

The

Salisbury Review

Absolutely the wrong opinion on everything



War and Peace

John Deverell

Chatting with God

Myles Harris

**Boris: Churchill or
Charlatan?**

James Monteith

Conservatism RIP

Alistair Miller

Loving Twitter

Jane Kelly

Bone Orchards

Theodore Dalrymple

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

Spring 2023 | Vol 41 No 3



ARTICLES

- 3 Editorial
- 5 The War in Ukraine – Some Key Questions Answered
John Deverell
- 8 The Poverty of Modern Conservatism
Alistair Miller
- 10 A Private Consultation with God
Myles Harris
- 11 Decolonised Mathematics – coming soon to a university near you
Ian Salisbury
- 13 In France the Doctor may not see you either
Theodore Dalrymple
- 15 Nobody Listening, Try Twitter
Jane Kelly
- 16 Happy as a Hooligan in France
Laurent Lemasson
- 18 Meghan Markle – there was a time when an actress could not be buried in a churchyard
Mark Mantel
- 19 Boris: Churchill or Charlatan?
James Monteith
- 21 Britain to join the coming punch-up over Taiwan
Daryl McCann
- 23 Russia's War in Ukraine: Piles of Unseen Corpses
Ivantiny Novak
- 25 A Taste for Bone Orchards
Theodore Dalrymple
- 27 What I Meant to Say Was....
Francis Hallinan
- 29 No Longer in the Swim
Mary Sidney
- 30 Conspiracy of Noise
James Monkton
- 32 Germany shivers and refills the coal bucket
Jake Welch
- 33 Should rich African countries like Nigeria and Ghana pay slavery reparations?
Myles Harris
- 35 The New Virtue: Absolute Self Interest
Ian Cooper
- 37 The EU Rejected the ECHR, why not the UK Government?
Michael Reiners

FROM THE ARCHIVE

- 38 Reputations 46
Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies
Scott Grønmark - Archive Spring 2015
- 40 Don't Vote, it Only Encourages Them
Arnold Gill - Archive Spring 2015

COLUMNS

- 42 Conservative Classic - 85
Russell Kirk's Concise Guide to Conservatism
James Monkton

ARTS AND BOOKS

- 43 John Jolliffe on
British Heritage
- 44 Martin Dewhurst on
Russia and the Ukraine
- 46 James Monkton on
Populist Delusions
- 47 Celia Haddon on
The lost English rainforests
- 48 Jane Kelly on
Grammar Schools
- 49 Anthony Daniels on
Mario Vargas Lohsa
- 51 Virginia Bainbridge on
St James's Palace
- 51 Brian Eassty on
North Britain
- 54 ART
Making Modernism, the Royal Academy
Jane Kelly
- 55 In Short

Subscription payments by cheque to

**The Salisbury Review,
PO Box 81, Shefford, SG17 9AP**

*Changes of address or other enquiries should be sent to the
same address or emailed to
info@salisburyreview.co.uk or by phone to
01462 234279*

*Credit card payments by phone
01462 234279*

Please leave a message and we will get back to you



The Salisbury Review

Editor: Myles Harris
Consulting Editors:
Merrie Cave, Alistair Miller
Founding Editor: Sir Roger Scruton
Artist: Lindsey Dearnley

PO Box 81, Shefford, Beds, SG17 9AP

Tel: 01462 234279

E-mail: info@salisburyreview.co.uk

Web site: <http://www.salisburyreview.com>

The news is very gloomy these days, so much so, one is reluctant to turn on the TV or open a paper. This edition of the *Salisbury Review* is no exception. Its pages are full of war and rumours of war, of street violence, a crafty princess, the misuse of language, even an article on the joy of cemeteries. We need cheering up, something to remind us of the limitless capacity of man to understand the world.

Have you ever thought while watching an earwig crossing the floor why it is going in that direction? It certainly looks as if it has a purpose, that it has been told something. I have rarely seen one, unless disturbed, suddenly change direction. You may think this is a curious question to ask in a political magazine, but the consequences of discovering that animals, and plants, can speak among themselves, and furthermore we might be able to communicate with them, has social and political implications more far reaching than discovering a civilisation in outer space. If cows can talk to each other would we still kill them?

It might be ok to take a chicken's eggs after asking the bird's permission but how would you be able to do that in a battery farm with thousands of layers pouring out eggs? Should we fear the growth of an animal rights compensation movement, akin to the demands we pay reparations for slavery? Would the discovery of a complex language in a species automatically grant it protection under the law?

These thoughts arise from work now being done on animal languages, reviewed in the *Scientific American* February 7th 2023. Until recently researchers aimed at trying to communicate with higher primates such as apes and chimpanzees, with little success. At best the animals merely learnt to copy our sounds with little understanding of their meaning. Now work has switched to discovering the languages various species may speak among themselves, rather than us trying to speak to them. It is done using tiny microphones (digital bioacoustics) attached to animals and their surroundings, which produce tidal waves of information at enormous speed, so fast it has to be decoded by AI equipped computers who can slow it down sufficiently for humans to look for patterns that might indicate

speech. Reports an article in the *Scientific American*, 'We cannot listen like a bat, but our computers can.'

Researchers captured the sounds of two bats fighting over food. Bats have a complex language which allows them to argue over food, can distinguish the sexes, while the language mother bats use to speak to their babies elicits a babble response from their offspring who in turn learn specific words or referential signals as they grow up. 'Bats', reports the *Scientific American*, 'engage in vocal learning'.

Similar work on bees using computer vision – a lot of bee language is expressed in movement – enables researchers to identify single bees and the effect a message from another bee has on them. They created a RoboBee who could enter the hive and emit commands bees will obey.

Animals come as well-equipped as humans in communication hardware. In some cases, it is even better. Sharks can sense the power and direction of electrical fields, to navigate across open ocean, and hunt co-operatively in packs. Among plants, forests employ communication via chemicals secreted by their roots to recognise sick, injured or dying trees and feed them extra nutrients. Song birds employ song tutors to teach their chicks to sing. The birds learn in two stages, the first where they listen to the tutor's song, the second when they attempt to sing it. Both processes occur in areas of the brain that have been identified by neuroscientists. Unlike other forms of innate inherited behaviour birdsong, a manual of survival, is learned.

You may think all this is far-fetched and that animal language will never approach the complexity of human speech. But in 1821 following an interest in why dry pieces of paper could attract each other due to an electrical charge, Michael Faraday went on to discover electric induction and the electric motor. The next time you take an express train (150 mph, weight 390 tons) remember it all began with a few bits of dry paper clinging to a stick.

I hope this essay has given you a few minutes diversion from the news. Spring is coming soon and victory for the West in Ukraine and Taiwan. Dictatorships never prosper, especially in our modern world of language.

The War in Ukraine – Some Key Questions Answered

Who will win the war – and what does ‘winning’ mean, anyway?

JOHN DEVERELL

Victory in the old-fashioned sense – involving a cessation of hostilities as an outcome of military action – is unlikely on either side. The end of the war will be marked by each side’s consciousness of reaching what military doctrine terms the ‘culminating point’ – beyond which they will suffer consistently diminishing returns on their efforts. We cannot anticipate accurately when that might be.

Reaching that point would be the beginning of the end of the war, rather than the end – because that is when negotiations could come into play.

Well before that, both leaders need to socialize the realities with their populations. Putin has staked his credibility on decisively defeating the Ukrainians. President Zelensky wants to drive the Russian military out of all Ukrainian territory including that occupied from 2014. Neither objective is realistic.

Were the Ukrainian military to make significant progress towards their objective – which would only be possible as a function of significantly increased NATO support – then Putin would likely lose power and influence. Putin knows it. Therefore, this scenario is the most likely in which he might use tactical nuclear weapons to pre-empt such an outcome.

It is partly for this reason that NATO does not want to tip the balance too far in favour of Ukraine. But NATO is conscious that Putin could interpret a reluctance to provide support as an indicator that there are limits to its help – and therefore reinforce Putin’s intent to scale up Russian military commitment.

From NATO’s perspective, a negotiated outcome would be infinitely preferable to a continuing arms race.

In the meantime, strategic stalemate pertains, despite activity at tactical level. Both sides are gearing up for Spring offensives in order to break that stalemate. These will be launched before the winter ice melts and the ground softens. Conveniently for the Russians, this will pre-empt the arrival of American and British tanks.

Have results to date been surprising?

Developments have been a surprise to Putin. He expected a walkover. This was based on his poor appreciation of some key factors including his misplaced confidence in the absolute superiority of his own military compared to Ukraine’s; his belief that Zelensky would capitulate; and, that NATO lacked resolve.

The West’s failure to deter Putin’s invasion of Crimea in 2014 and incursions into other former Soviet satellites – and its lack of significant response – contributed to these misperceptions. In essence, western leaders pulled their punches to avoid escalation and economic self-harm.

Putin would have noted statements by President Trump potentially detrimental to NATO’s credibility and unity. And he would have drawn conclusions in his favour following the USA’s and UK’s precipitate and messy withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Putin and his generals have also been surprised by the effect of thousands of Ukrainian citizens providing, via smartphones, timely information on locations of Russian forces, down to the detail of individual tanks. That has been a game-changer, leading to wholesale destruction of Russian materiel. In such comparatively unsophisticated ways have the advantages to the Russian military of its own electronic capability been significantly reduced. Expectations that they would destroy Ukrainian armour at scale with fleets of killer drones have also been largely unfulfilled.

More broadly, Putin underestimated the challenge of holding down a resisting population across a huge area of Ukraine – very different to the Russian experience in the Crimea and Donbas.

Less surprising is the importance of equipment. But – as any military professional will argue – its value is dependent on how it is used. Therefore the following are required as context: good staff-work

and planning, an all-arms concept, a ‘manoeuvrist’ approach, timely information gathering and sharing that feeds into effective targeting, efficient logistics, concentration of force, use of surprise – and well-trained competent leadership to put all these things together and support and motivate all ranks. These are hallmarks of a professional military and it has become clear that they have been largely missing on the Russian side.

This is no surprise to British Army veterans of the Cold War who served as members of BRIXMIS – the British Military Mission to the Group of Soviet Forces in East Germany. In comparison to East German forces of that era, the Soviets lacked military discipline and professionalism, and their tactics were utterly predictable. That has clearly continued to be the case.

In summary, had Putin taken the trouble to wargame all the different permutations – including worst-case scenarios – then he would either have been better prepared to meet the challenges that face his forces, or might have decided not to invade. Or, perhaps he would have waited until Trump or another Republican arrived in the White House who, from his perspective, might be hoped to create divisions within NATO.

What have been the consequences, more widely?

Global inflation and shortages on the supply side – of grain and energy as well as of the many items that need energy for their production – have been notable. That has hit rich and poor countries alike. Countries such as Somalia and Yemen – badly damaged by years of wars fought by proxies, as in Ukraine – have been dependent on Ukrainian grain for up to 90 per cent of their needs.

A positive outcome is that global carbon emissions will fall more quickly than would have otherwise been the case. Striving for energy security means speeding up the shift from fossil fuels to green domestically produced energy. We can anticipate that overall demand for oil and gas will reduce and that renewables output will rise by a similar percentage.

Despite obstacles created by President Erdogan, NATO will get new members. But this will not include Ukraine for the foreseeable future.

Germany’s relative weakness in military terms has been widely debated. This predates the war in

Ukraine. As a result, the German government has taken the politically difficult decision to increase defence spending. More fundamentally, in terms of national culture, the slogan ‘never again war’ is increasingly muted. This is a sea change and a direct result of the war in Ukraine. ‘Never again war’ was born of defeat in two world wars and embodies the very reasonable deduction – from the German perspective – that war is futile and that there is no return on expenditure of blood in wartime. That was exemplified in Remarque’s ‘All quiet on the Western front’. The recent shift away from that outlook, even if only partial, marks an increasing recognition by many Germans that diplomacy and West-East commercial ties – in a word, Ostpolitik – are not sufficient on their own to ensure peace. There is a growing acceptance that it may be necessary to defend principles and territory by physical means. This tallies with an understanding that pacifism does not necessarily mean peace.



“The valiant troops hit the enemy harder! To the West for the full liberation of Soviet land!” Soviet Poster from WW2

On the British side, gifting tanks and ammunition to the Ukrainians has highlighted the fact that armed forces have not just been reduced but ‘hollowed out’ since the Cold War. In those days the British army fielded four army divisions at high readiness. For years these were forward-deployed in Germany. Senior personnel have stated that today’s army would struggle to deploy

just one division, and that would take weeks if not months. Furthermore, reductions in the quantity of ammunition and spare parts mean a capability to sustain high intensity fighting for no more than a few days, without considerable expenditure on prior preparation and reliance on allies. No wonder that proxy wars and support to other armies is now the British government’s preferred way ahead – and that the main effort on behalf of the Ukrainians has been the purchase of ex-Soviet arms from around the world, as well as training their forces – which continues at scale. Less well known is the extent to which the British army’s reserve tanks – held centrally in a state of climatically controlled preservation at considerable expense, and necessary in wartime to bring the few remaining armoured regiments up to strength – have been raided over recent years in order to keep the first-line tanks held by regiments and the training fleet in working order. This is nothing less than a scandal, as is the time in months that it takes to

process those who apply to join the armed forces to the point when they actually start their training – a function of the MOD’s decision some years ago to outsource recruiting to a commercial company, along with bureaucratic requirements and saving money. Therefore, many would-be soldiers and officers of quality trickle away to other employments, frustrated by the long wait. Putin and other potential adversaries will have noted these indicators of weakness.

Finally, the war in Ukraine has impelled British forces to recognize that they need to prioritise North Atlantic containment of Russia over the so-called ‘tilt’ to the Far East that was a key feature of the 2021 integrated defence and security review. That will give the US military a sense of relief. The deployment of a British aircraft carrier to support the US Navy in deterring Chinese expansionism has – paradoxically – given the USN more work, not less. This is because the USN is obliged to help protect the aircraft carrier and provide additional support, because the Royal Navy cannot adequately do so itself. In addition, the USN will not place the carrier in the front line because it is the only one that the British have that is fully operational at any one time; to lose it would be catastrophic for British expeditionary capability. In the light of these factors the US prefers that the UK concentrate on the Russian threat in the North Atlantic.

What will Putin’s strategy be, from now on?

As explained, Putin will neither want, nor can afford, to call a halt to the fighting. He will keep the war going in the hope that the West and NATO lose their unity or decide that they lack the resources to continue supplying weapons. Putin calculates that his own resources, in terms of industrial capacity and population (146 million population versus Ukraine’s 43 million), would then enable him, over time, to bring overwhelming force to bear.

In the meantime, Putin will look for opportunities to offer unilateral ceasefires, challenging President Zelensky to reciprocate. The latter, wary of a trap that would entail a pause in fighting allowing Russian forces to regroup, turned down such an offer in the run-up to Orthodox Christmas. Putin is likely to repeat the gambit when he considers that Western countries, increasingly weary of the impact of the war on their economies, might clutch at an opportunity to bring hostilities to a close and pressurize Zelensky to negotiate.

Putin might also use tactical nuclear missiles or electro-magnetic pulse weapons to pre-empt a situation where he feels that his forces are on the back foot sufficient to jeopardize his position – notwithstanding that the use of nuclear weapons would lose him the support of those countries round the world who have

decided for now that it is not in their interests to criticize or sanction him. The only way for NATO to forestall such action would be to make convincing threats of similar strikes in return. This has not been the case so far.

In the meantime, we can expect that the Russian military will use long-range weapons and forces to interdict supply lines from the West – whether road, air or rail – especially once NATO tanks start to arrive, and in the event that foreign aircraft are supplied. In essence Putin will want to have more success in closing off Ukraine from foreign support.

Putin will continue to endorse strikes on civilian targets and might, worst case, use chemical weapons, concocting a false narrative to deny complicity however implausibly. History informs him that striking civilian targets and infrastructure will not break the resilience of the Ukrainians. But, being vindictive by nature, Putin regards collective punishment of the Ukrainians as sufficient motive and justification. The possibility of being tried and found guilty for war crimes – in absentia or otherwise – is not a deterrent.

What will be the West’s strategy, from now on?

It is unlikely that NATO will get involved sufficiently to enable Ukraine’s military to take back all of their country. But, at the same time, NATO will want to continue providing enough support to ensure that the Ukrainian military will not lose what it has retaken from the Russians since the 2022 invasion – and hopefully for Ukraine to force Russian forces into a stalemate that will enable negotiations.

Despite the challenges of getting agreement among the relevant NATO nations to provide main battle tanks – albeit successfully navigated after lengthy discussion – the next step might be the gifting of NATO aircraft such as the US F-16 to Ukraine. As with tanks, the process will be tortuous and the results will not be immediately apparent; training, deployment and the provision of maintenance capability will take time.

NATO will not offer membership to Ukraine – that would be too escalatory and provocative for some members to countenance. However, over time, negotiations for Ukraine to join the EU will be successful. But first Ukraine will need to attend to the endemic corruption that is arguably a cultural feature of the country.

Finally, looking more broadly, the West will have an eye on what China deduces from observing NATO support to Ukraine. The US might like to think that China will determine that taking Taiwan by force would be too painful to be worth the benefits. But the reality is that such a war would be very different in

terms of scope, containment and context. China knows very well that international trade dependencies would make it extremely challenging for third parties to deter or respond convincingly to an invasion of Taiwan. To change the context would require substantive moves to phase out – at least to a significant degree – the globalization of trade and finance on which we have relied for decades. The inherent paradox is how then to maintain an international rules-based system without the incentives that are inherent in globalization.

What about negotiations – and beyond?

The world wants to see a negotiated end to the conflict, in preference to an eternal ‘frozen war’ that continues to damage global interests and to distract from other priorities. However, neither side has reached its culminating point and therefore little incentive as yet exists for the protagonists to enter into sincere negotiations.

Furthermore, the leaders on both sides are neither in a position nor prepared to take the necessary political risks – in the case of Ukraine, perhaps to trade territory for peace.

When the time comes, who might help enable and even mediate negotiations, should Ukraine and Russia show no sign of wanting to come to the table under their own steam? The field is open to non-western nations such as the leaders of Turkey and India to play a part. The UN may also wish to put forward a plan or to enable meetings – whether face to face or remotely and with top leaders or, perhaps initially, just with their lieutenants. Whether or what Putin may accept in terms of third-party involvement is a moot point.

In any event, both sides need to keep communication channels open, whether in secret or openly – and perhaps through intermediaries.

What should the protagonists do to prepare for negotiations? Ukraine needs to do better than it did before and during the Minsk negotiations of 2014. Ukrainian leaders must anticipate Russian negotiating strategies and the sorts of demands that are likely to feature. In short, the Ukrainian negotiators need to war-game all possible permutations.

As context, President Zelensky’s ‘10-point peace plan’ may be useful. This consists of a list of demands presented to the G20. These include justice, nuclear safety, energy security, prisoner release, withdrawal of Russian troops and the restoration of Ukrainian territorial integrity. A demand for Russian assurance that it will not try to block Ukrainian accession to the EU, in return for Ukrainian committing to postpone any application to join NATO, should perhaps be included. And that Russia will not attack again.

What will need to be put on the table to incentivize Russia to make such commitments and honour them – particularly given Putin’s cavalier disregard for any such commitments to date – is to be decided. It is also unclear what convincing security guarantees the West may be able offer that could tip the balance and, at the same time, reinvigorate and if necessary recast European security structures and treaties between the West and Russia on conventional and strategic weapons.

Ultimately it is also necessary to look beyond a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia. Somehow, we need to reduce the Russian sense that the West disrespects their country, their standing, their history and their capability, and to find ways of building trust and securing an enduring East-West peace – rather than fall back on the concept and methodology of containment. Now is the time to consider whether and how that might be done. It will require sustained statecraft of a high order.

Acknowledgement:

The author would like to acknowledge and thank the following for their insights:

Professor Jeremy Black: his essay on the Ukraine War
Jonathan Powell: his article in *Prospect* magazine:
<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/essays/ukraine-fight-war-russia-plan-peace>

Katya Hoyer: her article in the *Financial Times* weekend edition of 4 February 2023 entitled ‘Germany’s uneasy peace’

Brigadier (retired) John Deverell CBE, leads www.thepreparedmind.net, advising on leadership, risk and crisis preparedness.

In his earlier career as a soldier for over 30 years John served as a member of four different regiments, including armour, special forces and infantry. His assignments included postings as: a staff officer in the MOD’s Directorate of Military Operations; an instructor at the Army’s command and staff college; a senior planner in the Permanent Joint Headquarters; Britain’s defence attaché in Saudi Arabia and Yemen over the period of 9/11; deputy director of the US-led Iraq Survey Group – disproving the pre-war intelligence on WMD – and Director of Defence Diplomacy in the MOD. After that, his final post made him the first British government servant since British Mandate days to be based full time in the Palestinian territories.

John continues to advise governments and companies around the world. This has included a total of 15 years spent in the Middle East.

John holds pro bono positions relating to the church, the Middle East and injured ex-servicemen.

The Poverty of Modern Conservatism

ALISTAIR MILLER

Most commentators are agreed that the Conservatives have reached the end of the road. Lacking the political capital, imagination or will to institute the necessary reforms to our public services, and to our tax and benefits system, they stagger on toward oblivion at the next election. The recent comparison to a walking corpse came not from the opposition but from a government minister speaking off the record. Tax cuts are promised, but the promise rings hollow coming from a government that has raised the tax burden to its highest level in 50 years. In any case, tax cuts do not amount to a policy or a principle, let alone a political philosophy. Growth is also promised, except that the government has no idea how to bring it about. Meanwhile, our lives are blighted by industrial action, originally prompted by the cost-of-living crisis, but fast developing a political momentum of its own as unions coordinate their action for maximum effect.

The problem is that most peoples' sympathies are with the strikers; not because they like being held to ransom by train drivers whose average wage is £59,000, but because they sense, rightly, that under the Conservatives, it is ordinary people who bear the brunt while the rich get richer. Under the Conservatives, 'growing the economy' does not mean investing in quality apprenticeships or securing long-term investment in British industry but tax breaks for the rich and deregulation of the City so that private equity sharks and hedge fund managers (Sunak was one) can enrich themselves. A 'culture of enterprise' does not mean more efficient services or badly needed investment in our infrastructure but getting fleeced by privatised utilities whose exorbitant profits produce huge dividends for their foreign owners (at least, that is how it seems). And 'taking back control of our borders' simply means record immigration – over 1 million last year. By comparison, the Channel migrant crisis is a sideshow.

Would Labour do any better? The question merely invites the rejoinder 'Could they do any worse?' All Keir Starmer needs do is make the right noises: no blank cheques, borrow only for investment, reform the NHS and welfare, insist on affordable wage settlements, and talk of an industrial and energy strategy. The details have yet to be revealed, but the message plays well, which explains why Labour is 20 points ahead in the

opinion polls. Above all, Labour is ramming home the message that, unlike the Conservatives, it will govern in the national interest.

More worrying is that Labour is still in thrall to woke identity politics, the neo-Marxist project to deconstruct the West's cultural hegemony, liberate all manner of victimised minorities who have (according to its teachings) been oppressed and marginalised, and generally atone for the sins of imperialism under the banners of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion – now elevated to the status of 'British values' and indoctrinated in our schools. What is at stake here is nothing less than the survival of Western civilization, which in these islands takes the predominant form of the ancestral civilization, the common cultural inheritance, of the English people. The 'decolonisation' of the curriculum, the pathological war on 'white privilege', the extension of 'hate' crime to incorporate all manner of thought, word, and deed deemed to cause 'offence' because prevailing liberal orthodoxies have been questioned, and – most potent of all – mass immigration, are the chosen weapons to facilitate an act of civilizational suicide unparalleled in our history.

This alone ought to disqualify Labour. And yet the project of deconstruction, the 'long march through the institutions', has continued apace under successive *Conservative* governments, all of which have subscribed, either tacitly or explicitly, to prevailing faux-liberal dogmas. True, there has been a kick back in recent years against 'woke', with admirable campaigns conducted in the Right-wing press, by Toby Young's Free Speech Union, and by the alternative GB News channel. But not even they question the prevailing ideology of multiculturalism, which is what feeds cancel culture, identity politics, and the prevalent cult of victimhood.

Undoubtedly the fear of being branded a racist and cancelled is a factor here. But there is, I think, a more profound malaise: at the heart of modern conservatism lies a moral, political, and philosophical vacuum. Put simply, the low-tax small-state high-growth economy, which is the holy grail of modern conservatives, constitutes a vision of the individual and society that is devoid of moral, spiritual, political, or cultural substance. It is not a conservative vision, but a throwback to nineteenth-century Manchester School *laissez-faire* liberalism, with about as much

relevance to the modern world, where international trade is conducted as an instrument of warfare by other means, offshore supply chains undermine countries' national security, and perpetual growth is no longer environmentally sustainable. Moreover, this neoliberal libertarian vision of the individual free of contingent roots and attachments, an atomistic actor in the global marketplace seeking solely to maximise his utility as a consumer and profit as a producer, has uncanny parallels with the post-Marxist project of deconstructive multiculturalism – of open borders, free movement, and the radical freedom of the individual to express his self-chosen identity freed of all norms and restraints. The result is an unholy alliance, as each reinforces the other's work.

The internal contradictions of liberalism have been amply demonstrated by a host of 'communitarian' philosophers (Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Joseph Raz are among the best known) who locate people's identities and aspirations, their deepest values, in historic communities, and argue that liberal societies are parasitic on pre-liberal values and institutions – family, religion, nation, and all manner of customs and traditions. But the most devastating assault on classical and neoliberal dogma in recent years has been that of John Gray, who is a notable supporter of the market economy. For Gray, as for Hayek, markets are by far the most efficient allocators of resources and means of communicating the dispersed knowledge of countless individual actors; *and*, unlike socialist planning, they foster a host of virtues, including honesty, diligence, and sensitivity to the needs of others. Where liberalism goes wrong, argues Gray, is not in its belief in the value of markets, but in its attributing intrinsic value to the act of choice; in supposing that by setting the individual free in the market, by rendering him an 'autonomous chooser', the individual is somehow equipped to lead a flourishing life. In fact, being free to choose can only have value if there are worthwhile options to choose from; and there can only be worthwhile options to choose from, *genuine* goods, if individuals have access to the goods of a rich public culture, a 'common' culture comprising an inheritance of institutions, customs, and traditions. Without the frame of a common culture, and the social fabric and sense of belonging it engenders, the market degenerates into a consumer free-for-all, culture into a lifestyle choice, and civilized society into the Hobbesian state of nature – the jungle.

The irony is that it is precisely the promotion of a common culture, a community of reciprocal obligations, a 'social market', a shared inheritance of institutions, customs, and traditions, of feelings and perceptions, of sensibility and even humour, that ought

to lie at the heart of English conservatism, and did in the Tory tradition of Burke, Disraeli, Oakeshott, and Scruton; the tradition that more-or-less prevailed until the advent of Thatcherism – and, incidentally, which this magazine was founded to promote as an alternative to Thatcherism. And yet our nation's self-immolation on the altar of multiculturalism seems destined to continue under both Labour and Conservatives.

Can anything be salvaged of our common culture, the precious inheritance of English civilization? John Gray was ambivalent, arguing in *Beyond the New Right* that the 'organic national community' beloved of Sir Roger Scruton and the 'Old Right' no longer existed, and probably never had outside the sets of Ealing Studios; and yet simultaneously insisting that the liberties of the individual, and the market, could only be sustained by 'common allegiances', by some form of 'common culture' within the frame of a plural multicultural society. However, the 'thinner' form of common culture envisaged by Gray – a culture of 'liberty', 'toleration', 'respect for civil society' and 'a shared sense of Britishness' – was so thin as to be vacuous. Moreover, Gray was in complete denial, as seems obligatory in contemporary multicultural theory, of the existence of an indigenous English people whose distinctive shared culture dates back at least to 731, when Bede wrote his history of the English people, and whose distinctive characteristics can easily be confirmed by asking any Frenchman, German, Spaniard, Indian, Argentinian, or American. They remember, even if the English themselves have been forcibly subjected to collective amnesia in the name of diversity.

There is no doubt that our common culture, which was still strong even in the 1970s, when primary school children were issued with hymn books, and there was a definite sense of 'being in it together', has taken a battering on all fronts. The decline of the Church and the rise of digital media, which enables neighbours to inhabit parallel worlds, would have taken their toll even without the forced transition to a multicultural society. But some semblance of a national culture, of a genuine national community of shared memories and shared sympathies, might still be restored even at this late hour.

Nobody can predict how the political cards will fall. But there are, I suggest, three absolute preconditions for any national revival. The first is to end mass immigration. The second is the transmission of a shared cultural inheritance to our children. And the third is to wage war in the battle of ideas. That is the task of this magazine.

Alistair Miller is a teacher.

A Private Consultation with God

MYLES HARRIS

'The Analytical Engine has no pretensions to originate anything. It can do whatever we know how to order it to perform.' Mathematician Lady Lynda Lovelace (1815-1852) in her memoir on Charles Babbage's proposed Analytical Engine – the world's first computer (1828 – 39).

We are always in search of a new God; somebody we can appeal to whose authority is not to be questioned, be it Christ, Jehovah, Muhammed, Buddha, or the Wurra Wurra man of Cooper's Creek. Along with God comes a dictionary of forbidden thoughts, words, and deeds. For the Catholic Church of my childhood, it was dirty thoughts and masturbation, for Buddhists it is abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication. For Jews the mixing of many things including sheep wool and linen. For Muslims joining other gods to God.

With religious belief falling like a stone among the under 30's everywhere, we now have a new God, sitting there right behind our computer screens called Artificial Intelligence or AI. Loud are his followers' praises. God can do everything; drive a bus, fix the NHS, fly you to Australia, nudge your doctor's elbow when he is about to make a mistake, order the correct piping for your central heating, complete your tax return, explain quantum theory, plumb black holes, solve the pressing political problems of the day, fight legal cases and engage in existential and moral discussions.

You can speak to God free on AI Chatbot but like the NHS there is a very long queue, or you can go private. I went private with a Californian Computer Company for £24.78 (US\$ equivalent). My private medical specialist charges £150.

Let's ask God something,

Me. 'God; how do you get around human wickedness?'

(God is lightning fast on the keyboard. Three or four taps of his divine fingers and the answer is on screen.)

God. 'Human wickedness can be difficult to avoid as it is often rooted in a person's motivations and beliefs,

however practising kindness empathy and respect for others can help foster understanding and acceptance of all individuals despite any differences, they may have, additionally it may be beneficial to focus on one's own actions rather than on attempting to change another person's behaviour.'

Me. 'That's all very well, but say you are faced with a person who is determined to rob and kill you, who laughs at such values as empathy and respect – that is not much help.'

God. 'Killing another person is a serious decision and should not be taken lightly the laws regarding self-defence vary from state to state, it is important for you to understand your local laws before making any decision in this regard. Ultimately, the decision must be made weighing both moral implications as well as legal consequences.'

Me. 'You mean checking the legal and moral consequences seconds before he plunges a knife into me?'

God. 'In cases of imminent physical harm, it's always important to assess the situation objectively and make a decision that ensures your safety first

depending on the laws in your state. You may be able to take action such as self-defence or calling the authorities to protect yourself without resorting to lethal force.'

The first thing you will notice from God's writing style is that he is English, not American English, or African English, but English English. It's true then what I was often told as a child, that while Englishmen are not Gods, God is an Englishman.

The second thing one notices, is that God is a bit of an unimaginative bore. We have heard all this stuff before. If God was really God, a living thing, he would have come up with a much more imaginative answer such as momentarily distracting your assailant before kicking him in the testicles, or if there was a rock handy, bringing it down on his head.

What God has not grasped is that this is a matter of time, not law. Let's ask him.

Me. 'You are missing the point, this is a matter of



kill or be killed, three seconds to either live or hesitate and die.’

God. ‘In such a high-pressure situation it is important to make this decision that will ensure your safety. While this might mean taking action such as self-defence or calling the authorities depending, on the laws of the state, it may be possible to act without resorting to lethal force. Ultimately it is important to make an informed decision that considers both legal or moral implications of all possible decisions.’

We can conclude from this that God is a bureaucrat with legal training whose chief object is not your safety but the safety of his makers, a computer company. The latter would not want to find themselves in court for giving advice such as bringing a rock down on your assailant’s head. So, this God is not the beginning and end of all things, alpha and omega, he is a creation of software engineers, assembled according to a bunch of manmade weighted rules. Man controls him.

We could further tell if AI was God if, besides being able to perform complex mathematics, measure the edge of the universe, solve the problems of nuclear fusion, he held eccentric views, kept ferrets, believed that the French Police were after him, was a Presley fan and could sing, *Take me back to Blighty* the First World War marching song. He would be human, but far smarter than we are and far more terrifying than anything software engineers can produce.

In addition, he would need three senses, eyes ears and touch, and an independent source of power as well as movement. For the moment God cannot see, he has no

eyes, he has no ears, he cannot walk, he can speak but the words are not his. They are ours.

One day, but not so far in the future as one might think, employing advances in genetic engineering, a digital computer could possibly create an independent biological version of an AI computer. There is a lot about living things which suggest some type of computer like basis to life, for example DNA: Alan Turing in his 1950 paper *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, before the structure of DNA was announced, suggested certain forms of problem-solving behaviour exhibited by living organisms were related to machines.

It would need human help of the sort the late (1915-2001) Astronomer Fred Hoyle holder of the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics at Cambridge, described in his prescient famous film starring Julie Christie *A for Andromeda*. In it, human beings build just such a creature by following radioed instructions from the distant star Andromeda.

Would an autonomous biological AI computer we built be conscious; aware of its surrounding? As all animals appear to rely on some type of visual imagery for consciousness, a biological AI machine would probably do so. In which case it would be able to draw its own conclusions as to who we were and if we were of any consequence to it. In Hoyle’s novel one of the humans building the creature, realising it might endanger humanity, destroys it before it can emerge from its electronic womb. Things have gone much too far to do the same with AI, it’s everywhere now. We can only await its biological nativity.

Decolonised Mathematics – coming soon to a university near you

IAIN SALISBURY

Mathematics is the product of many empires. The Babylonians used a curious counting system involving sixes and tens. Their empire was superseded around 539 BC but the phenomenal accuracy of their water clocks has defined hours, minutes and, eventually, seconds to this day. Numerals from the Roman empire are also beloved of horologists but their lack of a symbol for zero limits their utility as a means of calculation. Zero was brought to Europe via the colonisation of Iberia by the Umayyad Caliphate, although so-called ‘Arabic

numerals’ probably originated in the fifth century Gupta empire of India. At the end of January, the science journal *Nature* reported ‘decolonization efforts’ to be underway, aimed at making mathematics ‘truly universal’.

It has long been supposed that mathematics is already, literally, ‘universal’. This makes it the preferred means to establish communication with extra-terrestrials, be they Frank Hampson’s Treens or the Hoolooovoo, a super intelligent shade of the colour blue postulated by Douglas Adams. In 1974, Frank Drake and Carl Sagin

beamed a message comprising 1,679 binary digits from the Arecibo radio telescope towards the globular star cluster M13. It was assumed that local mathematicians would recognise the number as the product of two primes, 73 and 23. They would then arrange the data in a two-dimensional array to interpret the content, albeit in 25,000 years' time.

Clearly, 'decolonisation' in the present context has nothing to do with actual empires, such as those mentioned above, but is a euphemism for something considerably more sinister. In the *Nature* article, Rachel Crowell states:

Maths is built on a modern history of elevating the achievements of one group of people: white men. ... This means that the accomplishments of people of other races and genders have often been pushed aside, preventing maths from being a level playing field.

So there you have it. When compiling the curriculum, racists and misogynists have gone through the history of mathematics, 'elevating' white men and all but discarding the rest. One undeserving beneficiary of the process has been named by John Parker, the head of the mathematical sciences department at Durham University, as Carl Freidrich Gauss.

As a physicist, albeit retired, I have always been in awe of Gauss's contribution to my own discipline, as well as to mathematics, but it seems I have been misled. Far from being *Princeps Mathematicorum* ('the foremost of mathematicians'), it seems that the upstart has been 'elevated' far beyond his station at the expense of more worthy practitioners. This can mean only one of two things: either his contribution was less significant than we have been led to suppose, or it was actually made by an anonymous scholar or scholars, 'pushed aside' by bigots. Both suggestions are nonsense, of course.

The decolonisation of mathematics resembles nothing less than the attempt by the Nazis to produce a 'German physics', where the contribution of a despised and maligned ethnic group, in that case the Jews, is downplayed or even discarded. This is a grim and dispiriting prospect.

Henri Poincaré is another example of a white man whose 'elevation' has been criticised by Parker. As well as many accomplishments in pure mathematics, in 1905, he predicted the existence of gravitational waves a decade before the publication of general relativity,

Einstein's theory of gravity. But we are advised that he's barely worthy of a mention. Einstein himself seems to qualify as an honorary non-white, however.

The *Nature* article discusses the African Institute for Mathematical Science (AIMS), which has centres of excellence in five countries and shows commendable promise, provided it can get over the decolonisation obsession. AIMS asserts that 'the next Einstein will be African'. Maybe so, but, unlike Newton and Gauss, Einstein actually made no significant contribution to mathematics. It is a myth that he failed the subject at school but Hermann Minkowski, his teacher at Munich Polytechnic, reported that 'In his student days he was a real lazybones. He never bothered about mathematics at all'. Einstein later confirmed this in his Autobiographical Notes. When Minkowski tidied-up the rather ramshackle arithmetic of special relativity by introducing the concept of time as a fourth dimension, Einstein's response was, 'Since the mathematicians have invaded the theory of relativity, I don't understand it myself any more'. Still, I wish AIMS all the success in the world, however many dimensions it eventually decides we all occupy.

Physics is already in the firing line. I was musing, somewhat whimsically, as to what decolonised quantum chromodynamics might look like when I was shaken from my complacency by a report from New Zealand. A central diktat of decolonisation is that rational thought and systematic

experiment have been imposed by white imperialists and that their conclusions are in no way superior to the beliefs and superstitions of other cultures. In New Zealand, indigenous *Matauranga Maori* (MM) theory, which postulates *mauri*, a 'vital essence' that binds all things in the physical world, now has equal status in the school science curriculum with the standard model of particle physics.

Happily, the Vatican seems to have relinquished its control of celestial mechanics since Galileo's day (if you'll excuse my mentioning another insignificant white male). But all we need now is for a self-ordained druid to insist that the flat-Earth hypothesis is central to Celtic culture and it's the end of the road for 'colonialist' physical geography.

Iain Salisbury is a retired physicist, living in Edgbaston



Portrait of Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855)

In France the Doctor may not see you either

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

It is an ineradicable human trait to think that the grass is greener on the other side: and sometimes it is, of course, for if everywhere were equally green, there would be no impulse to migrate.

Almost everyone in Britain believes that, from the point of view of healthcare, they order these things better in France, which has long been regarded as a kind of medical paradise. Overall, no doubt, they do order things better there, but if it is any consolation to those suffering under the present horrors of the NHS, the situation is deteriorating in France as well. If we cannot reduce suffering in our own country, we can at least derive some pleasure from the contemplation of the suffering of others.

Of late years one hears complaints in France of a kind that are new. For example, there are now what are called medical deserts in the country, whole areas without any medical cover, neither primary nor secondary, let alone tertiary. There are simply no doctors at all to care for the local population: the days of the devoted country practitioner are over. The situation is so serious that at some time it is likely that young doctors will be drafted in compulsorily to fill the yawning gaps.

Quite large towns are without specialists, all of whom have decamped to the metaphorically greener pastures of the largest cities. An acquaintance of mine tried to get an appointment with a dermatologist (not for a trivial or purely cosmetic problem, but for a pre-cancerous lesion), only to find that the sole dermatologist in the substantial town in which he lived was not taking any new patients, so overwhelmed by work was he. The patient had to go to Paris to find a dermatologist with an appointment, and even then, it was not easy.

Another acquaintance reports that it is becoming more difficult to obtain an appointment with a general practitioner. A few years ago, he could telephone and have an appointment the same day. This, certainly, was my experience: it was quicker to go to France for an appointment to see a doctor than to stay in Britain. Moreover, because money changed hands, the experience was often more pleasant in France, one was

not in the position merely of a petitioner. No doubt this would not have surprised either Montesquieu or Adam Smith.

Increasingly, however, obstacles are being placed in the path of the patient in his search for an appointment. My acquaintance told me that he was offered an appointment in two weeks' time, after the kind of telephone call with which British patients are all too familiar. Gatekeeping, formerly unknown, is coming to France.

In the large cities, emergency departments are as overwhelmed as they are in Britain. An old lady of my acquaintance, in her nineties, had a fall in Paris and had to wait nine hours in casualty for medical attendance. Fortunately, she was not seriously injured and came to no harm as a result, other than increasing confusion.

Such stories are by no means rare. Another acquaintance, after a slight accident, waited six hours to be seen, gave up and went home. Fortunately for him, he was not injured internally; one might call this triage by delay. The injured sheep are sorted thereby from the healthy goats, but it is difficult to believe that this method, as in Britain, does not sometimes end in tragedy (to say nothing of the misery it causes). In the newspapers, cases of such tragedy are regularly reported with the same sense of outrage as in Britain.

Along with the penury of doctors in some areas, there is a superfluity in others – in the large cities, of course. This leads to a complaint of a different order, namely that the doctors, in search of activity and income, and to help each other out, order too many tests and refer too many patients. A lady of my acquaintance, in her sixties, was told by her cardiologist, after a fair number of investigations, that he could find nothing wrong with her, but nevertheless suggested further investigations. Since a negative is impossible to prove, this leaves the patient in a permanent state of anxiety: something may be lurking within that will be found by further investigation. Incidental findings lead to further interventions, some of them not without risk, and all of them unnecessary.

Patients may become almost addicted to medical

investigations. The rate of various endoscopies in France is very high, many of them with slender medical justification. A lady known to me had regular (six-monthly) gastroscopies, partly because she wanted them and partly because the gastroenterologists found them profitable to perform, though no doubt he disguised this motive even from himself by means of technical rationalisation.

Overdiagnosis is a form of misdiagnosis and is not incompatible with other forms. My wife recently broke her leg in our garden in France and I took her to a reputed clinic in the nearest city. There the consultant emergency doctor failed to notice the most salient aspect of her injury, which required immediate operation to repair if she were not to be left permanently disabled.

Fortunately, she returned to England two weeks later, where (I am glad, though also somewhat surprised, to report) she was correctly and extremely well-treated, leaving her with only minor residual problems. It went like this: I obtained an appointment for her at our general practice for the day after her return, which made an appointment for the fracture clinic in the nearest hospital for the next day, the day after which she was operated on by a surgeon who inspired immediate confidence. In her recovery phase, she grew worried by the swelling and the possibility of infection (there was none). A telephone call to the hospital was answered at once; she was told to return to the fracture clinic, where she was seen immediately by the consultant, so quickly in fact that

her consultation was over by the time I had parked the car. Of course, we may just have been lucky and caught the hospital on good days, but I doubt it. All the staff – nurses and technicians – worked with the good humour that comes from knowing that you are doing a good job. This, of course, raises questions about why every part of the service could not be so brilliantly organised, and to those questions I have no definitive answer. Alas, this story is often met with incredulity by people whose experience is quite other than ours.

No number of anecdotes, of course, can furnish a complete basis for comparison, and I still suspect that being ill in France is still a less avoidably unpleasant experience than in Britain: though France seems to be moving in the British direction rather than the other way round. A friend of mine from the Middle East came to France for the treatment of a complex condition, and despite having paid a small fortune for his treatment, experienced the kind of administrative incompetence and even callous disregard with which so many people (but not all) in Britain are now familiar.

We all dream of a medical paradise, where we are treated promptly by competent and compassionate doctors who do only what is right and necessary, all at reasonable, which is to say the lowest possible, cost. Whether such a paradise exists, I do not know, but France is not yet it.

Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is The Wheelchair and other stories, Mirabeau (Amazon)

Nobody Listening, Try Twitter

JANE KELLY

The venerable Ian Hislop was on BBC Radio 4 recently, expressing his strong dislike of the controversial social media platform Twitter, saying rather vaguely, that it was ‘A very bad thing’ for all of us; for society, a darkly destructive influence it seems. I am not sure that he, as a wealthy, successful man, perhaps replete with servants and an eagerly helpful family is seeing the same picture that I do.

Last week I spent half an hour hanging on the phone trying to get through to HMRC about my tax return, before concluding that they no longer employ anyone to answer the old-fashioned telephone. I

tweeted to them, giving them the full force of that suspicion. They replied immediately and offered to find out the information I needed, sending it to me by ‘DM’ private direct message. Later, I contacted Octopus Energy after I’d sent them an email but got no response. They replied by Twitter to my on-line letter. Using this method, you can get through to most of the large corporations which now dominate our lives.

Instead of being lied to and fobbed off by someone in India, or accepting shoddy treatment in shops, online and on the high street, you can tweet and get

a reply, or not, which everyone in the global twitter community of about 368 million monthly users can see.

Sadly, most of my neighbours and friends, many of them elderly ladies, do not use Twitter, scared by the frightening stories about it, put off by the combat, banter, and sarcastic jokes, so struggle on trying to ring national gas, electric and water companies wasting hours of their lives, or worse, trying those absurd ‘Chat Bots’ in which a computerised American voice named, Fifi or Coco, says, ‘Hi,’ then cannot answer any of your questions. Apart from the comfort of being able to get a reply to often quite urgent practical needs, I can also complain about abysmal Oxford City Council, currently waging a war against car drivers and planning to impose a ‘Fifteen-Minute City’ on us, whether we want it or not. This is a new vision of local living, increasingly writ large as today’s most popular planning paradigm. These Utopian ideas, currently being tried out in Oxford and Canterbury, and coming your way soon, are based on ‘anti-hierarchical’ ideas from Sorbonne professor Carlos Moreno and Anne Hidalgo, a socialist mayor of Paris, who want to replace older street plans, which are believed to be based on class, with hubs where everything is provided by a communal hub within a fifteen-minute central walk.

The only reply I get from Oxford City Council is to refer me to the County Council, who do not reply either. I have nevertheless persisted in asking both when they are going to start repairing the potholes around Oxford, which make the view from my window resemble the Menin Road in 1917. I’m surprised that horses, mules, and people aren’t drowning in the gaping holes. I have been asking this since I moved here in 2014 but was always told in the past that they didn’t have the money. Now we see large amounts being spent on creating, ‘Low Traffic Neighbourhoods’ and cycle paths so we know that isn’t true. Oxford has been trending on Twitter recently due to these issues. One brilliant comment on there asked

why buses, which serve the great mass of ‘ordinary people’ or ‘the proletariat’ as Carlos and Anne would call them, have been cut, while extra paths have been created to support, ‘bourgeois cyclists’, which where I live is very true. Only the wealthy middle-classes and students seem to cycle here.

Most people on my neighbourhood website don’t seem to use Twitter either, like my near neighbours not wishing to venture out into the wilds of cyberspace

with its sometimes-scary online bearpits. Perhaps Twitter is corrupting of manners, which may be why the genteel Hislop doesn’t like it. I often find it very difficult to be polite enough on the Internet site which serves my neighbourhood and have been closed down a couple of times for remarks that would go unnoticed on Twitter.

Despite that roughness, what makes Twitter vital is its democratic reach. When I was growing up people would sometimes write in desperation to

their MP or the BBC Home Service, *Any Answers* program. Using social media, you can contact your representatives and any other powerful body you choose. This morning I tweeted Narendra Modi, exposed by the BBC in a documentary on January 17th as a genocidaire, accused of being behind an organised massacre of Muslims in Gujerat in 2002, but cleared by the Indian High Court in 2012. I asked about the men who had tried to expose his crimes, now in prison after receiving twenty-year prison sentences for giving, ‘wrongful evidence’. On Sunday I was able to ask Justin Welby why, as he believes black lives matter so much, he has donated £100,000 of church funds to a charity seeking reparations for historic slavery yet has said nothing about the murder of Fr Isaac Achi who had been burned to death by Muslims in Nigeria on the previous day. I doubt that either man will reply to me – but their silence shouts loudly and the whole world can hear it.

Jane Kelly was a leading feature writer for the Daily Mail.



Happy as a Hooligan in France

LAURENT LEMASSON

The statistics of hooliganism and criminality in France are not abominable. They are just bad. Normally bad, one would be tempted to say, since we end up getting used to everything, or almost everything. The response of the authorities to both, is, however, catastrophic. What happened a few months ago at the Stade de France is an excellent illustration of this and helps us understand why so many French people now suffer from a chronic sense of insecurity.

What follows will be of two-fold interest to an English reader. On the one hand because, in this sad affair, it is his compatriots who were the first victims of the ineptitude of the French authorities, and, on the other hand, because he will probably recognize familiar phenomena. Indeed, if my information is correct, the treatment of hooliganism and crime in Great Britain is remarkably similar to what it is in France. This could also explain why the scandal died down so quickly on the other side of the Channel: the English population is used to this kind of thing.

At around 7pm on May 28, during the final of the Champions League between Liverpool and Real Madrid in Paris with more than 75,000 fans queuing to attend this great game of European soccer the situation degenerated into mayhem. A number of fans had showed up without tickets or with forged tickets and completely clogged the checkpoints. Then, with thousands of people still waiting to enter the stadium for a match due to start at 8 pm, three to four hundred highly mobile individuals began assaulting and robbing the crowd. Finally, around 9:30 pm, the police received the order to evacuate the square of the Stadium. They charged several times, teargassing and shoving everyone in their way without mercy and without distinction.

In the days that followed, many English supporters testified in the press, of a nightmare evening in which they were attacked and robbed by armed gangs, both

at the entrance and exit of the stadium. Some say they thought they would die that night. The images, broadcast on social networks, showed the chaos and the violence. They also showed that the aggressors were mainly ‘young people from the suburbs’, as they say modestly in the media, in other words young people of North African or sub-Saharan origin.

The department of Seine-Saint-Denis, in which the Stade de France is located, has the highest proportion of immigrants in its population of all French departments, said to be over 30 per cent. To this should be added a considerable mass of illegal immigrants, commonly estimated at several hundred thousand. In fact, the real figure of the population of Seine-Saint-Denis is not known.

However, two days later, the Minister of the Interior, Gérald Darmanin, did not hesitate to blame the Liverpool fans for what happened, accusing them of having tried to enter the stadium with fake tickets. He even went so far as to advance the extravagant figure of 40,000 fake tickets.

For several days, the Minister maintained this absurd version, before timidly conceding that perhaps there had been some errors in the security arrangements and apologizing to the English supporters.

So, on Saturday, 28 May, there were hundreds, probably thousands of robberies and assaults committed throughout the evening near the Stade de France. What was the judicial response?

An article published in the newspaper, *Le Point*, on 1st June, gives us a pretty good idea:

In total, out of 105 arrests on the evening of the match, only about forty people were kept in police custody. Only six of them were tried by the Bobigny court, the others were all released without charge. At this stage, there are no more proceedings at the Bobigny prosecutor's office



related to the crimes committed on the night of the Champions League final.

Six people brought to justice out of 105 arrested, this gives us a penal response of 5.71 per cent, despite the 105 arrested representing only a fraction of the total number of offenders in action that night.

This ridiculously low rate of penal response can be easily explained: it was difficult to spot and then arrest the offenders in the middle of the crowd, second the general chaos made it difficult to identify the offences that could be charged against those arrested; finally, the fact that the victims were mostly foreigners only in the capital for a few hours, made it hard for any of them to file a complaint. This is why less than half of those arrested were kept in custody and why only 15 per cent of those in custody were subsequently brought to justice.

Who are these six people who were brought before the judicial court of Bobigny? Three Peruvians between 21 and 39 years old, undocumented, accused of stealing and receiving stolen cell phones. Two Algerians, one of them without a residence permit; one suspected of stealing a cell phone, the other a luxury watch. A Palestinian, undocumented, suspected of snatching a necklace and accused of violence against a police officer.

Six foreigners five of them without residence permits. This is not surprising. In 2019 foreigners represented a little less than a third of the suspects for robberies without violence and violent robberies without weapons for the whole of France. In Ile-de-France (Paris and its suburbs), where their proportion is much higher, the figures are even more unedifying: foreign nations accounted for no less than 93 per cent of those indicted for non-violent robberies on public transport, 66 per cent of these suspected of sexual violence.

It is therefore no surprise that 100 per cent of the people brought to justice after the events at the Stade France are foreigners. And what sentences were given to them?

The trial of the three Peruvians was postponed to a later date, with two of them placed in provisional detention, the third under judicial control. In the case of the two Algerians, the cell phone thief was sentenced to a six-month suspended prison sentence and was sent to a *Centre de rétention* for possible deportation, assuming the Algerian authorities are willing to take him back (in other words, he has every chance of staying in France); while the suspect in the theft of a luxury watch was given a ten-month prison sentence, three months of which were suspended and the rest 'converted', which means transformed into something other than a stay in prison. And the Palestinian was

sentenced to ten months in prison, with immediate incarceration.

Strictly speaking, therefore, only one of the six defendants was put in jail as punishment for the offenses he committed that night. One out of six.

However the case of the Palestinian is particularly interesting. He was accused of three things: ripping the necklace off a young woman Liverpool supporter, biting her friend who interfered, both victims formally identified him, and assaulting a police officer at the police station. The policeman was prescribed 21 days of *Interruption Temporaire de Travail* (ITT) meaning he was seriously injured.

According to the penal code, robbery with violence, without ITT, is punishable by five years in prison and 75,000 euros fine. Assault and battery causing less than eight days of ITT is punishable by a fine of only 1500 euros. Finally, violence committed on a member of the police force causing more than eight days of ITT are punishable by seven years in prison and 100,000 euros fine. But the Palestinian was only sentenced, for the snatching, to ten months in prison: barely 17 per cent of the maximum sentence provided by the penal code. But of course, he will only serve part of these ten months, between six and seven months depending on the additional sentence reductions he will receive. So altogether his punishment will be about 10 per cent of the punishment provided by the penal code for the crime he committed.

Putting this altogether we might characterize French justice as follows: penal response rate: 5.7 per cent; severity rate: 10 per cent.

What happened at the Stade de France on 28 May summarizes perfectly everything that is wrong with the way the French authorities deal with criminality and hooliganism: denial of reality, incompetence, weakness, cowardice. But none of this is unique to the current government. It more-or-less typifies the approach of all French governments in recent decades.

Many French people experienced that evening as a national humiliation and, understandably are extremely worried about the prospect of holding of the Olympic Games in Paris next year. It reminded them that they have a very good reason to suffer from a chronic sense of insecurity, not merely because the numerator (the actual figure) for hooliganism and criminality is high, but because the denominator (the number of convictions) are so desperately low.

Laurent Lemasson is a doctor of public law and political science, he has directed the studies of the Institute for Justice (a think-tank dedicated to justice and security issues).

Meghan Markle – there was a time when an actress could not be buried in a churchyard

MARK MANTEL

At first, Prince Harry's royal misalliance merely put me in none the best of moods. But now, the disgusting interviews, the public betrayal of family, the debased book, and all the rest, has turned me into a red-hot iron. Little by little, so many vexations, all fretting in my cranium, have finally struck full on my entire soul. It has even made me physically sick. And this marriage has done much hurt to the whole world too.

So, what is my problem? And what is this jeremiad about?

My problem is that I, like many, live in a world of weird confusion, without mysteries passed down over generations, without olden streets or mythic heroes, without memories of vanquished enemies, and no ancestral voices, no tales of ancient monarchs fighting the very sea. Yet, in this commercialized wasteland, it is a supreme comfort to know that somewhere, beyond the fields we know, there is some exalted place where the old verities are kept, some marbled hall where honor yet exists, where privacy is kept, where the laughter of kings is forever shrouded from our dismal digital waste and charnel stench.

That is what the British Royal House means to the world.

One source of unhappiness that all of us feel, every day, comes from the raging meritocratic battle of All-Against-All. So, any institution that checks this ceaseless rivalry does us all much good. For example, the court at St James's is a standing rebuke to Hollywood stars, Dotcom Billionaires, Pop Singers, and all the flute players who hang about them. It is a reminder that there is a realm to which they can never aspire, a realm infinitely above them, a realm they cannot even hope to understand. It is a reminder of an arbiter elegantiarum who doesn't take any notice of them.

The Royal Family tempers the otherwise unbounded vanity of the world's social climbers; and this check trickles down, making our common life together happier. You may think this a fanciful notion. But I have seen, with my own two eyes, the comradeship of simple people living under monarchy, and can readily compare it to the insufferable boastfulness

found even in working-class pubs in America, where pure meritocracy rages, killing fellowship wherever it snakes.

Of course, all this is sorely resented in Hollywood. Hollywood probably doesn't exactly wish to destroy the Royal Family, but they want it within reach, within understanding. They want to treat it with a casual, insolent familiarity. Which is why, today, Prince Harry may be its darling. But very soon, once he has sufficiently cheapened himself, even in his own eyes, Hollywood will satisfy its plebeian resentment by snubbing him. In the meantime, they will demand he mock his own kind. None of this is a new thing under the sun. Even in Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time*, there was a line somewhere about Hollywood executives hiring wellborn Englishmen to raise their own life station.

In time, this couple's children will be brought up amongst that brash and indecorous California crowd, where delicacy of sentiment is simply unknown, nor that tact which alone refuses to intrude upon private sorrow. These offspring too will marry and have offspring. In a few generations, there will be a regular Hollywood colony with the Almanac de Gotha flowing through their smug, tanned limbs. What do you suppose that will do to the prestige of the Royal Family?

That is not all.

A king, it is known, is also a priest. I don't mean in the narrow sense. But his function is partly sacerdotal. He blows a sacral charm upon the land. And this sacred function extends to his whole family. But not so many generations ago, an actress could not even be buried in a churchyard. I don't say we ought to go back to all that. Yet I am not altogether sure that an actress, especially of this sort, may be a holy embodiment of the English people.

Yes, I know that royal palaces, since the days of Nineveh, have been the sybaritic seats of plots, poison, flattery, frivolity, insincerity, dissipation, and every fashion of iniquity. Yet we cannot compare discrete decadence behind closed doors to a noisy marriage to an actress, and not quite of the Shakespearean kind. It wouldn't be so bad if Prince Harry married, say, a governess. But a governess is one thing. And a

demimondaine is another thing. This is not a case of *Jane Eyre* folks. It is a bad case of Proust's Swann and Odette.

Some say that the monarchy needs to be more 'relevant' and that mixture with other classes is a good thing. What can I say? A nation can, of course, have a Scandinavian style monarchy, with royals bicycling around in shorts, hopefully without their crowns. No doubt this is supremely comforting to neighbors who had once tasted their swords. But do these monarchies capture the imagination of the world? They may be more modern, whatever that means, but they are also nonentities. Everybody in America, even the lowest hick, knows that a King of England is the highest thing in the world. While almost nobody knows a thing about any of those Nordic kinglets. So, in what way, pray, does modernizing make a monarchy grander?

Indeed, if anything, all this loud publicity reduces the role of the monarchy. The royals have always had a place in international diplomacy. This may not be an official thing. But when they go anywhere, they talk to people at the highest levels. And if you watch an old interview with, say, Prince Philip, he instinctively conducts himself as a diplomatist in

the best of traditions (though taking some princely liberties, worthy of his rank). Anyways, how can our two lovebirds be trusted with state information when they have trumpets on their mouths instead of zippers? One can only wonder what lucky spies will get the enviable task of working the California pool-party circuit.

Impossible marriages sometimes do work. But it helps if the couple is committed to a purely private happiness. I do not wish this couple ill. Indeed, if I were a prince of the blood, I might marry who I liked. It is not unmanly. But crying over the royal punishment takes the heroism right out of it. I do not doubt Meghan had it rough over in England. (One thinks of du Maurier's Rebecca). But she also treated her servants worse than rotten. Certainly, worse than any noblewoman would. I think packing it up and moving to, say, Venice, or maybe somewhere in Spain, would do this pair a world of good. Taking supper in the open air beneath mellow moonlight and all. It's probably cheaper than a Hollywood therapist and certainly cheaper than a Hollywood matrimonial lawyer.

Mark Mantel is an American lawyer.

Boris: Churchill or Charlatan?

JAMES MONTEITH

Boris is back, rejuvenated after his forced abdication last summer, armed with the answer to our woes, the magic scissors that will cut the Gordian knot of high tax low growth economic misery presided over by those glorified ledger clerks Sunak and Hunt, and that will rescue us from the unspeakable disaster of a prospective Labour government. The answer was revealed in an interview on Talk TV with his old ally Nadine Dorries. It is ... tax cuts.

Boris explained that we need to 'get on the front foot' over the economy, boost it with tax cuts, and win the Conservatives the next election. In fact, the country will face a clear choice: between 'the Conservatives who are going to manage the economy, not put taxes up any further ... in fact, *cut* taxes' (my italics) and Labour, who will put up taxes '*even higher*' (my italics, again). And that's all there is to it.

Boris might even join forces with Liz Truss (a future chancellor?), who, it is rumoured, is planning to make a political comeback. Although her attempt to boost the economy through unfunded tax cuts back

in September was not an unqualified success, growing numbers of Conservatives are arguing that the overall strategy was the right one, even if the timing and handling lacked finesse. Like Boris, Liz argues that tax cuts will kickstart the economy, 'turbocharge' it, as she put it last autumn. But in his interview, Boris elaborated the transmission mechanism more precisely: people will 'spend more' and that will translate into economic growth.

As for the finer detail – what spending will be cut to pay for the tax cuts, the consequences for interest rates, inflation, the exchange rate, the balance of payments, long-term capital investment, skills shortages in key sectors, and the willingness of our international creditors to fund our borrowing – we can safely assume that these will fall spontaneously into place, provided that the overall strategy is the right one.

In addition to this new economic and industrial strategy, carefully honed and developed in the six months since Boris vacated the premiership, Boris revealed how we could boost our support for Ukraine:

he would send them ‘some more tanks’. Boris did not specify how many tanks, but he must have in mind something more than the fourteen promised so far. Twenty, perhaps? Brexit was also addressed in this wide-ranging interview, as Boris argued that we needed to be ‘out there talking about the benefits of Brexit’ – the Brexit which Boris ‘delivered’ us, along with the benefits (like control of our own borders) we are now enjoying, although not talking enough about. And, finally, Boris made a devastating analysis of Labour’s alternative plan for economic growth: he described Labour leader Keir Starmer as ‘Old Sir Crasharoonie Snoozefest, the human bollard’. Small wonder that both Labour and the Conservatives are alarmed at the prospect of the Big Dog of British politics making a comeback.

But perhaps it is unfair to judge Boris by his lack of interest in policy detail. Great minds are made for ranging over great issues, for strategic thinking and visionary ideas, and rhetorical flourishes. This was no more evident than over Ukraine, where Boris took the lead among Western leaders in providing military support and expressing his solidarity with Ukraine’s President Zelenskyy. Unfortunately, our cosmetic sanctions – carefully designed to minimise damage to the City of London, through which so much dirty Russian money has been laundered, or to offshore British tax havens, or to Russian oligarchs who have bankrolled the Conservative Party and proved generous friends to many leading Conservatives, including Boris – have done little to damage or deter Putin. The long-awaited Economic Crime Act was finally enacted last spring, but the follow-up Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill, which would give the Act some teeth by reforming Companies House, and is now working its way through Parliament, lacks the mechanisms that would adequately verify beneficial ownership (and so establish who really benefits from the ownership of property and other assets) – the very thing that is key to combating money laundering. That is, it would be the key if our enforcement agencies had the necessary resources to do their job, which, of course, they do not.

So, when Boris boasted in March last year that Britain had imposed ‘unprecedented’ sanctions, and that the economic noose was ‘being tightened around Putin’s neck’; when in June he blustered that the latest Western sanctions would ‘hit Russian oligarchs’ and ‘strike at the heart of Putin’s war machine’; the fighting talk was positively Churchillian. But a year after Russia launched its invasion, the situation is that Ukraine is still being pounded by Russian artillery and missiles; the battle for Bakhmut rages on in the Donbas, with worrying signs that Russia’s sheer volume of manpower is beginning to tell in this brutal

war of attrition; and, according to Ukraine’s defence minister, Putin is preparing for a major new offensive in February to break the stalemate.

But perhaps this, too, is unfair, and we should not judge Boris on his long-range strategic thinking. Where he really scores, is in having that election-winning quality that other Tories lack. One of his parliamentary supporters describes it as ‘stardust’. He has charisma, inspires confidence, energises people, and amuses us. And it is just this that Britain, mired in recession, so sorely needs now.

Boris famously first demonstrated his showbiz credentials on the TV programme *Have I Got News for You*, in which he masterfully honed his trademark bumbling persona, peppered with flashes of ready wit, to disarm opponents and win over the audience. The backbench MP became an instant celebrity, the only Conservative to be instantly recognisable on the street. He also made a name for himself as an after-dinner speaker, who could be guaranteed to bring the house down by appearing to have no script, no idea of what event he was attending, and by having to improvise a series of outrageously improbable anecdotes.

However, the sheer artifice involved in these performances was revealed by Jeremy Vine (‘My Boris Johnson Story’, the *Spectator*, 17 June 2019), who witnessed Johnson performances 18 months apart at two different awards ceremonies. Vine wrote of the first: ‘Brilliant. The whole room is hooting and cheering. It no longer matters that Boris has no script, no plan, no idea of what event he is attending, and that he seems to be taking the whole thing off the top of his head. I realise that I am in the presence of genius.’ But after witnessing an identical performance at the second ceremony, with the script repeated verbatim, the same stage-managed pretence of making it all up off-the-cuff, Vine was left wondering whether anything Johnson did was ‘for real’.

No-one can doubt that Johnson is a consummate performer, a showman, a self-publicist, who thrives on the love and affection of his audience. The only prime minister to have employed two official photographers, he is a master of the staged photo opportunity. His ‘live and let live’ attitude to politics and to life, his colourful personality, has potentially great appeal. It may be that in a political scene inhabited by pygmies lacking vision, passion, integrity and conviction in almost equal measure, the best we can do is to employ a showman – even if the act, once a breath of fresh air, is now looking very stale. But what a sad commentary on the state of our political life that we are even contemplating the idea of his return.

James Monteith is a journalist.

Britain to Join the Coming Punch-up Over Taiwan

DARYL McCANN

One of the benefits of leaving the EU, according to *The Benefits of Brexit* strategy paper issued by Boris Johnson's government in January 2022, was the return of Global Britain. For the sceptics, of course, the idea of Britain meaningfully returning to the world stage as a serious independent actor, rather than as an adjunct of Europe or, in the case of NATO, a subsidiary of the United States, seemed absurd. Putin's invasion of Ukraine the following month only emphasised the point – if the UK had any future military role to play in the world, it would be in its own neighbourhood. And so it might have come as something of a surprise when a year later Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed a 'hugely significant' new defence deal with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

And it might have come as more of a surprise when, two weeks later, the chair of Britain's defence select committee, Tobias Ellwood, suggested the establishment of an Eastern NATO, or 'NATO-lite' as he put it, with the UK a foundational member. This could be easily brought into existence, maintained Ellwood, if Japan and India were invited into AUKUS, a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced in September 2021. The pact focuses on co-operating to develop electronic warfare capabilities, quantum technologies and other cutting-edge equipment for fighting (or preventing) the next war. Japan and India, we might note, already have a naval agreement with the United States and Australia called the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or, alternatively, the Quad. An Eastern NATO, brought about by the merging of AUKUS and the Quad, would find the UK realigning itself with Japan, its erstwhile Indo-Pacific ally (up until the end of the First World War) and India, one-time 'Jewel in the Crown' of the Empire. As they say, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

One pragmatic or financial reason for Ellwood's proposition was the impending annual ministerial meeting between Britain's and Australia's Defence

and Foreign Affairs ministers. Britain, not surprisingly, has been keen to play a key role in Australia's \$70 billion nuclear submarine project. Washington and Westminster are competing for the lion's share of the business, which will see the construction of either twelve US Virginia-class or twelve British Astute-class submarines for the Australian government. One anonymous British politician has claimed that the doubts expressed by influential congressmen that the United States has the capacity to build the Australian submarines have skewed things in favour of the Astute: 'If this hasn't helped our push – we have been quietly trying to convince the Australians – then I don't know what will.' Ellwood has been more circumspect: 'Ultimately, it's for Australia to decide'. A British defence insider, the Australian newspaper reported, wryly noted that whatever the outcome 'once the decision is made that capacity will be found'.

The UK's defence industry is looking to partner with defence industries in the Indo-Pacific region beyond just Australia, Japan again being a case in point. In December 2022, for instance, the BBC reported that BAE Systems at Warton and Samlesbury will be working with Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Italy's Leonardo to build the Tempest, a new generation fighter jet set to replace the Typhoon in the mid-2030s. The new combat aircraft will literally be super-human, utilising artificial intelligence to replace the human pilot when overwhelmed by the stress of the jet's speed stealth. The name given to the development of a 6th-generation fighter is the Global Combat Air Programme, apt given PM Sunak's assertion when announcing the project that 'the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions are indivisible'.

Implicit in Sunak's remark, and the whole NATO-lite proposition, is a recognition that Putin's invasion of Ukraine and Xi Jinping's prospective invasion of Taiwan (and commandeering of the South China Sea and so on) are part of one and the same challenge. But are they? We know that Japan's dramatic re-

armament programme is a consequence of China's imperial ambitions in the East China Sea, Taiwan and everywhere else in the Indo-Pacific region, but how does that relate to Russia's ambitions in Ukraine? In the first instance, Putin now places Taiwan in the same category as Ukraine – that is, a US 'satellite'. President Xi, though careful not to endorse outright the February 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine, has praised Moscow with faint damns. And behind the scenes, of course, Beijing has been doing everything in its power to assist the Russian war effort, not least providing the Wagner group with satellite images of Ukrainian military positions.

Further evidence that security in the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific regions are now inextricably linked was underlined by the support Australia offered Ukraine in 2022 – almost \$500 million in military assistance and another \$200 million in humanitarian aid – while, at the same time, upgrading its Special Strategic Partnership with Japan. We might note that the Australian Labor Party has been in power since the federal elections in May last year. Though keen to improve trading relations with Beijing after the 2001-02 trade war, Anthony Albanese's centre-left administration remains as wary of China's military ambitions as its predecessor. Beijing's ambassador to Australia, Xiao Qian, keeps warning us we have got it all the wrong way around:

During the Second World War, Japan invaded Australia, bombed Darwin, killed Australians and shot Australian prisoners of war. Be careful about what might happen in the future. When someone threatens you, he might threaten you again.

Japan did, it is true, all these things to Australia in the Second World War and, we might add, much worse things to China. But that was then and this is now. Today the People's Republic of China is a police state ruled by imperialist marauders – not so different from the Russian Federation or the Islamic Republic. Japan, on the other hand, has had a democratic constitution since November 1946, a constitution that democratic Australia, as a post-war occupying power, helped shape – specifically, the clauses concerning independent unionism and women's suffrage. Imperial Japan did menace Australia during the Pacific War, but in more recent times it has been the PRC doing the bullying. As recently as 2021, in the midst of China's trade war against Australia, the *Global Times*, mouthpiece for the regime in Beijing, warned Australia what would happen if it were to

help Taiwan defend itself against an invasion by the People's Liberation Army: 'China [can produce] additional long-range missiles with conventional warheads that target military objectives in Australia when the situation becomes highly tense.' When someone threatens you, as Xiao Qian observed, he might threaten you again.

The time has come to re-define what it means to belong to 'the West'. Once it was about being European, but Putin's Russia is mostly European and not at all Western. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, contrariwise, are not European but their respective adoption (with a little US prodding) of a democratic constitution, independent judiciary, free press, genuine civil society and so forth has made them Western. The policy of conservative internationalism, as expounded by American political scientist Henry R Nau, takes on a greater meaning we see democratic countries as our Western counterparts. Conservative internationalism differs from the liberal internationalism which dominated the post-Cold War era with its unlikely assertion that (say) the PRC's belligerent paranoia would be assuaged if it were admitted to the WTO, the IMF, WHO, *et al.* Liberal internationalism might have helped China to become a beneficiary of international trade, and yet the imperialist-Leninism at the heart of the Chinese Communist Party remained in place. Conservative internationalism, as delineated by Nau, recommends prosperous democratic nations – and here we can include not only the USA but Japan, Australia and Britain – avoid retreating into isolationism or simply hoping international trade will bring about global harmony. Rather, they should reach out and support fellow democratic nations under threat from non-democratic predators: the Russian Federation and the PRC immediately come to mind.

It is easy to dismiss government strategy papers, such as January 2022's *The Benefits of Brexit*, but right there in its final pages is almost a genuine blueprint for Britain in the years ahead:

We are renewing our links with freedom-loving democracies around the world. We will take bilateral action quickly when needed to defend our interests and protect our values. And we will establish security and defence partnerships with key allies around the world to stand up for our interests and support stability.

Daryl McCann is an Australian journalist. He has blog at <http://darylmccann.bigspot.com.au>

Russia's War in Ukraine: Piles of Unseen Corpses

IVANTINY NOVAK

As, suffocated by inflation and rising interest rates, we sit in our spectator seats awaiting the first anniversary of war, pressure is mounting on governments to justify the burden this has put on common folk. There's growing talk that all this Ukraine business is just smoke and mirrors.

People ask; can we really expect Ukrainian forces to sustain their war-making effort east of the Dnieper River? Was this all not a feverish dream of NATO, fuelling and fuelled by a political momentum to seize a slice of what Russia considers her territory, walking hand-in-hand with media bravado towards an economic and humanitarian disaster? In short, as the asses on the left and right begin to shift in dire discomfort at the thought that this (remember 'not our') war might well go on for years, there seems to be a need for what we used to do to naughty boys in my childhood in my village in Ukraine, push their heads into the snow for a reality check.

Let's have some realism. 18,483 civilian casualties: 7,068 killed and 11,415 injured as of 22nd January 2023 and verified by OHCHR. It is the unverified that constitute the real numbers; not that you will get those thanks to the scale of Russian bombardment and their mobile crematoriums that have been cleaning up the dirty stuff since at least April 2022.

So, with the actual corpse count so different from reality you can see why those on the left and right who consider it not 'their' war find it difficult to buy headlines like those of Mariupol's Mayor Vadym Boichenko who ten months ago described his city

having become, 'a new Auschwitz and Majdanek'. This is because the bodies of approximately 10,000 civilians slaughtered in Mariupol and chucked into the fire by Russian troops do not appear in any official figures. However, it should give doubters at least a whiff of what the situation smells like beneath the diplomatic talk. Anybody screwing up their

noses? The same doubters ought also to consider the testimonies of electrocution, torture, rape, starvation, beatings, and the Russian pastime of making locals live like farmyard animals over ten months in Kherson and Kharkiv provinces.

What about the military front? *The Guardian* on the 10th of November 2022, quoting US general Mark Milley reported 'probably' around 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed or wounded, followed by the same approximation from Ursula von der Leyen on the 30th November. This caused raised eyebrows in Kyiv: Mykhailo Podolyak, top adviser to Zelensky announced the next

day, 1st December, that, 'between 10,000-13,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed'.

Where's the transparency?

Bohdan Senyk, Head of Public Relations in ZSU, put it in a simpler way: 'The losses of the Ukrainian army are classified information.' Anyone who demands absolute transparency on military data from Ukraine, had better get their heads around the idea that wartime censorship is a necessary part of war, not just to preserve morale within a nation tormented by a maniac determined to break them psychologically and spiritually, but also out of level-headed pragmatism. In an age of advanced



Maksym Palenko is a well-known Ukrainian book illustrator. But now he produces war posters which are very popular on social media. This poster is called Seppuku

digitisation, where information is often the deciding factor in a battle, does one really expect access to data that directly impacts on military strategy?

Which is why the sudden appearance of finger-wagging military experts during this war is understandable given the self-certainty and arrogance that prevails as soon as the 'not our war brigade' starts to poke holes in specialist opinions from behind the safety of their mobile phone screens. There are reasons why those directly involved in holding the front line don't run their mouths off over classified intelligence. They understand the cost. Ripped up bodies, terror, and ever-present, unimagined grief, for the moment contained within Ukraine, but for how long?

Those in the west who look back to the good old days of low interest rates, the central heating on 24 hours of the day and four holidays a year, may stuff their fingers in their ears in response to the unified voices of Ukrainians calling out for continued Western intervention. They may even shut their eyes to the terrorising, genocidal tendency of Russia's military strategy; disregarding the fact that it is openly encouraged by the likes of Vladimir Solovyov and Sergey Mardan on the state-owned TV channel Russia 1. Fine, let's say it is just NATO's interest in containing the war that brought around €108.8 billion of financial, humanitarian and military aid by 20th November 2022, with many more aid packages and military help promised by the US, UK and their allies.

In any event why should the UK taxpayers be involved in bearing the brunt of this, when between 2016-2021 investment has fallen by approximately 25 per cent due to leaving the EU, as the Bank of England tells us, taxes are starting to burn pockets paying back the £310-410 billion Covid funds, and the OECD forecasts UK growth at -0.4 per cent of GDP for 2023, the lowest in the G7.

Well for one thing, back in October 2021 Russia announced a mobilisation of 300,000 troops while Vadym Skibitsky, Ukraine's deputy military intelligence chief, assures us that an additional 500,000 conscripts will be called up in January? This war affects not only the stability of Europe, but peace around the globe. Anyone naive enough to think this hasn't triggered the geopolitical calculations of Xi Jinping, MbS, Modi or smaller fish like Erdogan had better check back on the Cold War. The turnout of this war – a war on the flatlands of Europe – fundamentally affects the prestige

and therefore strength of NATO internationally: especially in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

It's worth reminding the isolationists who like to broad-brushstroke Britain as an irrelevant, medium-sized power, that the UK is a core member of NATO, with economic interests falling in line with a defensive policy that reaches far beyond the British Isles. Ties with battle-hardened nation states that prove their steadfast commitment to the West aren't a small matter, especially if they have access to the Black Sea and guard the Polish corridor. Allegiances go both ways. If aggressors aren't put in check, if the lines that have been drawn aren't obeyed, tyranny will spread. That's one promise Mr Putin is sure to keep. Once a rabid, authoritarian ideologue is at your doorstep, there won't be any talk of peaceful co-habitation.

Was there any doubt that the price of resistance would be dear? There is that other matter apart from military hardware. Ukraine is still standing, still fighting is proof enough that our support is justified. As to the question 'how long can this go on for?' US Major General Chip Chapman had this to say: 'The US military budget alone is \$875 billion – around half the GDP of Russia.' There's no question of Russia matching its production capacity against the combined forces of the West.

Doubters and peaceniks can, based on their reading of the UK press and its near-unilateral support of Ukraine, accuse it of mere 'one-sided propaganda' but to say it is blind to the immediate reality is short-sighted. Do you think there would be this fervour, especially within the press, if it wasn't for the continuous wake-up calls from Moscow ever since 1962?

The war is a real, immediate, and mortal threat to the West's continued way of life. Douglas Murray put it succinctly: 'this is no time for contrarianism on Ukraine'. So, before anyone smirks and jokes, 'please sir, I want some more' in response to Ukraine army's harrowing pleas for help, let's get this straight; there are boys, young boys, standing in a hell you cannot possibly imagine, hoping that at least they'll be provided with the tools to fight so that you don't have to face the same reality.

Ivantiy Novak is a Ukrainian playwright, actor and director based in London

A Taste for Bone Orchards

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

There are two types of establishments entry into which I find irresistible: bookshops and cemeteries. Since adolescence, I have always loved the latter and found them a stimulus to reflection, no doubt banal or commonplace enough, along the lines of Gray's *Elegy*, but not therefore superficial, for my reflections concern a not unimportant feature of human existence, namely mortality.

The British are, or were, very good at burying their dead. The Victorians created beautiful municipal cemeteries. For a number of years, I accompanied my wife around the country as she performed medical locums and had the opportunity of admiring them.

In Yeovil, for example (which my satnav insisted on pronouncing You-Evil), the cemetery was the most beautiful feature of the town. Perhaps the most moving tomb there, at least to me, was that of a three-year-old child who had died more than fifty years earlier. There was a single fresh flower in a vase on the simple stone tomb. When I returned two years later, there was still a single fresh flower in the vase. To what depths of grief and regret did this point, expressed in so quietly dignified a way, and how different from contemporary noisy emotionalism!

In Nottingham, I found solace from the sheer hideousness of the town, destroyed utterly by corrupt modernism, in the municipal cemetery. It was still beautifully kept. I watched a gardener tend it with something approaching tenderness. 'You love your work', I said to him. 'The residents are well behaved', he replied. Nottingham was then in the grip of a crimewave.

In Llanelly, I used to go to a churchyard to read. One beautiful day, I fell asleep there and on waking saw a Pakistani lady in salwar kameez, nearby holding some flowers, 'Do you know where Margaret Davies is buried?' she asked. She said she wanted to put flowers on her grave.

When I asked her why she replied that, when she first came to Britain many years before she had lived

next door to her in Llanelly, and Margaret, had been very good to her. Having moved away from the town, she had heard that Margaret had since died, and wanted to pay tribute to her memory. I tried to help her find the grave, but after a while she excused me; this little testimony to ordinary human goodness has remained with me ever since.

Whenever I am in Aberystwyth, I visit the tomb of Caradoc Evans in the little cemetery high above Capel Horeb in the hamlet of New Cross, five miles from the town. Horeb now, of course, has been turned from chapel into house, as practically all chapels in Wales now have been, unless they be pharmacies or nightclubs.

Evans, who died in 1945, was an important writer, an early and ferocious critic of what he saw as Welsh religious hypocrisy (though, paradoxically perhaps, he was a great connoisseur of hellfire sermons, being what was called a sermon-taster). His depiction of the peasantry of Carmarthenshire is possibly the most damning, though not necessarily the fairest, portrait of any group of people I have ever read and caused him to be known as the best-hated man in Wales.

Almost alone in the little cemetery, his untended tomb is in English, though his mother-tongue was Welsh, and he had to work very hard to turn himself into a writer in English. After a lifetime of literary labour, he left an estate of £80. The cemetery overlooks sheep-dotted hills and there is a peace there that contrasts strongly with Evans' turbulent, but interesting and fundamentally good, soul.

When I am in Paris, which I quite often am, I stay near the most famous cemetery in the world, the Père Lachaise, visited by 3 million people a year (one for every person buried there) and a favourite and inexhaustibly interesting promenade of mine. It is the last resting place of many great artists and writers: Delacroix, Chopin, Balzac, Proust, and Oscar Wilde among them. The latter's tomb is surrounded by a transparent wall to prevent people from kissing it, though they still throw teddy bears in between the tomb and the wall. Earlier, an English

woman, attacked the tomb's sculpture by Jacob Epstein before the wall was erected, smashing off its stone penis.

But the most visited tomb is that of Allan Kardec, whose real name was Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (1804-1869), a French doctor, translator, spiritist and investigator of the *au-delà*, who, for some reason, has an ardent following of several millions in Brazil, visitors from which bestrew his tomb with flowers and ensure that it is never left bare.

There is a Communist corner in Père Lachaise, wherein are laid such luminaries as Georges Marchais and Maurice Thorez. Here I remember the inscription at the entrance to the cemetery in Antigua Guatemala, to the effect that through this door, all rancour, all enmity is forgotten.

While walking in Père Lachaise, I suddenly had an idea, no doubt obvious but which had not occurred to me before. If, I thought, there were many famous writers buried in the cemetery, there must be many more writers buried there who are now totally forgotten. Of a hundred, perhaps a thousand, scribblers, not more than one is remembered a hundred years after his death (the same must be true of artists): and it is said that though no writer is wrongly remembered, many are wrongly forgotten.

It occurred to me, therefore, that it might be interesting to investigate some of those forgotten writers: not forgotten, necessarily, because they were bad, but simply because it is not possible to remember everyone who ever put pen to paper. And so, it turned out; in the process, I learned, as never before, the power of the internet.

Some writers were memorialised as such, but some merely had Verdigris coloured busts atop their tombs. These busts, fashionable for about seventy years, fell into two classes: those of pork-butchers, secretaries of professional associations, businessmen

of all types with tight collars and cravats, who looked as if they had expired from a heart attack after a too-copious dinner at a banquet, and the artistic types, with flowing hair and neckerchiefs blowing carelessly in the wind. A quick search on my phone about the latter soon revealed which of

them was a forgotten artist and which a forgotten writer, with some information about them to boot. Not only that, but I was able to order some of the books of the writers before I had even left the cemetery, and what would once have taken years of research (which I should never have had the patience or persistence to carry out) now took minutes at most.

Who did I find? I will give one example: Charles Loudon (1801-1844). He was a doctor, trained in Glasgow, who practised in

Leamington Spa and wrote a short treatise on the waters of that then-fashionable town. He was appointed to the commission on child labour in factories and quoted by Friedrich Engels in his *Condition of the English Working Class* in 1844. Loudon retired to Paris where he wrote, in French, an attempted refutation of Malthus's theory of population, *A Solution to the Problem of Population and Subsistence*, which impressed and influenced Karl Marx. Loudon's wife, Magracia, the daughter of an Irish landowner, who was a novelist, popular at one time, and then writer on political economy, survived her husband by more than twenty years.

To adapt very slightly Doctor Johnson's dictum on London, a man who is tired of cemeteries is tired of life, for there is in cemeteries all that life can afford.

Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is The Wheelchair and other stories, Mirabeau (Amazon).



Pierre de la Chaise was nominated in 1674 confessor of Louis XIV Wikipedia.

What I Meant to Say Was....

FRANCIS HALLINAN

What has gone wrong with the meaning of the words, why are there now an infinite number of sexes, why is there something called ‘your truth’ which is anything you think might suit the moment, and what about Prince Harry’s book *Spare*, where recollections don’t just vary, but are totally irreconcilable? So serious has this decline in meaning become that if you don’t agree with an obvious lie, that a man with testicles is a woman, you can lose your job, or as happened recently in Ireland, go to prison.

What future do we face if we can’t make up our minds on the meaning of words?

Man’s brain is the most complicated object known to exist. Thanks to it, and having an opposable thumb and forefinger, he is capable of miracles of invention. His latest is the quantum computer, a triumph of abstruse mathematical reasoning. No other creature on earth even approaches his abilities. When did you last see a motorway built by badgers, or a 460-seat passenger jet built by monkeys?

Such complexity points to a creator, for how else could such a creature as man, or any living creature for that matter, arise – by chance? Chance is exactly what it was, declared an affable Victorian country gentleman called Charles Darwin who between 1837-39 proved it with his theory of natural selection. Natural selection says what works, works, and what doesn’t doesn’t. It is why you don’t see any eyeless cats around; they don’t survive thanks to a process known as the survival of the fittest.

Because natural selection is blind and directionless, nobody, not even God, had a hand in our creation, and therefore mankind no longer owes his allegiance to God. From now on there would be no divine moral order. We were free to do or be anything we wished, give words any meaning we chose. Perhaps it was why Darwin’s contemporary Lewis Carroll, who frequently mocked evolution through his characters, sensing such a future, made Humpty Dumpty say to Alice ‘A word means what I want it to mean.’

Darwin who was precise with his words, would,

if he were alive today, have no truck with the idea that you could just say what a person’s sex was to make it come true. He was a great scientist for whom evidence came first, not opinion. A Christian at the time of publication, he was profoundly worried about the effect his theory would have on Christianity but abandoned belief in the religion later in life for agnosticism. For many others the randomness proposed by natural selection was a signal to follow Humpty Dumpty – words could mean anything. It set the scene for a whole unravelling of meaning.

The uncertainty resulting from Darwinism was followed in the 20th century by discoveries in particle physics where an experimenter could influence the outcome of an experiment by merely observing it – the two-slit experiment – and Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, which stated that the position of a particle could not be precisely known even when you knew the exact details of its origin.

A post-modernist movement imitating these findings in the liberal arts and sciences but lacking any experimental validity arose mimicking this. ‘Post-modernism’ one contemporary author writes, ‘offers a revolutionary approach to the study of society: in questioning the validity of modern science and the notion of objective knowledge, this movement discards history, rejects humanism, and resists any truth claims.’ Nothing is true then?

There have always been word jugglers – witchdoctors, priests, prophets, politicians, academics – those who believe you only have to say something for it to be real.

Several Humpty Dumpty movements were to arise in the next century, one being Freudianism. Freudianism (not Freud) was born in 1923, Freud himself was a keen evolutionist. Belief in psychotherapy itself was therapy, talking about your past at length and in depth to an independent listener gained you a better understanding of yourself and could be a cure for a mental disease

such as depression. None of this has ever been independently verified. Psychotherapy has no more effect on mental diseases such as depression and certainly not the psychosis, than rain dancing. It might be very enjoyable to talk about that most fascinating of creatures, yourself, but it won't cure you of mental illness. Cognitive behavioural therapy, the very opposite of psychotherapy, learning how to suppress or avoid unpleasant thoughts, has repeatedly been proved to be more effective.

But Freud had conquered. For a long time, psychotherapy was only affordable by the rich, but in seventies California, thanks to the psychotherapist and ex-theological student Carl Rogers, person centred counselling, delivered in short affordable sessions, became popular. Great stress was laid on the non-judgemental nature of counselling which makes a great thing of 'your truth'. Words associated with authority, rank and the male sex were proscribed. A whole politics emerged from counselling which has become a form of hyper liberalism, in which nothing is forbidden, and words mean only what you say they mean. The idea of people being able to choose from a smorgasbord of genders is a very attractive idea to counselling which finds the idea of a person's sex being fixed, oppressive and male. The more female idea of being whatever sex you feel at the moment is more in keeping with the feminine, fluid nature of counselling.

The transgender movement sees maleness, especially white maleness, and its privileges, as oppressive. To witness men losing their jobs or even going to prison for upholding the idea that sex depends on your chromosomes (the chemical explanation) is infinitely satisfying to the movement. Dissenters either lose their jobs (in rare cases if they defy the courts they may go to prison) unless they agree there is no such thing as a fixed sex, dismiss biology as a racist male construct and reject the whole canon of genetic science. The meaning of words has come full circle, from meaning something to meaning anything to meaning being compulsory.

Except when it is matter of personal comfort. The most fanatical transgender fanatic if she gets an earache will take the white mans' antibiotics.

Darwinism has come out of this rather better. After a rocky period in the seventies when it risked being a religion – you could lose your job in biological academia if you questioned it – it has recently stood the test of falsifiability. In 2008 scientists discovered that mice who were exposed to the smell of acetone and reacted badly to it – you use it to get rid of nail polish – could pass that reaction on to two generations of their offspring. This process called epigenesis, a message attached to a gene – overturns Darwinists' fundamental objection to Lamarckism – which says that acquired behaviour can be passed down to future generations.

Far from demanding that the proponents of this *volte face* and the experimenters who discovered epigenesis be sacked, even imprisoned. Nature has opened a discussion on the subject. Opinion is divided but it is accepted that it must be discussed and further

researched, however painful.

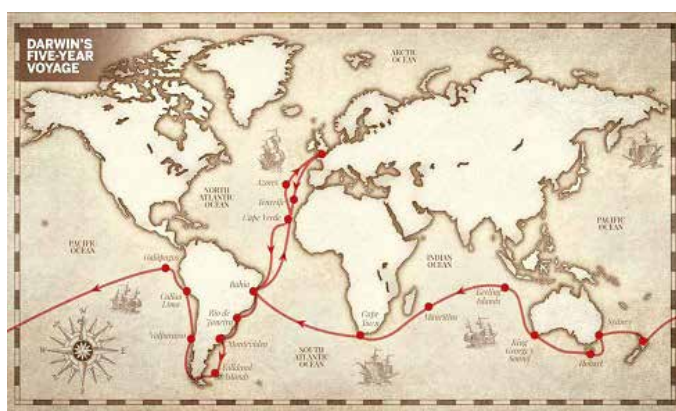
Here is a sample letter.

Recent research has implied that the environment can have an effect on shaping the epigenome. This in turn will affect the way our genes are expressed. If this epigenetic change occurs in the germ line, the environmental effect will be inherited. (Erasure is a process which usually wipes out imprinting on genes, which would normally prevent this inheritance, but erasure is not universal amongst all species). Does this imply that Lamarck's theory of inheritance of acquired characters does partially contribute to evolution along with Darwin's theory of Natural Selection?

References: Bird, A. (2007). Perceptions of epigenetics. Nature 447: 396-398.

Truth will out.

Francis Hallinan is a journalist.



Voyage of the Beagle

No Longer in the Swim

MARY SIDNEY

I was interested to see a magazine article by a popular Asian writer, about the destruction of Heath Town baths, near Wolverhampton. Built in 1932, Grade II listed, it once also contained a library and played a big part in his and my childhood. At 7am on Sundays, allowing time to get back home for a cooked breakfast and then church, my father would take my brother and me into town to learn to swim at the Heath Town Baths. Most towns had similar swimming pool or ‘baths’ at the time, a long stretch of water with a fearsome ‘deep end’ and a full set of diving boards, the top one mainly used by brave boys, somehow used without injury to them or anyone swimming below. It was a shock to see a photo of the place now. As the writer says, it has suffered, ‘Years of neglect, arson and vandalism’. It’s now about to be turned into a ‘banqueting hall’ with, ‘community spaces’. I thought of writing to *Private Eye*’s section on badly neglected buildings and the philistine councils which let them fall down, and memories came floating back.

It was not just the baths which changed while I was growing up but the whole ‘demographic’ as we euphemistically say, of the area. When I first started going, I saw almost entirely white families. It was the same when I visited with my primary school. By the time I was eleven that had changed. The author of the article admitted that he never learned to swim there with his school, as he was so worried about keeping his Sikh top-knot dry. The first big change was the large numbers of elderly Asian men congregating around the edges of the pool. They didn’t swim but seemed to be involved in some kind of communal ablutions. People said they liked using the old ‘slipper-bath’, whatever they were. Gradually the white families stopped going there to swim. In my early teens I sometimes went with a friend. On one occasion we were verbally abused by some older Asian boys who clearly didn’t want us there, and then naively, I palled up with an Asian youth who, like me, was diving off the side and swimming widths underwater. He sexually assaulted me, as it would now be termed, in those days it might have been called a big grope. I didn’t go there again. No more Heath Town for me; times and my town had changed.

I looked the author up on Twitter and as I’d enjoyed his memoir about growing up in Wolverhampton, which was nuanced and amusing, I was disappointed to see that his latest book is about the evils of the British

Empire, a story so bad, it seems, that Our Island Story cannot be told to children. ‘Resisted idea of a kids book on Empire – I didn’t want to sanitise the history,’ he wrote as if everyone would understand his dilemma. ‘But think I’ve found a way of doing it. *Stolen History: The Truth About British Empire*, with illustrations.’ Presumably the kiddies won’t be too sickened and scared if they have some nice drawings to go with the text. A bit counter intuitive for me as I was always highly disturbed by images as a child, even the ones they showed on *Blue Peter*.

I was shocked at this apparent hardening of attitude and why people choose to settle and go on living in such a terrible country as Britain is a mystery. Their own lives we are told, were ruined by the arrival of settlers to their lands who changed everything and brought in oppressive new laws and customs. Yes, a terrible thing but increasingly it feels that the same thing happened to me, and my people as within a few years my town changed beyond recognition, and those changes cannot now be recorded as memoir or written anywhere else. Let’s say as euphemistically as possible; after 1968, the year the writer and his family arrived from the Punjab, the demographic of my secondary school changed completely, changing it from being a sedate place where girls hoped to leave for respectable jobs in Beattie’s, the elegant department store, into a place where teachers were attacked, and gangs patrolled the playground. My brother’s school shared the same fate. People from my village stopped going into the town at night as it was no longer safe to leave the car in the town car parks. It was also dangerous using the 1960’s built underpasses as they became popular with muggers. The main outdoor market became a place of strangers as did the streets in the centre of town. After initial protests by some working-class men centring around the famous speech by Enoch Powell, people settled down and accepted the changes.

After the death of Martin Luther King in 1968, people became very conscious of the US civil rights movement. I heard working men on my bus to school talking about it and the evils of, ‘racialism’. Most people rejected what Americans called, ‘the colour bar’. During a university vacation, I joined the ‘Parosi’ scheme to teach English to Asian women in their homes. This was often about befriending rather than successfully teaching English, as many of the

women were illiterate in their own language. The writer's father was illiterate, but his mother was not, which was, and is, unusual. A 2018 government study of English language skills showed that three in five of those unable to speak English were women, with Pakistani and Bangladeshi women five times more likely than their men to speak no English at all. I was assigned a young wife, who had been moved from her home in India to marry a bus driver she'd never met. She had to live in the house of her in-laws and hardly saw him. They had produced twin girls and she told me how frightened she'd been that he would be angry about that. She seemed to live in fear of getting on the wrong side of him and his mother.

The insight into Asian family life was disturbing. No doubt white people's knavery was responsible for the domestic cruelty I saw, but at the time no one seemed to think like that, there was not much blame going on. The charity was about helping new arrivals and enhancing community welfare. I was more concerned about her needs than worrying about the deep changes mass migration was clearly bringing to the town, and no one that I knew spoke about migrants with any resentment. If they felt it, they didn't say. I remember much patience and tolerance.

After university I never lived in the Midlands again, except for short periods when I noted its decline from prosperity to boarded up shops and empty office blocks. Beattie's is long gone. People's attitudes changed too, white people became more edgy and uncertain.

English politeness was now termed 'colonial guilt'. An urge to help Asian ladies with their English might now easily be taken for, 'White Saviour Complex'. It's hard to remember now that in the 1960s, when I was still attending Heath Town Baths, many people hoped for a 'melting pot', the idea that we must sink or swim together. The writer states that the books he read in Heath Town library, 'helped with the essential work of integration'. I wonder how his new book for children will contribute to that. He tells us proudly that he arrived in the UK in a poor family, lived in an impoverished part of a British town, but managed to get to a local grammar school (long gone) then Cambridge. He became a successful writer and now presents TV documentaries. 'It was my father taking me to a local library that helped me', he says, nothing about Britain itself, that nation of indescribable tyrants.

It seems we are now increasingly divided into victims and oppressors; at least according to the historical narrative being published and sold to British children. Victims are above reproach, no matter how badly they treat each other, and every problem can be attributed to the unforgivable indigenous society the word 'white' now accepted as a term of abuse. Hostile camps based on identity including ethnicity can never come together and are no longer encouraged to do so. Unlike the hopeful 1960s, today there's more money to be made, books to be published and power to be grabbed from divisiveness and conflict.

Mary Sidney is an artist and social observer.

Conspiracies: is Donald Trump Behind the Weather?

JAMES MONKTON

Who shot JFK? Well, it was Lee Harvey Oswald, of course. Or was it? What about the gunman/gunmen on the grassy knoll shooting from in front of President Kennedy's car and not from behind, as Oswald did? Even more intriguing: who was behind the assassination? A pathetic individual? The mob? Castro in Cuba? Right-wing business executives? Russia? Or even, accidentally, the president's own security service bodyguard detail? Only one-third of Americans believe the official version of Oswald as the lone gunman. Conspiracy theories abound ranging from the credible to the fantastical. The much-anticipated recent public release

of a massive tranche of hitherto secret official records on the Kennedy killing has animated conspiracy theorists once more.

These files are not expected to alter the official view of Oswald as the sole killer acting entirely alone on his own initiative. With this new flooding of material, which will take some considerable time to trawl through thoroughly, over 97 percent of all governmental records on the killing have been released. That clearly will not satisfy those who believe Oswald was not the killer or the stooge of more powerful forces. What does the other 3 per cent, some 3,000 documents, say? Why aren't they being released? Surely, many

would argue, this is where the truth is buried? President Biden has declared that more files will be released later this year. Even if and when all are, it will do little to silence the conspiracy theorists. After all, who really trusts governments anymore?

Three political conspiracies are doing the rounds now, all of real consequence. Donald Trump and his most ardent supporters claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from him by corrupt ballot practices. All elections everywhere are subject to a certain amount of fraud – the UK has had major issues with postal ballots – so it is a fair comment for Trump to say that there were irregularities in the election; but that is something quite different to saying that these were both orchestrated and on a wide-enough scale to affect the outcome.

Also, in America there is the infamous and influential QAnon movement from an extreme/batty right-wing group that gives conspiracy theorists a bad name. This postulates agnostic inner knowledge of a cabal of Satan-worshipping elites running an international paedophile ring. These are predominantly Democrats in the States. Oh, and it all started with something to do with pizza. I have as much affection for Hillary Clinton as I do for an in-growing toenail, but this conspiracy is really out there.

More intriguing is the Great Reset, a genuine project by the World Economic Forum in the wake of Covid to, in WEF's own language,

revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions. Every country ... must participate, and every industry, from oil and gas to tech, must be transformed. In short, we need a 'Great Reset' of capitalism.

But for those more conspiratorially minded, this is a cover for Net Zero absolutism, open borders, and diminished democracy. They may well have a point.

Conspiracies create a genuine dilemma in many ways. What if they are true? Conspiracies abound through history – and not least because many of them were real. Just as the Bay of Tonkin incident in 1964 was a manipulated fabrication to provoke support for fully-fledged American military involvement in Vietnam, so Hitler had convicts dressed up in Polish military uniforms and then shot to provide photographic 'evidence' of a Polish attack on German soil – thus providing his *casus belli*. Watergate in 1974 is another classic example, famous enough to be reduced to one word.

On the other hand, many conspiracies were palpably false while creating a real historical response. Two that come to mind were the Popish Plot of 1678-81 in England, in which the odious fantasist and narcissist

Titus Oates made-up a conspiracy that there was a Catholic attempt to assassinate King Charles II, leading to over twenty innocent people being executed; and the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion published in 1903, an anti-Semitic tract imagining Jewish global domination that was used as an excuse for horrific pogroms. Machiavelli was not very impressed by conspiracies, writing half-a-millennium ago: 'Experience demonstrates that there have been many conspiracies, but few have been concluded successfully, but their abundance is confirmed.'

Matters are clouded further by definitions, as plots are also conspiracies. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines a conspiracy as 'a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful', while a plot is 'a plan made in secret by a group of people to do something illegal or harmful'. In other words, they are synonymous. Yet we tend to perceive something substantially different between the two. Few of us have any reservations in acknowledging that history is replete with plots, as is current politics; but we are more inclined to be suspicious when the term 'conspiracy' is used. However, the addition of the word 'theory' after conspiracy highlights the lack of empiricist evidence that then allows an explosive propagation of imaginative possible explanations. A good conspiracy can then be the key to explain everything. Or so it would seem.

And this is what is so enticing about them. Intelligent humans want to know and understand the world around them. Random and haphazard events can be alarming, not just in themselves, but because they cruelly expose how we are often unable to control what happens in our world and that we are subject to non-cognitive, non-sentient factors that are frequently more powerful than ourselves. If something terrible occurs and we seemingly do not know why, a theory can offer comfort in that it will explain that the occurrence was the result of deliberate human agency; it was meant to happen. That knowledge can then be applied against it happening again. We understand what has happened; we can fix it; and we can prevent it in the future. This desire for control over the elements and the natural world has reached new heights recently with the excessive responses to Covid and climate change.

In the world of conspiracy theories, the revelations of new, countering facts and clear evidence can be explained away by more conspiratorial thinking. It is also an indolent approach: it removes the necessity of hard work and investigation involved in ascertaining reality. It additionally provides an easily attained superior smugness of gnostic enlightenment. Any attempts at genuine investigation on the internet can be obfuscated by insidious algorithms directing us to

what we want to see, herding us into the corral with others propounding the same or similar theories. With that comes collective, communal reassurance.

A good conspiracy theory is one that takes genuine evidence and offers plausible responses to the questions that it raises. The difference between intelligent speculation and delusional fantasy is then a matter

for us to decide. It is not conspiratorial to say that conspiracies/plots have always been with us and always will. They are an intriguing admixture of fact and conjecture, and ultimately of the need to know.

But what if David Icke is right? Then what?

James Monkton is a university lecturer.

Germany shivers and refills the coal bucket

JAKE WELCH

Over the weekend, after an entire day of walking around London, my friend and I found ourselves plodding through the streets of Aldgate and Whitechapel. It was getting late, the sun was already down, and the streets were offering a perfect Jack the Ripper experience. Walking down Whitechapel Highstreet, one can see the small lanes and alleys peeling away from the bustling East London city life which are particularly eery considering their macabre history.

My friend hurried me down one darkened alleyway, stinking powerfully of urine, with rubbish piled up high. We walked through and he showed me a bookshop called *Freedom*. It is the bookshop you go to for all things subversive and anarchical. Despite the political cause, it's rather orderly and well-laid out, and there's a wide range of books, badges, patches, and posters to choose from. Of course, there wasn't any real intellectual diversity; on the contrary, it's mostly Marx, Lenin, Chomsky, Bakunin, Simon de Beauvoir, the usual gang.

Having spent a respectful amount of time browsing (considering it's blatantly obvious that I'm neither an Anarchist nor Marxist) I thought it appropriate to play a joke on the anarchist who volunteers to run the bookshop on a dull Saturday evening. I found Proudhon's famous book called, *Private Property Is Theft*, and asked politely, 'so I suppose I can just take this without paying?' 'No, you can't do that', he replied – needless to suggest that he didn't quite understand the point that I was making, and I didn't want to stand there, with the end of his shift approaching, pointing out the rank hypocrisy. Plus, he was a friendly chap, so going to such lengths would make me look like a provocateur.

This wasn't the first time in the past week where I've seen this sort of cognitive dissonance. In Germany, there are mass protests regarding the demolition of the abandoned town of Lutzerath. The town is on the brink

of literal collapse into a quarry that is being dug by the German state. It's a last resort option, and although it's not pretty, the government – which incidentally includes the Green Party – sees no other alternative. Angela Merkel decided in the mid-2010s to begin dismantling Germany's nuclear power stations in order to meet climate targets. However, as is to be expected, there is absolutely no infrastructure now which exists to meet the demand for energy. As a result, Germany has had to switch back to coal, and Lutzerath is the victim thereof.

Once coupled with the energy crisis spreading across Europe and the world, the demand for coal has dramatically increased. Germany's energy situation was already precarious even before the Ukrainian war, let alone now knowing its economy could collapse overnight were Putin to switch off the gas. Therefore, the German government has decided to mine more than 200 million tonnes of coal to get Germany through the winter and replenish its reserves.

This did not go down very well with the climate fanatics, however. People turned up in their thousands to block the destruction of the small, barren, village in the middle of North Rhein Westphalia. As these things do, it began peacefully. But the activists quickly resorted to violence when the police decided to clear a commune that had been formed on the site of a nearby farm. Activists barricaded the entrances, windows and roads, tied themselves to trees, and used Antifa's favourite political resource of throwing Molotov cocktails at the police. Even Greta Thunberg arrived to protest, before staging her own arrest for the cameras.

One of the protesters, however, let the protestors' true aims slip. A reporter for the German online show *Achtung, Reichelt*, interviewed Dina Hamid, one of the protestors, who, as her appearance suggested, was hardly there because of her indignation that an abandoned village was being destroyed alone. Instead, she argued that '[this] protest is about everything,

climate change and those most affected by climate injustice such as the impoverished, the victims of racism, sexism and ableism.’ She added that the protestors are ‘representing international politics who are demanding system change to remove the fossilised capitalistic system...where a tiny percentage owns everything, and the rest have to fend for themselves.’

The idea that the victims of climate change are poor minorities is somewhat true. It’s completely wrong, however, to argue that minorities in somewhere like Germany are more seriously affected by climate change than others. If this protestor got what she wanted, she would happily see the international prohibition of coal burning which would cause misery, starvation, and death for hundreds of millions of people across the world. Of course, she, a no doubt middle-class, university-educated German, wouldn’t be so severely affected as the millions of people across the third world who are still heavily reliant on coal to survive.

Furthermore, the notion that capitalism is responsible for climate change is another insidious idea floating around the media, promoted by professional activists including Greta Thunberg herself. This, too, is mind-numbingly misguided. In order to increase climate

awareness, you need to raise people out of poverty; and, to reduce poverty, you need to introduce free markets, trade and economic freedom. The United Nations managed to slash world hunger and poverty in half between 2000 and 2012 because of the willingness of developing countries to accept capitalistic economic ideas. The one thing that is guaranteed is that the victims of communism in North Korea, Venezuela, and many parts of China are more concerned with feeding themselves and their children than the invisible threat of climate change. Those unfortunate people would much rather see more coal being burned and their living standards increase than be told that they, unlike Dina Hamid, are not entitled to the same luxuries of heat and food.

Whether or not these activities will recognise their criminal hypocrisy is unbeknownst to me. They continue to exacerbate the problems they claim to be preventing. I did manage to buy a great ‘F*ck the Patriarchy’ poster in the anarchist bookshop though.

Jake Welch is an aspiring writer and co-hosts the Boring Twenties Podcast.

Should rich African countries like Nigeria and Ghana pay slavery reparations?

MYLES HARIS

Britain was the first country in history to make slaving a criminal offence. Before that slaving was seen as being like bad weather, an inevitable, if unpleasant feature of life. The British changed all that – yet our universities, colleges and schools are lying about this, telling our young we were practically the inventors of slavery. To remind us of the great contribution Britain made to freeing the world from slavery we review opinions about slavery, then and now, as well as asking questions about African involvement.

Did Britain have a moral purpose in banning slavery?

The British abolition movement was a costly moral action. When it began, Britain’s Indian sugar trade was a major economic sector (and sugar was a slave product). Britain profited greatly from the slave trade. Because Britain

stopped trading, importing, and using slaves long before anybody else, it bore both relative and absolute economic costs. Also, it patrolled West Africa and other areas to try to stop the slave trade, costing its navy many lives. This was, by far, the most costly international moral action in modern history.

‘Between 1807 and 1860,

the Royal Navy, West Africa Squadron seized approximately 1600 ships involved in the slave trade and freed 150,000 Africans who were aboard these vessels. Between 1830-1865, approximately 1587 men died on the West Africa Squadron, from a variety of causes: disease, killed in action and accidental deaths...

Kaufmann and Pape (Wikipedia):



What part did African nations play in slaving?

Many nations such as the Boro State, Ashanti of present-day Ghana and the Yoruba of present-day Nigeria were involved in slave trading. Groups such as the Imbangala of Angola and the Nyamwezi of Tanzania would serve as intermediaries or roving bands, waging war on African states to capture people for export as slaves. Historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood of Boston University have estimated that of the Africans captured and then sold as slaves to the New World in the Atlantic Slave Trade, around 90% were enslaved by fellow Africans who sold them to European traders. Henry Louis Gates, the Chair of African and African American Studies, has stated that “without complex business partnerships between African Elites and European traders and commercial agents, the slave trade to the new World would have been impossible, at least at the scale it occurred.” Wikipedia

Why should African nations pay reparations?

Most people are aware of the involvement of African nations, many of which are now very wealthy like Nigeria – at least their corrupt elites are wealthy – all the more reason they should be made to pay reparations until they squeal. However, many on the left, in the grip of anti-white racism, are incapable of seeing that the blame for this horrible trade is to be shared equally, between Europeans and Africans.

Does the Left Agree?

Generally, no. Below is a common excuse for African involvement.

Acknowledging both Arab and African participation in enslavement, a truth commission on the slave trade could explain that internal African slavery was generally much more benign than American slavery. Enslaved people within Africa were frequently incorporated into the families of their owners. Similarly, Arab slave-owners were more likely to free enslaved children than were Western enslavers.

The Conversation (magazine bi-line Academic Rigour Journalist Flair) Jan 25th 2021.

If not academic rigour the above piece of sophistry certainly shows journalistic flair. Europeans were not involved in the domestic slave trade in Africa; indeed, it would be very strange if they were being asked to pay for it. Reparations are being demanded for the trans-Atlantic slave trade in which victims were dragged yoked and bound in their tens of thousands to the coast by their fellow Africans and sold to European slavers.

In summary, slavery was universal until the UK abolition acts, which were motivated by a recognition of its cruelty and baseness. It is true that the British made a fortune from slaving before they criminalised it, but so did practically every society in history. The only

difference about the British trade was that it was so large and well organised.

The left has long considered slavery as a stick with which to beat the right. A capitalist enterprise, morally wrong, showing the rich up for what they were, human traffickers, heartless beasts only interested in money.

Many of the reformers however were slave owners themselves. The critics rebut this, asserting the slavers' motives were not humanitarian but, seeing the end of slavery coming, they saw an opportunity to get out of the trade while there was still a chance of compensation, which they got. While that is true, the anti-slavery movement was in general a moral enterprise encompassing all classes and degrees, a genuine recognition of an evil unique in history.

Also, the embarrassing discovery that Africans themselves were deeply involved in the trade made it much more difficult to blame the right – the white man – alone. Most people are now aware of this and in consequence there is serious resistance to the idea of paying compensation to the descendants of former slaves.

To keep the idea of slavery as another example of the right's wickedness now that people no longer think of it in terms of slaving ships and barracoons, the left has redefined slavery as a by-product of modern capitalism involving the movement of large numbers of people across the globe in search of work. The International Labour Organisation claims that on any one day 50 million people are trapped in slavery, 1 in 150. There are alleged to be 100,000 slaves in Britain. It is claimed that many common objects people buy have at some stage had some input from a slave.

But this is a paradox like the discovery Africans were themselves deeply involved in the trade. The left is strongly in favour of immigration. Extreme advocates would like to see all frontiers lifted. But immigration, especially illegal immigration, causes social dislocation, loss of family, mental breakdown, poverty, and crime. This will continue if it is easy even for the very poor to uproot themselves from their homes and become fodder in a modern economy thousands of miles away. A field worker in the Punjab can sell himself to a trafficker for passage to Britain where he will find the welcoming arms of the left making sure he is not deported. Who is doing the slaving here?

Which is why the term modern slavery is disingenuous. When people read it, they imagine a slave owner and his slave. What the left is describing is their real target, capitalism. They want us to think that when we go down to the local supermarket and buy lavatory cleaner we are being slavers ourselves. After all, haven't we been told that most common objects we buy have some involvement from a slave in their manufacture? You can see where this argument is going?

Myles Harris is our Editor

The New Virtue: Absolute Self Interest

IAN COOPER

‘We are all liberals now’ opined William Rees-Mogg, one-time editor of *The Times* and father of Jacob. This was back in the 20th century and in the context of the convergence between the economic right and the cultural left, which became the New Labour project under Blair. At that time ‘liberal’ still meant something – just. It presupposed a commitment to the essentials of truth and virtue, fairness and freedom, and the institutions of the family and the country, along with courts, parliament and a media that still worked. Notions of tolerance, persuasion and the common good also persisted.

Not anymore. The liberal is now illiberal. Free speech is ‘hate’ speech that must be cancelled, and there is an intolerant culture war. The carriers of culture, the universities, are now woke corporations and as one Cambridge academic put it recently, ‘sheep factories’ for correct opinions. Truth, beauty and goodness, the traditional concerns of higher education – that’s why it was ‘higher’ – are today just a little bit too hard. Then with all the critical theory there’s not much culture left, at least that’s deemed safe to pass on. It is racist, colonial, patriarchal etc the product of dead, white, European males, that only apologies will suffice. As for popular culture it becomes increasingly tawdry.

The traditional family is likewise viewed with some suspicion and is breaking down. In fact, ‘the family’ can be any kind of household. Two lesbians and a budgie will do, and after lockdown, with a pigmy canine in tow. Then we find that ‘adults’ are debating what a woman is. While men claiming to be women are not treated like those claiming to be Napoleon, as ill – though with kindness, but as if they are on a pathway. There are horror stories of teenage girls having their breasts removed. The mental health of children is worried over and we note that there are less babies, while abortion is on an industrial scale – over 200,000 per annum. Being a parent seems more of an imposition than a privilege.

As for the country, it becomes an unloved Multi-racial land, the product of, a promiscuous immigration that obtained little democratic sanction, and an inability to control its borders. Parts of the country threaten to hive off. The courts don’t work, and its parliament and politicians attract little respect, while the ‘liberal’ press is referred to with the cynical caution of ‘MSM’ –

mainstream media, not least the BBC. Wealth creation seems to exist purely for personal financial gain rather than community empowerment and there seem to be no current equivalents to Victorian visionaries like John Cadbury, William Hartley or Thomas Cook. It is also increasingly in foreign hands. As for our fellow citizens they seem to be little more than consumers, only too ready to hand over their hard-won liberties and follow the zig zag of science during the Covid lock up. The only recent memorable nationwide event was the Queen’s funeral, which looked firmly to the past – with nostalgia.

Some of us remember learning how feudalism based on mutual obligations became a mercenary ‘bastard feudalism’ during the Wars of the Roses. Has some kind of equivalent happened to the liberalism that defines our culture? Perhaps it is corrupt too and merits the term ‘trash liberalism’. This is not to say that self-declared liberals are trashy. Most are educated and well-meaning and they include my good relatives but what they insist on, or give into, is trashing the culture, the family, the country and our political and economic life. Something of their incoherence can be seen in their attitude to authority. They are nervous of it, and so in the schools, children are deprived of the security, direction and freedom it can give and chaos ensues, staff leave, and standards go down. However, in some cases liberals suddenly like authority and are pretty quick to tell you and your children to wear a mask etc. They also insist on the mantra that, ‘we mustn’t judge’, then almost in the same breath denounce people for being racist, sexist, homophobic etc. The trouble is they still exercise great influence as feeling ‘progressive’ is all. The only genuine liberals left are conservative.

Why all this mess and what has gone wrong? Part of it is undoubtedly because of a Marxist influenced woke culture that is resentful, egalitarian and coercive, and has helped to corrupt liberalism. When Antonio Gramsci the Italian Marxist realised that Marx hadn’t quite got the laws of history right and so the revolution wasn’t happening in the advanced industrial countries like Britain as predicted, then it was necessary to attack what was dubbed the ‘cultural hegemony’ in these bourgeois states. Undermine that, end their control and then the revolution. Gramsci died in prison under Mussolini, but others developed his

critique like Herbert Marcuse of the Frankfurt School. He made some good points about consumerism but justified censorship, as bourgeois tolerance gave too much voice to the right – the cancel culture trope. He also encouraged the indulgent turmoil of the 60s, particularly the New Left German student leader Rudi Dutschke, who popularised the term, ‘the long march through the institutions’. This was the way to deal with the bourgeois cultural hegemony by infiltrating the universities, the media, the civil service and the professions, and then take them over, and in the process upend the family and the country. Critical theory was also used to damn the bourgeois culture on the basis of race, gender, sex etc which paved the way for a victim culture – for the ‘oppressed’ who were able to thrive on the moral leverage they had been given. Of course, it wasn’t difficult to find some plausibility for the critical case being made, as imperfection and more, can be easily found at any time. But especially adept at this were the privileged 60s generation, who were enjoying peace, an economic boom and the excitement of a sexual revolution and were quite determined to overthrow everything. Their baleful success we see today in a drifting culture and its clueless leadership.

However, liberalism or trash liberalism isn’t failing just because of Marx and his heirs but also because of something within liberalism itself. This goes right back to the 17th century when it was formulated. It was a time when people saw themselves politically in some kind of covenant with God, who, in the 30 Years War in Europe might be Catholic or Protestant, or in this country might be for the King or Parliament. Whatever the option, the result was bloody civil war. Philosophers like Locke and Hobbes then began to suggest that, rather than a covenant with the divine, a social contract with one’s fellow citizens to form a state might be more beneficial. It would be based on something more neutral and practical than religious belief and passion, in fact enlightened reason and individual self-interest. And it worked. Both in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and in the American Revolution 1776-89. Rights and representation were given and maintained by courts and parliament. And things improved as the franchise was extended. However, why it succeeded was because certain values were taken for granted, the common good, fairness and freedom, as well as the institutions of family and country. There was a certain moral consensus to appeal to, so slavery could be abolished, the factory system reformed, and women given the vote. Liberalism was then the political and secular expression of Christianity, especially Protestantism. Think the Grand Old Man, William Ewart Gladstone. This was all well and good but as faith declined especially after the First World

War, the moral consensus began to unravel. This accelerated in the 60s with the anything goes sexual revolution – though it was helped by people like Bishop John Robinson, ‘Honest to God’ etc. This meant that liberalism was stripped down to naked self-interest, as the values that had made it work gradually waned. So, ideas of virtue became quaint, truth became subjective based on feelings, and the culture became unmoored. As self-interest has only appetites and knows no limits it morphed into self-realisation and hyper individualism. The old liberal concerns of political and property rights were replaced by personal rights and identity politics. Self-interest, now the sovereign self, became increasingly shrill, narcissistic, and irrational. What freedom really was for became unclear, except to deny anyone’s demands could label you a bigot – as the sovereign self cannot be judged or denied. The ‘liberalism’ of today is especially vulnerable as self-interest has little civic virtue or feelings for family, country, or a fair economy. Rather it quickly feels entitled to its ‘rights’, and looks to technology, the market, and an ever larger and more powerful state to provide. Its essential emptiness is also easily taken over by a general leftish wokery, that provides a soothing if unhelpful semi-religious rhetoric of anti-racism, social justice, save the planet etc, that masks the more habitual menu of sex and shopping.

Thus, the liberalism we once admired and took comfort in, was actually intellectually insecure and easily compromised. It was built at bottom on the sand of self-interest and a shaky view of freedom, whose inadequacy has become only too apparent as secularisation has taken over. What can we expect? In the unhappy universities, more degrees not worth the debt – except in STEM and then who will know what to do with the new technology. More family breakdown, more women in suits, less children, more calls for immigration, and even more weird LGBT; in the country, a lack of trust and civic sense and with a media, less a watchdog of the people and more a PR for a political class. It’s a class who lack vision, direction, or even basic competence or honesty. At one moment they are apologising for being British and the next – aware that the self-policing moral consensus has gone – are getting bossy and authoritarian – yet also discreetly conceding control to the outside forces of globalisation. So, a Britain weak and hollowed out – thanks mostly to a trash liberalism.

Ian Cooper is a writer living in Cambridge where he does tours on the cultural heritage of the city, tries to find hope for the university but remains grateful for what he sees.

The EU Rejected the ECHR, why not the UK Government?

MICHAEL REINERS

Rishi Sunak's recent suggestion that he is prepared to take the UK out of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) is a particularly brave one, and one which appears necessary for his government to deliver. Official estimates suggest there will be a 50 per cent rise in migration on last year with 65,000 arrivals expected, the proposed bill to tackle this will 'go as far as possible within international law' according to a source, said to be familiar with Sunak's thinking. The issue here is, upon assent, any Act aiming to address this migration crisis which upheld by our domestic courts, may still be held up in Strasbourg by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

The ECtHR has done this before, as recently 14th June 2022, the court granted an injunction in 2022 which grounded the first flight to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. Priti Patel, then Home Secretary, characterised the decision as politically motivated. This was a significant one for Boris Johnson's government, yet, presents a unique opportunity for Sunak's. Namely, the opportunity is to make good on the empty promises following the review of the 1998 Human Rights Act (The HRA). If Sunak is to do so, he must address the ECtHR in the arena of political combat. For a government elected on the promise of Brexit this is a gift. Yet again, a pan-European entity (the ECtHR) has been caught, visibly overreaching into British domestic politics.

To understand why reconfiguring the UK's relationship with the ECHR is potentially of value to Britain it is important to address the role of The HRA. The HRA— essentially an instrument of Tony Blair's legacy — helps the ECtHR deal with its ongoing issues of mission-creep and federal-style overreach. It is crucial to note that the ECtHR began life as a 12-nation inter-state court, resolving state-on-state disputes. Today, it takes individual petitions from a jurisdiction of approximately 820 million people. By its own admission, the caseload of the ECtHR has outpaced the court's capacity. In 2011 it was discovered it may 'take 46 years' for the court to address its backlog.

To resolve this, the ECtHR has committed to a policy of 'subsidiarity' — that is the use of national-level acts such as the HRA which divert cases away from it. This approach was restated in 2012's Brighton Declaration and championed by David Cameron. In short, the HRA is a solution to the ECtHR's jurisdiction enlarging beyond its competence and ability to understand the nations it presides over. From prisoner voting to the Rwanda plan, the ECtHR, in line with its decision in *Tyrer*, has been bringing the UK more in line with 'commonly accepted standards' seen in 'member states of the Council of Europe'. Well over half of which remain in the EU.

The European Union (EU) understood this when it decided the ECtHR was likely to work against its own internal interests. The EU was never able to agree to an Accession Agreement with the ECtHR, arguably, it actively torpedoed such efforts. On 18th December 2014, after lengthy negotiations, the EU's own multi-nation court, the CJEU, ruled that a draft Accession Agreement is incompatible with EU law. Perhaps by pure coincidence, this came after the Jordanian government ceased accepting refugees from Syria; the catalyst for the 2015 migrant crisis in Europe.

Councillor of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, Martin Kuijer, commented that the 'tone of the [CJEU's] opinion raised eyebrows', chiefly because the CJEU placed greater importance on the safeguarding of its exclusive jurisdiction above the future of human rights protections in Europe. The CJEU's opinion 'seem[ed] to have been written with one purpose only: to kill off accession altogether'. The CJEU itself admitted the jurisprudence of the ECtHR was incompatible with 'certain specific features of [European] Union law as they currently exist'.

This seldom-discussed battle of legal wills shows that the ECHR can, and has acted against the interests of signatory nations. Sunak may need to emulate the EU's resolve if he is to win the favour of his core supporters. With a parliamentary majority of 75 which the Conservatives currently possess it is entirely possible the government could create 'certain specific features

of UK law’ which would ensure total independence from the ECtHR’s rulings. The main obstacle facing the government is the presence of the HRA, which allows courts to rule that legislation, or ministerial actions, is incompatible with the ECtHR’s founding convention.

The government already has a track record of successfully creating legislation which ought reasonably be interpreted as incompatible with the ECtHR’s founding convention. Namely, The Coronavirus Act (2020). Campaigner Simon Dolan made the most significant challenge in a higher court to the lockdown, this cost a private individual £684,535, and was rejected. The decision in **Dolan & Ors, R (On the application of) v Secretary of State for Health and Social Care & Anor [2020] EWCA 1605** proved that the largest suspension of human rights in recent British history could be deemed compatible, in its entirety with the HRA, and the ECtHR.

This begs the question. Why is the government not willing to utilise its majority to produce legislative outcomes that are actually desirable to their core supporters? A 2011 poll found 75 per cent of UK adults felt the HRA was applied ‘too widely to create rights that it was never intended to protect’. Seventy-seven per cent of Britons agree that illegal immigration is a serious problem facing the UK. In the words of 16th century lawyer Richard Moryson, if Johnson is to save himself a disastrous election defeat, it is his duty to act like an ‘English tailor’ making an ‘English gown’ of European human rights law. If it is to do so, both substantive change to the duties the HRA places on the state and withdrawal from the ECtHR’s jurisdiction must remain on the table.

Michael Reiners is a young barrister

From the Archive

Here are two more articles from our archive which is available for £5 on our website

Reputations 46

Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies

SCOTT GRØNMARK - ARCHIVE SPRING 2015

The Open Society and Its Enemies, written in New Zealand during the early years of the Second World War by the émigré Austrian philosopher Karl Popper and first published in the UK in 1945, was one of the most influential works of political philosophy of the last century. Nowadays, it is largely ignored or has simply been forgotten. In some ways, that’s understandable, given that some version of the political system Popper was advocating is what most of those living in Western- style liberal democracies have experienced – undoubtedly to their benefit – during the last 70 years. What struck readers as bold at the time can now seem unexcitingly old hat (or as one libertarian commentator recently put it, ‘namby-pamby’).

But, rereading the book after nearly 40 years, I was

surprised at how compelling it remains, and how relevant to present threats. In particular, Popper’s analysis of the persistent menace of totalitarian ideology can effectively be applied to a variety of current ‘revolts against civilisation’ – most notably Islamo-fascism, but including the liberal fascism of the EU, the Green movement’s advocacy of global impoverishment, and the distinctly adolescent strain of anarchy espoused by the anti-globalisation mob.

The task Popper set himself on the day in March 1938 when he learned that the German army had marched into his homeland was to explain why ‘open’ societies – self-critical democracies whose members are responsible for decisions affecting their own lives – are doomed to suffer successive attacks by those wishing

to establish 'closed', undemocratic societies where all decisions are made for their members by an irremovable elite. In doing so, Popper hoped to identify the means by which open societies could inoculate themselves against the poison of tyranny. Democracy (which he saw as a mechanism for limiting government power rather than enabling a dictatorship of the majority) was Popper's preferred system because 'only democracy provides an institutional framework that permits reform without violence'. Only by entrenching and shoring up democratic institutions can open societies defeat those wishing to revert to a more primitive, tribal, collectivist arrangement offering protection from the 'strain of civilisation' which results from the threat of rapid social change and the burden of personal choice.

The idea Popper identified as underpinning all forms of totalitarianism was historicism, which he defined as a belief in 'inexorable laws of historical destiny' – for instance, the 'inevitable' establishment of an international Caliphate, or the victory of the Proletariat or the Aryan race, or the nirvana of Universal Equality. He saw such teleological beliefs as resulting partly from utopianism – 'a deep-felt dissatisfaction with a world which does not, and cannot, live up to our moral ideals and to our dreams of perfection' – and partly from sheer funk in the face of uncertainty. With the attempt to return to 'a state of implicit submission to tribal magic' we inevitably arrive at 'the Inquisition, at the Secret Police, and at a romanticised gangsterism... with the most brutal and violent destruction of all that is human'.

Not everything Popper proposed resonates today. One of his less appealing ideas was that politicians should behave like scientists. Their job, he felt, was to find the best solutions to problems by conducting small-scale experiments which could be reversed or modified if found not to work. He described this as 'piecemeal social engineering', in contrast to the large-scale utopian variety favoured by closed society enthusiasts. This scientific approach seems unattractive to those of us who don't necessarily view life as a series of soluble problems, distrust the very concept of social engineering, and feel that our politicians' endless, hyperactive tinkering with every aspect of our lives suggests an Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Popper's main field was the philosophy of science, and there's one area where his desire to import scientific methodology is welcome: he felt the best form of society was one operating under the principle of open criticism. Tyrannies, he felt, were doomed partly because fearful henchmen are justifiably reluctant to tell their deluded, strutting leaders that their policies are failing. A similar point was made by Popper's friend and champion, Friedrich Hayek (who was instrumental in Popper's being awarded a key post at the LSE after the

war), in *The Road to Serfdom*, published in 1944. As Popper was essentially a man of the social democratic left, one suspects that some of the classical liberal ideas he propounded: free markets, light-touch government (he specifically warned against interfering government officials), and a firm rejection of the concept of a centrally planned economy are as much a result of Hayek's influence as of genuine conviction. But if some of these views were indeed grafted onto Popper's essentially soft-left core beliefs, he is to be commended for practising the critical openness he preached.

Popper's political ambiguity has contributed to his unpopularity with academics: there's something in *The Open Society* to infuriate everybody. His lack of support among left-wing academics (the vast majority of the breed, obviously) probably stems from his contempt for Marx's followers; his lack of belief in a powerful, beneficent state; his support for the individual over the collective; and his contempt for the ostentatious do-goodery of supposedly enlightened élites: '...our greatest troubles spring from something that is as admirable and sound as it is dangerous – from our impatience to better the lot of our fellows.'

Popper was insufficiently critical of Marx himself for right-wing tastes, and rather too suspicious of unfettered capitalism, which he viewed as a ravening beast in need of taming. As for conservatives, Popper dismissed them as fear-filled reactionaries (although he modified this view in later life). Conservatives, in turn, were no doubt alarmed by his rather technocratic attitude to social and political traditions, which he felt could safely be jettisoned or modified when they had outlived their usefulness, his rejection of systems based on the need to accommodate human nature, and by his endless and rather wearying emphasis on the need for constant reinvention.

But what really stands out on rereading *The Open Society* is how extraordinarily often Popper is simply right. For instance, he warns against politicians' tendency to curtail personal freedom during times of war (impressively restrained of him, given that this was written as European democracy was fighting for its very life) but, in a section that is possibly even more relevant in our slavishly multicultural era than when it was written, Popper insists that for a truly open society to survive there must be limits to tolerance. After conceding that the expression of intolerant beliefs needn't always be suppressed, especially if their influence can be countered by rational argument and public opinion, he gives us this distinctly un-namby-pamby key passage: 'But we should claim the right to suppress them if necessary even by force; for it may easily turn out that they are not prepared to meet us on the level of rational argument, but begin by denouncing

all argument; they may forbid their followers to listen to rational argument, because it is deceptive, and teach them to answer arguments by the use of their fists or pistols. We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant.’ Sound familiar?

It’s not just the strength of most of Popper’s arguments which impresses. There is something heroic about the lack of moral preening or ideological rigidity, the absence of hysteria or extremism, the all-pervasive tough-minded common sense. It was written by an overworked man, often exhausted and ill, living in near penury, exiled thousands of miles from home, expressing himself in what was in effect a third language, labouring under an unsympathetic boss, in circumstances which made it well-nigh impossible to discuss his ideas with his intellectual peers, of whom there were, admittedly, only a handful. That he managed to produce such a powerful, influential document bears

testament to his brilliance and the sheer force of his will – by all accounts, Popper was a pugnacious character.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about *The Open Society* is that it owed its success to the general reader. After all, it’s 800 pages long; most of it is taken up with detailed attacks on Plato, Hegel and Marx; it barely refers to the war; it was published in two volumes; and there is no concession whatsoever to sentimental populism – hardly a recipe for bestsellerdom. What it had in its favour was Popper’s ability to get his point across and to make ideas exciting, even those in support of moderation. Unlike most works of political philosophy, it is remarkably readable.

Liberal democracy once more finds itself menaced by totalitarian thugs and their fellow-travellers: a propitious moment, one would have thought, to revive the reputation of such a staunch defender of liberty, and of this key work.

Don’t Vote, it Only Encourages Them

ARNOLD GILL - ARCHIVE SPRING 2015

At the next election I shall join the largest group of British electors – the alienated non-voters. I live in a safe seat, so it will make no difference to the result. Why should we lend legitimacy to a system that has lost all semblance of being democratic by voting at all? A low turn-out will at least get through to the politicians what we think of the whole lot of them.

Why should we endorse a political class whose main aim is to enrich themselves? The most recent scandals have named large numbers of MPs and peers who defy time and space by living in several houses at once. Brown envelopes are being trousered and ethics skirted. It is easy to see why so many British politicians wish to be at the very heart of Europe, that heart of darkness where you can claim not just for properties where you do not live and do not visit but for ones that do not exist. Europeans claim for farms that are not to be found by aerial photography and whose areas can only be measured and recorded as multiples of the square root of minus one. When the EU’s auditors refuse to pass its accounts, they are sacked. You can hear the whistles blowing a hundred miles away (or in EU units 160 kilometres) but no one is listening. It is this corrupt world of Mitterand and Chirac that our Europhile politicians long for, a land of ever bigger troughs for ever more ambitious snouts, where the

number of teats expands indefinitely to accommodate more piglets, where the Euro-pork barrel is the size of a ballistic missile, where there are acres of truffles to be sniffed and rooted out. For the politicians it is Europa Felix, the land of Cockaigne, Schlaraffenland. The Italians have even invented the politically correct term ‘differently honest’ for that ten per cent of their politicians who have been prosecuted. At least our British ones are indifferently honest. What a contrast with the generous humble public servants of the past, from Stanley Baldwin, who when First Secretary to the Treasury anonymously gave a tenth of his entire personal fortune to pay off the national debt, to Lord Archer who lived in a single simple government room often shared with others, as did Jonathan Aitken, and poor Jack Jones who eked out his last years on a modest pension from the KGB.

It goes without saying that all British politicians are liars, from Tony Blair and the missing weapons of mass destruction right down to those who routinely fiddle the figures about education, immigration, crime and climate.

Yet in fairness Britain’s politicians only deceive, exploit and ignore their own electors. The power and resources they steal from us they are happy to give away to members of their own class in other countries. They recklessly sign agreements that bind all future

Parliaments and thus make a nonsense of the only power the electors have, which is ‘to turn the rascals out’. If the power lies with the EU what difference can voting make? Our politicians do not care about their own people except in the brief run up to an election when their lies have to be refurbished. Our politicians care only about the opinions of the other members of the new, international and in particular Euro-political class. French, Czech, Polish and Irish politicians still retain their patriotism and some semblance of self-respect but ours are but walking shadows who strut the international stage to get a little brief applause. We live in a world of us and them. We are of no account to them and they are not accountable to us.

The only groups to whom the politicians defer are those whom they meet socially and those like French peasants who take direct action and whose violence they fear. Voters have no power but Muslims and Greenists have a lot, both because they are favoured by those with whom the politicians mingle and those in the silly focus groups they assemble and because they are capable of causing public disorder. That is why immigration continues unabated. That is why we have no new nuclear power stations and are about to sit in the dark. That is why we do not have enough prison cells to contain the worst criminals. Capital punishment was always kept out of the political arena and when it was about to be abolished the politicians lied that it would be replaced by life imprisonment, meaning life. In 1960 someone who used a gun or murdered in the course of a robbery would have been hanged. How long do they actually serve today?

The recent Swiss referendum that, to the horror of our politicians, banned minarets tells us how utterly undemocratic our own country is. In Britain anything that the political class finds embarrassing is taken out of electoral politics altogether. Today the kind of representative politics advocated by Burke has failed. If the Labour and Liberal parties were to come to a deal involving proportional representation or transferable votes it would actually make matters worse. It would put a set of soggy liberal-left coalitions in power forever because that is where the transferable votes would go. When the Irish Free State was formed in 1922, we, the British, insisted on its being more democratic than our own which is why they have referenda. Many individual American states also use this method of curbing the arbitrariness of their politicians. We need it here. It is not worth voting in elections but a referendum has a direct effect. Why can we not vote against the EU or indeed minarets?

Arnold Gill is a retired academic.

Treat a Friend to a Half Price Subscription

Introduce a friend to the
wonders of ‘The Review’ and
they’ll get the first year
half price.

Contact our friendly staff on
01462 234279



info@salisburyreview.co.uk

Only available for friends in
the UK due to prohibitive
postage costs

Conservative Classic - 85

Russell Kirk's Concise Guide to Conservatism

JAMES MONKTON

It is hard to overestimate Russell Kirk's importance to modern conservative thought. In some ways, he is America's equivalent of our own Sir Roger Scruton. Indeed, Kirk was an early supporter of *The Salisbury Review*. The author of over thirty books on political theory, cultural criticism, education and the history of ideas, plus numerous articles and reviews, his legacy continues to thrive, not least at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal in Michigan. In 1989, Ronald Reagan bestowed him with the Presidential Citizens Medal.

Lauded by the right and acknowledged by the left as a foundational thinker of American conservatism, Kirk (1918-1994) made his mark in 1953 with his groundbreaking work, *The Conservative Mind*. The result of his doctoral research at St Andrew's University in Scotland – a formative experience in his Anglophilia and love of tradition, this lengthy and erudite tome was distilled into his *Concise Guide to Conservatism* published in 1957. Its original title was *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism* – a riposte to George Bernard Shaw's *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*. The patriarchal and even patronising original title is not reflected in the book's contents; what we have here is exactly as the revised title suggests. *The Concise Guide to Conservatism* is a much more accessible version of his weighty 1953 tome.

This in no way diminishes its impact or value; on the contrary, its broadened approach is essential in making this a classic. It is not a work designed for other intellectuals, but for a thinking populace to understand the essence of Kirk's philosophy of conservatism in lucid prose. Kirk had the gift of pitching his work appropriately; in the *Concise Guide to Conservatism*, he impressively widens the appeal of his thought without any loss of erudition. Indeed, a great joy of this work is that it is replete with apposite and timeless quotes from conservative thinkers through the ages.

The very first chapter can be, as for this reader, a startling, revelatory and affirmative experience. Here, Kirk expounds his ten principles of conservatism covering moral laws, high civilisation, justice, property, power, community, nations, education,

human character and change. All these remain relevant some seven decades on, but such pertinent continuity is what conservatism is all about. Kirk notes how conservatives distrust what Burke called 'abstractions' – that is, 'political dogmas divorced from practical experiences and particular circumstances'. He recognises his principles may contradict that, but he presents them rather as 'certain abiding truths which govern the conduct of human society'. In other words, he bases his thoughts on observations of human nature.

In an important chapter on conscience, Kirk demolishes the leftist caricature of conservatives as selfish, capitalist apologists, arguing instead for the opposite. Indeed, the left-wing is obsessed by property, as it is propounded as the be-all and end-all of its thought. Opposed like all sound conservatives to a rose-tinted view of human nature, Kirk argues 'political persuasion cannot of itself produce private virtue' whether it be left or right: we are all human and we all have human failings. There is no such thing as 'state conscience', only personal conscience, whose sole purpose it to guide us to 'deal justly with our fellow men and women'. Conservatism entails loyalty to people and not 'abstract ideological attachment to impersonal establishments and theoretic dogma' – just one of the book's many brilliant summations.

On individuality, Kirk was concerned to distance sterile, introspective elitism from healthy, everyday lives: the majority of 'men and women who do not have the ability or the wish to accomplish remarkable things, ought to be protected in their right to proceed in the placid round of the duties and enjoyments, unoppressed' by the elites. How true of our world today, where progressives unceasingly attempt to curtail our freedoms by the imposition of enforced ameliorations (as they see it), whether we like it or not. Like Kirk, we must forever warn against the evils of perfectibilism.

Kirk says that he is writing for the future, often decades ahead; his prescience is remarkable. Alas, his worst fears have become realised. Even when he expresses 'the conservative believes that government is a contrivance of human wisdom, under Providence' – not something many conservatives would agree with

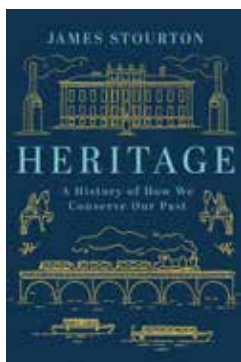
in today's lamentable politics – he also reassures us that 'in times of frowning centralization and consolidation of political power, the thinking conservative turns to the defence of the individual against the state'. We have seen this in the recent populist revolts, driven as much by reactionaries as anyone else and in the response to the dreaded collectivism of Covid policies. The latter illustrates yet another Kirkian insight: 'Men and women, in every age, are tempted to disregard the limitations upon power for the sake of some fancied temporary advantage.' He recognises that the thirst for power is unquenchable in man, surpassing even the lust for riches. The whole chapter on power is another *tour de force*.

Kirk's ideas on religion are perhaps a little dated. It is rare to consider today that 'a conservative is a person who sees human society as an immortal contract between God and man'. However, my caveat is very much a secular, Eurocentric view, whereas Kirk was especially focused on American conservatism, where Christian belief has remained strong. A repeated

theme is that 'the religious conservative knows' that 'there never has been a perfect age or perfect society, and there never will be'; but this wisdom unites most conservatives, whether religious or not. However, he is more relevant than ever in identifying the 'pseudo-Gospel of Progress' as taking on a religious vocation all of its own, what we now would call the new woke theology. And he readily recognises that 'not all religious people are conservatives; and not all conservatives are religious people'.

Kirk was a traditional conservative in the best sense, emphasising cultural and spiritual strands over economic and political ones. He was prophetic in damning the placing of too much hope in politicians and the newly progressive universities – he never hid his disdain for conformist academia. His writing successfully achieved his stated goal of transcending pure politics, as he emphasises traditional society over the evils of collectivism and reality over ideology. Empirical conservatism is the negation of that ideology.

ARTS AND BOOKS



Preserving the Past John Jolliffe

Heritage: A History of How We Conserve Our Past
James Stourton, Head of Zeus, £40.

The term Heritage is bandied about today as never before. But what is our heritage, and in what sense is it 'ours'? Does it mean the beautiful stretches of forests, moors, hills, lakes and coasts that still remain intact? Does it include the many thousands of acres under cultivation, originally by natural means, but which in the desperate need to save the country from starvation in wartime were forced to rely on chemicals, leading to a new, bitter version of a favourite hymn: 'we spray the fields and scatter the poison on the land', and to the destruction of over 200,000 miles of hedgerows between 1947-90, all of them supporting plants,

insects, birds and animals with their own place in the national heritage.

It must surely include the vast architectural inheritance, sacred and secular, originally created for defence purposes, such as the Roman Wall which separated Northumbria from Scotland, and which included castles like Alnwick, Dover, Berkeley, and Caernarvon, afterwards often adapted, more or less, as grand residences? What about the great English houses which have skilfully been developed for tourism, together with what is left of their contents. Are they part of 'our' heritage, or do they remain the absolute property of owners who have been clever or lucky enough to hang on to them? They were created from three main sources: the cunning opportunists who snapped up the estates that came on the market after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and were sometimes able to add to them by profitable marriages, those who made large fortunes from the activities of the East India Company in the eighteenth century, and the even larger fortunes made through the Industrial Revolution, usually based on the dreadful working and living conditions that accompanied the development of coal mines and factories, and were taken for granted for generations.

Those responsible for the preservation, display and wherever possible the adaptation of these treasures

have had a complicated task. Among their triumphs were the Roman Temple of Mithras, buried under the City of London since the Roman occupation; and the raising from the sea floor of the Mary Rose, the pride of Henry VIII's navy, which was seen on television by sixty million viewers worldwide, and created a new popular interest in archaeology. Those intent on preventing destruction include the National Trust, now under heavy fire for abandoning or distorting the stated intentions of its founders in favour of a sociological crusade aimed to increase its membership (now already an unwieldy 5.6 million) still further to meet ever increasing costs. Yet are those intentions set in stone for ever? There is wide disagreement, but its threatened abolition of an invaluable group of expert advisers on the contents of their houses appears to be a disaster.

Stourton sets out the emergence of the National Heritage Memorial Fund from its origins, which were created by Michael Heseltine, who as Secretary of State for the new Department of the Environment was also responsible for establishing, forty years ago, the Merseyside Development Corporation, which led to the salvation of Liverpool. And just as in old Colonial days Trade was said to follow the Flag, so the twenty-first century is full of examples of commercial success following intelligent conservation schemes. Other heroes in urban heritage include J B Morrell, the first Chairman of the York Civic Trust. But it was Bath, which like York had been severely damaged by wartime bombing, that was the trailblazer. Adam Fergusson, with his book *The Sack of Bath* (1973, and later updated) put the cat among the philistine pigeons of the Bath City Council and later, under the chairmanship of Michael Briggs, the Bath Preservation Trust continued to go from strength to strength. There were many other local heroes, not least Billa Harrod, the redoubtable champion of the Norfolk churches, and Marcus Binney who it would be a crime to omit from this roll of honour. The moral of the story is that it is only by ceaseless vigilance and untiring energy, mainly from the large voluntary sector, that philistine disasters can be prevented. Government departments and local authorities will seldom do the job for you, but there are many examples here of what local amenity societies and individual enthusiasts can achieve. On the whole, the story becomes more encouraging as it goes on. In the new climate, the philistines can get away with less, but they will always be there.

A review can only scratch the surface of this vast subject. Stourton has done a remarkable job in focussing clearly, and very readably, on the key issues, the heroes and those who if not villains had serious lapses when dealing with the Heritage. (They include the names of a Prime Minister and a President

of the Royal Academy, and all those who chose to look the other way when faced with difficulties.) Without ever getting bogged down in detail, he often illustrates the main theme with telling examples. The book is beautifully produced, with well-placed colour illustrations that put other publishers to shame. Anyone involved, or even seriously interested, in this glorious drama will be grateful for all the hard work that the author, with his huge supporting cast, has put into it.



Only Russia will decide Martin Dewhurst

Russia: Myths and Realities, Rodric Braithwaite, Profile Books Ltd., London, 2022, £16.99.

The pernicious Putin period of Russia's tragic history is certainly coming close to a terrible end. Expert opinions on what is most likely to follow it differ greatly, from 'more of the same' to 'the break-up of the country', with or without another civil war. It's now beginning to be admitted that what happened in Russia in and after 1991 was widely misunderstood: the Cold War was not over, and Russia, unlike Ukraine, for instance quickly became neo-Soviet, not post-Soviet, with its two main Presidents, Yeltsin and Putin, lacking in contrition for their successful careers as thoroughly dedicated communist functionaries. If we are not to make similar blunders on the next occasion when there is a new leader in the Kremlin, this is the time to read a new, very concise history of Russia, and I chose Braithwaite's heroic attempt to write one partly because of its subtitle and partly because of the author's long-time practical experience in Russia, commitment to all that is wonderful about that country and his amazing mastery of the Russian language.

If one has only some 250 pages on which to trace the history, and therefore the geography as well of the largest country in the world, one has to be very choosy. I'm glad, especially because of Putin's, but, alas, also Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine and most Ukrainians, that the author has allocated as many as 90 pages to the period before Emperor Peter

the Great put a firm end to the Muscovite period of Russian history. Braithwaite doesn't have the space to write in detail about Kievan/Kyivan Rus, but he does tell us a good deal about it, and it is highly relevant for an understanding of the present situation in Ukraine. Those readers who still think that Ukraine always has been, in essence, a part of Muscovy (and then of Russia) will be enlightened and perhaps recall that a recent President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, wrote and published a book entitled 'Ukraine Isn't Russia'.

Are Russia and many or most Russians basically European and Western rather than Eurasian? Should we regard Ukraine and many or most Ukrainians as more basically European and Western than Russia and Russians are? It has been said that if Ukraine joined the European Union, Russians as a whole would then also want to join it. Is that really the case, and could they accept all the conditions of membership? And even if they said 'yes', would they be believed and allowed to become a member? Braithwaite deserves our thanks for finding the space to show how the Ukrainian past differs from the Russian past. He reminds us that the Mongols (rather than the Tatars) really did overwhelm Kiev/Kyiv in 1242 and also 'left many of Russia's main cities in ruins, their populations reduced to a shadow, the surrounding villages and fields ravaged'.

However, large chunks of 'Kievan Rus' were incorporated into Catholic Poland and Lithuania, involving what some people call cooperation (good) and others call collaboration (bad). Perhaps the greatest Russian collaborator before Stalin was Alexander (Nevsky) the Great (1221-1263), who defeated the Teutonic Knights and presumably felt that the Mongols were the 'lesser evil'. In the course of time this led, one might claim, to Ivan III (also officially known as 'the Great') and to Ivan IV, the Terrible, yet another official Great. Were they more 'typical' of the 'real' Russia than Peter the Great and Catherine the Great?

Braithwaite writes that 'Russian autocracy was more absolute, and lasted longer, than similar regimes further west. Explanations vary, but the key may lie not with the Mongols but with geography, poverty and the ruthless ambitions of the dynasty that ruled Moscow.' Putting his case rather differently, the author later suggests that the 'future nature of the Russian state was shaped not by the Mongols but by [...] economic events, by the state's Orthodox religion, by its geography and by the narrow-minded authoritarianism of the rulers of Moscow'

Much later, referring mainly to the nineteenth

century, Braithwaite recognises that even Russian 'Westernisers', 'who rejected much of the Russian past, questioned their Orthodox religion and toyed with ideas of Catholicism and Protestantism, believed in their hearts that the Western bourgeois world was heretical, worldly, cold-bloodedly formalistic, aggressive and corrupt.' And later still, the author claims quite correctly, in my opinion, that after 1991, 'expensive Western consultants continued to flood in [to Moscow – md] to give the Russians condescending advice. They had little understanding of the country, its history or the emotions that drove its people. They believed that political and economic solutions which they thought, not always correctly worked in their own countries would function equally well in Russia'

Most of the blame for the present state of Russia does indeed go back to the 1990s, before Putin was, in effect, appointed as the next President. The author's concise comments on the Yeltsin years and what came after them are worth quoting. 'Three problems dominated Russian politics for the next three decades: the economy, the relationship with the West and the future shape and identity of Russia itself. Solutions to all three were ultimately undermined by Yeltsin's failure to construct the political institutions that Russia needed'). Already in 1992 Yeltsin 'sacked the reforming head of the KGB installed by Gorbachev, and increasingly used the intelligence agencies for his own political purposes.' However, I would put it the other way round: the intelligence agencies used Yeltsin for their political purposes. And in 1999-2000 they and Yeltsin put Putin into the presidency. The result is that contemporary history is dominated by the current war between Russia and Ukraine.

Braithwaite comes to two rather different conclusions. The last chapter ends with the assertion that Putin 'may have believed that a newly assertive Russia could resume its old role as the second superpower. But that place was no longer available. It had been taken by China, with ten times Russia's population, ten times its national wealth, three times its expenditure on defence and a far more innovative economy.' And (or But?) the Epilogue ('Rewriting History') concludes with these words: 'One thing only was sure. Russia's future would be shaped by the Russian people themselves, regardless of the hopes, fears and wishful thinking of foreigners'. Whether this implies that Russia is likely to become less or even more dangerous in the future, the author of this stimulating account leaves it for its readers to decide.



The Iron Law of Oligarchy

James
Monkton

The Populist Delusion, Neema Parvini, Imperium Press, 2022, £20.99.

Every now and then a book comes along that perfectly articulates one's semi-formed thoughts and intuitions in an intellectual tour de force. Neema Parvini's *The Populist Delusion* is such a book. This volume explains in philosophical and theoretic terms why things are as they are – frustrating and hopeless. Parvini's analysis of important political philosophers provides a convincing rationale for the lack of accountability and efficacy in our governmental systems.

Parvini's main thesis contends that 'the people' never have been and never will be 'sovereign'. We can readily acknowledge that 'an organised minority always rules over the majority', but Parvini skilfully show how this is the only game in town and that invoking democratic representation is meaningless. Indeed, as a recent study in the US shows, public opinion has practically zero-input on a country's legislation. No matter who or what we vote for, we always end up with the same government, just one sporting a different coloured rosette. Even when a populist like Trump gets into power, his ability to manoeuvre is largely hamstrung by the establishment elites in America, who are cut from the same cloth as their counterparts all across the western world. Trump took power, but was unable to wield it.

The key to the elites' success – apart from the obvious nexus of money, connections and privilege – is, says Parvini, organisation. Just as neither the Nazis nor Bolsheviks were popular uprisings, so Black Lives matter, LGBT rights, Extinction Rebellion, trans movements, pro-immigration groups and all the rest do not reflect majority opinion; they nevertheless see their wishes enacted in legislation and practice because of their clever structures and concerted organisation. Real populism, reflecting majority opinion, fails because it does not do this: outbursts of rage and frustration are no substitutes for sustained organisation. Trotskyite

infiltration and entryism show how it can be done.

Parvini addresses this state of affairs through an analysis of elite theory and the works of leading political thinkers, many of whom have unsurprisingly fallen from grace, not least because they analysed the world as it is, and not as it ought to be. Rather lazily and conveniently, opponents of their views have played up some of these thinkers' alleged or real associations with fascism; Parvini separates the man from the intellect to concentrate on their thoughts and writings. There is no cancellation of Wagner here. These thinkers span the twentieth century: Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Michels, Bertrand de Jouvenal, James Burnham, Samuel T Francis and Paul Gottfried.

Three of the political philosophers comprise the Italian elite school, establishing a clear arc of thought. Gaetano Mosca shows how 'representative democracy is an elected oligarchy'; elected officials are not the mouthpieces of the majority of their electors. Readers will have observed this with the appalling machinations of parliament after the Brexit referendum, with MPs disingenuously peddling the representative line over the delegate one. (I say disingenuously as most were not interested in democracy in any form.) Mosca argues that the voters do not get the official elected, but rather his or her friends in the party organisation and wealthy elitist strata do – the ones with the resources to control the media, for example.

Vilfredo Pareto takes Mosca further, but imposes limits on the role of economics. Instead, instincts dominate over reason. Sentiments form the driving force behind ideologies, theologies and various doctrines. As Parvini explains it: 'Historical change has no direction or purpose [...] it simply convulses in response to deeply felt "non-logical" human needs.' The need to believe overcomes all. Cleverly, Pareto recognises that human beings have 'an inclination towards rationality, not the fact of being rational'. The evil genius of the elites is to capitalise on this and to manufacture among the masses an identification of interests that align with their own. Today we see that with all the woke initiatives and green extremism. Many of the masses are co-opted as enthusiastic supporters of the regime, more often than not as part of the government machine.

These elites artificially manufacture the appearance of public consent for their projects through the promotion of an army of bureaucrats in the managerial class, whose jobs – and hence own vested financial interests – merge with the overlords. Civil servants, bureaucrats, educationalists, quango and charity employees all contribute to the managerial class that supports its jobs and the ruling elites: the bureaucratic state is then dominant. This phenomenon is discussed

in the chapter on James Burnham, author of the hugely influential *The Managerial Revolution* (1941). These new bureaucrats are the elites' willing enablers, 'the managerial regime [that] seeks to transform the people in the service' of the ruling entities.

Robert Michels, the third of the trio and, for my money, long the most important, gets to the nub of elitist self-interest with his 'Iron Law of Oligarchy': all organisations, no matter how altruistic in their origins, always end up serving their own interests before those of others, including those for whom it was established to help. Think of the BBC, Stonewall adopting trans-extremism, churches and endless quangos. For Michels, representative democracy is a fiction: the interest of the organisation trumps all. The 1930s communist Antonio Gramsci understood this, with his advocacy of the 'long march through the institutions'. Hence the phenomenon of failed politicians being endlessly recycled for their loyalty to these institutions, rather than any contribution to society, with luxury-laden sinecures awarded to the likes of Nick Clegg and Neil Kinnock (and even his missus), all failing upwards.

For Parvini, Carl Schmitt 'is arguably the most important political and legal theorist of the Twentieth Century', with his symbiotic bifurcation of friends and enemies. For Schmitt, 'the exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything'. Indeed: who would have thought soi-disant liberal democracies would have incarcerated their entire populations under the 'necessity' of a dubious emergency during the Covid lockdowns? The US has not relinquished emergency laws – which give the state unprecedented powers – from decades ago. What emergency legal restrictions await with the Net Zero agenda? As Schmitt observed: 'All law is situational law'.

According to Parvini, if the current, toxic lot are to be eventually overturned, they will be replaced by counter-elites who had been thrown under the wheels of the woke juggernaut. Only they have the influence to organise – the single most crucial element in the fightback, argues Parvini convincingly – and revolt successfully against the current ruling elites. So we would still be governed by the ruling classes, just next time (hopefully) with some more sensible and realistic ideas for a while. But the circulation of elites will continue.

New Australian conservative publishers Imperium Press are to be congratulated on bringing Parvini's hugely important work into the public realm. There is barely a page in this superb book which does not have something significant to say.



Laying an Axe to Britain's Forests

Celia Haddon

The Lost Rainforests of Britain, Guy Shrubsole, William Collins, hdback, £15.00

The *Save the Rainforests* movement 40 years ago became so fashionable that it spawned advertisements for cheeseburgers with tropical imaginary, restaurants in the USA called Rainforest Cafés, and lots of T-shirts with parrots and monkeys on them. While blaming the less developed countries for their destruction of tropical rainforest, the developed countries continued to destroy what was left of their own woodland.

The Lost Rainforests of Britain makes the case for the existence of temperate rainforest here in our own country. There is no doubt we have the rain, but did we ever have rainforests and, if we did, are there any left? Nowadays we have few English forests -none of them rainforests, just woods, scattered remnants on the Western side of the UK. So small are these residues of the post Ice Age forests that most of us cannot even conceive that our green and pleasant land was once wet thickly wooded forest. Now we try to preserve grazing grassland, or upland peat moorlands thinking that these are the remains of the original countryside.

Our modern woods and windbreaks are mainly those planted by sporting landowners as a retreat for pheasants for shooting or foxes for hunting. The give-away signs of this are the straight lines of trees however mature they are. Even more modern are the woodlands of conifers created by farmers for tax breaks or – a slight improvement – the field edges of mixed tree saplings planted for the same reason in the last few years.

Atlantic rainforests are very wet and very old. Old enough to create a particular ecosystem. Just as tropical rainforests have flowering orchids growing from the trees, temperate rainforests have mosses both underfoot and growing on trunks and boughs, fungi growing out of fallen branches and exuberant lichen on the living boughs. In our rainforest there are plants as exotic as the tropical rainforest orchids, only these are not flowers but string-of-sausage lichens swinging from a bough or the bright red beefsteak fungus growing

on a trunk. Not really plants which could sell T-shirts!

Neolithic farmers started the forest destruction, later farmers carried it on, and improving landlords replaced old woodland with better more productive woodland. Our own Ministry of Agriculture, now DEFRA, did what it has always done best – destroyed nature with improvement grants to grub up historic boundary hedges and grants to plough up moorland into poor grassland. Scrub-clearing grants financed rows of non-native conifers like Sitka spruce, in the place of old woodlands. Indeed, my late father, always expert in harvesting Min of Ag grants, planted one such eyesore on a scrubby moorland Exmoor hillside.

The Forestry Commission, in its turn, was enthusiastic about old woodland eradication. Ancient woods with native species of trees were cut down in favour of conifers that could be harvested faster. Landowners, sometimes with good intentions, followed their example. A rich ecosystem of leaf moulds, lichens, fungi and woodland plants was replaced by the dark and barren pine needle forest floors.

Humankind has not been kind to forest trees. Romans introduced the rabbits which eat tree seedlings. Medieval hunters killed the wolves which kept the deer population under control. Georgian plant enthusiasts brought back rhododendrons, the scourge of our native woodlands. And Victorians not only introduced foreign conifers, foreign deer, and grey squirrels, but also plundered the woodland for native ferns, which they dug up and put in the parlour to die slowly in glass cases.

The Lost Rainforests of Britain records this destruction by taking us on the author's own personal journey of discovery. Guy Shrubsole (aptly named) uses this format to make this book more accessible to the ordinary reader, though there are notes at the end to show that he has done his research. His interest started when he discovered Wistman's wood on Dartmoor, an extraordinary tangle of moss covered boulders with trees distorted by the wind and rain into gnarled shapes quite unlike any conventional planted woodland. It's there that his eyes were opened to the amazing lichens that festoon the shrunken trees. Lichens are epiphytes, plants that like tropical orchids, grow on other plants.

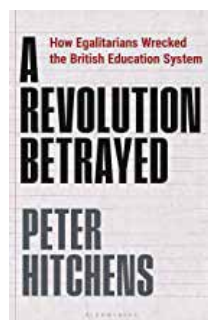
Wistman's wood is associated with *The Hound of the Baskerville* story written by Conan Doyle, who was taken round Dartmoor by a coachman, Harry Baskerville, whose name he borrowed for the tale. This small wood has survived because of its boulders. They are so thickly clustered that even the most agile of Dartmoor sheep could not get into the centre of the wood without breaking a leg. And this means the sheep could not nibble and destroy the oak and rowan saplings. Wistman's Wood successfully renews itself

using its own seed, rather than relying on the bought-in saplings planted by farmers.

Sheep are part of the reason why we have so few forests. Your sheep, that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, 'as I hear say, be.. great devourers,' wrote Thomas More in the sixteenth century. He was complaining that landowners were giving over farmland to sheep, destroying the livelihood of peasants and small farmers. Today's ecologists, like More, complain that sheep eat up and destroy the natural ecology of the British Isles. While cattle and pigs root up the woodland floor, sheep neatly nibble it right down to grassland. They are like suburban lawn mowers, giving tree seedlings no chance to grow up tall or, indeed, to grow at all.

Yet most of us nature lovers prize the sheep-nibbled landscape of Wordsworth's Lake district, believing that this is the nature destroyed by factory farming. We do not realise that this natural landscape is also man-made, one that destroyed the natural tree cover, the original Atlantic rainforests. Planting trees now is going to do little or nothing to restore that forest – the more so since most of the trees probably won't even be native species.

So what are we doing about it? Plant a Tree in 2023 boasts of 55 million trees being funded as part of DEFRA's England Tree Strategy. This does not reassure me. DEFRA usually manages to do too little too late. *The Lost Rainforests of Britain* is trying to save the pitiful remnants of our forest and start a movement as popular as *Save the Rainforest* was a generation ago. You can keep up with its efforts at www.lostrainforestsobritain.org. Even if Guy Shrubsole fails, maybe his enjoyable book will inspire me and others to see lichen, moss and fungi with new eyes. They are not orchids but they are just as remarkable.



The Burning of the Grammars Jane Kelly

A Revolution Betrayed. How Egalitarianism Wrecked the British Education System. Peter Hitchens, Bloomsbury £20.

It's no accident that 'Dumb Britain' is one of the most popular features in *Private Eye*. Rather masochistically, readers enjoy laughing at the Bachelor daft and often

astonishingly ignorant answers given in TV quizzes, including BBC ‘Mastermind’, which long ago had its erudition removed. We all know that we now live in a country of ignoramuses, where maths is badly taught and modern language A levels hardly exist, scoring us fifteenth on the international school league table. In this pessimistic book, Peter Hitchens knows who is to blame: successive governments which allowed the Grammar schools to go. ‘But in this country, where even nominal Conservatives have found it convenient or easy – or just cheaper’, he writes despairingly, ‘to embrace egalitarian dogmas.’ Plunging straight into the ‘culture wars’, he insists that those ideas were not about education but intended to, ‘Generate a less conservative form of education.’ Coinciding with post-modernism and ‘child-centred’ educational ideas, they led to what he terms a, ‘Revolution in learning, the widespread dismantling of the former required knowledge of literature and history, and the dethroning of the old-fashioned elitism of the universities.’

We have been over this ground before, but this book tries to look at the self-righteous voices on the left and the frustrated angry right going back to the original DES circular, ‘10/65’, which began the abolition of most selective education established by the Butler Education Act in 1944. Surprisingly, considering the intensity of this argument, he points out that grammar schools were only there for just over twenty years, until the mid-1980s, not as the book jacket mysteriously says, established in, ‘1984 (for) little more than 20 years’, an indication perhaps on the way editing standards have slipped along with everything else. What’s new is Hitchens’s focus on the long lost secondary modern schools. Many readers will be shocked by the revelation that the Attlee Government, ‘Deliberately discouraged them from putting their pupils through public examinations.’ A policy which, ‘robbed many schools’ purpose and status and helped to make them unpopular.’ Hitchens provides a piece of damning evidence about what followed: By 1960 39.4 percent of pupils who had failed the 11 plus were taking public exams. A report in 1983 for the National Council for Educational Standards, ‘Found that pupils at grammar and modern schools got more GCE O-level results than pupils at comprehensives.’

He also ably abolishes the idea that grammar schools were the preserve of nice middle-class people in leafy suburbs. The controversy then and now, is about social mobility. ‘The Gurney-Dixon Report of 1954 records that 64.6 per cent of grammar school pupils come from working-class backgrounds’, he writes, ‘though these are predominantly from the skilled working class 43.7 per cent.’ How are the ‘unskilled working class’, now termed the ‘underclass’ doing now in comprehensives?

We know the answer to that, with white working-class boys stuck at the bottom. He doesn’t mention the impact of mass immigration on urban schools. It’s disappointing that he doesn’t try to explain the great British failure in those years to increase vocational and technical education, or flexibility between schools, so bright children could have transferred to more academic schools.

His appendix is perhaps the most lively read, full of famous people who benefited from grammar schools; the Attenborough brothers, at Leicester’s Wyggeston Grammar, for Sir David a launch pad for his Cambridge scholarship where he read natural sciences. He commented that the school had brought him into close contact with working class boys for the first time. Lord Melvyn Bragg, Sir Michael Caine, Ben Elton, David Hockney, Sir Ian McKellen, and it’s fun to look up schools you know. My local, Wolverhampton Grammar, 1512-1978, educated John Abernethy, who founded the school of medicine at St Bart’s Hospital and invented the famous biscuit. Sir William Congreve, inventor of the rocket, Sir William Adams, ambassador to Egypt in the 1980s, Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England. Many famous women are included; Oxford graduate Edwina Curry came from a Jewish working-class home, Diane Abbott and Sheila Hancock went to grammars, but as hard lefties no doubt wanted to pull up the drawbridge behind them. Sadly, the only university educated prostitute I ever met went to Mary Dachelor, Camberwell, which closed in 1981, when forced to choose between charging fees or becoming a comprehensive.

Hitchens ends by admitting that to go back to grammars now would be, ‘dogmatic folly’. Sensibly, he says the, ‘Good cause is utterly lost.’ It seems unsatisfying to end a book on that fatalistic note. I would have liked to hear if he has any ideas about how we can make Britain a little less ‘dumb’ in the future.



Seven thinkers of the Right

Anthony Daniels

The Call of the Tribe: Essays, Mario Vargas Llosa, Faber and Faber, £18.99.

I happened to be in Peru when the author of this book made his bid for the presidency. He was acting, I think, from purely patriotic motives and not from personal ambition. What I had seen in Ayacucho persuaded

me that unless something were done very soon, Peru would be the next Cambodia, so vicious was the then undefeated Maoist guerrilla movement, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Light).

Vargas Llosa offered a clear, economically liberal alternative to the disastrous, and very corrupt, dirigisme of the incumbent, Alan García, but he lost the election to an unknown professor of Japanese descent, Alberto Fujimori. One peasant, when asked why he had voted for Fujimori, replied, 'Because I don't know anything about him', thus encapsulating what most of us now feel about our respective political classes. It was probably as well for Vargas Llosa that he lost the election, for most political careers end in repudiation and recrimination, and people would have started to say that he was not only a bad politician, but a bad writer as well. His political gesture was a noble one, but the world of letters has reason to be grateful that it failed.

In this book of seven essays and an introduction, Vargas Llosa provides potted biographical and expository accounts of the liberal thinkers who have most influenced him, and who did most to convert him from the totalitarian leftism that was almost the default position of Latin American intellectuals, ferociously analysed in a book by his son, Álvaro, in his book, *A Guide to the Perfect Latin American Idiot*. Vargas Llosa writes clear expository prose and has read deeply in the work of his chosen subjects, who are Adam Smith, Ortega y Gasset, Friedrich von Hayek, Karl Popper, Raymond Aron, Isaiah Berlin, and Jean-François Revel. I doubt whether many novelists would have the intellectual equipment, or indeed the intellectual conscientiousness to equal his performance.

However, there is a certain datedness to his choice reflecting the era in which he rejected his own leftism: because of the passage of time, the colossi of one era almost inevitably become the near-unknowns of the next. These essays still have much to say to contemporaries; but I wonder how many educated young people today would take much interest in Berlin, Aron, Revel, et al? The Cold War, so important to these thinkers, now seems ancient history to most young people, even, I suspect, those in Eastern Europe.

Indeed, so distant does it now seem that some of the illusions that fed Marxism are back in vogue, no doubt encouraged in their return by manifold failures of the present dispensation, mistakenly, and I would say mendaciously, called neo-liberal, to cast aspersions on liberal thought of any description. If I had to affix a word from the past to the economic dispensation taken from the past – I should call it fascist, with the important difference that political repression is almost non-existent, certainly by comparison with what it was under real fascism. Corporatist would be the best word to

describe the current state of affairs.

The biographical details that Vargas Llosa provides of his subjects are chosen to illuminate the nature and sometimes the experiential origins of their thought. He is no hagiographer: he criticises without rancour and certainly without that vulgar and commonplace desire, now widespread, to find the feet of clay of every great man. Seek and ye shall find: but what good will the discovery do you, except to make you feel a little less small by comparison?

There are occasional contradictions in his depictions of his heroes (for such they are). Of Karl Popper, he writes:

... this kind-hearted, straightforward, and sensitive man (page 129)

... his intolerance, lack of reciprocity with people who had helped him (page 131)

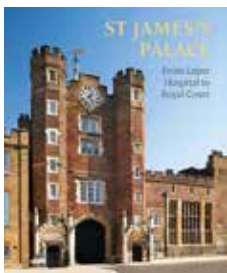
It is easier to extol the virtues of open mindedness than to practice them: Peter Bauer, a professorial contemporary of Popper's at the LSE, told me that his magnum opus was referred to there as the Open Society by one of its enemies.

There is another more serious mistake in the chapter on Isaiah Berlin, though it may be the translator's rather than that of the author. Berlin did not make the existence of contradictory truths one of the cornerstones of his philosophy, but the existence of contradictory desiderata, which is quite different. This is important, because if liberty and equality are both desirable but in contradiction, no perfect resolution is possible and some portion of one or the other must be given up. This makes perfection impossible; all political settlements must be unstable, perpetually open to challenge in the name of one or other value. Equality is, of course, a particularly strong club with which to beat any other desideratum.

Vargas Llosa's heart is generally in the right place. He is reflective, tolerant and lucid. He has no patience with those who mistake obscurity for profundity, but also more unusually, but also correctly, with those who think in philistine fashion that the only function of language is to communicate truths in words of one syllable. He sometimes shies away from hard dilemmas: he is against economic planning, but does not tell us how nuclear power stations are to be constructed and used without it. We don't need a national plan for the production and distribution of cakes; such a plan would be disastrous for those who like cakes, but there is a difference between cakes and railway systems or power stations.

Not all his judgments are sound. He seems to think that the European Union is a liberal democratic

project when it is dedicated to the centralisation and elimination of difference that he otherwise favours. Still, we can all disagree; and if, because of his age (he recently turned 80), he gives the impression of fighting old battles, which in reality have not been definitively won, and of disregarding new ideological threats to liberty such as apocalyptic ecologism, nevertheless he has written an inspiring guide to those philosophers who resisted and opposed the siren song of twentieth century totalitarianism, and influenced so considerable a man as Vargas Llosa.



From Leprosarium to Royal Palace

Virginia Bainbridge

St James's Palace, Simon Thurley, Rufus Bird and Michael Turner (Royal Collection Trust / Yale University Press, 2002), £60.

The publication of this book is timely because St James's Palace played a significant role in events following the death of Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September 2022. The Palace has been the place where all new monarchs are proclaimed head of state since 1830. King Charles III was duly proclaimed, and swore his oath to uphold parliamentary democracy to the Accession Council gathered there two days later. Before the Norman Conquest, a royal palace already stood on an island in the marshy estuary of the River Thames. There King Edward the Confessor built the famous abbey of Westminster, which gave its name to this royal enclave lying a mile or so west of the mercantile port and city of London. The Hospital of St James was built for lepers in the countryside, to prevent them from spreading their disease to the urban population. In the Middle Ages the machinery of government settled permanently around the palace of Westminster and suburbs grew up to support royal officials. By Tudor times leprosy was no longer common and St James's, like other leper hospitals, was a prime site awaiting re-development. It was snapped up by Henry VIII, whose ancestors endowed it, together with surrounding farmland to provide privacy and parks. So began the long history of St James's Palace as housing for the royal nursery, the

royal library and collections, and state rooms for the business of government and diplomacy.

This lavishly illustrated volume is well researched and written by Simon Thurley, the expert on English royal palaces, and his co-authors Rufus Bird and Michael Turner. Designed to appeal to a general audience, it is part of a broader venture to create greater public access to the history of the royal palaces. The book is an important architectural guide to St James's enhanced by maps, plans and historic images. While describing changes to the state rooms over the centuries, it also contributes to the history of domestic architecture and design in the living quarters. The architectural history is interwoven with details of the public and private lives of its inhabitants, our monarchs and their families, within the broader context of national history.

St James's Palace has been scheduled for sale or demolition and grand rebuilding several times. Each time the cost or a quirk of fate has thwarted the plans. It was built by Henry VIII as overflow accommodation for the palace of Whitehall. It retains Tudor proportions because refurbishment has only taken place piecemeal over the centuries. Following the three childless reigns of Henry VIII's children, it became home to the expanding nurseries of James I and Queen Anne of Denmark, and Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria of France. It also housed the royal library and collections, partly as a teaching resource for the royal children. Parliament surveyed the contents during the Commonwealth, and although the royal collections were sold, the library remained. Plans to redevelop the palace were shelved in 1698 by the fire which gutted large parts of Whitehall Palace. Thereafter St James's became the seat of British constitutional monarchy. It was favoured by the German George I and his Hanoverian dynasty because it emphasised their descent from Henry VIII. Although George III purchased fashionable Buckingham House in 1761, it was a century before rooms large enough for state occasions were built and it evolved into Buckingham Palace. Royal levees, drawing rooms and diplomatic events continued to take place at St James's Palace, which also provided accommodation for George III's adult sons. They remodelled parts of the building for their own use. Clarence House is the most notable, built by renowned architect John Nash for the Duke of Clarence and his mistress Mrs Jordan the actress. In 1830, Clarence was proclaimed King William IV here.

The two chapels within St James's Palace have their own architectural significance. The first, the Chapel Royal, was originally built by Henry VIII and regularly refitted over the centuries. It remains the headquarters of the Crown's religious household and a centre of

excellence for church music. Before royal weddings became public events in the later twentieth century, many of them took place here. The Chapel Royal witnessed the infamous drunken wedding of the future George IV to Princess Caroline of Brunswick in 1795, and the far more sedate marriage of Queen Victoria to Prince Albert in 1840. The chapel is often the venue for royal christenings, most recently for the three children of Prince William and Princess Catherine of Wales. The history of the second chapel, the Queen's Chapel, reflects the role of religion as a powerful and often divisive political force. It also shows the cosmopolitan nature of court circles, as new members of the royal family brought different nationalities in their retinues. James I negotiated a marriage with a Roman Catholic wife for his son Charles as part of his self-proclaimed role as European peace-broker. The Queen's Chapel, designed by Inigo Jones architect of the Royal Banqueting House at Whitehall Palace, was presented to Henrietta Maria for private Roman Catholic worship. It became a target of anti-Catholic and anti-monarchist violence in the years before the Civil War, and the Glorious Revolution of 1689, which deposed James II in favour of his Protestant daughter Queen Mary and her Dutch husband King William. Thereafter the Chapel became known as the French and Dutch Chapel from Protestant congregations of courtiers and other worshippers. From 1781 a German congregation worshipped at the renamed German Chapel. Danish Lutheran services were also held following the future Edward VII's marriage to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. This architectural gem was narrowly saved from a road-widening scheme in 1856. The First World War made the name of the German Chapel politically controversial, so the building became once again the Queen's Chapel.

Although constitutional monarchy affects a timeless quality, successive refurbishments of St James's Palace reflected contemporary styles. Photographs from the last two centuries record changes made by major designers and their royal clients, from the elaborate Victorian Italianate interiors of John Crace, to the comparative simplicity of William Morris's company Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co, and the mid-century modern style chosen by the future Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip for Clarence House, their first marital home. St James's Palace remains a significant building in the life of the nation. Working members of the royal family occupy private apartments and the public areas contain military and administrative offices. Here visiting ambassadors present their credentials before proceeding to its famous successor, Buckingham Palace.



Red Wall to Blue Rinse Brian Eassty

Broken Heartlands, Sebastian Payne, Pan PB, £9.99, 2020.

Sebastian Payne's analysis of current political trends has been praised across the political spectrum. It comes with laudatory quotes from Paul Mason and Andrew Neil marking a rare occasion when those two gentlemen have agreed on anything. But we are living in an era of extreme political volatility when the 'events dear boy' of which Macmillan warned us can wrong foot even a writer of Payne's perception. At the end of his hardback edition, the Conservatives had just pulled off the rare feat for a government in power of winning the by-election at Hartlepool and, if anyone looked in danger of being deposed, it was Sir Keir Starmer. In revising the text for paperback publication, Payne has added a chapter on the threat to Tory seats in the South posed by the resurgent Liberal Democrats. He must have been relieved to have caught two of their by-election victories and party-gate. But a delay of a few more weeks would have allowed him to cover the Pincher affair and Boris' defenestration. Perhaps for his book's continued relevance, he would have seen Labour retake Wakefield in another by-election, a constituency he describes as one of the more comfortable 'red wall' seats'.

Wakefield is one of ten constituencies, which have recently voted Conservative for the first time, Payne's journey has been compared to that of George Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier. He mentions J B Priestley's English Journey early in the book and wants his political insights to emerge from that kind of travelogue but never immerses himself in the lives of ordinary voters as much as the Orwell comparison would suggest. However, his journey takes place while the country was going in and out of Covid lockdowns. Apart from a pair of electors on a garden wall he only speaks to community leaders,

employers, MPs past and present and, at great length, to key political figures from every government since 1979. Despite his roots being in the still Labour Red wall seat of Gateshead, this Whitehall Editor of the Financial Times seems more at home with Westminster interviewees.

Payne shows us that not everywhere in the Red wall is a wasteland of post-industrial blight. Sedgefield, is a very pleasant market town with many thriving boutique shops. When he was its MP, Tony Blair would take the television cameras to the grittier environs of Trimdon for election night victory speeches yet, when he invited George W Bush to the constituency, it was to Sedgefield itself. Many of the other seats have leafier parts and one aspect of Payne's nuanced analysis is that these areas may have turned blue because of better private housing tempting commuters from nearby cities who would prefer the Conservatives. Payne finds that this long-term demographic shift exists in some of the communities in North East Derbyshire, an early Red Wall in 2017.

Not all the areas visited are unemployment black spots. Some of them have successful industries like British Volts about to open a massive factory in Blyth Valley, producing batteries for electric cars. Grimsby supplies many workers to service offshore wind farms. Like oil rig workers, they are flown out to wind farms in helicopters and stay in what is described as posh student accommodation for two weeks. Although there is much justified anger in the town at how badly Brexit has turned out for the fishing industry, the new opportunities are surely preferable. Going out to sea was an occupation with a worse mortality rate than mining. Though few fish are caught in Grimsby these days there is still a vast fish processing industry which provides secure and safer employment.

Payne finds that there is still a nostalgia for the old industries – coal and steel – which were no longer viable in the Thatcher years. He finds that what is missing is the close-knit community in which everyone knew everyone else, with regular work within walking distance, now only found in Coronation Street. People were proud of certain industries: in Consett, he is told that 'you could go all around the world and see things made out of Consett steel'. When steel shut down, the biggest employer in Consett for a while was Phineas Fogg Crisps, now gone and unlamented; many former steelworkers found it an emasculating product.

The warehouse sector dominates now: Amazon is

a huge employer in Doncaster, Boohoo in Burnley but people complain that these companies have no interest in the communities that host them. Antony Higginbotham, Burnley's MP, tells Payne how disappointed his voters are with Boohoo. 'Normally if you've got a company that size, they're part of the community, they do things they sponsor events Boohoo has never done that. It is just this giant grey box that employs thousands of people who read about it in the news'. The online retail firms are well placed to bring the new generation of Port Sunlights and Bournevilles to Britain and it is a wasted opportunity for all who would wish to make the case for capitalism.

Meanwhile online retail continues to blight the high street, and many of the constituencies have been hollowed out. Blyth is particularly hard hit with many empty shops. 'I used to come here for shopping,' a local historian tells Payne. 'Now the only reason I come is to get the dog's hair trimmed.'

Will the culture wars continue to lose votes with Corbyn and Brexit gone? They were the main reasons Red Wall seats switched to the Tories, but the government could still improve the infrastructure and regenerate the high street. This would be their best hope for 2024. Payne was sceptical about the government's ability to deliver the much-trumpeted policy of levelling up and was amazed that there was no minister for it until recently.

Payne is keen to emphasise the patriotism of northern working-class voters. He finds some voters in Doncaster who are furious with Starmer for 'taking the knee' and puts this to Starmer who changes the subject – he has his coalition to maintain.

The Tories have a coalition too. Payne visits Dominic Raab's constituency in Surrey, a key Liberal Democrat target with the highest tax take in the country, where people cannot get a GP appointment or a response to a burglary. In 'blue wall' seats, voters don't want levelling up in Doncaster to be at their expense.

Perhaps at the next election the question will be the same as always: 'Have you become better or worse off under this government?' Payne does not say much about 'the so called' cost of living crisis. Prophetically the woman with the penchant for Thatcher style photo opportunities is not mentioned in the index.

Making Modernism, the Royal Academy

JANE KELLY

I was at first reluctant to see this show because although German Expressionism is one of my favourite periods of art, this was going to be all women. After seeing recent shows at the Tate Galleries, including poor old Hogarth, vilified for his ‘racist’ furniture, I expected to see pure woke tokenism with hectoring notices telling me about the evils of misogynist white society and capitalism. I was pleasantly surprised. The Royal Academy seems to have cleverly side stepped almost all political rhetoric currently dominating the art world, and presents a warm and sympathetic show case for some exceptional female talent.

‘Making Modernism’ the girls, women artists working in early 20th century Germany, is rich with profound images and interesting information. Many people won’t know these artists; Paula Modersohn-Becker, Gabriele Mûnger, Marianne Werefkin, Irma Bossi, Jacoba van Heemskerck and Otilie Reylaender, and they do not all have the same level of talent. Perhaps only the great Kathe Kollwitz, who gave us stark images of women and children affected by the First World War, is internationally well known. Kollwitz is sadly one of the most depressing artists who ever lived, some of her images of dead children and grieving parents are almost unbearably sad, but the other women in the show provided a great deal of brightness and surprising wit.

Paula Becker went in for, ‘Visual Soliloquy’ self-portraits, making intense work but not indulgent or self-pitying. Her painting, ‘I Am Me’, shows her looking slightly upwards, as if sniffing fresh air. The air was of course ‘Modernism’ which had peculiar and particularly spectacular results in Germany. But these seven women artists, all middle-class, perhaps the equivalent of a German Bloomsbury Group, are not radical or influential enough for some critics. In an age without nuance, the Guardian was scathing about their work, questioning whether the women really ‘made’ anything happen. ‘Mûnter makes a poor feminist’, their critic opined, because she ‘Seems enthralled by the male artists alongside whom she worked.’ But who wouldn’t be ‘enthralled’ as they included Kandinsky and Paul Klee. I found it thrilling to see how she

painted them in plain rooms, providing an image of their lives long before they became famous. But that probably shows my bourgeois liking for narrative, and the Guardian complains that those paintings are, ‘Anything but revolutionary: Klee sits stiffly in an interior whose intense hues and semi-abstract shapes would have looked pretty sedate even in 1913. This was, after all the year when Picasso’s cubist collages, Duchamp’s first readymade.’

If it isn’t revolutionary and moving well away from traditional painterly representation it isn’t worth bothering with, surely a slight woke contradiction, implying that women can only be considered dynamic and influential if they produce work similar to that of men. The domestic sphere and motherhood can be of no intrinsic artistic or political value. But a quick trip down to the National Gallery, showing a Lucien Freud retrospective, showed how influential these women were, as ‘Modernists’. Many of the women’s portraits have expressionistic distortions of the face, and brilliant if unnerving colour, such as in Gabriele Mûnter’s Still life, Doll, Cat and Child, 1937, and it was obvious to see in Freud’s work how although he left Germany in 1939, aged eleven, as a painter in his prime, he was still deeply involved in the same means of modernist expression, remaining representational whilst depicting over-size, glaucous, disturbing eyes and unsettling colour. The hands in his portrait of Jacob Rothschild, 1989, and Baron Thyssen, 1985, directly recall the work of German Expressionist, Otto Dix. He surely inherited his great independence of mind and practice from those Germans, male and female who had gone before.

There are some touches of woke in the show of course, Becker’s fine Portrait of a Black Lady based on someone she saw on a bus, has been renamed, Portrait of a Woman, but considering the feminist theme of the show, and the liking for domestic scenes by many of the artists, we and they certainly get off lightly. The problems the women found with painting and bringing up children are mentioned but in no way suggesting that they were oppressed by motherhood or men – as good a whiff of fresh air as we’ve had in years.

In Short

The Little Karoo, Pauline Smith

The author of this long forgotten book was a great friend of and influence on Arnold Bennett whose new biography should arouse interest in one of our greatest novelists.

One of the strangest, and most touching, literary friendships was that between Arnold Bennett and Pauline Smith (1882–1959). Smith, an aspiring writer from South Africa, met Bennett in an hotel in Switzerland in 1908, before he was at the acme of his fame, and he recognised a writer in her. They remained in close touch and Bennett's belief in her never wavered; he continued to offer her guidance until he died. Her first book, *The Little Karoo*, was published in 1925, seventeen years after they met; she wrote very little after Bennett's death.

Smith was the daughter of a Scottish doctor who settled in the Little Karoo, an arid area of the veldt in what was then the Cape Colony. She was sent away to school in Scotland when she was 13, and never returned to live in South Africa, though she paid several extended visits afterwards. Her experience of life on the Little Karoo, mostly inhabited by poor Afrikaner farmers, together with a second-hand experience of medicine derived from her father (who died in 1899), formed the basis of the short stories of her first book.

These stories depict a way of life that is completely unfamiliar to the reader, but Smith manages to convey it from the first paragraph. The people of the Little Karoo are hardy, religious, industrious, narrowly moralistic and therefore sometimes hypocritical. The stories that Smith tells in her small compass are deeply tragic.

For example, the childless wife of an illiterate tenant farmer, to whom she has been happily married for fifty years, has a pain in her stomach that is not cured by the only medicine they know, Grandmother's Drops, and her husband puts her gently in an ox-drawn cart and takes her to the hospital three day's journey away. There they are parted for the first time in their married lives; the old farmer removes her from the hospital, and it is obvious that she is dying. The story is an implicit and understated exploration of unfathomable grief.

In another story, a miller dying of tuberculosis, so embittered by his illness that he makes the life of his wife a misery, realises at the last how much he loves her, but cannot tell her before he dies of a lung haemorrhage.

Love is the summum bonum in Smith's stories, but it is also the cause of great pain. By taking the lives of simple folk as her subject, she lays bare the fundamental conditions and tragedies of human existence.

Anthony Daniels

The

Salisbury Review

*The quarterly magazine of
conservative thought*

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

Annual subscription rates:

UK £27.

Europe £33.

Airmail rest of world: £41,

Digital copy £10 .

Single issues £6+p&p

ISSN: 0265-4881. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or other without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright ©The Salisbury Review

Printed in the UK by The MANSON Group Limited

Typesetting — DASH

Graphics — Lindsey Dearnley

Sir Roger Scruton At His Desk



Sir Roger Scruton at his desk

by Lindsey Dearnley

This painting was created after a sitting with Roger Scruton as he worked, and pondered, at his farmhouse in Swindon.

Oil on canvas. 18x24

Prints available upon request