relief to visit Pallant House and find almost the entire collection on the walls. And the collection is now very substantial since the architect of the British Library, Colin St John Wilson, gifted his modern paintings to augment the existing bequests of Dean Walter Hussey and Charles Kearley. The collection is so big that it needed a contemporary wing to be added

to the elegant Queen Anne townhouse which had served as the museum since 1982. Last summer that new wing opened to deserved fanfares. Designed by architects Long & Kentish in association with Wilson, it cost some £8.6 million, bankrolled by the Heritage Lottery Fund and various benefactors (who said the generosity of individuals was a thing of the past?). It is a triumph, because for once an art gallery has been designed with art in mind, and not the usual architects' desire to show off. This building works superbly as a machine for showing art, which is what it should be, and this is due no doubt to Wilson's involvement. It's rare indeed that a collector gets to design the museum which houses his collection. Or is competent to do so.

Sandy Wilson, as he is familiarly known, has an impressive collection of more than 400 works, mostly paintings and sculptures by his friends and contemporaries. There are thus excellent examples of work by Frank Auerbach, Peter Blake, Patrick Caulfield, RB Kitaj and Eduardo Paolozzi. Less well-known figures such as Michael Andrews, Colin Self and Victor Willing are also represented. These complement the existing holdings of Mod Brit, with their emphasis on the likes of Hitchens, Sickert and Ceri Richards. To go round Pallant House today is a treat. It's not too large to be exhausting (though there's an excellent restaurant to pause in for refreshment), but it is extensive enough to give you a real feeling for the development of British art through the 20th century.

Meanwhile, temporary displays bring an added focus and interest: William Roberts (1895-1980), one-time Vorticist and classic figure painter of crowds mostly at leisure, is the first to receive the spotlight in 2007. This monographic exhibition is followed by group shows of the Romantic spirit in British Art ('Poets in the Landscape', 31 March-10 June), which will examine the links between poetry and art through such historical figures as Blake and Flaxman, coming up to date with Craxton, Sutherland and Dylan Thomas. Later on is 'Eye Music: Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (30 June-16 September), which explores the inspiration of music, and looks at British artists John Tunnard and Alan Davie. I can't recommend Pallant House highly enough for a day visit if you haven't already been. It's closed Mondays, has a late night on Thursday and costs £6.50 to get in (£2 children and £3.50 students). It thoroughly deserves your support, and offers a great deal of pleasure into the bargain.

The oil paintings in the Pallant House collection are all listed and illustrated in The Public Catalogue Foundation's volume for West Sussex. This series of books aims for the first time to catalogue every oil painting in public ownership in Britain (remember, this does not include watercolours, so the Girtins of this world go unrecorded here). The PCF's initiative is recent, the first volume appearing in 2004, devoted to North Yorkshire, and mentioned then in this column. West Sussex is the third in the series, but there are at the time of writing a dozen volumes in existence. The project is a massive one: to produce a county-by-county record of paintings, and it is very badly needed. Until now, the public has had no real idea of what museums hold. (Sometimes the museums don't know either.) These books (available for £20 in paperback or £35 in hardback, order them direct on 0870 1283566) are a visual record of the pictorial wealth of the nation. At a glance the reader can see what's on offer in Essex or Suffolk. Colour reproductions are laid out clearly, nine to the page, with basic details. Not burdened with reams of analytical or overwritten text, these are essentially picture books. And what a joy they are to browse among. In the West Sussex volume I lingered over a fine landscape by John Nash (why was he so drawn to winter definition?) in Worthing, and the Brangwyn murals at Christ's Hospital School which inspired John Piper and Keith Vaughan amongst others. Elsewhere I found Vivian Stanshall, the late and much lamented lead singer of the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, represented by a painting entitled 'Speranza Regards her Son'. Stanshall was an alumnus of Bishop Otter College in Chichester, and as such is there in the College collection, prompting thoughts of the role of art schools in the development of rock music. Now there's a rich subject for a thesis.

Sir Alfred Sherman's Last Interview on CD

Sir Alfred Sherman's last recorded political thoughts show great insights into the social background and personality of Margaret Thatcher. He analyses her Premiership, its crises and achievements and the political characters who supported and undermined her. Here, with a microphone close and in a private setting, Sherman was at his brilliant, intellectual and acerbic best. (Rodney Atkinson)

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The Early Years of the Royal School of Church Music

Andrew Earis

It is almost eighty years since the foundation of the School of English Church Music (SECM) — now the Royal School of Church Music — by Sydney Nicholson. A result of the 1922 report 'Music in Worship' by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, to consider 'the place of music in the worship of the Church', Nicholson's aims were twofold: to train church musicians and educate the clergy in the knowledge of music, and to assist by advice and practical help choirs or parishes affiliated to the newly formed School. The latter was one of Nicholson's great passions. He wrote 'There are in England some thirteen thousand churches and in the great majority of them there is musical activity of some sort. Every one ... is a self-contained unit...Together they represent an enormous body of musical energy and enthusiasm... Each little unit is working largely in isolation, and more often than not, under considerable difficulties.'

On St Nicholas Day 1927, whilst Nicholson was Organist of Westminster Abbey, a meeting was held in the Jerusalem Chamber of the Abbey and 'The School of English Church Music' was founded. One of the first steps of the Council of the School was to establish a training college at Chislehurst in Kent which opened in January 1929 — the College of St Nicholas. An integral part of the scheme was the establishment of a Chapel with daily choral services. At the same time an association of affiliated Churches who committed themselves to high standards in church music was set up. In the first ten years, the number of affiliated churches reached thirteen hundred worldwide.

Big festival services — which members of affiliated choirs could attend and take an active part — were a major feature of the School from the beginning. The first took place in London in December 1929, on the occasion of the second AGM of the School, and was sung by affiliated choirs from all over England and with an address by the President, the Archbishop of Canterbury. This was repeated in what became an annual St Nicholastide Festival of affiliated choirs. Nicholson wrote of the festivals, 'many of those who have been present must have been thrilled by the splendid effect of these massed choirs. Yet the object of these gatherings is not to give a grand musical performance, but rather to afford the opportunity for the choirs themselves to join in united worship'. During its first ten years, major choral festivals were held triennially in London — in 1930 at the Royal Albert Hall, and 1933 and 1936 at the Crystal Palace, with the latter bringing together some three thousand choristers under one roof.

Another way in which Sydney Nicholson aimed to educate parish churches throughout the land in the ways of good church music was through the recording of a number of gramophone records of hymns, psalms, communion settings and lectures. In an accompanying leaflet Nicholson wrote 'they are intended for demonstration purposes, use in mission fields, and other places where none of the usual instruments is provided'. A review in the *Church Times* described them as 'a model of straightforward, unaffected singing by a genuine church choir'.

Nowadays, as the School reaches its eightieth year, it is a very different organisation. It has moved away from the original emphasis on English choral music towards supporting a more diverse range of music across the world — including some of the more recent modernising excesses of the Anglican Church. It would probably be unrecognisable to Sydney Nicholson were he still alive today.

Nicholson aimed to achieve the highest possible standards in church music whether in cathedrals, chapels or small village churches. In his address to the first Festival service of the SECM in December 1929, the then Archbishop of Canterbury spoke about music in the church — words which are still relevant those who value excellence in church music.

Music makes all its lovers, 'high and low, rich and poor, one with another,' friends and companions. We who are here assembled are united as lovers of music. We are grateful beyond words for the delight, the solace, the inspiration, with which it has enriched our lives. We are united most of all in our desire to make music a worthy aid to, and offering of, the worship which rises from the human spirit to God, — most High, most Beautiful, most Holy.

IN SHORT

Handle with Care, Harriet Sergeant, Centre for Policy Studies, 2006.

Many more children enter care because of sexual and physical abuse than when I examined the system less than a decade ago. The underclass flourishes, with more drug taking, more 'multi-partnered fertility' and more diverse sex and violence. The outcomes are just as bad with the children being ten times more likely to be excluded from school, sixty times more likely to join the homeless, and fifty times more likely to be imprisoned. Sergeant's account is the latest in a tradition going back to Rowe and Lambert's analysis of the tragic care population in 1973, via other damning reports.

The system is still informed by the fantasy that care is a temporary respite while the original family is rehabilitated. One day the child is in such peril it has to be removed from home. The next day resources are poured into maintaining contact — with addicts who rent out their toddlers for sex with groups of men; who stunt their children with drugs and starvation, and who leave babies to be eaten by rats. Care children deteriorate as they plummet through a multitude of placements until official responsibility terminates at 16, and they are sent unprepared into the world. Leading careers for girls are prostitution and single motherhood — one in seven is already pregnant or a mother. They work as prostitutes and rent boys while still in the system. Six months after entering a care home, fifty per cent of those without criminal convictions will have one. In care there is no discipline, only 'rights'. Children's teeth rot because they can refuse treatment and from the windows of a 'therapeutic' home for children vulnerable to sexual exploitation, care workers watch as their charges go out to the pimps in the waiting cars.

Dysfunctional parents need deadlines to turn their lives around; otherwise automatic adoption should follow before more damage is done — Family ties ensure enduring responsibilities; they cannot be replicated by social workers.

Hopes that adoption would reduce the care population or become a mainline childcare option have always been disappointed, since this is a failure in terms of social service objectives. Now not even Sergeant proposes it. She wants a 'successful system of care', which makes sure children see the dentist and get bedtime stories. Dream on. Shame about the children.

Patricia Morgan

Three Cheers for Selection, Lord Blackwell, Centre for Policy Studies, 2006.

'Far from bringing the classes together, England's schools — private and state — are now a force for rigorous segregation' says Lord Adonis, quoted on the cover of this informative pamphlet. Sir Eric Anderson remarks in the foreword that selection by ability has been replaced by selection by neighbourhood. Even worse which he does not mention is selection by parental income. Our disastrous educational system ensures that we are losing the race in an increasingly competitive world.

A recent survey shows that the public — and not just the middle class — is not clinging to the outworn dogma of egalitarian education. Three quarters of people polled believe that there should be some form of selection in secondary schools and that it would benefit less academic children as well as the bright. The author recommends that state schools should be free to introduce streaming or become fully selective without a return to the rigidity of the 11+. The old technical schools should be revived to provide vocational training while the whole system should become much more flexible taking account of different speeds of development and allowing children to move at different ages between different types of schools.

The politicians are way behind the public. New Labour has proposed that it will abolish catchment areas and replace the selection process with a lottery. The New Conservatives are no better: David Cameron declared that he has no interest in selection — most Conservative leaders have always educated their children privately and have little knowledge of the shortcomings of the state system. When it was politically possible they did not give the voucher idea an experimental run. Meanwhile the private schools are increasing their fees well above the rate of inflation thus excluding more desperate parents. Modestly priced private schools are needed to respond to parents who want a good basic education without expensive frills.

My own view is that education will never improve until it is removed from the dead hand of the state. We have so much choice in other areas; why should it be denied us in the most important one?

Merrie Cave

Who Killed the Bible? Ian Robinson, Edgeways Books, 2006, £7.80, www.edgewaysbooks.com.

In this lively and authoritative book, Ian Robinson kills off the widely-held supposition that 'meaning' is something separate from the words in which it is expressed. Most biblical translators think that the Bible exists — almost we might say in Platonic space — susceptible to being put into a great variety of new editions. Robinson's demolition of this foolish idea reminds me of a similar put-down by C H Sisson when he said, 'Unfortunately, the choice of words determines what is being said'. Nowhere is this truer than in versions of the Bible. For example, Robinson thinks it is absurd that the King James rendering of *Isaiah 30: 27: Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation and his tongue as a devouring fire* can be adequately replaced by the Message Bible version:

> *Look, God's on his way and from a long way off! Smoking with anger, immense as he comes into view, words steaming from his mouth, searing, indicting words*

Robinson comments, 'Tell me another! Is this God or Stephenson's Rocket?'

The prominent theory — actually Eugene Nida's — in biblical translation supposes, '...that the thing said is assumed to be somewhere other than the saying. To validate his view of the matter, Nida would have to produce unpacked content. But content is always and only found in one expression or another. The suitcase image is misleading because in language we can never get the contents without a suitcase.'

Is one version of the Bible as good as another? Robinson denies it: 'There is no point in offering as the Word of God a version that is evidently godforsaken. Our world of science and celebrities is not one of religious seriousness'.

So many translations are studies in deprivation — and it is the reader who is deprived: 'The people who translated the *Song of Songs* 'How pretty you are. How beautiful!' cannot express love in their own private lives.' Examples always provide the acid test. Does anyone really think that *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (KJV) can be satisfactorily rendered (or even rendered at all) by:

The Word became a human being and lived among us. We saw his glory, full of grace and truth. This was the glory which he received as his Father's only Son (*Good News Bible*). And it is not just a matter of 'beautiful language'. It is a matter of meaning and truth.

What is to be done? Robinson concludes: 'In the 21st century there is only one of the 106 English versions that could possibly fulfil our requirements and that is the King James version suitably expounded and annotated, but *used*'. *Who Killed the Bible* is clear and powerful like those other two Robinson classics *The Survival of English* and *Prayers for the New Babel*

Peter Mullen

The European Question and the National Interest, Jeremy Black, Social Affairs Unit, 2006, £16.99.
The Dotted Red Line, Jeremy Black, Social Affairs Unit, 2006, £13.99.

Jeremy Black is one of the most exhausting people in this country. The speed with which he produces one interesting book after another deprives one of the will to live, let alone compete. But, reading them is such a pleasure that much can be forgiven. These two are companion pieces, the first dealing with foreign policy, especially Britain's involvement in the European Union and the somnambulistic situation in which we have found ourselves that is of very little use to us and from which exits are few and fraught with difficulty.

The problem is, as has been pointed out before, by Kenneth Minogue, but cannot be repeated often enough, that political discourse no longer centres on national interest as a primary factor. Blair has found himself in hot water over the whole question of the intelligence report and what was done with it because he could not even think of arguing the case for supporting our closest ally, on the grounds of national interest. To be fair, the arguments against the Iraqi war tended to be based on that inexplicable hatred of America that seems to have overwhelmed large chunks of the British population, left and right.

Jeremy Black's small tomes are a little breathless in tone — he has a great deal of history to cover in not a great deal of space. As befits an historian, he does not propagandize for or against NATO, for or against the European Security Force that is intended to undermine and destroy NATO, though his opinion of the latter is fairly clear. Nor does he come down on either side in the British political debate, landing punches on the Labour Government and the Conservative Opposition with strict impartiality. His main recommendation is one that we cannot argue with: Britain badly needs a clear and coherent discussion about her role in the world, both in political and military terms. The drift of the last couple of decades has landed us in a messy situation with our soldiers unable to cope with the tasks they have been set and our politicians not knowing where to turn to next. These books are welcome as a first (double) salvo in that debate.

Helen Szamuely

Demonstrable Failures. Veiled Threats

Following its decision to make it obligatory for Catholic adoption agencies to accept homosexual couples as prospective adoptees, the government announced it was 'minded' to apply the same principle and ban the wearing of the Niqab or total veil in government offices. Just as any adoption agency taking public money must abide by the law, so the government must uphold the rights of the public to see whom they were speaking to. Like homosexual adoption the numbers of people involved were tiny but an important principle was involved. The government was also concerned that wearing the veil should be a matter of free choice for Muslim women. It was important that women must have the same rights as men, and that included the right of Muslim women to show their face in public.

Last week in support of the Prime Minister's courageous suggestion large crowds gathered outside the Saudi Arabian Embassy to demonstrate against the use of the full veil. The demonstration, under the slogan, 'Women show your Face — Show your Freedom' chose the Saudi Embassy because of its dreadful record on women's' rights and it is where the use of the niqab is common. Only 5 per cent of the entire female population is allowed to work, women are excluded from municipal elections, inadequately protected from gross physical and sexual abuse and in 2005 three were publicly executed. (Execution is by shooting in the back of the neck, as against decapitation for males, as it is an offence for a woman to bare her head in public. Many people being led to execution are unaware they are under sentence of death.)

Outside the embassy prominent left wing journalists and women's' rights campaigners gave fiery speeches denouncing the veil as a symbol of male oppression, which, they said, far from preventing sexual exploitation, was a form of male abuse. Once a man put his wife behind a veil, he effectively made her no more than a domestic possession. Speakers also asked why it was that male Muslims were not required to be veiled, as they themselves were just as much at risk of sexual exploitation by predatory western females, as Muslim females are at risk from western men. Others called for light to be thrown on the tens of thousands of women living in linguistic purdah in Britain. The husbands of these unfortunate women actively discourage them from learning English in order to prevent them being 'contaminated' by western values.

Wide publicity was given to the campaign and the BBC *Today* programme ran a series of interviews with women's right campaigners. The left wing playwrights Ken Loach and Harold Pinter jointly collaborated on a TV play called, *Fatima open the door* in which a young married Muslim woman is persecuted by her repressive fundamentalist family for going unveiled.

The demonstration then marched to Downing Street where to huge applause a delegation of unveiled Muslim women presented a petition to Tony Blair asking for laws preventing wearing of the niqab in public offices. Mr Blair, who came in person to the door of Number 10, said after seeing such support his party would be putting legislation before the Houses of Parliament as quickly as possible.

Myles Harris

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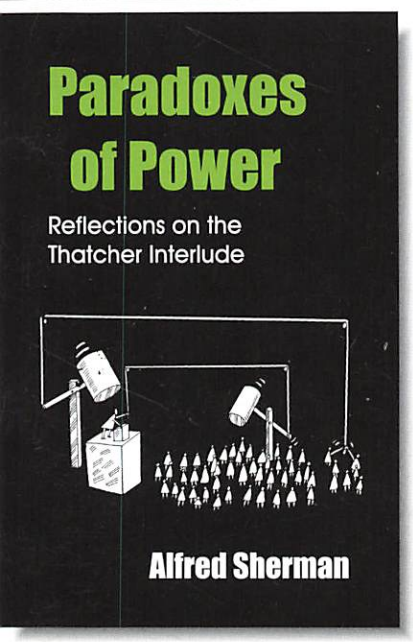
Sir Alfred Sherman 1919-2006

Sir Alfred Sherman,
Lady Thatcher and
Alexander Deane
at the launch of
Paradoxes of Power
Centre for Policy Studies,
27 July 2005.

In her speech, Lady Thatcher declared:
"We could never have defeated socialism if it hadn't been for Sir Alfred."



"*Paradoxes of Power* should be read by anyone examining the Conservative renaissance o the late 1970s and 1980s ." Margaret Thatcher

"These reflections by Thatcherism's inventor are necessary reading."
Sir John Hoskyns, *Salisbury Review*

"These essays by 'Alfie' Sherman are highly relevant to the politics of today." Norman Tebbi

"Fascinating . . . read Sherman's marvellous little chapters on the Centre for Policy Studies and how they gradually transformed Mrs Thatcher from the untried party leader of 1974 into a prime-minister-in-waiting." *Quadrant*

"Sherman was the most eccentric, and certainly the most contradictory, figure ever to have been a leading adviser to a senior politician." *Daily Telegraph*

"Alfred Sherman – the enfant terrible and éminence grise of the Conservative Party." *Times*

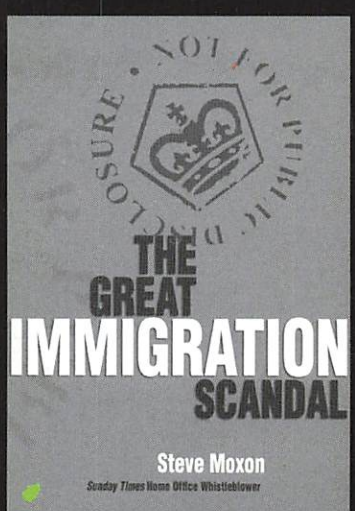
"Supplied much of the drive for Keith Joseph to turn back the tide of collectivism." *Guardian*

"Sherman made a crucial and beneficent contribution to modern Britain." *Independent*

This book examines the origins and development of 'Thatcherism', but concludes that the post-war consensus remains largely unscathed — 'we are back to where we started'.

ISBN 1845400143, 184 pp. (hbk.) ~~£17.95/$34.90~~ **£9.95**

Steve Moxon



Steve Moxon, *The Great Immigration Scanda*
ISBN 184540078X, 276pp. (pbk.), October 2006, ~~£8.95/$17.90~~ **£5.9**

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including new afterword where the author discusses th extraordinary developments since the publication of h original revelations and the corrosive effect this has ha on public confidence in government and democrac

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